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Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Golob/Ms. Fajon	(Slovenia)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Attaf
	China	Mr. Wang Yi
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mr. Todd
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Gonçalves
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sierra Leone	Mr. George
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Lord Collins
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Prime Ministers, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matters 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, Jordan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite 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, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: Almost one year has passed since the horrific acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023. I repeat my utter condemnation of those attacks and of the taking of hostages. Nothing can justify such acts. This week, I held two more in a series of meetings with the families of hostages. I again call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Since 7 October 2023, relentless Israeli bombardment and hostilities have killed tens of

thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, including many women and children. Countless others have been injured, maimed and traumatized for life. The speed and scale of the killing and destruction in Gaza are unlike anything in my years as Secretary-General. Nothing can also justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Over the past year, virtually the entire population of Gaza has been displaced — many of them several times — with nowhere safe to go. Half of the homeless are children. All are surviving in appalling conditions with very limited access to food, water, sanitation, shelter and health care. All are in constant fear for their lives.

In the face of that destruction, international humanitarian law is in tatters. And let us be clear: violations by one side cannot be used to justify violations by the other. The humanitarian system is hanging by a thread. Some 226 of our own colleagues have been killed, many with their families. I call for investigations and accountability for those killings.

At the same time, violence continues in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Some 700 Palestinians and 14 Israelis have been killed since 7 October — the highest number on both sides in more than two decades. The construction of new settlements, landgrabs, demolitions and settler violence all continue. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice found that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and that Israel has an obligation to end it as rapidly as possible. The General Assembly demanded that Israel should comply.

Meanwhile, the Israeli authorities continue to limit and prevent the international media from reporting from the occupied Palestinian territory. International media outlets are the eyes and ears of the world. Journalists must be able to do their jobs everywhere.

Shockwaves radiating from the unprecedented death and destruction in Gaza now threaten to push the entire region into the abyss — a full-scale conflagration with unimaginable consequences. Monday was the bloodiest day in Lebanon since 2006. Today Israel Defense Forces struck civilian buildings in Beirut, saying they had targeted Hizbullah's main headquarters, located underneath. War in Lebanon could lead to further escalation involving outside Powers.

I fully support the proposal for a temporary ceasefire, allowing for the delivery of humanitarian

relief and paving the way for the resumption of serious negotiations for a durable peace across the Blue Line. We need that ceasefire now. We cannot afford endless negotiations, as we have had on Gaza. We must avoid a regional war at all costs. Gaza remains the epicentre of the violence, and Gaza is key to ending it.

Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. But our colleagues continue to do their utmost to fulfil their humanitarian mission. The recent polio vaccination campaign shows what humanitarian agencies can do when they are allowed to carry out their vital work. But crossing points into Gaza remain restricted or inaccessible. Roads are damaged and littered with unexploded ordnance. Essential items, including shelter kits and protective equipment, are prohibited, and thus far this month, almost half of the coordinated humanitarian movements in Gaza were denied access or otherwise impeded by the Israeli authorities. Eighty-seven per cent of movements between the north and the south were denied or impeded. Instead of scaling up humanitarian operations, we see a scaling up of attacks and harassment against humanitarian personnel.

On 28 August, Israeli forces opened fire on a clearly marked World Food Programme armoured vehicle that was part of a convoy that had been coordinated with the Israeli military authorities. Ten bullets hit the windows of the vehicle. On 9 September, a United Nations convoy that had been fully coordinated with Israeli forces was stopped at Al-Rashid checkpoint on its way to support the polio vaccination campaign in northern Gaza. Soldiers pointed their weapons directly at the convoy personnel. The clearly marked United Nations vehicles were encircled by Israeli forces, and live shots were fired. The convoy was approached by two Israeli tanks and a bulldozer. The rear tank rammed the United Nations vehicles from the back, compacting the convoy with 12 humanitarian workers inside. The bulldozer dropped debris on the first vehicle, while soldiers threatened the United Nations and non-governmental organization personnel inside.

Actions like this create significant risks to United Nations and other humanitarian personnel. Attacks on humanitarians are an unacceptable assault on the values of the United Nations and must stop. Meanwhile, the indispensable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East cannot be undermined by attacks against its people and mandate or by administrative obstacles. I urge the

Israeli authorities to do everything in their power to end attacks on United Nations personnel and property, to stop spreading disinformation against United Nations officials and entities, and to speed up the approval of visas and procurement requests. All parties must abide by their obligations to protect humanitarian personnel and ensure that civilian sites are not used for military purposes.

The United Nations will continue to support all efforts towards sustainable peace, starting with an end to the violence. The death spiral must end — for Gaza, for the people of Palestine and Israel, for the region and for the world. International humanitarian law must be respected. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. Aid must flow freely and safely. And there must finally be accountability. The key to peace in the region is a political solution. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally, and the international community must mobilize for an immediate ceasefire and the beginning of an irreversible process towards the end of the occupation and the creation of a Palestinian State.

I urge the Council to unite in support of an immediate ceasefire leading to a viable two-State solution. That is the only way to end this cycle of tragedy.

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

I now give the floor to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mustafa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Slovenia on your presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank you for convening this important ministerial meeting on the Palestinian question. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your capable leadership of the Security Council during your presidency, especially at this critical time. We have witnessed the honourable positions taken by Slovenia in standing with international law and the rights that it guarantees, and we convey to Slovenia our full respect and commendation.

I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his wise leadership of our Organization, which is the target of unprecedented attacks and

defamation campaigns by Israel. We reiterate our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his courage and determination to maintain the credibility of this Organization and the effectiveness of its work and to continue to provide aid and relief and mobilize support to alleviate the suffering of our Palestinian people. He is doing so despite the burden and responsibility resulting from this task, despite the loss of his colleagues in the Gaza Strip, who are our brothers and sisters, and despite Israel's attacks on the United Nations and its headquarters, shelters and employees, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We salute him and convey to him our full respect and support.

An entire year has passed since the beginning of the Israeli aggression against our people in the besieged and destroyed Gaza Strip. It has been 360 days and nights of terror, killing, displacement, destruction, disease, pain, hunger, oppression, despair, sorrow, need, deprivation and, above all, people stripped of their humanity and dignity. It has been a year of intransigence by the Israeli Government and a year of inhumane double standards on the part of the Council, leaving our children and our women, our elderly and our men, our doctors and our journalists, our teachers and our staff without protection or assistance, as if they were not human beings.

We came to the United Nations and felt the great solidarity with our people and their just cause, but as we leave the United Nations, the Israeli massacres have not yet stopped, and the Security Council has yet to deter the Israeli aggression or to adopt measures that would rein in the Israeli Government, which regards war and aggression as a political strategy to stay in power. After completely destroying all of Gaza, invading the cities of the West Bank and brutalizing our defenceless Palestinian people, today we see the Israeli Government opening fire on the brotherly Lebanese people and violating the sovereignty of Lebanon, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It behaves as a rogue State because it is convinced that it is a State above the law and that it has the right to do what others do not. How can Israel refrain from repeating its spectacle of aggression in Lebanon while it is not being punished for its crimes in Palestine or forced to comply with the demands for a ceasefire in Gaza, stop its policy of aggression and deter settler terror in the West Bank, including Jerusalem?

Israel is continuing with its aggressive plan to drag the entire region into open warfare. Will the Security Council continue its traditional stance of condemnation and demands, expecting Israel to comply? When will members activate their tools here in the Security Council that compel Israel to comply in order to maintain and preserve international peace and security? How long will Chapter VII be forbidden for Israel? Are members waiting for a bigger disaster? Are they waiting for a bigger war?

We condemn the targeting of all civilians, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality or religion. There is no justification for targeting or harming civilians.

Perhaps what we can conclude with regard to the Palestinian question this week at the United Nations is that leaders of the world from different countries believe that it is illogical and even insane to continue with the same approach that we used in the past to face the enormous challenges we are facing today, which prevent us from achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. That also means that it is not possible to merely express and join the consistent international position on the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question and then leave things as they are until all the parties are ready to negotiate in favour of a just, peaceful and comprehensive solution. We cannot ignore the fact that there is a party that does not want to negotiate, even though that party has all the time to do so and is imposing illegal facts on the ground, according to its internal and colonial political agenda, that are contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, the other party is racing against time and with every passing day is losing what is most precious and valuable for which there is no compensation and which cannot be recovered. We can no longer believe that managing the conflict, instead of ending it, is a viable strategy that will lead to security and stability.

The consistent international positions on the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question are necessary and very important positions that we have collectively worked on for decades so that they become internationally agreed terms of reference based on international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy. However, today we are facing great challenges and are at a historical juncture, and those positions alone are no longer sufficient. It has become urgent to redouble efforts to take practical measures to make ending the occupation and realizing the two-

State solution, along the borders of 1967, a reality on the ground that cannot be revoked or retracted. It cannot remain merely an international political or security vision.

With every new Palestinian generation, Israel, the illegal occupation authority, deliberately tries to destroy Palestine. We rebuild it, but Israel destroys it again. We rebuild it again, and it is destroyed again. We have experienced great hardships and many tragedies, and our people have managed to lift themselves up after each tragedy, healing their wounds, bearing their pain, holding on to their hope and determined to live. Our people deserve the Council's support, solidarity, help and assistance. Every time, the Palestinian building and development machine is met with the Israeli demolition and destruction machine. We build and Israel destroys. We build schools and raise human beings, and Israel demolishes schools and executes human beings.

We want to rebuild Palestine in a way that guarantees that it will not be destroyed again, that our people will not be displaced once again and not stand at the doors of the Security Council grieving and crying for help once again. We want to rebuild Palestine with the certainty that its path will lead it forward towards prosperity, where its people can live in dignity in a sovereign State among States and as a free nation among nations.

We want to be free from the illegal Israeli occupation without delay, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem*. We want our free and sovereign independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We want our people to live on their own land, enjoying freedom and dignity, guaranteed by their legitimate right to self-determination, without delay.

We have all the necessary ingredients, namely, history, heritage, civilization, experience, capability and will, and most importantly, we have the resilient and capable Palestinians, who are our inexhaustible human resources.

I would like to continue in English so that I can clarify some thoughts.

(spoke in English)

We came here with a simple message: there must be no complicity and no complacency, no bias and

no double standards, no excuses and no self-inflicted powerlessness. We call for the rule of international law for the benefit of all. No country should be above the law. No people should be denied the protection of the law. There must be no weapons to kill us, no trade with settlements and their associated regime to rob our land and resources. Israel must be held accountable rather than shielded while it continues committing its crimes. Israel has a plan — it is not hiding it — to get rid of the Palestinian people and grab their land.

We need an international plan with the necessary measures to change the reality on the ground. What we are calling for is clear.

First, the State of Palestine must be recognized and its membership to the United Nations must be supported.

Secondly, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 endorsing it must be implemented and Member States must demand an end to the unlawful Israeli presence in the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territory within 12 months.

Thirdly, Member States should join the global alliance unveiled yesterday to end the occupation and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine and implement the two-State solution.

Fourthly, we call on Member States to support our national plan Build Palestine, including to build our economy and consolidate our institutions.

If impunity ends, the Israeli occupation will end. If the Israeli occupation ends, we will achieve shared peace and security. A free Palestine is the sole key that can unlock a peaceful future for our region and unleash its potential. Everything else has been tried and failed. And the cost of that failure is measured in human lives, all too often in Palestinian lives. A different future is possible. It starts with the decisions each State will make today.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, we cannot overlook Hizbullah's recent actions. Since 8 October 2023, Hizbullah has launched over 9,000 rockets, more than 1000 anti-tank missiles and hundreds of explosive uncrewed aerial vehicles at the Israeli civilians. While we are interested in a diplomatic solution, we will take all necessary measures to ensure the safe return of the

70,000 internal refugees to their homes. It is time to hold Iran and its proxy accountable and take decisive action.

This is now our fifth meeting in the span of just 12 days. How long will we repeat these debates? It is time for the Security Council to break free from the gridlock and regain a semblance of productivity.

We sit here today just 10 days from the one-year commemoration of the 7 October 2023 massacre, a day forever etched in the hearts of every Israeli. More than 1,200 innocent lives were brutally taken in a single day. People were torn from their homes, bound and burned alive in their final moments. More than 100 hostages remain in Hamas's grasp, enduring unimaginable cruelty. Recently the bodies were found of six hostages who had been brutally murdered just before they could be rescued. The conditions they had endured — starvation, suffocation and deprivation — are a testimony to Hamas's cruelty. That must be a wake-up call to the international community. It must condemn Hamas and demand the immediate release of all hostages.

That moment was the largest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. It was a defining moment, not just for us, our leaders and our people, but for the Palestinian people and its leadership. At that moment, on 7 October, they stood at a crossroads and were faced with a choice — to stand with humanity and peace or to align themselves with barbarism and terror. In that crucial moment after we got the news of the attack, the Palestinian Authority (PA) failed, exposing its lack of will, desire and ability to be a true partner for peace. That failure has deepened doubt among many Israelis about the possibility of a peaceful future.

Prime Minister Mustafa has left, but I plan to ask him how he can stay silent. How can he, as a supposed representative of his people, remain speechless in the face of such barbarity? Why does he refuse to condemn Hamas and its atrocities? I listened very carefully to what he said. Not once did he mention Hamas. Yesterday I listened to President Abbas in the General Assembly. He spoke for half an hour. Not once did he mention Hamas.

The Palestinian Authority was presented with a clear opportunity to distinguish itself from Hamas and its brutality. But once again it wasted it. It could have presented itself to the world as a moderate, reasonable body seeking a peaceful future. However, the Palestinian Authority has no interest in that future. The words of the late Abba Eban, who was the Israeli

Permanent Representative here many years ago, still ring true. He said, "The Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Instead of standing for peace, the PA uses international diplomacy to shield Hamas. We saw it in the General Assembly. We see it here every day. Instead of confronting Hamas, the PA has protected it. And, unfortunately, its failure runs even deeper. Not only has it failed to condemn terror, but it has encouraged it through words and policy. Through the vile policy of pay-to-slay, the PA has turned the murder of innocents into a profitable enterprise. Terrorists are rewarded and their families compensated. The PA has transformed innocent Israeli blood into a form of sick currency. That is not just a betrayal of Israelis. It is a betrayal of the Palestinian people, whose future is being sold off for violence.

I want to ask the Minister and Prime Minister a question. His Government's collaboration in this violence has prolonged the conflict that it claims to want to resolve. It shelters terrorists rather than condemning them. We speak about Gaza and about the future of Gaza. How does it expect to be part of a functioning and cooperative future for Gaza when it cannot even maintain control over the areas it governs now? Let us look at the cities in Judea and Samaria such as Jenin and Tulkarm, which are just short rides from Ramallah, the centre of the Palestinian Authority. The Council knows as well as I do that Mr. Mustafa, Mr. Abbas and maybe Mr. Mansour cannot enter those areas. Not any more. They cannot go to Jenin or Tulkarm. Their security forces refuse to confront the radical armed terrorists who are quickly seizing control. They have given over those cities and many more to the ruling hands of terrorist monsters. How can they expect to govern Gaza when they have allowed terrorist strongholds to flourish in their backyard? The international community must ask itself how the PA can possibly be trusted with Gaza's future.

Let me be clear. Israel will not stand by as terror spreads. There will be no safe haven for terrorists in Judea and Samaria or Gaza. The Israel Defense Forces are operating wherever necessary, focusing on areas such as northern Samaria from which the terrorists launch many of their attacks. Everyone here should understand that those operations would not be necessary if the Palestinian Authority met its obligations. It is both unwilling to do that and incapable of it. Instead of rooting out terrorism, it allows it to fester, leaving Israel no choice but to act. That is what we do. We have

a mission to eliminate terror wherever it arises — in Beirut, in Jenin, in Gaza. We will not stop until our citizens are safe.

While Israel is fighting a war it did not seek, it is making every effort to protect Gaza's civilian population despite relentless attacks. We have ensured that humanitarian aid continues to flow. Well over 1 million tons of aid have entered the Strip via more than 50,000 trucks. Of the more than 1 million tons of aid, more than 800,000 tons have been food. We stand ready to continue to facilitate the entry of aid and we will continue to go above and beyond our international obligations even as Hamas continues to embed itself among civilians. Those are not the actions of a nation seeking destruction, as the Palestinian Authority and its allies would have Council members believe — and they are going to hear many ministers today. They are the actions of a nation that values life and is fighting an enemy that worships death above all else. Yet the PA remains silent about those facts, choosing instead to distort reality to further its political agenda.

It is time for the international community to regain its moral clarity. What we are seeing all over the world is a clear divide between those who seek peace and those who thrive on chaos and violence. We should not waver. We should not hesitate. There is a distinction between good and evil. In all of their countries Council members are facing radical forces, criminals and extremists, while their law-abiding citizens simply want to live in peace. The question we must ask ourselves today is this. Which path is the Palestinian Authority choosing? It has to decide. Does it want to follow Hamas or be something else? It must be forced to condemn terrorism, renounce Hamas and change the radical positions that fuel the cycle of violence. It must realize that there is no future in terrorism and that peace requires courage, not weakness.

But whether or not the international community finds the strength to act, Israel will not waver. We will continue to defend our people, protect our borders and uphold the values of peace and justice. Our resolve is unbreakable. Our mission is clear and we will prevail.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

I want to start by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing and acknowledging the many high-level participants in this meeting.

After this week's debate on leadership for peace (see S/PV.9732), I am convinced that making a daily choice in favour of peace is also a sign of courage. To ensure peace in the Middle East, we must take tangible and bold steps to protect the possibility of a two-State solution. I am not talking about an empty slogan. We need courage from leaders in the region and from the Council to change the trajectory we are facing. There are facts on the ground that are making the prospects for a two-State solution almost non-existent.

First, I agree, we can no longer stand idle — every single leader must contribute. It has been almost a year of war in Gaza, a year of hostages kept in tunnels, a year that has brought about suffering, killing and destruction. And that is in addition to decades of the suffering, killing and destruction of the entire occupied Palestinian territory. Many of us around the table have stepped up our efforts to ensure humanitarian assistance and contributions to different organizations, providing glimpses of humanity to the people of Gaza, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Humanitarian efforts alone are not enough. We need concrete political signs. Slovenia recognized the State of Palestine in June, and I call on others to do the same. The recognition of Palestine is an extremely important political sign and a message of encouragement for the Palestinians in their struggle for statehood. We must support initiatives empowering the Palestinian Authority to take control over the entire Palestinian State and to regain the trust of the Palestinian people.

Secondly, we must work together. The Council has adopted numerous resolutions on this conflict, including four on this war. The International Court of Justice has been clear in its provisional measures and its most recent advisory opinion: the occupation must end, and practices and policies such as illegal settlements, settler violence and human rights violations must end. The Council must be united and adamantly clear in its call for the immediate implementation of its resolutions and the decisions of the International Court of Justice. There should be no double standards or selectivity. If only one of us is not protected by international law, none of us can rely on it any longer.

Thirdly, we must act to prevent peace in the region from slipping away. We can no longer express our concern about the potential regional spillover. However, the spiral of violence has gradually become more complex. This week, and in the past few days,

we have seen an enormous escalation in Lebanon. The attacks must cease. We call for restraint from all actors and respect for international law. The Council must clearly respond to that threat to international peace and security. We cannot let another Gaza happen. Lebanon is a further sign that we must urgently deliver on the ceasefire deal.

Fourthly, we must not forget about the West Bank and East Jerusalem. As the world focuses on Gaza, the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has reached a boiling point. Israel's dehumanization of Palestinians has reached new heights. The number of Palestinian children in the West Bank alone who have been killed by Israeli forces has nearly tripled in a year. The death toll in the West Bank since 7 October 2023 is the highest it has been in the past 15 years. There has been a dramatic increase in the intensity of settlement expansion, which involves numerous human rights violations.

Standing for peace cannot be in the form of hatred, escalation, provocation, occupation or terrorism. Standing for peace is through the normalization of ties, negotiation in good faith, equality and respect for international law. Only a just solution of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, can turn a new page for the security and prosperity of the region. And what is the Council doing? It is definitely not doing enough. I have therefore instructed our ambassador to the United Nations to start consultations on a possible new humanitarian draft resolution regarding Palestine.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening of a high-level meeting on the Middle East initiated by Arab countries. Under the current circumstances, this meeting is highly relevant and necessary. I thank Prime Minister Golob for chairing today's meeting. We all listened carefully to the briefing of the Secretary-General and commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations to mediate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and promote peace in the Middle East.

This round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict has lasted more than 300 days. The humanitarian crisis is unprecedented, and the tragedies of war are horrific. The people in Gaza are suffering under bombardment and blockade and from hunger and disease. More than 40,000 civilians have lost their lives, and millions are forcefully displaced. Women and children are the first to suffer. Meanwhile, from Lebanon to Syria, from Yemen to Iran, spillovers of the crisis continue to spread. Regional hotspots are intertwined, the intensity is spiralling upward and the situation in the Middle East is worrisome. When the Middle East is unstable, the world is insecure. Faced with the current difficulties and challenges, the international community cannot just look on and the Security Council cannot sit idly by. China proposes four points.

First, the war and conflict must not continue. A comprehensive ceasefire must be achieved immediately. One more day of war means more civilian casualties and broken families. One more region where conflict spreads means more spillovers of crises and hatred. We must act with the greatest sense of urgency to promote a lasting ceasefire and the comprehensive withdrawal of troops in Gaza. The parties to the conflict must fully implement the resolutions of the Security Council and make the decision to cease fire and must not make any adventurous moves that aggravate the tensions. Countries with important influence over the parties concerned should also take a sincere and responsible approach and play a more constructive role in promoting a ceasefire and effectively managing and preventing the spillover of the crisis. The Lebanese-Israeli situation is worrisome. The sovereignty of Lebanon should be upheld, and the safety of the people of Lebanon should be protected. China opposes all moves to abuse force and aggravate tensions in the region. We condemn all actions that harm innocent civilians. We urge the relevant parties to take immediate action to prevent the situation from escalating further and to avoid more casualties.

Secondly, we must not deviate from letting the Palestinian people govern Palestine and must work together for post-war governance. Gaza used to be where diverse civilizations met, but today it is engulfed in fighting, with ruins everywhere, a scene of total devastation. We must adhere to the principles of Palestinians governing Palestine in a Palestinian-led and Palestinian-owned process and take a coordinated approach to the post-war governance of Gaza. We

should encourage all factions of Palestine to implement the Beijing Declaration on ending division and strengthening Palestinian national unity, support the Palestinian National Authority in boosting its authority and governance capacity and achieving effective jurisdiction over all territories of Palestine, and support the conduct of specific governance affairs, with the Palestinian people at the centre. China calls for a meeting on post-war reconstruction to be held and calls on the international community, the countries in the region and regional organizations to take an active part.

Thirdly, justice must not be absent. We must revive the two-State solution as soon as possible. Last week, the emergency special session of the General Assembly adopted by an overwhelming majority the first resolution introduced by Palestine (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24), demanding implementation of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the end of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel as soon as possible. That is of historic significance. The United Nations resolution should not just be a blank sheet of paper, and the dream of the Palestinian people to build their own country or State cannot be negated over and over again. China urges the relevant parties to immediate and comprehensively implement the resolution and to duly fulfil their international obligations. The Security Council should support Palestine in becoming a full member of the United Nations and renew efforts to achieve the two-State solution. China supports holding a larger, more authoritative and more effective international peace conference with a view to implementing a timetable and road map for a two-State solution in order to finally achieve the peaceful coexistence of the two countries of Palestine and Israel and harmony between the two peoples of Arabs and Jews.

Fourthly, there must be international support. We should uphold the peace and stability of the Middle East, which used to be a highlight of civilization. It should not become a low point of peace today. The international community should support the will of Middle East countries. It should support them in using their wisdom to settle hotspot issues in the region. Under the premise of mutual respect, fairness and justice, we should work to create a security architecture that fits the history and reality of the Middle East and accommodates the legitimate concerns of all parties. We should support the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region in effectively fulfilling their

mandate to promote de-escalation and peace and development. The international community should step up humanitarian assistance and ensure the effective access of humanitarian supplies. It should support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assume its important role. Countries yet to resume funding for UNRWA should do so as soon as possible. We should help countries in the Middle East, especially those affected by the conflict, to achieve sustainable development and cement the foundation for lasting peace. We should oppose external pressure and interference and help the Middle East do away with the shadows of conflict and confrontation.

China is a strategic partner of the Middle East countries. We have always been a builder of peace, a promoter of stability and a contributor to development in the Middle East. China never interferes in the internal affairs of Middle East countries, never draws spheres of influence in the region and never uses hotspot issues to seek selfish geopolitical gains. Instead, our actions seek to restore peace and stability in the Middle East in order to help the countries achieve stability and prosperity and to deliver a happy life to the people there. War is a test of human conscience and justice, and peace requires the wisdom and determination of all countries. China stands ready to work with Arab and Muslim countries and all other peace-loving countries that advocate justice to bring about an early ceasefire, prevent spillover of the conflict, implement a two-State solution and promote peace in the Middle East.

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

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind response to our request to hold this meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his accurate and expressive briefing on the dossier under consideration today.

My delegation took the initiative to request holding this meeting today to shed light once again on the responsibility borne by the Security Council with regard to the continuous genocide witnessed in Gaza for almost a year, as well as what is currently happening in the Middle East — a dangerous Israeli escalation that portends an all-out regional war that could undermine the security and stability of everyone.

The Council bears a legal, political, moral and human responsibility in that regard. It is a responsibility in the face of the heinous Israeli crimes committed against the Palestinians and other peoples and countries of the region. It is also an established responsibility of our Council, and there is no justification under any circumstances to not uphold it. We cannot ignore that responsibility under any pretext. Finally, it is also a steadfast responsibility that the Council must shoulder and must never be abandoned despite the failure of this central organ, which has been paralysed and cannot even bring justice to the Palestinian people or ensure their rights.

Our Council has met dozens of times since the start of this horrific Israeli aggression against Gaza. Following long deliberations and stalled negotiations, such meetings adopted only two resolutions — resolutions 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024) — calling for a ceasefire in this devastated Palestinian territory. Those two resolutions were disregarded by the colonizing Israeli occupation, which never respected them or appreciated them. On the contrary, the occupation continued its heinous crimes, gross violations and inhumane practices, without any firm deterrence, clear condemnation or even just the blame or criticism of the Council.

Here we are today, taking stock of the catastrophic repercussions resulting from granting the Israeli occupation a free hand and being lenient with its criminal practices. We have simply turned a blind eye to its expansionist, destructive and subversive schemes. At the beginning, we were just observing the developments of genocide within Gaza. Now, however, we see the expansion of the war to the West Bank, in addition to an Israeli escalation in the entire region, from Yemen to Syria to Iran and reaching Lebanon, where the crimes of the occupation have even escalated in stages. Indeed, the crimes committed in Gaza for a year, and recently in Lebanon, cannot be described diplomatically, politically or legally. Those crimes are so barbaric as to be uncivilized, immoral and inhumane.

The Security Council has moved heaven and Earth in previous situations that do not even constitute a drop in the ocean of Israeli violations of all international norms and conventions. Our Council has resorted to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to impose bans and sanctions in situations that were not as difficult or dangerous as that of Gaza, Lebanon and the Palestinian neighbourhood. Our Council has actually

convinced different international judicial bodies to take action on situations that are not even close to the barbaric scenes we have been witnessing due to the crimes of the Israeli occupation.

As we review past Council experiences and the way that the Council has reacted when its binding resolutions were not respected, we need to ask certain questions. How long will the Israeli settler occupation enjoy impunity, with no accountability or punishment? Why is there a system that applies only to the Israeli occupation? How long will the occupiers remain free to do what they want while committing crimes, flouting international legitimacy and undermining the security and stability of the region without any accountability for their actions and practices? How long will the occupation continue its tyranny and despotism, as if it rules the destiny and future of Palestinians — even the destiny and future of the entire region — without an end being made to such arrogance?

We firmly and sincerely believe that maintaining the status quo will lead to a worse situation. It will encourage and further establish the hegemony of the occupier, perpetuating the occupation and expanding it by force, paving the way for an Israeli project that will undoubtedly push the Palestinians and all the countries of the region towards a fate that is not difficult to predict, because we know the catastrophic repercussions that will result.

The dangerous developments that we have witnessed leave no room for procrastination or inaction on the part of the Council. It has to shoulder its responsibility. The Palestinians, the Lebanese and all the peoples and countries of the region are not calling for the impossible. They are merely asking the Council to act and to put an end to the killing, torture and destruction that they have been enduring. They are simply calling for it to act and ensure respect for its binding resolutions. They are only asking it to act and prioritize the rules, regulations and norms of international law that we must all equally respect and comply with.

We strongly believe that the Israeli occupation's persistent disregard for the Palestinian question will only make it the most just cause on Earth. It will only leave the Palestinian people more adamant and more determined than ever to regain their stolen national rights. It will only strengthen the faith of the international community and its certainty of the rightness and necessity of establishing an independent

and sovereign Palestinian State as a just, lasting and final solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict — an imperative and indispensable condition for restoring security and stability in the entire Middle East.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guyana.

Mr. Todd (Guyana): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and I would like to express my thanks to the delegation of Algeria for initiating the discussion on the ongoing situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In a few days it will be one year since the Hamas attack on Israel and the brutal war of retaliation on Gaza. That is another year added to the many decades of violence that we have seen since 1948. Recently, however, there have been some extremely worrisome dynamics. I will highlight three of them so that we can take cognizance of what they mean for the prospects of achieving a permanent solution, the rule of international law and the legitimacy of the United Nations, including the Council.

First, there is the fact that the humanitarian response is being systematically compromised. It is characterized by reduced access into Gaza, restrictions on the entry of life-saving necessities, non-functioning deconfliction mechanisms, targeted attacks on humanitarian personnel, including those of the United Nations, and targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals.

Secondly, there is the attempt to control the narrative of the war, deliberately putting out false and misleading information about what is happening in Gaza or attempting to muzzle those who are vocal about the atrocities that are taking place. We have been told, for example, that there are no challenges regarding the supply of humanitarian assistance to Gaza except the inability of the United Nations to handle the flood of aid. We have also seen journalists killed, even in instances where they were wearing clearly marked press vests. Just this weekend we saw the forceful closure of one media outfit in the West Bank. The misinformation campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its unproven accusations cost the Agency dearly at the beginning of this year. Although a substantial amount of funding has been restored, significant voluntary

contributions are still being withheld. The move by the Israeli Knesset to designate the Agency as a terrorist organization is another dangerous element of the misinformation campaign.

Thirdly, and perhaps most worrisomely, there is the blatant and seemingly entrenched disregard for international law on the part of the occupying Power that characterizes not just this war but the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more generally. It is made even more dangerous by an accompanying lack of accountability, creating a situation of impunity. That is the principal reason for the protracted and stalled situation regarding the Palestinian question and for the fact that no solution seems imminent.

I would like to conclude with three appeals. First, we need an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all hostages and illegally detained Palestinians, and an end to the campaign of violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We also need a de-escalation of tensions across the region and for all parties, including Israel, to cease their provocative actions.

Secondly, we need concerted international efforts in support of the well-being of the Palestinian people, both in the immediate and in the long term. That must include action by the Security Council to end the war in Gaza and the heightened violence in the West Bank. It has gone on for far too long, and we must take decisive steps to end it and to secure peace in the region.

Thirdly, we need to end this war and make progress towards achieving a two-State solution. We cannot allow Israel to continue dismantling the two-State solution. Guyana is committed to doing its part on all those fronts.

Mr. Gonçalves (Mozambique): Mozambique commends the Slovenian presidency for convening this important briefing on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We thank Algeria for requesting this timely briefing. We also thank the Secretary-General for his important statement on the alarming situation in the Middle East.

The situation in Gaza and in the occupied Palestinian territories remains critical. We have witnessed a significant escalation in violent and militarized operations, causing a high number of casualties and extensive destruction of immeasurable civil infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and shelters. The expansion of settlements has

also intensified, leading to forced displacement and illegitimate property demolitions. That deeply deplorable situation is further exacerbating tensions and undermining any prospect for peace.

It is imperative to emphasize that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal, unacceptable and a blatant violation of international law. The International Court of Justice has underscored that those settlements and the associated policies amount to de facto annexation and systematic discrimination against Palestinians. We urge the Government of Israel to hold accountable any individuals and entities responsible for violence against civilians in the West Bank.

Given the grave situation prevailing in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, we reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages and all others in captivity and safe and unconditional humanitarian access, ensuring that aid reaches those in need without restrictions. It is crucial for the international community and the Security Council in particular to continue pursuing diplomatic solutions, especially as a regional spillover becomes an unfortunate reality in the Middle East.

We commend the completion of the first round of the polio vaccination campaign in Gaza. That achievement exemplifies the collaboration and dedication of all the parties involved, including the World Health Organization. We urge all parties to show the same spirit of cooperation and guide the facilitation of the second round of vaccinations planned for October and any other humanitarian assistance. Ensuring that children receive those vital vaccinations is crucial for their health and well-being, especially in a region facing such challenging circumstances.

In the light of the current crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip in particular, we are of the view that the Council must take the following set of urgent actions. First, it must call for direct dialogue between the parties. Secondly, it must use its influence with the parties to lead them to de-escalate. Thirdly, it must halt the regional expansion of the conflict. Fourthly, it must ensure scrupulous respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Mozambique extends its appreciation and encouragement to United Nations staff members, humanitarian workers and regional organizations for

their tireless contribution to peace and security in the Gaza Strip. We reiterate our consistent and unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-State solution, whereby two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, as full Members of the United Nations, coexist peacefully and securely within recognized borders, consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Mozambique further stresses the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General for his assessment of the situation in the Middle East, with a focus on the unprecedented level of confrontation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Lebanon-Israel border area.

This is a conflict that is also having consequences in other parts of the region, with the fallout being felt in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Hotbeds of instability persist in vast swathes of the entire Middle East and North Africa. The spiralling violence has extended far beyond the area of Arab-Israeli confrontation and is destabilizing the situation not only in the aforementioned regions, but in the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf and all of North Africa as well. The root cause of those crises has been and remains the fact that the Palestinian question remains unresolved.

At the epicentre of the current confrontation, there is the Gaza Strip, where what began in October 2023 — I am referring to the most recent wave of military operations — has become the most brutal outburst of hostilities in the long series of Arab-Israeli wars. The number of fatalities has exceeded 41,000, and the number of wounded and missing persons is nearing 100,000. The majority of victims are civilians in the Strip, including many women, children and elderly people. Amid the military operations and Israel's blockade of the Strip, the situation is rapidly deteriorating.

The Gaza Strip has become the largest open-air prison, from which people are unable to flee. According to the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ms. Spoljaric Egger, Israel's military operation has completely reshaped the conflict towards "dehumanization and stripping civilians of human dignity".

I would like everyone to recall our steadfast position, which remains unchanged. There is no justification for the terrorist attack of 7 October 2023. However, the collective punishment of all Palestinians is unacceptable. I recalled the number of civilian deaths: 41,000 in the year following 7 October 2023. That is more than double the number of civilians killed on both sides over 10 years in the Ukraine conflict, which followed the bloody coup that took place in February 2014. In just one year, twice as many Palestinians have been killed than the total number of civilians killed on both sides in Ukraine in 10 years.

Despite the fact that the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted several resolutions calling for a ceasefire and the establishment of sustainable humanitarian access to Gaza, the Israeli army operation is proceeding. Ten days ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/24 in support of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem*, which explicitly refers to the illegal nature of Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and the need for it to end. The overwhelming majority of Council members supported that initiative to achieve a just and lasting resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and for the exercise of the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The United Nations made its position clear in its resolutions, and our common objective is to ensure their implementation.

The fact that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains unresolved is destabilizing the entire region, as I said. The unprecedented brutality and devastation in Gaza have triggered a sharp escalation of the Lebanon-Israel confrontation. The entire world has seen footage of the ongoing shelling along the Blue Line and deep in the territories of Lebanon and Israel. The Middle East has once again found itself on the brink of a major war, which, it seems, some are very eager to see occur.

On 23 September alone, as a result of a large-scale Israeli bombardment of Lebanon, at least 558 people, including 50 children and 94 women, were killed, and more than 1,600 were wounded. According to the UNICEF Lebanon office, more people were killed in that country in one day than in the past 11 months. Among the dead were two staff members of the Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Tens of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes.

We strongly condemn the actions of the Israeli side, which blatantly violate the sovereignty of the friendly country of Lebanon. Indiscriminate attacks that claim civilian lives are categorically unacceptable. The path of war embraced by West Jerusalem will not enable it to bring internally displaced persons back to the north of the country, nor will it ensure security along the Lebanon-Israel border. A stark case in point is the 2006 Israeli campaign in which Israel was not able to achieve its objectives despite using its entire arsenal of the most advanced military equipment and weapons.

It is imperative to put an immediate end to the cycle of violence before the situation spirals completely out of control, which is, as I already said, something some clearly want to occur in order to provoke a major war. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities to prevent further bloodshed and create conditions conducive to a political and diplomatic resolution.

I understand that just today orders were issued to bomb Beirut. We consistently and unwaveringly stress the need for a full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which stipulates Israel's obligations to cease its offensive military operations, withdraw its armed forces from southern Lebanon and end the occupation of Lebanese lands, as well as Hizbullah's obligation to withdraw its formations north of the Litani River.

For our part, we are deploying extensive diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation and to avert the most catastrophic scenario. We stand ready to coordinate with our international and regional partners to that end. We believe that the security of any State must not come at the expense of the security of others.

We fully support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which plays a stabilizing role along the Blue Line. It is the presence of peacekeepers that has long alleviated the risks of a full-on armed confrontation. It is critical to scrupulously ensure the security of the Blue Helmets.

The Security Council is not merely a platform for exchanging views on the most pressing global issues. It is also the primary organ for the maintenance of international peace and security which possesses myriad time-tested tools to enforce its decisions. Council members must prioritize the interests of the

peoples of Palestine and Israel and put them above the self-serving political calculations of certain political actors and demand an immediate ceasefire, the release of all illegally detained persons and full and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. The violators of Security Council resolutions must be rigorously held accountable, without which the Council's decisions will remain dead letter.

I would like to specifically address the representatives of the United States. The choice is up to the United States: either it continues to block the work of the Security Council or it stands on the side of peace and on the side of the international community and demands an end to the war. Without the comprehensive support the United States provides to Israel, the conflict could be quickly and effectively brought to an end. That would help create the conditions for a return to peace talks on the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel. Of course, negotiations should be conducted under the aegis of the international community without any one country monopolizing the process. We have all seen that before, and it has always led to catastrophe.

Lord Collins (United Kingdom): Let me start by underscoring a clear message from my Government: we need an immediate ceasefire and release of hostages in Gaza now, and we need an immediate ceasefire across the Lebanon-Israel border now.

We are on the brink of a much larger regional war, which risks even more devastation and suffering. Unfortunately, as we have seen both on the ground today, with further strikes in Beirut, and as we have heard from speeches in the General Assembly Hall, the escalation continues. We urge Israel and Hizbullah to heed the calls of the United Kingdom and its partners and to immediately agree a 21-day ceasefire. Calm heads must prevail to end the cycle of violence.

Today's meeting was called to focus on the dire situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Almost one year into the conflict, 41,000 Palestinians have been killed, and hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians lack access to clean water and sanitation, facing the threat of disease and famine. And 101 hostages are still held by Hamas in horrific conditions, as Israel and its people continue to reckon with the aftermath of the worst terrorist attack in its history.

It is clear that there can be no military solution to the conflict. Israel and Hamas must agree a deal urgently.

In the meantime, Israel must fulfil its commitment to flood Gaza with humanitarian aid. Sadly, that has not yet materialized. Ahead of winter, Israel must ensure that the right supplies and equipment can enter Gaza to protect vulnerable families. And it must ensure it complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians. Only last week more than 200 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, and many continue to live under a relentless barrage of attacks, unsafe even in the shelters where they seek refuge.

The United Kingdom is also deeply concerned by the situation in the occupied West Bank. We call on Israel to exercise restraint, adhere to international law and clamp down on actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. The closure of Al Jazeera's offices in Ramallah by the Israel Defense Forces is contrary to the democratic principles that Israel is rightly proud of. Media freedom and the security of journalists must be respected.

Without a revitalized political process towards a two-State solution, we will not achieve a sustainable peace. We need galvanized international efforts to that end and to realize a safe and secure Israel alongside a safe and secure Palestinian State. That must include the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in line with the 1967 borders and under the effective control of the Palestinian Authority.

Planning for Gaza's future must also put Palestinians at the centre of governance, security, recovery and reconstruction efforts. That is the only way to deliver lasting stability. Together we must stop the region from slipping into a deeper crisis and pull it back onto the path towards a peaceful future.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing.

As my delegation reiterated at this week's Council briefing on Lebanon (see S/PV.9733), we are deeply troubled by the heightened hostilities across the Blue Line. Today's large-scale strikes in Beirut have further deepened the gravity of our concern. All actors in the region must de-escalate and seriously consider the possible catastrophe at the end of this dangerous cycle of violence. Maximum restraint is still the best option. Amid the unprecedented escalation in Lebanon and Israel, we remain extremely concerned by the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the surging

violence and instability in the West Bank, including tighter restrictions on movement for Palestinians.

We are, and should be, still hopeful for the release of all hostages, an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an urgent de-escalation in Lebanon. In that regard, we fully support all diplomatic efforts by key regional and global stakeholders, including the recent initiative led by the United States and France to secure an immediate 21-day ceasefire across the Lebanon-Israel border. We call on both sides to accept it without delay. On the other hand, we are dismayed that, according to last week's media reports, quoting high-level officials, the deal for Gaza mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt may not be reached for months. We assume that the direct parties have many political and military considerations in the negotiating process. However, the humanitarian suffering of both Palestinian civilians and Israeli hostages in Gaza permits no time for such calculations. As humanitarian suffering deepens in Gaza and the West Bank, the foundations of long-term peace will further deteriorate and break down amid multigenerational resentment and anger. Therefore, a ceasefire is essential, not only to relieve the current humanitarian suffering, but also to establish the conditions requisite for durable peace and stability in the Middle East.

The current conflict in Gaza has a disproportionate impact on children, with the total shutdown of education throughout Gaza. However, even in this dark reality, we are witnessing a glimmer of hope for the future of those children through the selfless devotion of humanitarian workers. We applaud efforts led by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to establish temporary learning sites for more than 30,000 children. And it is painfully clear that additional efforts are greatly needed to restore, at least partially, the destroyed education system in Gaza, where 85 per cent of school buildings have been damaged, and more than 625 hundred students have been out of class since 7 October 2023.

Education is not only a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also a crucial basis on which to construct a brighter future and to break the multigenerational inheritance of resentment and mistrust in both Palestine and Israel. In that connection, we urge Israel to stop all strikes on schools. International humanitarian law must be upheld everywhere, at all times, and all parties must comply with their obligations. Children and schools must be

protected for the sake of Gaza's future and for long-term peace in the Middle East and beyond.

Yesterday's informal interactive dialogue between the Council and the League of Arab States provided a timely opportunity to listen to the League's sincere ideas and common vision. We appeal to all players in the region, including Israel and non-State actors, to heed those strong calls from their neighbours. The region is tiptoeing towards even hotter flames, but there is still time to turn back and extinguish the fires through reinvigorated diplomacy and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I acknowledge and thank the Secretary-General for his briefing at this meeting, which has been convened to address the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Ecuador's position on the Palestinian situation has consistently, through the years, been one of support for a political, negotiated, lasting and just solution between the parties, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), which the Council adopted in 2016 and specifically concerns the occupied Palestinian territory. The Council's presidential statement of February 2023 (S/PRST/2023/1) strongly opposes all unilateral measures that impede peace and jeopardize the two-State solution. Those measures include the construction and expansion of settlements, the confiscation of land, the purported legalization of settlement outposts, the demolition of homes and the displacement of civilians.

Ecuador has friendly ties with the State of Israel and a long-standing commitment to the right of the Israeli people to live in peace and security. That is why, since 7 October 2023, my country has on numerous occasions expressed its utmost and unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, its condolences to the families of the victims of those atrocities and its solidarity with the people of Israel. Humankind must repudiate those acts. Justifying them paves the way for the justification of other atrocities. All the hostages taken by Hamas must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Nonetheless, since that day, there have been thousands upon thousands of distressing civilian deaths in Gaza, including among women and children. Ecuador's solidarity also extends to their families and

their people. There is no justification whatsoever for inflicting pain and death on the civilian population, nor for using civilians as human shields. The principles of international humanitarian law must be observed at all times, and their violation incurs grave consequences and responsibilities. That will represent the first step in re-embarking on the path of peace that was taken by visionary and courageous leaders, whose steps we have regrettably been incapable of following.

In 1994, 30 years ago, the Norwegian Nobel Committee noted: “For several decades, the conflict between Israel and its neighbour states, and between Israelis and Palestinians, has been among the most irreconcilable and menacing in international politics. The parties have caused each other great suffering.” The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded that year to Yasir Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin for contributing substantially to a historic process “through which peace and cooperation can replace war and hate”. Today we are facing one of the darkest moments we have seen in recent times. We must recover the spirit of the Oslo Accords to prevent war and hate from continuing to win. We must prevent this conflict from lasting for more decades thanks to political convenience and a lack of courage. Extremism and barbarism must be stopped. Our common humanity must prevail.

In the Pact for the Future, which the General Assembly adopted just five days ago, we all

“reaffirm our commitment to act in accordance with international law, including the Charter and its purposes and principles, and to fulfil our obligations in good faith” (*General Assembly resolution 79/1, para. 32*).

Effectively fulfilling that commitment, without excuses or pretexts, will pave the way for peace.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

This is a decisive moment for the region. As President Biden said earlier this week, “All-out war is possible”. But it is not inevitable. We are all too aware of the strong headwinds, but there is still an opportunity to have a ceasefire with hostage release in Gaza and a diplomatic resolution of the conflict between Israel and Hizbullah. Doing both, alongside efforts to integrate Israel into the region, could reinforce peace and stability, and it could breathe new life into what I think we all recognize has been a lack of progress towards

a two-State solution. The decision to embrace that change, to take the difficult steps necessary to achieve a safer and more peaceful and prosperous future for all, lies not in the hands of Security Council members but in those of decision-makers in the region. However, the Council can support progress in the right direction. We can create opportunities for the forces of change to ultimately triumph over the forces of violence and terrorism, division and despair. That is what President Biden has worked to achieve this past year. That work has not been without its setbacks, and it certainly has not been easy. But he believes — and I believe — that the building blocks are there.

First is a 21-day ceasefire between Hizbullah and Israel, which would provide space for a diplomatic solution consistent with resolution 1701 (2006) that would pull Hizbullah’s forces back from the border and allow people to safely return to their homes in both countries. We have been working tirelessly for that outcome, and we encourage all Member States to support the proposal that the United States and other countries put forward earlier this week.

Secondly, there is the framework for a ceasefire with a release of hostages in Gaza, as endorsed by the Council in resolution 2735 (2024), which would end the war, enable a surge in humanitarian assistance and set the stage for the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a revitalized Palestinian Authority.

Thirdly, there is the potential historic normalization agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, which would further bind Israel and the Arab world together and help marginalize the terrorist proxies that are funded, armed and sponsored by Iran, sowing chaos across the region. Achieving those three steps would require political will, but it would make Israel more secure and would create the conditions for a better future for the Palestinian people — a future in which they enjoy equal dignity and security, freedom and self-determination.

In just 10 days’ time, we will mark the one-year anniversary of 7 October 2023 — one year since Hamas killed 1,200 people, murdering children in front of their parents and parents in front of their children; one year since Hamas unleashed sexual violence as a weapon of war; one year since Hamas took hundreds more hostage, including Americans and citizens from more than a dozen countries, some of which sit on the Council. As President Biden said, the world must not flinch at the

horrors of 7 October. Any country would have a right and responsibility to ensure that such an attack could never happen again. Israel is no different. With that, we must all recognize that allowing the terrorist group that committed that carnage to dictate the terms of peace is hardly a recipe for regional stability. And even as we press for a ceasefire and demand that all the parties to the conflict protect civilians and humanitarian personnel, we must not forget that Hamas continues to put civilians in Gaza at risk every day by its refusal to accept the ceasefire deal on the table and its continued practice of hiding fighters and commanders in schools, hospitals and tunnels under civilian infrastructure.

Now, there are members of the Council who will not even utter the word “Hamas”, let alone condemn its brutality on 7 October and after it. But acknowledging that reality does not mean ignoring the plight of the Palestinian people. We mourn the tens of thousands killed and the nearly 100,000 injured this past year. Nor does it relieve the pressure on Israel to protect civilians — quite the opposite. What is more, while our eyes rightly turn to the situation in Gaza and Lebanon, we cannot forget that Palestinians living in the West Bank have been subjected to violence by extremist settlers, watching in horror as their homes are set on fire, their olive trees uprooted, their land seized for illegal outposts and settlements. Their suffering, too, matters. Their humanity, too, matters. The current situation is so very clearly unsustainable. And while I wish that there was a shortcut to peace, we know that that is not the case — not in the General Assembly and not here in the Security Council, which has repeatedly underscored that a lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved only through direct negotiations between the parties, consistent with the principle of land for peace, previous resolutions and international law.

The United States will therefore continue to oppose unilateral measures that undermine the prospect of negotiations towards a two-State solution. That includes one-sided resolutions, such as that recently adopted by the General Assembly (resolution ES-10/24), which do little to bring Palestinians closer to a democratic State of their own. It also includes Israel’s advancement of its programme of settlements, which, as we have reiterated again and again, hinders the prospects for peace, weakens Israel’s security and is inconsistent with international law. And it includes unilateral efforts to undercut the Palestinian Authority, whether

by withholding the transfer of tax revenues owed to it under the Oslo Accords or potentially not sustaining correspondent banking relationships between Israeli and Palestinian banks. We have made it clear to Israeli officials that those relationships are necessary for preventing a deepening economic crisis in the West Bank, and that a lapse in those legitimate financial efforts would increase the risk of illicit financing, undercutting Israel’s security.

We have a shared responsibility to enable diplomacy between the parties. The 21-day ceasefire across the Israel-Lebanon border would allow negotiations towards a diplomatic solution, reducing tensions along the Blue Line and allowing people to return to their homes in both countries — a ceasefire with the hostage release in Gaza and, ultimately, a normalization deal with a firm commitment to a political horizon for the Palestinian people.

Creating openings for diplomatic processes takes political will, and it requires leaders to make some difficult decisions. But for the sake of Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese civilians and all those in the region desperately hoping for peace, it is critical that those leaders make the right decisions. Let us help, rather than hinder them, in doing just that.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

As President Emmanuel Macron told the General Assembly on Wednesday, there must be no war in Lebanon. We strongly call on Israel to stop its current escalation in Lebanon and on Hizbullah to stop firing into Israel.

Since the beginning of the week, Israeli strikes have already caused several hundred civilian deaths, including dozens of children. International humanitarian law must be respected. Civilians, whether Lebanese or Israeli, must not be targeted under any circumstances. Today’s massive strikes in the southern suburbs of Beirut have once again caused destruction and numerous casualties. They must stop immediately.

France is determined to bring about a cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), and to ensure the safety of civilian populations in both Israel and Lebanon.

In Gaza, the war that has been raging for almost a year must end, without further delay. The Council demanded just that in resolution 2735 (2024), and it must

contribute to putting an end to the tragedy unfolding there. There must be an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. All hostages must be released without delay. Obstacles to humanitarian aid must be removed. The stability of the region is at stake.

France condemns all attacks on schools, shelters for displaced persons and humanitarian and United Nations personnel. International humanitarian law must be respected by all, including Israel. There can be no double standards. We also pay tribute to the efforts of the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to carry out a successful polio vaccination campaign.

As 7 October approaches, France reiterates its firm condemnation of the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups. France's commitment to Israel's security is well known and unwavering.

The humanitarian emergency in Gaza must not cause us to lose sight of the West Bank, where the situation is constantly deteriorating. The accelerating settlements, which are illegal and which we condemn, makes the prospect of establishing a future viable and contiguous Palestinian State even more remote. The settlers' policy of terror must cease without delay. France also condemns the violations of the historic status quo at the holy sites in East Jerusalem, as well as the provocations and unilateral measures that risk triggering a conflagration of the situation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In the face of the tragedy in the Middle East, inaction — particularly by the Council — is not an option. France supports the mediation efforts led by the United States, Egypt and Qatar. We must do all we can to bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion as quickly as possible. In conjunction with its partners, France is continuing its work to relaunch peace efforts aimed at implementing the two-State solution. France will continue to take the initiative, including in the Security Council, which will have its full role to play in due time.

In the meanwhile, we must continue to help the Palestinians establish a viable, sovereign and contiguous future Palestinian State. Measures aimed at weakening the Palestinian Authority must cease. France calls on Israel to stop obstructing the transfer of revenues to the Palestinian Authority. It supports a reformed Palestinian Authority, capable of exercising its

responsibilities throughout the Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I too thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

From the start of this conflict, Malta's call has been consistent, unequivocal and clear: only a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza will provide the necessary environment for de-escalation. We therefore remain gravely alarmed about the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and beyond. This has resulted in unimaginable devastation and displacement, often on multiple occasions, for countless civilians. Unfortunately, the outlook remains bleak.

Nevertheless, accepting the status quo is not an option. We fully support the ongoing diplomatic efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar towards achieving a ceasefire. The Council and the international community have a critical role to play.

Meanwhile, 110 hostages are still being held captive by Hamas and have been forced to endure unimaginable conditions for almost a year. They must be immediately and unconditionally released and reunited with their families and loved ones.

At the same time, the humanitarian needs of the civilian population in Gaza are immense. More than 41,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children, have been killed. Israel's ongoing strikes continue to render the entire Gaza Strip uninhabitable.

Although the United Nations is working tirelessly to prevent a polio epidemic, the health crisis has only deepened. Compromised hospitals suffer crippling shortages of fuel and medicine, all as acute levels of hunger persist.

As children worldwide start their scholastic year, schools in Gaza continue to be attacked. The ongoing insecurity, including attempts to use educational facilities for non-educational purposes, deprives children of their safety and access to education.

Additionally, the dignity, safety, health and rights of women and girls have been gravely undermined. They face a multitude of threats and hardships, including those due to rampant lawlessness and criminality within desperate communities.

It is unacceptable that international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as international

human rights law, continue to be flagrantly disregarded. We further reiterate that Israel has the responsibility to provide adequate unimpeded access for humanitarian aid into and across the Gaza Strip, including through opening all crossings.

Malta is also gravely concerned that the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is quickly edging towards catastrophe. That cannot be allowed to occur. It would extinguish any remaining hope for peace. Civilian deaths and destruction caused by Israeli military operations and escalating settler violence, combined with demolitions, forced displacement and intimidation, are rendering conditions unliveable for Palestinians. We reiterate that settlement activity is illegal under international law and undermines the contiguity of a future Palestinian State. In line with the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 19 July and General Assembly resolution ES-10/24, adopted last week, Israel is under obligation to end its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory as rapidly as possible.

As the world continues to witness unprecedented regional suffering, which has now alarmingly spilled over into Lebanon, the latest news coming out of the country is deeply concerning, and we are monitoring developments closely. We stress that further escalation will not lead to a resolution of the conflict. We call on all parties to exercise utmost restraint and to de-escalate the situation through diplomacy and the agreement of a sustained ceasefire. That is the only path that will allow us to rebuild a necessary political horizon and lasting peace, a peace based on a two-State solution, along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. George (Sierra Leone): I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his briefing, which clearly highlights the precarious nature of the ongoing conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory and other parts of the region.

Let me further acknowledge the leadership of the Secretary-General and the commitment of the entire United Nations system to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people. In that regard, we commend the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East for collaborating with the Palestinian Ministry of Health to successfully roll out the polio vaccination campaign. We honour the service and ultimate sacrifice of the more than 220 United Nations and other humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in the conflict and stand in solidarity with all front-line operational personnel.

In the briefing by the Secretary-General, delivered by the Chef de Cabinet on 17 July 2024, there was an urgent call for the parties to the conflict to end what the Secretary-General referred to as a “terrible war” (*S/PV.9687, p. 4*) and for a political solution in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Indeed, the war has been terrible, with far-reaching consequences for civilians that have resulted in a death toll of more than 41,000 civilians, 95,818 injuries and an estimated 1.9 million internally displaced people, living in overcrowded sites. The congestion, combined with the severe shortage of water and sanitation services, has created a breeding ground for disease. We continue to be alarmed by the breakdown of law and order and the increase in the crime rate in Gaza seriously affecting the safety and security of its citizens.

The steady rise in the violence and military operations in the West Bank by Israeli security forces and extremist settlers is dangerous and unacceptable. Israel’s continued occupation and expansion policies could ignite tensions and provoke an even more deadly conflict. We urge Israel to cease all military operations in the West Bank to avoid claiming more civilian lives, destroying civilian infrastructure and setting the stage where the two-State solution becomes untenable. We therefore condemn all attacks against civilians and call upon parties to the conflict to take immediate steps to de-escalate the situation.

The latest wave of escalating attacks between Israel and Hizbullah can only lead to a broader regional conflict, as tensions continue to rise and the fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border persists. The ramping up of activities across the region, with various parties taking offensive and retaliatory actions, is unprecedented and must immediately cease. With the protracted conflict in Gaza being our utmost priority for almost a year now, a solution to the crisis is needed more now than ever before. In that regard, allow us to highlight the following points.

First, we emphasize the need for an urgent ceasefire in the entire region. Military operations have only inflicted damage on the civilian population, who remain prime targets and are sometimes being used as human shields. An immediate ceasefire, whether through a negotiated agreement or in response to the decisions of the Security Council, as demanded in resolutions 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024), or in compliance with international humanitarian law, must be urgently implemented by the parties to the conflict. The ongoing killings of civilians are not acceptable by any standard and have no justification.

Secondly, we maintain that dialogue and diplomacy must precede violence and unilateral actions. Therefore, we reiterate our call for renewed dialogue and diplomacy, which is an embodiment of our dedication to the Charter of the United Nations, to justice and to human rights. According to the United Nations Charter, it is our — that is, the United Nations — collective responsibility to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity of all. We urgently call for the resumption of negotiations and the speedy conclusion of a deal that allows for the release of the remaining 101 hostages, a permanent ceasefire and increased access to humanitarian assistance. That was the intent and purpose of resolution 2735 (2024) of the Council. We therefore reiterate our support for the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States in that regard.

Thirdly, we call for respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, which will guarantee the safety and security of civilians, including humanitarian personnel. We reject indiscriminate attacks against civilians and call for accountability for war crimes. We once again draw the attention of the parties to the conflict to the various advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, which, on different occasions, has clearly outlined its valued opinion on various questions regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, not least its opinion of 19 July 2024, which concluded that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is unlawful.

In conclusion, the resounding call from the international community, during the General Assembly's seventy-ninth session high-level debate this week, on the situation in Gaza, was for efforts to work towards the path of peace and not to give up hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We

therefore support the launch of a political process that will lead to the achievement of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, in peace, within secure and recognized borders.

It has been proven over the years that a fragmented approach, without a holistic examination of the root causes and legitimate concerns of the parties to the conflict, is pointless. Therefore, the launch of a peace process must be consultative, guided by the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and all resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. We must not renege on delivering peace to the children of Gaza and future generations in the Middle East.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank the Secretary-General for his sobering briefing, and I also express our deep appreciation to the United Nations entities and their staff on the ground for their humanitarian roles in an extremely dangerous situation.

The conflict in Gaza has gone on for nearly a year. Every day brings additional suffering to both Israelis and Palestinians. Japan reiterates its strong condemnation of the brutal acts of terror and the taking and killing of hostages by Hamas and other militant groups. At the same time, the enormous number of civilian casualties caused by Israel's military operations is intolerable. The humanitarian situation is simply catastrophic, depriving the people of Gaza of their dignity.

Let us be clear: the hostages must be released. Civilians must be protected. Humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed a safe operating space. International law must be respected. And, most importantly, the conflict and violence must end immediately. The longer this conflict continues, the more civilians will be victimized, the more people will suffer from hunger and disease, and the more children will be orphaned and traumatized.

It is too late for many, but we should still call on parties to prioritize civilian well-being, not to fight for a military victory. There is no winner in a competition of pain. That is why the parties, in particular Hamas, must swiftly move towards the conclusion of a deal, in accordance with resolution 2735 (2024). That will pave the way to releasing the hostages, bringing about an immediate ceasefire and expanding aid delivery throughout Gaza. Japan reiterates its unwavering support for the tireless mediation efforts made by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

We have also witnessed an alarming escalation in the West Bank. The heavy civilian fatalities and the massive destruction of civilian infrastructure are deeply concerning. The General Assembly recently adopted a resolution following up on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24). As a country that attaches great importance to the role of the International Court of Justice and the rule of law, Japan voted in favour of the resolution after thorough consideration. Israel's settlement activities are in violation of international law.

Japan strongly urges the Government of Israel to completely halt its settlement activities, as the General Assembly resolution demands. We also condemn the violence by the extreme settlers.

As we all know, the only viable path to resolving this tragic conflict is a two-State solution, whereby both Israel and a future independent Palestinian State live side by side in peace and security. That requires confidence-building and sustainable dialogue between the parties, not hostilities or hatred. Diplomacy must prevail, even in this time of difficulty and darkness. Japan will continue to play its part to seek a peaceful way out of this decades-long conflict.

Last but not least, we are compelled to address the extremely dangerous situation in Lebanon. Japan is strongly concerned about the escalation of tensions between Israel and Hizbullah and deeply saddened by the numerous civilian casualties. Japan has joined the statement issued by like-minded countries calling for an immediate 21-day ceasefire. We call on all parties to endorse the temporary ceasefire immediately, consistent with resolution 1701 (2006), and to give a diplomatic settlement a real chance.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this high-level briefing. I also welcome the many ministers who are here with us. Their presence attests to the international community's determination to prevent the risk of an even more serious escalation and to return to the path of peace. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing to the Council.

Switzerland supports the Secretary-General's call for immediate de-escalation in the region. We are deeply concerned about the situation in Lebanon, particularly following the air strikes that have killed more than 700 people this week. We condemn the fact that those strikes have caused many civilian casualties. Today's

massive attack in southern Beirut and the rockets that continue to be fired at Israel are extremely worrisome.

We call on all parties to return immediately to a full cessation of hostilities and to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006). All parties must exercise the utmost restraint and take all necessary precautions to protect civilians, in accordance with their obligations under conventional and customary international humanitarian law.

Switzerland supports ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities on both sides of the Blue Line. The spiral of violence that the Council has unanimously spoken out against since the acts of terror of 7 October 2023 — which we strongly condemned — must come to an end.

As immediate measures, and also with a view to de-escalation in the region, Switzerland continues to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and for safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. The parties must comply with their obligations under international law.

Switzerland reiterates its support for the efforts of the United Nations, and in particular, that of our humanitarian colleagues, who are so often a target in this conflict. In May, the adoption by the Council of resolution 2730 (2024) reaffirmed that the protection of humanitarian personnel and United Nations staff and associated personnel is an obligation under international humanitarian law. Without the protection of humanitarian personnel, their premises and their property, the recent polio vaccination campaign in Gaza simply would not have been possible. And yet, the first phase of that campaign demonstrated that the United Nations can fulfil its humanitarian assistance mission if there is the political will to put in place the necessary framework to do so, in accordance with obligations under international law. It is high time that the parties respected those obligations and that safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need was finally guaranteed on a sustainable basis.

The measures required to comply with international humanitarian law have a crucial impact on the lives and well-being of civilians. Switzerland will continue to insist on the obligation of all States, under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions, to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

(spoke in English)

Wars have rules.

(spoke in French)

In that spirit, Switzerland will carry out the mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly in the resolution adopted on 18 September (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24). We will be organizing a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention within the next six months. Strict compliance with and implementation of international humanitarian law is also a fundamental step towards regional de-escalation, which is itself a crucial step towards peace.

Peace requires political will and the implementation of Council resolutions. That is the case for the resolutions on Gaza that have been adopted by the Council since 7 October 2023 (resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024)), which contain all the elements needed for de-escalation and the relaunch of a viable peace process. But peace also hinges on the implementation of the resolutions adopted before 7 October 2023, such as resolution 2334 (2016). As affirmed by the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 19 July, which Switzerland supports, the illegality of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, which has been under way since 1967, is now beyond doubt. It must end, and a political horizon must be re-established. In that connection, Switzerland welcomes the fact that the General Assembly has called for an international conference to be held during its seventy-ninth session, with a view to establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The two-State solution is the only foundation capable of guaranteeing peace between Israelis and Palestinians and regional stability.

We must help to rebuild — without further delay — that foundation of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. Switzerland stands ready to work alongside the United Nations, the members of the Council and the States of the region to achieve that.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Safadi (Jordan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: A few days ago, a Palestinian-Israeli girl dared to say what

Israel has forbidden: the truth. She said that, in Gaza, children were starving, and there were no homes left to shelter them. That acknowledgment unleashed against her a hellish hatred that had been sown by the Israeli racial extremist incitement in the minds of children as young as 13 years old. Students at her school in Be'er-Sheva attacked her at the instigation of their teacher. Afterwards, the administration of her school expelled her on charges of incitement, before amending its decision to suspend her from school pending an investigation into the incident — an investigation which precedents show will never be completed, similar to the investigation into the killing by an Israeli soldier of Palestinian-American journalist Shirin Abu Akleh. Another Israeli soldier tore up a photo of Shirin Abu Akleh in Al-Jazeera's Ramallah office last week after it was shut down. That act provides further evidence of the depth of the hatred and the taboo against telling the truth in Israel.

The students who attacked the child celebrated her dismissal from the school by posting videos on social media repeating the incitement of the extremist Israeli Minister Ben-Gvir, who was a member of an organization previously designated a terrorist organization by the United States, saying, "burn her village". The Deputy Mayor of her city called for the displacement of the child's family. According to the girl's lawyer, her family members receive threats of beheading on a daily basis.

Israel has not only killed Palestinian children, destroyed their homes, bombed their schools and deprived them of food, medicine and hope, it also has demonized and dehumanized them. It has raised its children to hate Palestinians, its soldiers to target them and its society to deny their right to exist. That is the racist, dehumanizing ideology that has made war crimes against the Palestinian people in occupied Gaza and the West Bank an act that soldiers in the Israeli occupation army brag about on social media. That is the hatred that motivated the Israeli soldiers to kick the bodies of young Palestinian men from rooftops in the West Bank, causing them to fall metres to the ground, along with their killers' claims of morality.

The Israeli Government has demonized Palestinians, enabled settler terrorism against them and legalized the theft of Palestinian land and the denial of their rights. Israel's war on Gaza is a brutal manifestation of that hatred. It is a war of ethnic cleansing aimed at erasing the Palestinian presence on Palestinian land.

Evidence of that can be seen in the public calls by Israeli ministers to burn Palestinians, in the Israeli Prime Minister's assertion that he will never allow the Palestinian people's right to self-determination to be fulfilled and the Israeli Knesset's decision to prevent the materialization of a Palestinian State. That is also evident in the barbarity of the aggression against Gaza and in the illegal and inhumane Israeli policies and measures that preceded it throughout the occupied Palestinian territory — the confiscation of land, the building of settlements, the burning of homes, the economic blockade, the attack on Islamic and Christian holy sites of occupied Jerusalem and the attempts to change its Arab, Islamic and Christian identity.

During its ongoing aggression against Gaza, Israel has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians and buried more than 10,000 men, women and children under the rubble of their homes. It denied food, water and medicine to those who remained displaced in tents and in the ruins of schools and hospitals, causing children to die of hunger, mothers to die of thirst and fathers to die of oppression. Israel destroyed Gaza, and it has become a place that is no longer inhabitable.

The Israeli Government is implementing the same plan in the West Bank — pushing it to the brink of explosion to justify launching a new war aimed at eradicating the Palestinian presence there and to prepare for the displacement of its people. That is a war crime that Jordan will not tolerate. We will not allow the displacement of the Palestinian people from their historic homeland to our homeland.

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein said clearly, firmly and decisively that Jordan will not be an alternative homeland. That will never happen. We will protect Jordan. We will respond to any threat to our homeland with all our means no matter what. That is a sacred duty. The Palestinians have their occupied homeland which will be liberated as an independent, sovereign State, with occupied Jerusalem as its capital, even if that takes some time. Jordan will remain impregnable for its people and a steadfast supporter of the Palestinian rights.

Israel is destroying Gaza, bombing the West Bank, violating Lebanon and pushing the region towards an all-out war because the world has allowed it to do so. The Israeli Government is violating international law and international humanitarian law because it does not face consequences for those violations. It commits

war crimes because it is not held accountable for them. It defies Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the rulings of the International Court of Justice because international law is selectively applied, placing Israel above the law. It threatens international peace and security because the Security Council is not fulfilling its role and is not using the legal tools at its disposal to prevent it from doing so.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* is clear and cannot be misinterpreted. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is illegal. Everything that resulted from it is invalid. The advisory opinion must be implemented in accordance with international law and to protect the prospects of achieving peace. The occupation is the ultimate evil. It is the cause of all the tragedies that the region has experienced. It is pushing it towards the abyss. It is the greatest danger.

A Government that fosters hatred and racism in its society does not want peace. Hatred and racism are as much the enemy of the perpetrator as they are a danger to their victim. The Israeli Government lies to its people when it claims that they are surrounded by those who want to destroy them. It threatens their own future by making them prisoners of fear, engulfing them with hatred and racism and making their country a rogue State. All Arab States have condemned the killing of Israeli civilians. All Arab States want a just peace. To that end, we have presented a comprehensive initiative that guarantees Israel's security and recognition in our region, in the context of a solution that ends the occupation and guarantees the right of the Palestinian people to freedom, dignity, life and an independent sovereign State on its national soil.

However, the Israeli Government rejected peace and chose war. Israel killed more children than had been killed in any war in decades, which resulted in its placement on the United Nations blacklist for killing children. Israel set a record for killing United Nations staff and humanitarian workers. Because the criminal fears the truth, it has killed journalists, and it has prevented the international media from entering Gaza, which is the largest war crime scene in modern history. If the international media were to enter Gaza, the world would discover the scale of the death, destruction, injustice and misery that our international community has allowed Israel to inflict on the people of Gaza. The

world will then see the extent of the shame that will stain humankind for generations to come.

It is a crime to allow a Government whose ideology is extremism and whose methodology is killing to steal the future of the region. Enough is enough. The Council must stop the injustice and impose international law and human values. All Member States support the establishment of a Palestinian State based on a two-State solution as a way to achieve a just peace. They must translate their conviction into reality, by recognizing the State of Palestine and granting it full membership in the United Nations.

All Member States reject the humanitarian catastrophe exacerbated by the Israeli aggression on Gaza. The Council must put an end to the use of starvation as a weapon of war. It must stop the siege and heed the call of His Majesty the King for a sustainable humanitarian bridge to prevent Palestinians from dying of hunger, thirst and disease. The danger of the region falling into the grip of a regional war is real and increasing by the day, and the Council must avert it before it is too late. The Council has the legal, political and operational tools at its disposal to overcome it. It must use them, impose sanctions, stop supplying Israel with weapons and implement its previous resolutions. It must save the Palestinians and Israelis from the extremism, darkness and crimes of the Israeli Government and protect the region and the world from the consequences of its aggression, which will not stop at the borders of the Middle East.

Israel has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and its war machine is capable of killing even more, but it will not succeed in killing the will of the Palestinian people to survive or in defeating them in their struggle for freedom. The Palestinian people will continue to try for generations to come. Such is history and such is the future. The Palestinian people have rights that must be fulfilled if the region is to enjoy its right to security and peace. The light of Palestinian rights will pierce the darkness of Israeli injustice, and Israel's falsehood will end sooner or later. Indeed, the Council must end it sooner rather than later, so that oppression and injustice do not turn the future into the vortex of conflict, murder, misery and war that we are seeing now. Enough is enough. The oppressors have gone too far. Stop this injustice.

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

Mr. Abdelatty (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank Slovenia for convening this meeting at Algeria's request to discuss current developments in the light of the war and the ongoing brutal aggression against the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, along with the unjust aggression being waged against the occupied Palestinian territory.

We have met on this issue on a number of occasions since the beginning of the war on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. We have repeatedly appealed to the Security Council to intervene directly to stop the brutal Israeli aggression that civilians in the Gaza Strip have been enduring for nearly a year, and to end the siege and starvation of an unarmed people. Innocent children have lost their families and continue to suffer from the dangers of famine and infectious disease amid a horrific humanitarian disaster created by the treacherous Israeli occupation. It has claimed the lives of more than 41,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, in addition to 100,000 wounded, and it has left others buried under the rubble or missing. Even the survivors will continue to suffer for many years.

The Israeli war and aggression machine has destroyed most residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, in a deliberate approach to make the Gaza Strip uninhabitable that has now been extended to the West Bank. Despite all the international appeals to Israel to end the bloodshed and stop the continued killing and targeting of civilians, despite the ongoing mediation efforts of Egypt together with Qatar and the United States, despite numerous Security Council resolutions and rulings by the International Court of Justice and despite the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, the occupation forces have persisted in exacting vengeance on the people of Gaza, using starvation and siege as a weapon against the Palestinians and forcing them to leave their homes. Israel has occupied the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing and prevented United Nations agencies and relief organizations from distributing aid inside the Gaza Strip. For months it has left civilians without belongings, medicine or sufficient food, causing a protracted humanitarian catastrophe.

Egypt and the Arab States have protested at the killing and targeting of civilians since the beginning of the crisis. I want to repeat here to the Council,

before the eyes of the world, that we have objected to violence in all of its forms against all civilians. Israel is intent on taking revenge and expanding the conflict, turning it into a full-scale regional confrontation. It is now targeting innocent civilians in our brother country of Lebanon and exposing more of them to danger, and we condemn that in its entirety. In that context, Egypt would like to present to Council members and the entire world some facts that must be understood by all. Israel, the occupying Power, is primarily and directly responsible for the situation in Gaza and the region and for causing the destruction there. It is also responsible for expanding the conflict. In the wake of the humanitarian catastrophe that it has caused in Gaza and the unjustified escalation in the West Bank, the Israeli war machine has moved onto Lebanon, where in one day it claimed hundreds of victims among our brother people, including women and children.

Israel, like other States, has an unequivocal obligation to implement all the Council resolutions and decisions of the International Court of Justice that have been issued since the crisis began and to abide by the laws of war and the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law. And we underscore that so far none of those resolutions and decisions have been implemented, while Israel has suffered no consequences. Public opinion sees that as reflecting hypocrisy and double standards among the international community. We must all clearly reject the feeble justifications for the continuation of the current war and aggression. We must also reject the occupation authority's repeated hollow claims about the measures it has taken to alleviate the humanitarian consequences — claims that have been repeatedly discredited. The clearest example of that is the worsening famine in Gaza, as described in United Nations reports. The halt in the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Rafah crossing is a direct result of Israel's ongoing military control over the entire Gaza Strip, including the Palestinian side of the crossing. We have already objected to that, warning that it is a continuation of the policies of collective punishment of the Palestinians. It is creating a situation on the ground where humanitarian work becomes impossible and is in fact a suicide mission and a direct threat to humanitarian workers. In that regard, we would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of the humanitarian workers who have been martyred, including United Nations personnel and in particular those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Their

humanitarian work can resume if Israel shoulders its responsibilities, immediately withdraws from the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing, surrenders control to the Palestinian Authority and opens all the other crossings into Gaza on the Israeli side.

What is going on in occupied Palestine is not a coincidence. Israel is fully aware of the impact of its practices on the ground in the Gaza Strip. It is also aware of the effects of the settlement activity, the demolitions, the land confiscations and the daily military incursions into West Bank cities. Those practices reflect nothing more than policies that seek only to destroy any remaining prospects for a two-State solution.

Egypt will continue to work tirelessly to stop the war, ensure the full, safe and sustainable delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and work to find the most effective way for the people to access that aid, based on our humanitarian duty to a brother people. We will continue to support the Palestinians' steadfast efforts in their territories in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem to resist all attempts to displace them, which is a red line that we will not allow to be crossed. Our mission will succeed only when there is clear and explicit support from the international community, without discrepancies or double standards. The Security Council can bring about change on the ground if we show political will and sincere intentions. I would therefore like to briefly identify the role that we hope to see the Council play by using its binding mechanisms and tools at this critical phase in the history of the Middle East.

First, Israel must be compelled to accept an immediate ceasefire, the radical solution to the ongoing escalation process in the region, and to stop its deliberate escalation, including in Lebanon. We must compel Israel to fully withdraw from the Gaza Strip, including by withdrawing immediately from the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing and the Philadelphi corridor, in order to enable the flow of urgent humanitarian relief aid to be resumed. It should also withdraw from the Palestinian side of all the crossing points in the Gaza Strip and open all those crossings in preparation for a complete withdrawal from all of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Secondly, Israel must implement all the rulings of the International Court of Justice.

Thirdly, the Palestinian Authority must be provided with full support and enabled to perform all its duties

regarding the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, including the restoration of the crossings, the provision of basic services and its police, administrative, governance and law-enforcement functions.

Fourthly, the Security Council should welcome the State of Palestine's full-fledged membership in the United Nations on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, including East Jerusalem. That is an important and urgent issue if we are sincere in our support for a two-State solution and for delivering international justice, whose credibility, along with that of the United Nations and the Security Council, is at stake.

Fifthly, Israel must end all the manifestations of its occupation of the State of Palestine, whether in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, according to a specific and clear timetable, while following up on implementation and taking appropriate measures in case of inaction, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We have been waiting for decades for Israel to conclude the final-status negotiations, to no avail. Members may agree with us that the time has come to confront the Israeli Government's rejection of a two-State solution and of the provisions of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in addition to its explicit official policy aimed at preventing the establishment of a Palestinian State. The reality is that there are no partners for peace at the moment. The time has therefore come for the immediate recognition of an independent Palestinian State and for an end to the decades of occupation, which the International Court of Justice has explicitly called illegal. Egypt will remain steadfast in supporting the peace efforts that we established and launched 45 years ago. We hope that the international community, including the Security Council, will not fail to meet its responsibilities and obligations to accomplish the peace that all the peoples of the region deserve.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Slovenia for responding to Algeria's call for convening this meeting, and for supporting the efforts to establish international peace and security that were clearly reflected in Slovenia's historic recognition of the State of Palestine.

The Palestinian question remains at the forefront of the crises demanding the Security Council's attention, as Israel's grave violations continue and the humanitarian situation deteriorates. We are clearly witnessing the serious implications of the prolongation of the crisis and the widening of the conflict through the continued military escalation. We have previously raised the same urgent issue with the Council without seeing it take any serious action. Since October 2023, six of the 10 draft resolutions on the topic have been vetoed, and those that have been adopted have so far failed to achieve a ceasefire, address the catastrophic humanitarian situation or pave the way for a credible political path towards peace.

We wonder what the Council needs in order to end the suffering and implement international law. It is clear that there is a widening gap in the international consensus and that there are divides within the Council that have undermined its performance and results. The General Assembly has expressed the will of our countries in successive resolutions, including the urgent need for a ceasefire, the uninterrupted provision of humanitarian assistance and the right of Palestinians to self-determination. In that context, we value the General Assembly's resolution recognizing Palestine's eligibility for full membership in the United Nations (General Assembly resolution ES-10/23), by virtue of which Palestine received additional privileges from the Organization, as well as its most recent resolution calling on Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territory (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24).

Achieving peace requires effort on the part of the institutions of the international community, in particular the Council, as well as courage in decision-making and a commitment to implementation. The legal and moral responsibility to end the crisis lies with the Council. However, political considerations have undermined its discussions and prevented it from shouldering its responsibilities. To those who say that we should wait for negotiations to establish a Palestinian State and refrain from taking unilateral steps, I say: what can we do when Israel refuses even to admit the principle of a two-State solution and continues unilateral measures that undermine the prospects for peace? Just wait.

It is therefore high time to launch a serious partnership for peace. I call on the members of the international community, especially the Council member countries that have not done so, to recognize the State of Palestine, in support of a two-State solution

and the prospects for coexistence and a sustainable peace. Saudi Arabia believes that ending the occupation and implementing a two-State solution represent the foundation for ending the cycle of violence so as to relieve people's suffering and achieve security and stability in the region. Along with our partners on the joint Arab-Islamic Ministerial Committee, as well as the Kingdom of Norway and the European Union, we have therefore launched a global alliance for implementing a two-State solution, because we feel the shared responsibility for acting to change the reality of the conflict without delay.

In conclusion, Saudi Arabia reaffirms its commitment to establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, so that the Palestinians can achieve their inherent right to self-determination.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye.

Mr. Fidan (Türkiye): At the outset, I would like to thank Algeria for initiating this meeting. I would also like to thank you, Madam President, my friend, for opening this debate to the participation of countries outside the Council.

Today we are confronted with a blade-sharp turning point. Our trajectory will define the world we want to live in and the way nations interact. As I articulated yesterday in a different setting, our highly valued rules-based order is in shambles. Its erosion is becoming more irreversible with each passing day. Wisdom could have prevailed to stop this barbaric war in Gaza before it expanded to the West Bank, Lebanon and beyond. It is puzzling that certain international actors that had the leverage to alter this horrific course, decided deliberately to stay paralysed and showed no intention whatsoever to take conclusive action.

What we need to do is very clear. There is a Security Council resolution setting out the fundamentals of a deal — resolution 2735 (2024). An immediate and permanent ceasefire must be secured, a hostage-detainee exchange must take place, Israel must withdraw from Gaza, humanitarian aid needs unhindered access to Palestinians that are in dire need.

We are all aware that Netanyahu has consistently prevented such a deal from unfolding. Greatly encouraged by the impunity granted, he will continue with his genocidal acts until the international

community, especially the Security Council, applies real pressure on Israel for it to stop. I underline the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Regrettably, the Council has thus far failed to make sure that Israel implements Council resolutions. There has been no arms embargo and no coercive measures. With Israeli aggression unbounded and with Lebanon now the target, we are in uncharted waters. All measures of international law and international humanitarian law have been sidelined and blindfolded. Intense bombing continues unabated, without distinction between civilians and military targets.

The Security Council must rise to its essential task. I urge one and all to stop this war and Israeli aggression. Only peace will ensure the security of Israel, and peace will come only in the form of a two-State solution. The political and personal interests of Netanyahu and his fundamentalist partners should not endanger regional stability and international order. Let us pave the way for a two-State solution, with an independent, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Let us all work together for a just and lasting peace. That is our call to the Security Council.

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*): I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States at the United Nations. I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting, and I thank sisterly Algeria, the Arab member of the Council, for its initiative to convene this meeting.

For a year now, we have been repeatedly calling in the Security Council for it to act and shoulder its primary responsibility entrusted to it by the Member States pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations. That responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security, which today are facing serious escalating threats due to the Council's inability to implement its own resolutions and stop the genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, its aggression against brotherly Lebanon and its repeated aggressions against Syrian territories.

It is unacceptable that all relevant resolutions — adopted with difficulty in previous months as a result of the support provided to Israel by

certain Council members — have not been implemented. For some people, their adoption was for no reason other than reducing tensions and giving the Israeli occupation authorities more time to continue their barbaric crimes. Almost one full year has elapsed since the beginning of the brutal Israeli aggression against Gaza, which is unparalleled since the Second World War.

One question must be asked — is the Council's performance consistent with the positions expressed by the overwhelming majority of Member States? The occupying authorities responded to that question by continuing to perpetrate genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the worst forms of killing and destruction against the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the occupying authorities have expanded their crimes to the West Bank. In recent months, the Arab Group, alongside a large number of United Nations representatives and agencies, have discussed the effects of the Israeli aggression and the crimes perpetrated by the occupation forces before the eyes of the world.

Today we are witnessing an escalation of Israeli aggression against brotherly Lebanon, which has claimed hundreds of innocent civilian martyrs, destroying their homes and livelihoods and forcing their displacement in the hundreds of thousands. Only a few hours ago, the occupying Israeli entity targeted residential buildings housing hundreds of civilians that had been living in peace and safety in the southern suburbs of Beirut. That is yet another illustration of the barbaric Israeli entity, which disregards international law.

Moreover, the Israeli entity continues its repeated attacks against Syrian territories, the latest of which was today's early morning targeting of the Syrian-Lebanese border. Before that, displaced people at a border crossing between Syria and Lebanon were targeted only a few hours after attacking the Lebanese area of Yunin. That attack resulted in the martyrdom of 23 Syrians living in Lebanon, most of whom were women and children.

The Arab Group reiterates the centrality of the Palestinian question and its full support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. The Arab Group also strongly condemns the continued Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and States in the region, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and of the relevant United Nations

resolutions. The Arab Group holds Israel fully responsible for the grave loss of human lives, as well as the human suffering, material damage and destruction of property and infrastructure.

The Arab Group stresses the importance of taking immediate action before it is too late. In that connection, we appreciate the tireless efforts of Egypt and Qatar to achieve a ceasefire and mitigate the human suffering in Gaza. The Arab Group supports the implementation of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the illegal nature of the occupation and the settlements, and on the need to put an end to settlement activities, broaden the recognition of the Palestinian State and support its right to become a fully fledged Member of the United Nations. We also underscore the importance of implementing the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 September (resolution ES-10/24) in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories.

The Arab Group strongly condemns the measures taken by the Israeli occupation to undermine the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to target and kill its staff, as it has done with other humanitarian workers. We also underscore the importance of maintaining UNRWA's mandate and the Agency's ability to provide support to Palestinian refugees on their territory and in host countries.

The Arab Group emphasizes its strong solidarity with our brother nation of Lebanon and its people. We call for an end to the brutal Israeli aggression against Lebanese territory and demand that the Israeli occupation authorities be held accountable for their crimes. The Arab Group also calls for a halt and an end to Israel's aggression against Syria. We hold Israel entirely responsible for the escalating situation in the region, which could lead to a regional war that would be a threat to international peace and security.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reiterates that the Israeli occupation has been and remains the primary source of instability in the region. We call on the United Nations to act expeditiously to implement its own relevant resolutions, put an end to the occupation and guarantee Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.

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): More than enough has been said about the horrors of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, but the Security Council has not taken a single action to stop it. Instead, the Israeli criminal mafia is being rewarded and its crimes justified and its atrocities normalized before our eyes. That is why Netanyahu and his companions have become so viciously emboldened to dream of repeating their carnage in Lebanon and of pushing the entire region into a full-scale war. It is quite clear that they are counting on United States support in their sinister campaign of terror and destruction. Just this morning the Israeli regime used several 5,000-pound bunker busters that had been gifted to them by the United States to hit residential areas in Beirut. While the Israeli regime must be held accountable for the atrocity crimes it has been committing in occupied Palestine and Lebanon, we cannot disregard the fact that the United States is complicit in its crimes.

I would like to remind the Council of a couple of facts. First, Israel's warmongering relies on United States military support and political backing. American weapons constitute a major part of the Israeli weaponry and ammunition used in Gaza, and the United States is therefore implicated in every aspect of Israel's atrocity. The vast majority of the bombs that Israel drops on Gaza are United States-made. The United States has sent so many arms to Israel since 7 October 2023 that the Pentagon has struggled to find sufficient cargo aircraft to deliver the materiel. If there were even minimal honesty in the United States' expressions of concern about the loss of innocent Palestinian life in Gaza and Lebanon, it could simply deny Israel the tools it needs to commit its crimes. The genocidal campaign in Gaza has now gone on for more than a year. More than 200,000 people have been slaughtered, wounded or buried under the rubble. The entire Gaza Strip has been levelled to the ground. Children and women have been deliberately murdered en masse as part of Israel's deliberate whim to annihilate Palestine. The world has watched with indignation and disgust while the West has merely appeased the culprit.

The Council's credibility is shrinking every minute as Israel's major supporters prevent it from fulfilling its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. It must act now to put a stop Israel's cruel plan to exterminate an entire nation that for eight long decades has been under brutal occupation and suppression. The Council's inaction is an invitation to more atrocities.

The members of the Council, and indeed the whole United Nations system, will be held responsible for every atrocity Israel commits in Gaza, in Lebanon and elsewhere. Netanyahu and his criminal gang must be arrested and prosecuted for their heinous crimes. He should not be permitted to appear before this body and take pride in his evil deeds. It is a historic shame that a high-profile killer dares to show up at the United Nations and poison the General Assembly with his disgusting lies and outrageous threats to invade other States and kill more people. He is so delusional about the people in the region that he boasts about normalizing relations with Muslims by swimming through a sea of Palestinian and Lebanese blood. And that is definitely not going to happen. As Israel's campaign of death and destruction continues, the peoples of the region become more determined in their firmly held belief that Israel is a vicious outsider planted in our region as part of a colonial scheme to engage us in unending cycles of wars and violence.

We express our sympathy to the people of Lebanon. The Islamic Republic of Iran will do everything possible to demonstrate that it is standing on the side of Lebanon and of resistance.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Eide (Norway): I speak to the Council today as a representative of the country that facilitated the Oslo Accords back in 1993. We have been committed to a course of fostering good relations between Israel and Palestine and to preparing for the work of establishing a Palestinian State. We always believed that we would recognize the State of Palestine, but until recently we believed that the right moment for doing that would be at the end of a process of voluntary, open-ended negotiations between the two sides.

When the Oslo Accords were agreed, the idea was to build the institutions of a Palestinian State from the bottom up, beginning with the practical elements of the State, while the negotiations would continue on the four clusters of outstanding issues, which we all know so well. It was people such as Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat and their teams who negotiated that — in my view, in very good faith — with a clear indication that they actually wanted to achieve that goal. That is why we thought — and I still think, given the information we had at the time — that the right thing to do was to build it bottom-up so that the outstanding

issues of borders, the status of refugees and security could be settled at the end. At that time, we — and I believe all countries of the United Nations — would recognize the State of Palestine.

At some point, we realized that there was no progress in those talks and that not much happened. I have been in and out of this job, both now and previously as Chair the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, which has been ad hoc for 31 years. We had a meeting yesterday that was very constructive. Prime Minister Mustafa gave a very good report of what he and his Government have done since they came into office some months ago, including plans that were broadly applauded by donors, including the European Union and the United States of America, which are my co-Chairs in that role. In many of the years that we have been doing this work, we wondered whether we were part of the solution or part of the problem.

On a good day, we were part of the solution, because we were building the quintessential institution that is necessary if one wants to have a State. As the Council knows more than most, sometimes we recognize States without really having the “interior” in place. The idea was that, once the State was in place, it was really firmly built to be able to cooperate with Israel in a constructive manner, as well as to provide the key services and for the aspirations of the Palestinian people. But on a bad day, we thought that maybe we were a part of the problem, because we were just creating what some people saw as the process and others saw as the status quo, a status in itself. Of course, the process is good if it leads to something. But it can be quite harmful if it does not lead to anything.

At some point we realized that we could not go on eternally. We had to shift gears. And what has happened now? I am not going to repeat what so many people have said of the immense atrocities and the violence and the death and destruction that has been visited upon the people of Israel, the people of Palestine, both in Gaza and in the West Bank and now also in Lebanon, and the fear of many countries that it will expand into other countries in the region and that even some of the peace accords that were secured decades ago could now be in trouble. Out of all that, we realized that we had to change gears.

Together with Slovenia, which I applaud for its very good work as President of the Council, as well as Spain

and Ireland, we added ourselves to the already long list of countries that have recognized Palestine — 149 right now, leaving 44 States of the 193 Members of the United Nations yet to do so. What we did yesterday, as was mentioned by His Highness the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, was to launch what we call the global alliance for the implementation of a Palestinian State and the two-State solution, which brings together a number of countries that believe that we have to shift gears and accelerate this work now and that we have to see how we can come out of this deadlock and try to use this deep crisis as an opportunity to move forward.

I, along with the contact group that established the global alliance, therefore urge all countries to contribute to the universal recognition of the Palestinian State and its United Nations membership, as we, including Slovenia, my country and many others, have done, and to strengthen the institutions of the State of Palestine so that they are ready to live up to the expectations of their people in the West Bank, but also to prepare for their return to Gaza. For we want one Palestine, not different Palestines. We want that Palestine that came out of the Oslo Accords, which means the institutions that we know as the State of Palestine, which while now embryonic, will finally be the real, existing, universally recognized State of Palestine.

But as was also mentioned in the intervention of Saudi Arabia, that would also be anchored in the broader regional setting of normalization, where many countries in the region would be ready to provide for the security guarantees of Israelis and Palestinians alike. This is an updated vision based on the Arab peace formula that was launched many years ago, but adapted to today's reality.

Many speakers invoked the decision of the International Court of Justice in July, which very clearly points out, in its legal language, that the occupation is illegal, that it amounts to annexation and that it has to come to an end. The vast majority of the members of the General Assembly confirmed that position in a resolution adopted last week (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24). By the way, that was the first resolution ever proposed by the Palestinian delegation and supported by many others, including my own.

In that context, I want to share with the Council the following observations.

Of course, Israel has to be part of how this is finally settled. But it no longer makes sense that, if you are

illegally occupying other peoples' lands, you have an absolute eternal veto on everything that is going to happen in that area. It does not fit with international law. It does not fit with how the vast majority of people on the planet see it. That has to change.

In conclusion, I want to say something to Israel. And I am happy to sit beside Israel, because we have no problem with diplomacy. We think that, when we disagree, we do better speaking to each other than cancelling each other. I am therefore happily sitting right here. I want to say to our friends from Israel: Norway was an enthusiastic supporter of the establishment of the Jewish homeland of Israel, and we still are. We want Israelis to thrive and prosper in safety and security and without terrorism, without fears for their life, in Israel. But we have exactly the same law for the Palestinian people. We want the Palestinian people to thrive and prosper and live securely and safely in Palestine. And we believe that the people of Israel and the people of Palestine are much more likely to do that if there is a two-State solution. And we think that this is exactly the moment to arrive at the two-State solution, which is why we believe that this is the moment to move forward, think outside the box and try to move towards real progress on this issue.

I want to remind the Council that it was bestowed upon it to be the primary source of upholding international security and international law, in accordance with the United Nations principles and the Charter. As the Secretary-General told us at the opening of this session of the General Assembly, international law is in trouble. It is in serious trouble in Ukraine; it is in serious trouble in the Middle East and in so many other places. This is an excellent opportunity to turn a very deep and alarmingly dangerous crisis into a major opportunity. And it is time to implement a Palestinian State so that we can implement a two-State solution.

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

Mr. Borrell Fontelles: Everybody knows the figures. Since the start of the war, approximately 42,000 Palestinians have been killed, and more are under the rubble in Gaza. Most victims are innocent civilians, including over 11,000 children. This is after 1,200 Israelis were killed and hundreds were taken hostage, many of whom are still in captivity, while Gaza has been reduced to rubble and is a place where life is no longer possible.

This week, I met families of hostages, as I had done before during my previous visit to Israel. I saw their agony. Two weeks ago, I was on the border of Gaza. I heard the bombing behind me and saw large amounts of humanitarian aid supplies that could be life-saving but are not allowed to enter Gaza. It is difficult for me to add anything to what the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Lazzarini, said yesterday: Gaza is a place that horrifies even the most seasoned humanitarians. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to UNRWA, 222 of whose staff members have been killed.

The European Union continues to call for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, which is really needed. We support the United States, Qatar and Egypt in their ongoing efforts. As has already been said, the escalation in the region is driving it into the abyss of a full-blown war across the Blue Line and in the region. As we speak, bombs are again falling in Beirut. Civilians are paying an unbearable price. The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union, which I am proud to represent here, supports the French and American efforts for an urgent ceasefire in Lebanon and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by all parties. That is essential. But allow me to also recall that the resolution was adopted almost 20 years ago, and we are still asking for it to be implemented.

The West Bank as well, including East Jerusalem, is about to fall off a cliff. The European Union continues to condemn violence, terrorism of all kinds and settlement expansion. We have adopted sanctions on terrorist organizations such as Hamas, but also on some of the extremist settlers. As many have said — and I am sorry — the West Bank is becoming another Gaza. One can see the videos of bulldozers destroying roads, water supply systems and sewer systems — all in the name of fighting terrorism, of course.

Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese and all people deserve security and the protection of international law. For Israel's sake as well as for that of Palestinians, we need a strong, legitimate and effective Palestinian Authority. Therefore, we support its reform. On that basis, we provide emergency support worth €400 million. And we will work with key partners on further support.

Finally, it is vital to not just focus on the many crises of today. As my Norwegian friend said, we have to work to resolve the underlying conflict. Therefore, yesterday we co-hosted a high-level event with the League of Arab States — and I want to thank everyone who made the event possible — the contact group of the Organization of Islamic Cooperations and Norway, which I also thank very much, which was open to all United Nations Members without exclusion. Some decided not to go, but many did so. It was a big, constructive and positive event.

Under the chairship of Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia, we launched the global alliance for the implementation of the two-State solution — in fact, for the implementation of the Palestinian State, because the other State has already been implemented. Under its umbrella, all States and international organizations can bring together their practical measures to bring about a free Palestine next to a secure Israel. And I want to stress that we want the security of Israel. We Europeans ask for a free Palestine next to a secure Israel.

Taking responsibility means that we must not only say what we oppose: “I do not want this solution”. Okay, then what is your solution? If you do not want the two-State solution, what is the solution? Does someone know a better one that can be explained and implemented? We have to act if we want to achieve. We will do this work with the whole world, quickly, because every day costs lives. But in the end, it is up to Israelis and Palestinians to make their own peace. I know that both peoples experience this conflict as

an existential one. Both fear that the other wants to destroy them. The Israelis fear being thrown into the sea, and the Palestinians to be thrown into the desert. Extremist forces do their worst to fan the hate, the hate that killed Rabin. The same voices that were pushing for killing Rabin are now being heard again. All of us must help the two societies to speak with each other. Understanding the suffering of the other is certainly the most difficult challenge in a conflict, the most difficult thing to be done by people in conflict. But it has to be done. And we Europeans could perhaps provide an example: this has been done. Let nobody say that this is not the time for the two-State Solution. When was the right time? When will it be the right time? How many more people have to die before it is the right time?

The Palestinians are a people who refuse to die. And there is nothing more absurd than antisemitism. There is nothing more absurd than to hate and to kill a human being because they belong to another group, another ethnicity, or who professes another religion. Antisemitism has brought humankind the worst crimes. Therefore, do not let this word become banalized. We refuse any antisemitic approach to this problem.

On that basis, it is time to act. Let us go to work. The bombs continue falling. We are living in a world of resolutions, meetings and speeches. Outside of this Chamber, the real world is made of war; people are being killed; there is misery and hate. Let us make this world approach the real world. And let us make our world have the capacity to change it.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.