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New York

President: Ms. Fajon/Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Attaf
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. Barrot
Guyana	Ms. Persaud
Japan	Mr. Ando
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Vershinin
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Lammy
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General and the Heads of Government, Ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and His Excellency Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

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

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I will start by apologizing for the fact that I will have to leave very early because this was squeezed into what was already an impossible agenda.

Hell is breaking loose in Lebanon. As I told the General Assembly yesterday, we should all be alarmed by the escalation. Lebanon is at the brink.

Of course, the Blue Line has seen tensions for years. But since October, exchanges of fire have expanded in scope, depth and intensity. Hizbullah and other non-State armed groups in Lebanon and the Israel Defense Forces have exchanged fire on an almost daily basis, with Hizbullah indicating that it would require a ceasefire in Gaza to cease hostilities. The exchanges of fire have been in repeated violation of resolution 1701 (2006). And the daily use of weapons by non-State armed groups is in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

Lebanese sovereignty must be respected, and the Lebanese State must have full control of weapons throughout Lebanese territory. We support all efforts to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Since October, nearly 200,000 people within Lebanon and more than 60,000 from northern Israel have fled their homes. Many lives have been lost. All that must stop. The communities of northern Israel and southern Lebanon must be able to return to their homes and live in safety and security without fear.

Since the emergency Council meeting on Lebanon on 20 September (see S/PV.9730), in the wake of the remote detonation of pagers and handheld radios used by Hizbullah across Lebanon, hostilities have escalated dramatically. This past weekend saw heavy exchanges of fire endangering civilians on both sides of the Blue Line — with the Israel Defense Forces striking approximately 400 Hizbullah targets in Lebanon, while Hizbullah launched hundreds of missiles, rockets and drones into northern Israel.

Monday was the bloodiest day in Lebanon in a generation. The Israel Defense Forces said that it struck some 1,600 Hizbullah targets. Many civilians were killed, and many, many more were injured. Since then, Israel has continued its deadly strikes across Lebanon, including in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health reported that 569 people were killed on Monday and Tuesday, including 50 children and 94 women. More than 1,800 people were injured.

Lebanese authorities report a total of 1,247 deaths since October. Two colleagues from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were among those killed by yesterday's bombing. Today further strikes killed at least another 50 people and injured more than 200. Meanwhile, roads are clogged as families desperately seek safety. And many are stranded at the Beirut airport.

The Ministry of the Interior of Lebanon has reported that more than 90,000 people have fled southern and eastern Lebanon towards Beirut and the north-west, with 30,000 people in shelters. At least \$170 million is needed to respond to growing numbers of displaced and mounting humanitarian needs.

The people of Israel have endured also repeated attacks from Hizbullah and others. According to Israeli officials, since last October, more than 8,300 rockets, approximately 1,500 anti-tank missiles and hundreds of explosive uncrewed aerial vehicles have targeted Israel, with 49 Israeli deaths and hundreds injured.

Hizbullah continues to launch drone and increasingly high-calibre missile and rocket attacks on military targets and residential areas in Israel. Earlier today it launched a ballistic missile targeting Mossad headquarters near Tel Aviv. The ongoing rocket attacks have injured several people in Israel, with homes and other structures damaged.

(spoke in French)

Diplomatic efforts have intensified to achieve a temporary ceasefire, allowing for the delivery of humanitarian relief and paving the way for the resumption of a more durable peace. We fully support those efforts. Earlier this week, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, travelled to Israel for consultations, underscoring that military escalation is in no one's interest. The Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz, has continued his close engagement with the parties, supporting humanitarian access wherever possible and continuing to urge immediate de-escalation.

Despite the dangerous conditions, our peacekeepers remain in position. To mitigate the risk to mission personnel, most civilian personnel have temporarily relocated north of the Litani River. A few critical staff members remain in the mission's area of operations, together with the Blue Helmets. I want to reiterate our sincere gratitude to our peacekeepers — civilian and military — who serve along the Blue Line, as well as to all the troop-contributing-countries.

(spoke in English)

I implore the Council to work in lockstep to help put out this fire. The parties must immediately return to a cessation of hostilities and take real action towards full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). Civilians must be protected. Civilian infrastructure must not be targeted. The safety and security of all United Nations personnel and assets must be ensured. International law must be respected.

To all sides, let us say in one clear voice: stop the killing and destruction. Tone down the rhetoric and threats. Step back from the brink.

An all-out war must be avoided at all costs. It would surely be an all-out catastrophe. The people of Lebanon, as well as the people of Israel and the people of the world, cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia.

More violence will not bring more security. Terrorism under the guise of solidarity or military operations under the pretext of protection do not equal more security. They translate only into the suffering of civilians and the postponement of meaningful diplomatic solutions. We need peace. In line with what the Charter of the United Nations and basic humanity expect from us, it is our job to achieve it.

First, I condemn the recent escalation in Lebanon. Following months of escalating tensions, last week's events represented a new chapter, which was extensively discussed last Friday (see S/PV.9730). The new attacks of this week are fuelling further chaos and instilling more fear. I take this opportunity to call on both sides, as well as all States and all actors in the region, to exercise restraint in their actions and in their words. Every single attack presents an opportunity for a miscalculation and drives us further away from peace. To those around this table with influence on the various actors: this is the time to use it. Israel must stop its air strikes and abandon plans for a ground invasion. Hizbullah must stop its attacks. It is the moment for the Security Council to be united in our call for de-escalation and a cessation of hostilities.

Secondly, the protection of civilians must be a priority. We are deeply concerned about the images of confusion and fear reigning in the south of Lebanon. That has come on top of months of hostilities with a heavy impact on civilian infrastructure and civilians, many of whom have been displaced on both sides of the border. We repeat: further violence will not bring them back. We call on all parties to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. No one could have said it better than the International Committee of the Red Cross President during this morning's open debate (see S/PV.9732): international humanitarian law offers a pathway to peace, and it should be declared a political priority. We also call for the immediate and full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). We would like to express our full support for the work of the United Nations

Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Its presence and its mandate are vital stabilizing factors. The safety and security of UNIFIL must be ensured at all times.

Thirdly, diplomacy is the only path forward. It is therefore time to return to the negotiating tables — both the one related to this crisis and the one on the ceasefire in Gaza. I fully concur with the Secretary-General — we cannot afford Lebanon becoming another Gaza. We cannot afford the spiral of violence in the Middle East continuing. It must stop now. I appeal for a genuine commitment to the conclusion of negotiations and for the Council to play an active role in supporting those endeavours.

In classic literature, hell has been depicted as nine concentric circles of torment. They become gradually more progressive and complex. I am afraid that we are stepping on the same path, discussing the increasingly thorny situation in the Middle East. Before the region reaches a point of no return, I call on all of us to show it the path back to diplomacy.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

Mr. Barrot (France) (*spoke in French*): I decided to call this emergency meeting on behalf of France. The situation in Lebanon today threatens to reach a point of no return. We are now beyond escalation. Israeli strikes have killed too many people, and Hizbullah continues to target population centres in Israel. Since the beginning of the week, Israeli strikes have already killed hundreds of civilians, including dozens of children. That is unacceptable. And I want to extend, on France's behalf, my complete solidarity to Lebanon's people. I reiterate that compliance with international humanitarian law is not optional. Civilians, be they Lebanese or Israeli, must never be targets.

Today the tensions between Hizbullah and Israel could drag the region into a wider conflict. The consequences would be unimaginable. Lebanon, which is already considerably weakened, would not recover from such a war. It is therefore urgent for all actors involved to determinedly take the path of de-escalation. They also need to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006). That is the framework set by the Council and approved by the parties. The objective is clear: the end

of hostilities along the Blue Line. Attacks from both sides must therefore cease. France is committed to the security of both Lebanon and Israel.

I would like to commend the crucial contribution of the Blue Helmets engaged within the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Their role is essential. With almost 700 soldiers, France contributes fully. And I reiterate that the protection of the Blue Helmets is also an obligation for all parties to a conflict. France is committed to that and committed to averting a regional war.

Let us seize the opportunity of having so many leaders in New York this week to impose a diplomatic solution and break the cycle of violence. War is not inevitable. A diplomatic solution is possible. In the past few days, we have worked with our American partners on a platform for a temporary, 21-day ceasefire to allow for negotiations. That platform will be made public very shortly, and we are counting on both parties to accept it without delay in order to protect civilian populations and enable diplomatic negotiations to begin. We have worked with the parties to define the parameters for a diplomatic crisis exit on the basis of resolution 1701 (2006). It is a challenging path, but it is a possible path. I repeat: war is not inevitable. We are totally committed to avoiding it, and I will be in Beirut later this week to work on it with the actors concerned.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad of Algeria.

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing on the developments in the current situation in brotherly Lebanon, which once again is facing flagrant, brutal and barbaric Israeli aggression. It is as ugly, atrocious and grave aggression as that imposed on the people of Gaza. That aggression is part and parcel of the policy of escalation adopted as a preferred approach by the colonizing Israeli occupation, which is using it as a deliberate strategy on more than one front, in more than one direction and in the entire Middle East region.

In fact, that occupation is no more satisfied with the war of genocide that it is perpetrating against the Palestinian people in Gaza and in the West Bank. It is igniting crisis after crisis and attempting day after day to impose its criminality and its power on all neighbouring countries, namely, Yemen, Syria, Iran and currently Lebanon. To our Lebanese brothers

we extend our full solidarity and support as a result of the abominable and shameful Israeli aggression, which requires an explicit condemnation and strict denunciation from the Council. We absolutely reject that aggression, and we must urgently act to stop it and hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Lebanon is facing a violation against its sovereignty that undermines its security and stability. The Israeli occupation is perpetrating in Lebanon all kinds of crimes that it committed in Gaza, namely, a crime against peace, a crime of aggression, a crime against humanity, a crime of war and genocide. In other words, Israel is attempting to transform Lebanon into another Gaza. The Lebanese people, the Palestinian people and all the States and peoples of the region are suffering today and paying with their lives and property. The Council has been unable to shoulder its responsibilities and put an end to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Escalation has started in Gaza and is now spreading all over the region. They are paying the price with their lives and property because the Council is unable to deter the Israeli occupier and make it accountable for its crimes. Impunity is a green light for the Israeli crimes to widespread.

Last but not least, that heavy price is being paid because the Council could not compel the Israeli occupation to abandon its illusions and its mirage of achieving security and stability by enforcing insecurity and instability in neighbouring countries, as the occupation believes in word and deed that enjoying security lies in denying it to its neighbours. It is time for the Council to realize that security and stability in the Middle East region cannot be held hostage to the capricious whims of the Israeli occupation as it undermines the region the way it wants. The Israeli occupation has proved that it does not believe in peace and does not want peace, and that it considers itself to be an exception to the norms and rules that unite us here under the auspices of this Organization.

Therefore, Algeria underscores that the very least that we expect from the Council is the action needed to put an end to the escalation, today not tomorrow. The Middle East needs concerted efforts from everyone, more than ever, to avoid the horrors of a widespread war that is already on the horizon.

In that context, my country underscores that efforts towards de-escalation should be a priority in order to put an end once and for all to the hell that the Palestinian people are suffering in Gaza. Those efforts should also focus on the aggressor and not the victim, that is, on the

Israeli occupation and not on Palestinians, Lebanese or others in States of the region that have been affected by Israeli crimes of all kinds. They have had enough of the arrogance of the Israeli occupation.

We remain firmly convinced that establishing security and stability in the Middle East depends on the ability of the Council to overcome the obstacles it faces and to enforce full respect for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. It also depends on implementing its resolutions to ensure a ceasefire in Gaza, to put an end to the systematic Israeli escalation in the region, to end the occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories and to impose an independent sovereign Palestinian State as a just, sustained and final solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Vershinin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We support the convening by the presidency of an emergency meeting in connection with the sudden escalation and developments in the friendly country of Lebanon and in the Lebanon-Israeli border region. We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, for his briefing and for his assessment of the regional situation.

Developments in recent days show that our worst predictions are coming true. The escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which resulted in a wave of instability throughout the entire Middle East — from the Red Sea to Iraq — triggered a full-blown confrontation between Israel and Hizbullah whose main victims are civilians on both sides of the Blue Line. Since 23 September, the victims of the largest Israeli bombardment since 2006 against Lebanon include at least 569 people, with 50 children, and 1,835 people have been wounded. According to the UNICEF Deputy Representative in Lebanon, Ettie Higgins, in one day, more Lebanese died than in the last 11 months. Two staff members of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have perished. Half a million people have had to flee their homes. On 24 September, after yet another Israeli air strike in the Bekaa Valley, an entire family of 10 people died. On 20 September, more than 50 people were killed as a result of an Israeli air strike on a densely populated residential area. Retaliatory strikes on military targets in Israel are being carried out by Hizbullah as well. All of that is happening only days after the horrific terrorist attack involving the detonation of wireless devices in Lebanon that claimed the lives of 39 people, including children, and wounded several thousand.

We emphatically condemn the large-scale military attack and provocations against the friendly nation of Lebanon. We extend our sincere condolences to the families of the dead, and we wish a speedy recovery to the wounded. We categorically reject indiscriminate attacks whose victims are civilians.

Israel has released statements to the effect that the objective of the military operation against Lebanon is to create safe conditions for the return to the north of Israel of internally displaced persons. According to the Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, that is in preparation for a ground offensive. However, the experience of the 2006 Israeli campaign has already demonstrated that superiority in terms of military materiel and weapons alone does not result in peace and security through military measures alone.

The developments in the region once again show that seeking complicated solutions to the crises plaguing the region, including the Lebanese crisis, is possible only through dialogue. We must immediately end the unfolding violence before it spirals completely out of control. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, which would prevent further bloodshed and create conditions for returning the settlement process to a political and diplomatic track.

It is also important to abandon irresponsible rhetoric. We all remember the words of the Minister of Defence of Israel Yoav Gallant that the Israelis can drive Lebanon into the Stone Age, as well as his threats of destruction to those who play with fire, in the context of the confrontation with Hizbullah. We are convinced that in this atmosphere, which has reached a breaking point, it is critical to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid provocations that will further fuel the conflict. However, regardless of our concerns about Lebanon today, we all understand perfectly well that the looming spectre of a major war in the Middle East can be halted only by stopping the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip, where the number of victims of the inhumane Israeli military campaign has already exceeded 42,000 people.

The inaction of the Council, which is de facto being held hostage by one of its permanent members, is all the more unacceptable given that the Security Council has a host of instruments at its disposal in order to compel the warring parties to turn towards peace. That would help to save the lives of the Israeli hostages, whose prospects of returning home are fading with each day that the Israeli operation continues. We believe that

the next critical stage should be a fair solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with the well-known international legal basis. There is no other solution to any Middle Eastern crisis, without exception.

Turning to Lebanon, our consistent position is that there is a need for the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which clearly sets out Israel's obligations to renounce all offensive military operations, withdraw its armed forces from southern Lebanon and end the occupation of Lebanese lands, and contains provisions on the withdrawal of all Hizbullah formations north of the Litani River.

We fully support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which plays a key stabilizing role along the Blue Line. It was the presence of peacekeepers that for a long time helped to mitigate the risks of a full-scale military confrontation. We stress the need to ensure respect for the safety and security of the Blue Helmets.

For our part, we will continue to focus our diplomatic efforts on de-escalating the situation and preventing a catastrophic scenario. We stand ready to coordinate with international and regional partners to that end. Most importantly, no one must try to monopolize these efforts for the advancement of their parochial geopolitical interests. All of us today are being forced to deal with the consequences of such actions taken by one of the permanent members of the Security Council.

Mr. Ando (Japan): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Japan is gravely concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. Over the past year, the Security Council members, including Japan, have been calling on all concerned actors to refrain from any action that could further escalate tensions in the region. Yet, heavy exchanges of fire between Israel and Hizbullah over the past few days have reportedly killed hundreds of people, including women and children, and wounded thousands.

Japan extends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and loved ones of the victims and expresses its deepest sympathy to those who were injured. Japan renews its call for de-escalation by all relevant parties.

No one desires to witness any further catastrophes in the Middle East. Japan is especially concerned about the civilians who have been victimized and affected by

the ongoing conflict. Many innocent civilians, including women and children, have been killed and injured by attacks. Tens of thousands of people in both Lebanon and Israel have been displaced from their homes since the daily exchanges of fire began last October. We once again urge all parties to immediately take all measures to prevent civilian casualties and adhere to international law, including the protection of civilians.

Japan calls for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006), which calls for a return to a cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line, as well as respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. At the same time, Japan strongly urges all parties to exercise the utmost restraint so as to avoid further escalation. Japan supports the tireless efforts made by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, together with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization and the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, to reduce tensions.

Japan also reiterates its strong support for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of the hostages based on the outlines of resolution 2735 (2024). We reaffirm our strong commitment to making every diplomatic effort to end the cycle of violence and restore peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his important briefing on a tragically escalating situation. I acknowledge the participation of His Excellency President of the Council of Ministers of Lebanon.

Following the indiscriminate explosion of communications devices in Lebanon a few days ago, reportedly killing 37 people and injuring at least 2,931, the Secretary-General and most Council members expressed deep concerns about the dramatic escalation of tit-for-tat attacks and the build-up to large-scale aerial attacks.

Over the past two days, it has been reported that Israel carried out approximately 800 attacks on about 1,600 Hizbullah targets into southern Beirut, eastern Bekaa Valley and other areas of south Lebanon. Hizbullah, too, has claimed to have launched more than 300 rockets against military bases in Haifa and other areas deep in northern Israel.

This dangerous escalation of the situation has resulted in the death of at least 579 people, including 50 children and 94 women, with about 1,500 more injured

and 16,500 people displaced. It is also reported that Hizbullah rockets and missiles fired into northern Israel caused damage to civilian areas and injured a few people.

Sierra Leone expresses grave concern for the safety of civilians and cautions the parties to the conflict that the deliberate targeting of civilians and essential civilian infrastructure is a clear violation of international humanitarian law. We therefore urge the parties to the conflict to desist from their indiscriminate bombing of communities and to protect civilians. Sierra Leone calls for both parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint, and we further stress the urgent need for immediate de-escalation.

We remain concerned about the impact of missile strikes on United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon positions and about possible injuries to peacekeepers. We condemn all acts that endanger the lives of peacekeepers. We urge all parties to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to respect the inviolability of United Nations premises.

As we take note, with concern, the dangerous rhetoric relating to the achievement of respective military or political objectives by the conflicting parties, we reiterate that military action is not a solution for achieving their stated objectives. Sierra Leone therefore calls on the parties to use diplomatic channels, including the Organization's good offices, in order to avoid further escalation and the risk of an all-out war or a wider, devastating regional conflagration.

As the region grapples with the war in Gaza and the dire humanitarian crisis, we reject actions that may jeopardize the ongoing peace negotiations between Israel and Hamas and threaten regional and global peace and security. We call on all countries of the region and elsewhere with influence, to prevail upon both parties to desist from further attacks over the Blue Line and elsewhere.

The escalation of attacks or an all-out war is in no one's interest. The impact of a full-blown conflict on the Lebanese people and economy would be devastating. As we have previously noted in the Council, the people of Lebanon have already gone through a lengthy and destructive war and have lived through periods of fragility. The Council must do all it can to prevent the recurrence of such events. We must heed the call made by the Secretary-General and world leaders at the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-ninth session in order to prevent this conflict from escalating.

The potential for humanitarian devastation in Lebanon is already becoming apparent. The Director of Save the Children Lebanon reports that children in Lebanon, especially those from the south, who have been living with cross-border violence between Israel and Hizbullah over the past years, are “terrified by the sound of drones and fighter jets over their heads” and have said that “it feels like ... they can never be safe”. UNICEF officials in Lebanon have also noted that more children died this past Monday than have died throughout the entire past year. Schools and universities across the country have been shut down and are already being used as temporary shelters.

We welcome efforts by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, who has already met with Lebanese Government officials, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment, and other United Nations humanitarian agencies in planning a coordinated aid response that includes the activation of an emergency operations centre and the identification of schools to be designated as shelters. We urgently call for the timely provision of the \$50 million that humanitarian agencies have requested to preposition basic needs, such as food and shelter supplies, for an immediate response for the next few weeks.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone continues to call for the parties to consider the regional implications of their actions and to recommit to a cessation of hostilities. At this juncture, the priorities for the Security Council and regional stakeholders should be the establishment of a permanent ceasefire in Lebanon and Gaza, the release of hostages and prisoners, the facilitation of access to humanitarian aid and the commencement of the implementation of the two-State solution for Israel and Palestine.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In the days since we last convened to discuss the situation along the border shared by Israel and Lebanon, the United States has engaged intensively with all parties in the region. Our aim is clear: to avert a broader war that we believe is in no party's interest — not that of the people of Israel and not that of the people of Lebanon.

As President Biden emphasized to the General Assembly, a diplomatic solution consistent with resolution 1701 (2006) remains the only path to durably reversing the cycle of escalation and to enabling

displaced people in both Israel and Lebanon to return to their homes. Undergirding United States efforts is a recognition that diplomacy will only become more difficult amid a further escalation of this conflict.

We are gravely concerned by reports that hundreds of Lebanese civilians have died in recent days. We further mourn the deaths of two staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the same time, and as we have repeatedly made clear, the Security Council cannot ignore the origins of this particular conflict between Israel and Hizbullah. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese civilians and more than 65,000 Israeli civilians have been displaced as a result of Hizbullah's decision on 8 October to break the peace that had largely endured along the Blue Line following the Council's adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) in 2006.

Hizbullah's buildup of weapons, many of which are supplied by Iran, and its presence along the Blue Line, in defiance of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), have long been a source of instability. Nobody wants to see a repeat of the full-blown war that occurred in 2006, but the path to enduring stability goes beyond ending cross-Blue Line strikes. It must end with a comprehensive understanding relating to the Blue Line that has real implementation mechanisms.

As we learned in 2006, diplomacy is most effective when the international community unites with a shared goal and speaks with one voice. We are working with other countries on a proposal that we hope will lead to calm and enable discussions aimed at reaching a diplomatic solution. We encourage the Security Council to lend its support for those diplomatic efforts in the coming days.

Even as we work to avert a broader war, we have been clear that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hizbullah's attacks — that includes the escalatory ballistic missile launch that targeted Tel Aviv last night, in addition to the rockets fired every day since 8 October. No member of the Council would tolerate a terrorist group conducting rocket and ballistic missile attacks on its territory. And all parties must comply with international humanitarian law and take all reasonable steps to minimize harm to civilians, especially those in densely populated areas. The United States also underscores its strong support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and emphasizes the importance of all parties ensuring that UNIFIL personnel are safe and secure.

In this dangerous moment, it is imperative that we work together to help Lebanon's people and the region avoid further tragedy. The United States will continue to do its part and appreciates the efforts of other nations that share its commitment to forging a diplomatic solution.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): The devastating communications device attacks last week were shocking, but the Israeli air strikes across Lebanon since Monday even more staggering and distressing. On 23 September alone, more than 500 people were killed, marking Lebanon's highest death toll since the long civil war and equalling half the total deaths during the bloody 2006 conflict.

I would now like to highlight the following points.

First, protecting civilians is not an option; it is an obligation and the cornerstone of international humanitarian law. While it is claimed that the attacks targeted military objects, the bombings across Lebanon have devastated civilian and medical infrastructure, causing widespread casualties, displacement and panic in all Lebanese communities. Simultaneously, thousands of Israelis have been forced into bomb shelters by Hizbullah's rocket attacks, which have expanded in frequency, intensity and range. Neither can be justified. My delegation is also deeply saddened by the deaths of two employees of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees during the Israeli air strikes carried out on Monday. International humanitarian law clearly provides that all parties have a duty to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers at all times. That is also an obligation.

Secondly, we urgently call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, prioritize de-escalation and elevate common efforts to avoid an all-out war in the region. From the Blue Line to Gaza, the West Bank, Yemen and Syria, the region is at serious risk of descending into a broader and more destructive war.

History has shown that declarations like "escalate to de-escalate" rarely achieve peace. We therefore condemn any inflammatory rhetoric advocating mass destruction or the potential reoccupation of or even new settlements in southern Lebanese territory. Such words undermine peace and put millions of Lebanese and Israelis in peril of even greater violence. Diplomacy is the only viable path to sustainable peace, and such statements must stop.

We also condemn all hostilities surrounding the Blue Line, which have significantly increased since last weekend. We are deeply concerned about their ongoing impact on the safety and operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in which the Republic of Korea is actively participating, and we reiterate that the security of United Nations peacekeepers must be ensured. We call on parties to cease all attacks against Israel and respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its recognized borders.

We stand at the edge of an abyss, but it is not too late to step back. Urgent diplomacy, de-escalation, a ceasefire in Gaza and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006), are the only viable path forward.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): The situation in Lebanon is quickly approaching a dangerous and devastating tipping point. As noted by the Secretary-General, the country is on the brink. Time is running out for us to protect the millions of lives that will be impacted across the Middle East and beyond if the situation continues to deteriorate.

Since the atrocities committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups against Israel on 7 October 2023, we have witnessed over 11 months of near-daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line, further exacerbating an already highly volatile context. On 17 and 18 September, widespread simultaneous explosions across Lebanon killed dozens and injured thousands. The consequences of such a widespread attack, including the large number of civilian casualties, were foreseeable. Such actions also reflect a worrisome disregard for established norms of international humanitarian law.

Over recent days, we have witnessed Israeli air strikes across Lebanon. The scale and intensity of the attacks have resulted in the deaths of more than 550 people, including women and children, and more than 1,800 injured. The attacks have damaged civilian infrastructure, severely impacted the Lebanese health services and caused major displacement of civilians. Worrisomely, we are again hearing echoes of the rhetoric used to justify the thousands of attacks on medical and United Nations facilities in Gaza since last October.

As the Secretary-General warned, we cannot let Lebanon become another Gaza. In Israel, rockets fired by the military wing of Hizbullah are landing on

military bases, facilities and residential areas. Schools have been closed across northern Israel, and hospitals in the country are being forced to move operations to protect medical-centre areas. Those actions must be condemned.

Malta's position is clear. We call on all parties to protect civilians in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Any attack that targets civilians or civilian infrastructure is unacceptable and must immediately cease. We express grave concern for the safety of civilians on both sides of the Blue Line. Civilians on both sides wish for nothing more than to live in peace and to no longer have to fear for their lives and those of their loved ones. We strongly condemn the continued loss of life, including the two workers from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees killed this week, and the mass displacement.

The ongoing and critical work of the United Nations and its partners must be supported, including the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in seeking to ensure the safety of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, as must the continued bravery of Lebanese humanitarian workers.

We echo the call for urgent de-escalation. It remains the case that it is the civilian population that suffers the most in a full-blown war. That outcome, which we can all foresee, must be averted at all costs, including by renewed diplomatic efforts. The Security Council has a crucial role to play in forging a path forward, one that prioritizes de-escalation and restraint across the region. Security Council resolutions must be respected and implemented.

Along the Blue Line, all parties must step back from the abyss and implement an immediate cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire based on resolution 1701 (2006). The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Lebanese Armed Forces are essential cornerstones of any future security architecture in the region and should be bolstered to the largest possible extent. Malta is proud to contribute troops to UNIFIL. Israeli air strikes on, and flyovers across, Lebanon must stop. We also strongly denounce the possession of weapons outside the control of the Lebanese State by militant groups, including the military wing of Hizbullah. In that vein, we stress the need to establish an area free of any weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL, between the Blue Line and the Litani River.

Across the broader region, the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza continues to risk spiralling into a wider conflict. As the Secretary-General outlined yesterday, that conflict threatens to take the entire region with it. In that vein, we reiterate our call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the safe return of hostages to Israel and the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions, namely, resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2735 (2024).

In conclusion, the continued suffering of ordinary civilians makes our role and our responsibilities crystal clear. The risk of military escalation, with catastrophic consequences for the entire region, requires decisive action by a united Council. All of us here around this table and beyond must do our utmost to avert the all-out war that appears to already be on our doorstep.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We thank France for requesting this emergency meeting and the Secretary-General for his briefing describing the events of the past few days.

As the Secretary-General has just said, Monday was the deadliest day since the end of the civil war in Lebanon. More than 560 people, including approximately 50 children, were killed. Since then, the situation has not improved. The much-feared regional escalation is unfolding before our very eyes. Like other members of the Council, we warned of that risk and urged for a strong and united appeal in order to prevent it. It is our responsibility to find ways of preventing the situation from deteriorating further.

Israel's massive air strikes on large swathes of Lebanon and the indiscriminate rockets fired by Hizbullah on Israel are unacceptable and must stop. We condemn the fact that, according to information from the Lebanese Ministry of Health, those strikes have caused numerous civilian casualties. That tragic toll and the trauma caused to the civilian population in Lebanon are unacceptable. The same can be said of the injuries, the damage and the constant fear that rocket fire instils in the Israeli population. I offer our most sincere condolences to all the families of civilian victims of the conflict. On top of that suffering comes the anxiety of tens of thousands of inhabitants of southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley who are fleeing and the anguish of displaced persons in Israel who are still unable to return home.

One thing is absolutely clear: dialogue and de-escalation are the only ways to end this conflict. The current dynamic risks leading to all-out war, which all

parties say they want to avoid. We therefore support all efforts to reach a diplomatic solution. All parties must commit themselves to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which is accepted by all. The Council unanimously reaffirmed its support for that request a month ago. The resolution charts a course towards resolving the underlying causes of the conflict and enabling the people of Lebanon and Israel to live in peace and security. Switzerland accordingly calls on Israel and Hizbullah to cease hostilities immediately.

International humanitarian law must be fully respected by all parties, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities, under all circumstances. Taking all possible precautions to protect civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, is an obligation under conventional and customary international humanitarian law. We also recall that attacks against civilians and essential civilian infrastructure may constitute war crimes. There must be accountability.

We are outraged by the death of two staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees killed in southern Lebanon. Ensuring the protection of humanitarian workers, anchored in international humanitarian law and recalled in resolution 2730 (2024), is central and a point that Switzerland emphasized at a ministerial meeting this week.

The security of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) personnel is also essential. That Force, to which Switzerland contributes through the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), is currently carrying out its work in a very difficult environment. We welcome the efforts that UNIFIL and UNTSO continue to make to reduce tensions and ensure liaisons between the parties.

We must ensure that the conflict, like that in Gaza — where we will continue to insist on a ceasefire, as well as on the release of hostages and rapid, unhindered humanitarian access — ends immediately. The Council must urgently contribute to a diplomatic solution and speak with one united voice to avoid a regional conflagration, which everyone wants to avoid and for which the civilian population would pay a heavy price.

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing on the urgent and rapidly deteriorating situation in Lebanon. I also welcome the participation of the Prime Minister of Lebanon in today's meeting.

The Council met only six days ago to discuss the recent attacks in Lebanon. Sadly, those deadly attacks, using pagers and other communications devices, pale in comparison to what occurred on Monday.

Expressions of deep concern or alarm are wholly inadequate in capturing the true feeling of shock and devastation brought on by the reports that Israeli strikes killed more than 490 people, including 35 children, and injured more than 1,600 people in a single day. The death toll has since risen to more than 560, including 50 children and 94 women. We note with deep concern that most of the air strikes carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces on Monday were in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area of operations and that two staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were among those killed. We extend our condolences to their families.

At the same time, Hizbullah has claimed multiple strikes against military targets of the Israel Defense Forces, with rocket barrages, drones and artillery, in northern Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan.

Lebanon has faced constant strikes across its territory over the past 11 months. However, the most recent events are reportedly the deadliest barrage since the 2006 war.

The continued attacks by one country on the territory of another sovereign State, especially in the light of their indiscriminate nature, cannot be allowed to occur with impunity. The protection of civilians cannot be treated as an afterthought to one nation's supposed security objectives.

World leaders are gathered here at the United Nations in reaffirmation of their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations. Just this morning we talked about leadership for peace, and on Monday, we adopted a Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1) on the very day that the future of 35 children were snuffed out in the most gruesome and inhumane way. The patterns emerging in Lebanon have become quite familiar. Our response cannot be more inaction.

During yesterday's meeting on the war in Ukraine (see S/PV.9731), most Council members called for an end to impunity and demanded that violators of international law be brought to justice.

When the Council last met on this issue, Guyana described the situation in the Middle East as untenable. Now I am truly at a loss for words to describe the

glaringly obvious disaster that awaits us. There will be no winner in any war in the Middle East. That much is fact. Yet, despite that reality, no party is willing to step back from the brink.

Diplomatic efforts have not yet yielded any significant results after almost one year. I call on those with influence to exert greater efforts. It is not too late to step back from the precipice. That process must begin with a ceasefire in Gaza and a recommitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Guyana calls upon the parties to immediately cease the hostilities and to ensure that civilians are kept out of harm's way.

The Lebanese people, much like the Palestinian people, have become innocent bystanders to the games of a handful of ideologues hell-bent on the achievement of their political pursuits. How much longer will we sit in the Council only to express our concern and then gather a few days later as the circumstances inevitably worsen? The people of Lebanon are depending on us to act in the Security Council. The Council should consider the necessary action it can take to de-escalate the situation and, ultimately, end the war in Gaza.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for the information provided on the worrisome situation in Lebanon.

Not even a week has passed since the Council last met to discuss this issue. The gravity of the events and their possible consequences for the entire region warrant our meeting.

Since then, the violence has been increasing. The indiscriminate explosion of communications devices was followed by aerial bombardments by Israel in Beirut and other locations and the indiscriminate launching of rockets from Lebanon into Israel by Hizbullah. Those events are a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), which calls for a definitive cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line, and a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty.

The violence against the civilian population on both sides of the Blue Line threatens to cause further displacement and become a new humanitarian crisis in the region. Ecuador recalls once again that the norms of international humanitarian law must be respected by all actors in the conflict at all times.

To contain regional tensions, a ceasefire is imperative to stop the war in Gaza, to allow the entry of sufficient humanitarian aid to the area, as well as

the immediate release of the hostages taken by Hamas, almost a year ago, during the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, which Ecuador once again condemns.

The implementation of resolution 2735 (2024) is urgent. Those who want more violence must be left without any excuses.

We also need the commitment of the countries in the region and international actors with influence on the parties to prevent the Middle East from continuing in a spiral of violence leading to destruction and misery. We also call on regional organizations to act to ensure that moderation and restraint prevail.

Ecuador supports any initiative that contributes to de-escalating the conflict and calls on the leaders of all parties to act with courage, responsibility and humanity.

The peaceful settlement of disputes is the very essence of multilateralism and a fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations. As we said this morning in the open debate on leadership for peace, the prevention of conflicts, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and endorsed in the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1) adopted this week, deserves our utmost attention. Only dialogue, building trust and a two-State solution will make it possible to achieve the elusive but much-desired peace in the Middle East.

I would like to conclude by echoing the Secretary-General's call for the parties to exercise maximum restraint, prioritize the protection of civilians and ensure the security of humanitarian workers and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon personnel.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank France for requesting this meeting and welcome the presence of Prime Minister Najib Azmi Mikati of Lebanon. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing, which reminds us of the gravity of the current situation.

The Lebanese people have just experienced the bloodiest week in decades. Thousands of communications devices were detonated simultaneously via remote control, causing heavy casualties among innocent civilians. China once again condemns such unscrupulous and indiscriminate attacks. While the Lebanese people were still reeling from the shock, bombs rained down from the sky. Israel launched multiple rounds of large-scale air strikes on southern and eastern Lebanon, leading to more than 500

deaths and close to 2,000 injuries. China is seriously concerned about the current situation between Lebanon and Israel, firmly supports Lebanon in defending its sovereignty, security and national dignity and strongly condemns acts that violate the basic norms governing international relations. We firmly oppose any indiscriminate attacks against civilians that breach the red line of international humanitarian law. We emphasize the importance of effectively guaranteeing the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers. United Nations personnel and assets must not be the target of armed attacks.

Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict in October 2023, the international community has been focusing all its efforts on promoting an immediate ceasefire and preventing the conflict from spilling over and expanding. But the reality is heading in the opposite direction. As world leaders gather here in New York, making an overwhelming call for the maintenance of peace in the Middle East in the General Assembly general debate, Israel has chosen to expand the fighting. That is nothing short of a mockery of international justice and the authority of international law. The Middle East cannot afford another war. It is imperative to stop military adventurism and facilitate de-escalation.

We welcome the appeal of Secretary-General Guterres and the ongoing mediation efforts by the United Nations. We note that Lebanon has stated that it demands justice and a diplomatic solution. The Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Iraq and Jordan issued a statement on 25 September, pointing out that deterioration will have serious consequences for the entire region. Other regional countries concerned have also stated that they want peace and seek no war. We urge Israel to make the right decision, put aside its obsession with the use of force, stop its military operations in Gaza, stop its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and security and stop adventurous acts that could drag the region into a new catastrophe. At the same time, we call on all relevant parties to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid escalating the situation.

The Security Council bears the important responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. In the current situation, we understand that a vast majority of Council members support the Council taking urgent actions to prevent the worsening of the situation. We hope that all members will demonstrate political will and leadership for peace, respond to the expectations of Lebanon and the Arab States and

support the Council in taking strong, necessary actions without delay in order to play an effective role in stopping the war and easing the situation.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I wish to thank the Slovenian presidency for convening this urgent meeting, which was requested by France. We also thank the Secretary-General for his insights on this very worrisome matter. We welcome the Prime Minister of Lebanon to this meeting.

The situation in Lebanon continues to be a source of grave concern. The recent escalation between Hizbullah and Israel has resulted in near-daily cross-border exchanges of fire, causing a significant number of casualties and heightened regional tensions. Furthermore, Israel has intensified its military operations. Monday's bombardment was by far the largest it has launched against Lebanon since the last full-scale war raged between Israel and Hizbullah in the summer of 2006. Reports indicate that nearly 500 people have been killed, including children and employees of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and more than 1,600 have been injured. That has led to widespread displacement, with many families fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in schools and other shelters. Just a few days ago, we met in the Chamber (see S/PV.9730), alarmed by the recent cyberattacks in Beirut and other parts of Lebanon, which resulted in hundreds of civilian victims, including children.

The current events in Lebanon are inextricably linked to the ongoing deadly conflict in Gaza, which has claimed the lives of more than 41,000 Palestinians so far and is showing no sign of abatement, raising the spectre of further escalation. The humanitarian crisis is severe, and efforts to secure a ceasefire have so far been unsuccessful. We are deeply concerned about the potential of the intensification of air raids in Lebanon in the coming days. It is in that regard that we reiterate our call on all parties to immediately cease all military operations on both sides of the Blue Line. We emphasize the critical need for de-escalation to prevent further instability, retaliatory actions and bloodshed. We also reiterate the call on the parties to protect civilians, including humanitarian workers, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law. We urge all parties involved to strictly adhere to international law and Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1701 (2006), which called for, among other things, a full cessation of hostilities, the

withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the deployment of Lebanese and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon forces in southern Lebanon. In that regard, we urge those Council members with significant influence on both sides to work towards de-escalating the ongoing hostilities. We emphasize the need for urgent diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation and address the humanitarian crisis.

In conclusion, Mozambique reiterates its firm commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stands ready to support all efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East.

The President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lammy (United Kingdom): I thank everyone for their contributions and the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also want to acknowledge the presence of the Prime Minister of Lebanon in the Chamber today.

This is the moment of maximum danger. We are on the brink, the precipice, at a few minutes to midnight. We talk of the risk of full-scale regional war, but the truth is that we are already witnessing conflict on multiple fronts — in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and the Red Sea. The strikes in recent days have taken 550 lives in Lebanon. The death of civilians, women and children; the United Nations workers killed; and the Hizbullah rockets that have killed Israelis are just the latest in the cycle of pain, anguish and loss. As we face the abyss, the Council has a duty to speak with one voice. We must say that the rockets must stop now; the air strikes must stop now; and talks must start now, with an immediate ceasefire on both sides now. It is time to pull back from the brink.

A full-blown war is not in the interests of the Israeli or the Lebanese peoples. That is why within hours of last week's strikes, I called for an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hizbullah and Israel. Since then, we have worked closely with the United States and France to formalize a wider demand for a ceasefire and a political plan to implement it. And at the United Nations in New York, the Prime Minister and I have been urging our Group of Seven and other partners to do the same. Our priority must be a political solution in line with resolution 1701 (2006). It is our duty to do all we can to exert maximum diplomatic pressure, so Israeli

and Lebanese civilians can return to their homes, lives can be saved, security can return to northern Israel and southern Lebanon, and daily life can begin to return.

Now let me be clear: the United Kingdom condemns Hizbullah's attacks on Israel over the past 11 months, which have driven more than 60,000 people from their homes. There was no justification for those attacks. They have brought misery to ordinary people in Lebanon and Israel. They have done nothing to end the conflict in Gaza or secure Palestinian statehood.

With regard to Iran, nothing justifies supplying weapons to terror groups, in defiance of the Security Council. We call on Tehran to use its influence and urge Hizbullah to agree to a ceasefire.

For the people of Israel and for the people of Lebanon — a brilliant, multicultural and tolerant nation taken captive by an armed militia that puts itself before the Lebanese people — we must come together to bring the conflict to an end. In 2006, the Council acted in the interests of peace and security. All parties need to embody that same spirit today, by coming together and acting now to bring the conflict to an end, to stop the cycle of destruction, to stop the loss of yet more innocent lives, to stop the conflict from exploding into full-blown war and to open a path to peace. That is what we need.

The President: I now give the floor to the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Najib Azmi Mikati (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the French Republic for requesting this important meeting of the Security Council in the light of the difficult situation that Lebanon is going through. France has always been a loyal friend of Lebanon and its people and has stood by us throughout our most difficult times. The best proof of that are the genuine efforts made by France today, in cooperation with the United States of America, to issue a joint statement that is supported internationally to put an end to this dirty war.

I would also like to thank Slovenia, President of the Security Council for this month, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, as well as sisterly Algeria, which represents the Group of Arab States in the Council, for its continued support to us. I also thank all members of the Council for their continued support to Lebanon's sovereignty, unity

and stability. Furthermore, I seize this opportunity to thank all Council members for supporting resolution 2749 (2024), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force for another year, at the request of Lebanon.

Today we are facing in Lebanon a clear violation of the sovereignty of the Lebanese State and its people's human rights owing to the brutal practices of the Israeli enemy against Lebanon and its people. The Israeli enemy is violating Lebanon's sovereignty by sending its warplanes and drones over its skies; killing civilians, including women, children and youth; destroying homes and forcing families to become displaced under harsh humanitarian conditions. Furthermore, it is spreading intimidation and horror among Lebanese citizens in full view of the whole world, which is sitting idly by. Regrettably, the number of innocent civilian martyrs and wounded is constantly increasing. Hundreds of civilians lost their lives within a few days, and hospitals are full and not able to receive more wounded.

Lebanon today is a victim of electronic, cyber, air and sea aggression which could turn into a ground attack and lead to an all-out regional war. I hope to return to my country armed with the Security Council's explicit position calling for a cessation of that aggression and respect for the sovereignty and integrity of my country.

What we are witnessing today is an unprecedented escalation, involving the use of new tools and mechanisms, especially electronic ones, to harm my people. The aggressor claims that it only targets combatants and weapons, but I assure Council members that Lebanon's hospitals are full of injured civilians, including dozens of women and children. Given the aforementioned, the questions are: who can guarantee that such attacks will not be waged against other countries if no decisive deterrents are put in place and no punitive measures are taken against the aggressor? Who can guarantee the safety of our food and water or any other goods that enter our territory?

Those events cannot be dissociated from a long history of conflicts and violations that Lebanon has suffered for decades. The ongoing Israeli acts of aggression against the Lebanese territories are a blatant violation of our national sovereignty and rights as a United Nations Member State. However, that situation is not new, as Lebanon has gone through long periods of tensions and aggressions that threatened its stability and the safety of its citizens. But Lebanon has

remained resistant to all challenges, and the Lebanese have bravely faced all attacks on every inch of soil of our homeland.

I speak on behalf of Lebanon, and I am here not just to file a complaint or to submit a detailed report of the number of martyrs and wounded and the destruction that has caused people's displacement. All that is documented with sounds and images for the public's consideration. I am here today with the hope of coming out of this meeting with a serious solution based on the concerted efforts of all members of the Council to put pressure on Israel for an immediate ceasefire on all fronts and to restore the security and stability of our region.

The Lebanese people reject war, believe in stability and work for the future. Lebanon is a founding State Member of the United Nations, and it contributed to drafting the Charter of the United Nations. Lebanon, represented by Mr. Charles Malik, also participated in the drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That contribution reflects Lebanon's deep commitment to humanitarian values and international justice. Today, in the name of those values, which brought us together under the umbrella of the United Nations, we have come to stress Lebanon's right to stability, security, safety and sovereignty and its right to recover its occupied lands.

The current tensions are not occurring in a vacuum. They are the result of many conflicts and aggressions, the root causes of which were never fully addressed. Israel never stopped violating the United Nations resolutions adopted throughout the years, in particular resolution 1701 (2006). That resolution was intended as a framework to achieve lasting stability in south Lebanon. Regrettably, we are still witnessing Israeli violations of our sovereignty around the clock — by land, sea and air. Those repeated violations undermine all efforts to promote stability and, as a result, the entire region is threatening to explode at any moment. I therefore reaffirm the full commitment of the Lebanese Government to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Today I call on the Council to take earnest and immediate action to ensure the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Lebanese territories and end its daily violations. We also reaffirm the urgent need to end Israeli aggression against Gaza because of its direct consequences for the situation in Lebanon and the region — and the entire Middle East — if said aggression is not addressed expeditiously. The failure

to reach a solution will further complicate the situation. The ongoing violations will lead only to further escalation, which does not serve the interest of any party to the complex situation.

The United Nations was created to promote stability. However, we see today that the world is unable to stop the ongoing humanitarian tragedy in our region. On behalf of the Lebanese people, we therefore call on the Council to shoulder its full responsibilities and take an immediate, decisive stance that would end the ongoing plight of our people and pave the way for diplomatic solutions.

Lebanon is not asking for a favour. We are asking for our legitimate rights pursuant to international law, for our right as Lebanese to live in safety, our right to protect our national sovereignty and our right to a future free from the spectre of wars and the horrors of conflicts. I appeal to the Council and the entire international community — it is time to reject violence and wars and to implement international resolutions so that they do not remain dead letters. We have the tools. What we need today is genuine will and effective collaboration. Let us not waste this opportunity today. We must act now because we cannot afford to lose another generation to the war.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): At Israeli civilians in the north watched with horror while their brothers and sisters in the south were tortured, raped, beheaded and kidnapped by Hamas terrorists, they fled to bomb shelters as Hizbullah rained down missiles in a show of solidarity — that is what they call it among these butchers and savages.

Irit Efrati has lived in Kibbutz Dan, in the north, since her birth. She has had to flee her home only one other time — as a 7-year-old in our war of independence in 1948. Now aged 83, she again finds herself as a refugee in the city of Haifa. For nearly a year, Irit has struggled to maintain her sanity, confined to a small room and far from the life and home she built over a lifetime. This is not a unique story. Irit joins tens of thousands of Israelis now living in cramped temporary housing. She is praying for the day she will return to the only place she has ever called home.

Since 8 October, almost 9,000 rockets, along with hundreds of anti-tank missiles have been launched at our civilians, targeting their homes, families and State. Since 8 October, 70,000 civilians have been forced to flee their

homes. They have been made refugees within their own country. They do not know when they will be able to return home to restart their lives or when their children will be able to go back to their schools. Since 8 October, terrorists and their relentless attacks have injured more than 370 Israelis and murdered 49, including 12 Israeli Druze children who were playing soccer.

And now I sit here again to defend Israel's actions as if any other country in our situation would behave differently or would chart a different course and not act in the defence of their people. Let us be honest — no nation would sit idly by as its citizens are attacked.

Over the past week, Israel has been conducting precise strikes in Lebanon against Hizbullah's command centres, launching sites, missile and weapons stores and leadership. On 20 September, we targeted Hizbullah terrorist leaders during a meeting where they were planning a second 7 October. Hizbullah has made it clear — given the chance, they would storm our borders, infiltrate our communities, murder, rape and take hostages back to their dens of hell. Yet the Security Council, the Secretary-General, some United Nations officials and even some commanders of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) can barely bring themselves to mention Hizbullah. Listen to the all the statements. They cannot mention that word.

Hizbullah, the internationally designated terrorist organization that began this conflict and has violated Security Council resolutions in an ongoing manner. For years, we have been clear that we fully support resolution 1701 (2006), like the Prime Minister just affirmed. We support that resolution, and we support its complete implementation. For years, we have sounded the alarm over Hizbullah's blatant violations. For years, we have provided undeniable evidence of their military build-up, yet our warnings have been ignored. The time for half measures is over. Resolution 1701 (2006) must be fully enforced, without delay.

I remind the Council, the resolution specifies that the Lebanese army should be on the border with Israel, not Hizbullah. Perhaps some have forgotten how this started and why we must defend ourselves, but we have not. I make this declaration here today to remove any doubt — never again will the Jewish people hide from the monsters whose purpose in life is to murder Jews. Never again will we provide the benefit of the doubt to those who declare their intention to murder Jews. When they tell us and show us who they are, we will believe

them. We will take all necessary steps within our rights and in accordance with international law to neutralize that threat.

Israel does not seek a full-scale war. We have made our desire for peace clear to all those who are not blinded by hatred and political agendas. However, Israel is under attack. In the past 24 hours, northern and central Israel have faced a new wave of relentless attacks, with over 150 rockets launched deep into Israeli territory into areas that are home to 1.5 million Israelis. Those strikes have injured civilians and destroyed homes in communities like Tsfat and Rosh Pina. This morning Hizbullah escalated its aggression, launching a surface-to-surface missile towards Tel Aviv. At the same time, Iran's other proxy, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, one of many in the Middle East, has claimed responsibility for the attack using unmanned aerial vehicle systems and cruise missiles on our northern and eastern regions.

Yet many remain silent about Hizbullah's crimes, further emboldening Iran's terror proxies to continue their attacks. They are not discriminating based on race or creed. Nazareth, an important northern Israeli city, with a population that is 70 per cent Muslim and 30 per cent Christian, the hometown of Jesus himself, was showered with rockets just a few nights ago.

Not only does Hizbullah target civilians, but it also continues to hide behind them. Israel has uncovered clear evidence that Hizbullah is using civilian homes as storage and launch sites for its missiles. They are homes where families live. Hizbullah uses the basements. It uses the rooftops to put the rockets on, and it forces people to stay in their houses. Those are homes where children sleep. Hizbullah exploits the very people it claims to represent, putting both Israeli and Lebanese civilians in the line of fire. Worse still, it fires from positions near UNIFIL posts, recklessly endangering peacekeepers from across the world.

This is not just a war against Israel; it is a war against humankind, waged by Iran's proxies. They are holding the people of Lebanon hostage — we know that — using their homes as shields for their rockets, pushing the entire region to the brink of destruction. We cannot accept those conditions. We will not let Iran's terrorist proxies dictate how Israelis can live their lives. We will not let our north become a war zone.

Every representative here knows which entity is behind that situation, orchestrating it. It is the regime that has placed a countdown clock in the centre of the

capital counting the days until our destruction. I have not been to Tehran, but if one goes there, one will see that clock ticking. The Islamic regime of Iran is the driving force behind the rockets that have been launched at our communities for almost a year, the driving force behind Hizbullah's aggression and the driving force behind the instability sweeping our region. At the head of the terrorist snake, Iran has spread its venom against innocent Israeli civilians. From the Houthis in Yemen attempting to strangle global trade to Hizbullah's rocket barrage, from Hamas's practice of rape and kidnapping to the Shia militias in Syria and Iraq targeting Western personnel — we all know the Ayatollah stands behind it all. Every missile fired by Hizbullah, every drone launched by Iranian proxies and every act of terror on foreign soil traces back to one source: the Islamic regime of Iran. It is the spider at the centre of that web of violence, and we have to fight that web of violence. There can be no peace in the region until we dismantle that threat.

There is a clear path of action for the Council, if it truly wishes to avoid escalation: demand the immediate implementation of resolution 1701 (2006); designate Hizbullah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization; and finally, stop casting blame on the side defending its citizens and instead find the courage to once and for all name and condemn the true aggressor responsible for igniting this cycle of violence.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Aboul Gheit.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (*spoke in Arabic*): It has become clear to all of us today that what we feared most has happened. The fire, ignited a year ago by the occupation in Gaza, has spread to Lebanon, whose inhabitants over the past two days have been subjected to unacceptable and indiscriminate strikes, the likes of which they have not seen in two decades.

We now understand why the Israeli occupation rejected one proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza after another. Simply put, Israel did not want the war to end. On the contrary, it wanted to expand the war, thereby subjecting the peoples of the entire region to an extremely dangerous situation and gambling with people's lives and a future of peace which has been established by some Arab countries for decades. Thus, Israel has disregarded every attempt to stop the reckless slide into the abyss.

The path to de-escalation was clear. Ending the unjust, brutal and bloody war against Gaza would have been enough to calm the situation on the northern front between Israel and southern Lebanon. It would have given diplomacy a chance to establish calm. However, Israel chose to expand the circle of fire and blood, to attack a sovereign Arab State whose people are living today in the clutches of fear and horror.

I honestly say that the impotence in the face of thuggery and brutality in Gaza, including the impotence of the Security Council, which embodies the international will, encouraged Israel's leaders to escalate the situation as they found the road to escalation paved with impunity and no real pressure to change course.

We know how wars break out because we have lived through such painful experiences in the Middle East for decades. What Israel is doing today is a deliberate and foolish summoning of a storm that will spare no one from its harm and dangers. What Israel is doing we have seen repeatedly in the modern history of the Middle East. We have learned lessons and gained wisdom. However, some who are deluded by the arrogance of power believe they can achieve their goals by killing as many people as possible. Some believe that peace can be achieved only with bloodshed and that States can be ruled only by the sword. If that madness is allowed to prevail, we will find ourselves in an endless cycle of death and destruction.

Today we have a real opportunity to step back from the abyss. President Biden said yesterday in the General Assembly that there is an opportunity for a diplomatic solution. I say that the Security Council must assume its responsibility to make that solution a reality as soon as possible. The war must stop today. It must stop right now in Gaza, in the West Bank and in Lebanon. We must act now before it is too late.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Araghchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting to address the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon. We welcome the presence of His Excellency Prime Minister Najib Azmi Mikati and express the full solidarity and support of the Iranian people for Lebanon in its heroic defence against the aggression and atrocities of the terrorist entity of Israel.

The situation in the region is extremely explosive. If it is left unchecked, an all-out unprecedented catastrophe would be inevitable. In continuation of its brutality in occupied Palestine, the occupying apartheid regime of Israel is now waging an unjust war of aggression against Lebanon and targeting innocent people across the border and deep inside Lebanon's territory. That aggression, which has claimed the precious lives and limbs of thousands of innocent people, including women and children, is not simply a tragic consequence of an imposed war, but rather a calculated tactic by Israel to terrorize an entire population and force them out of their homeland.

Furthermore, the deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of civilians in Lebanon by detonating pagers, walkie-talkies and other electronic devices used by rank-and-file citizens across the country, must sound the alarm for the entire international community since this is the most outrageous manifestation of the weaponization of ordinary communications devices.

This new version of terrorism must be condemned unequivocally by all. Otherwise, it would establish a very dangerous precedent that could be easily replicated by other terrorist groups and entities. It is a shame that the United States did not allow the Security Council to issue a simple press statement in condemnation of this mass terror. And it has prevented the same Council from taking any meaningful action to stop the genocide in Gaza.

The Zionist regime's aggression against Lebanon cannot not be isolated from the overall situation in the region. For this terrorist regime, international humanitarian law and the principle of human dignity mean nothing. From the long decade of occupation of Palestinian territories to its ongoing genocidal war against people in Gaza to its unprovoked aggression against Syria and Lebanon and its terrorist attack on Iran's diplomatic mission and the assassination of the political leader of Hamas in Tehran — those all underscore Israel's real character as a genuine terrorist entity that does not value peace and human rights.

The Israeli regime has no intention of pursuing peace or agreeing to a ceasefire. Its real objective is to drag the entire region into a full-scale war. Unfortunately, the unwavering support of the United States and the United Kingdom has given Israel carte blanche to engage in all sorts of sinister behaviour.

The ongoing aggression against Lebanon is fuelled by the failure of the international community and the Security Council, in particular, to hold Israel accountable for war crimes and genocide in Gaza. The failure of the United States to rein in the regime, coupled with the ongoing supply of military equipment and political backing, has emboldened Israel to commit these heinous acts with impunity.

We all need to work together to disallow the normalization of evil and atrocities. The Security Council should be urged by all States to live up to its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. The criminal and corrupt leadership of the Zionist regime must understand that its actions will not go unanswered.

The region stands on the brink of a broader conflict due to the regime's aggression and heinous crimes against nations of the region. Now more than ever, Israel has become a serious threat to international peace and security. This regime does not deserve membership in the United Nations. Its representative to the United Nations shamelessly shreds the United Nations Charter before the eyes of the international community. The only way to prevent further escalation is clear: Israel must immediately cease its war on Gaza, and its attacks on Lebanon must stop. Let me be clear — without a ceasefire in Gaza, there can be no guarantee of peace in the region.

The international community cannot afford to remain silent. We call on the Council to respond with urgency and determination. The Security Council, which bears legal responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, must shoulder its responsibility and respond decisively to Israel's aggressive and terrorist actions in Lebanon. If that does not happen, the region risks being dragged into a full-scale conflict.

The Israeli regime's supporters and enablers, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, have a legal and moral responsibility to act before it is too late. The atrocity crimes and genocide committed by the occupying apartheid regime must not go unpunished, as impunity has been emboldening the regime to persist in its patterns of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The world is watching, and history will judge the Council by the actions it takes or fails to take today.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelatty (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): What we are witnessing in Lebanon today is full-blown aggression and a blatant violation of the sovereignty of a founding member of the United Nations. It is an aggression that has killed hundreds, injured thousands and caused the forced displacement of tens of thousands of Lebanese citizens, in complete disregard for the Charter of the United Nations and in violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

The tragedy that Lebanon is experiencing today, which we are meeting today to end, did not happen in a vacuum. It is the inevitable result of the shameful inability of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to put an end to the war that has been raging for a whole year in the Gaza Strip.

We in Egypt have repeatedly warned that the continuation of the war in the Gaza Strip would spill over to other regional areas and threaten international peace and security throughout the entire Middle East. We say very honestly that what we have been witnessing over the past year in Gaza, and now in Lebanon, is likely to expand to other areas in the region if the international community does not shoulder its responsibility to put an end to the killing and destruction machine — as partial solutions and palliative policies are ineffective.

It is no longer acceptable to move ahead without the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which must be fully implemented in a non-selective manner, with no discrimination among the parties addressed in the resolution. There must be an immediate and unconditional halt to the continued violation of the sovereignty of Lebanese territories and airspace.

However, the return of complete stability to the Middle East is primarily dependent on the full and immediate implementation of resolution 2735 (2024) and on bringing an end to the war of aggression on the Gaza Strip. That is the fundamental conflict that has caused all the other tensions that we are currently witnessing in the entire region. Without putting a stop to the bloodbath in Gaza that has lasted for over a year, we can only continue to employ palliative policies and temporary truces that collapse very quickly.

Today the Middle East is at a critical crossroads and is facing a real threat. We either fully stop all forms of aggression and hostilities in all arenas or we face further collapse and a rapid expansion of the circle of conflict in a region that can no longer tolerate more destruction. That is our responsibility, and I hope that

the Security Council meeting today will be able to take it on so that we can put an end to the unjustifiable and unacceptable catastrophe that Lebanon is experiencing.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): A few days ago (see S/PV.9730), the Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the Israeli terrorist cyberattack against the Lebanese people, which resulted in the martyrdom of dozens of civilians and wounded thousands more with serious injuries. The occupation entity turned civilian devices into tools of collective killing. The failure of the Council to take any action to deter Israel has encouraged it to escalate its aggression against brotherly Lebanon. For the past few days, Israel has continued its brutal and violent bombardment, which has not spared people, places, homes, hospitals or schools and has resulted in the martyrdom of hundreds of civilians. More than 500 martyrs were claimed in a single day, including women, children, media correspondents and humanitarian workers, in addition to the mass displacement of people.

The Israeli aggression against fraternal Lebanon serves to underscore the Israeli entity's contempt for the Charter of the United Nations and international law and its insistence on expanding the war of genocide that it is waging against the Palestinian people to include Lebanese territories, as if the blood of more than 42,000 innocent Palestinians and more than a 100,000 wounded were not enough to quench the thirst of the war criminals in Israel for blood, killing, destruction and chaos.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns, in the strongest terms, the brutal, heinous Israeli aggression against fraternal Lebanon. We reiterate our full solidarity with the Lebanese people and are fully ready to provide all the necessary support and assistance to our Lebanese brothers in all sectors needed.

Syria stresses that the Security Council must take immediate and urgent action now, not tomorrow, to condemn the multifaceted Israeli aggression, stop the killing and destruction machinery and prevent Israel from igniting an all-out war in the region by expanding its aggression. We and other countries had repeatedly warned about that and about the possibility of serious repercussions for peace and security in the Middle East and the world.

The Israeli war of aggression against the Palestinian people, which has lasted for nearly a year, has also been accompanied by systematic and repeated attacks against Syria. The Israeli occupation forces have carried out rocket strikes on many areas in Syria, resulting in many civilians killed and many others wounded. It has also damaged the infrastructure, critical civilian facilities, residential buildings and even diplomatic premises. Syria, along with the majority of United Nations Member States, has called for an end to that aggression and the ongoing violations against the sovereignty of Syrian territory, including its continued occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan since 1967.

The Syrian Arab Republic considers that the ongoing brutal and barbaric aggression by the Israeli occupation entity against the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese would not have happened without the unlimited and multifaceted support of the United States to that entity, including impunity, which makes the United States complicit in that aggression.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Security Council to overcome its paralysis and take immediate action to implement resolutions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), and stresses that the region can enjoy peace and stability only if the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon is brought to an end.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles.

Mr. Borrell Fontelles (*spoke in French*): We are talking about a region in the world in which the worst is generally certain.

(*spoke in English*)

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the Lebanese people, who have clearly for a long time been hostages in a conflict that they do not deserve and that is far beyond them. We all know the tragic situation of the recent months. Representatives have been explaining it, and I will not repeat it. Sixty thousand Israeli inhabitants have been forced to leave their homes since October. Now 200,000 Lebanese are on the road, having been forced to flee the fighting, while their houses have been systematically destroyed. They will not have anywhere to go back to.

I am not going to play the game of blaming one party more than the other. However, I know three things.

First, escalation will not solve anything, because war does not solve anything.

Secondly, what is happening in southern Lebanon cannot be separated from what is happening in Gaza; one thing influences the other. But at the same time, we have to do everything to ensure that southern Lebanon avoids becoming a new Gaza. And it is becoming a new Gaza, as the Secretary-General said in the General Assembly and as many representatives have said. When the communications devices exploded, they were targeted in their purpose but indiscriminate in their consequences. They were a terrifying nightmare for the Lebanese people.

Thirdly, there is a legal basis for settling the Israeli-Lebanese conflict, and that basis, as Council members know, is the famous resolution 1701 (2006). However, the little problem is that the resolution was adopted almost 20 years ago, and it has not been implemented.

What we can do in the face of this escalation, as this death procession stretches under the door and while the sounds of guns are at our back? I heard the guns when I visited UNICEF headquarters some days ago. And I am asking this question to the Security Council. Excuse me, but sometimes I wonder if it is not better for the Council to talk about insecurity. The Council registers cries, recriminations and grievances without solving them, and when it agrees on something, it is unable to implement it.

What a tragedy. Now it is up to all of us to do something to promote a ceasefire along the Blue Line, so that the instinct for life can take precedence over the instinct for death, so that the terrible fatalisms today, in the face of so much horror, can be overcome.

Before coming here, I had the opportunity to speak with the families of Israeli hostages still held by Hamas, for almost one year now. As such, I know how this tragic situation is affecting everyone — Palestinians, Israelis and now, Lebanese. And some days ago, I was at the Rafah border — which is closed, by the way — listening once again to the cannons, reflecting on how the tragic situation in Gaza stirs our conscience.

Let us therefore try to call unanimously for the suspension of hostilities along the Blue Line and the implementation of the landmark resolution 1701 (2006). What else can we do? At least let us agree on that and try to enforce its implementation. Let us call for restraint in order to avoid the trap of fatality, which would have us believe that there is nothing to be done. Indeed, something must be done. That is the only thing I can do. But naming things is essential. One has to name things because refusing to do so only adds to the world's tragedy.

The meeting rose at 8.15 p.m.