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Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Baeriswyl	(Switzerland)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Ms. Persaud
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	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 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to point out that the Security Council is a place of respect, and I request that, in their observations, that all speakers abide by the relevant rules with regard to time, language and content. I also underscore that, as a general rule, the Council encourages all participants — members and non-members alike — to keep their statement to under five minutes.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel, Mauritania and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Lazzarini.

Mr. Lazzarini: To my deep regret, one year after the abhorrent attacks against Israel and the catastrophic war on Gaza, no end is in sight to the brutal violence engulfing the region. It has been a year of profound loss and suffering, a year of dehumanization and barbarism. Hostages taken from Israel remain captive, with their families left in deep and prolonged distress. Gaza is unrecognizable — a sea of rubble, a graveyard for tens of thousands of people, including far too many children. Almost the entire population is displaced. People have

been forced to flee multiple times, searching for safety that does not exist. The latest developments in the north are especially alarming. Hundreds of thousands of people are again being pushed to move to the south, where living conditions are intolerable. And yet again, Gazans are teetering on the edge of a man-made famine.

Children in Gaza have not been spared. They have been killed, injured and orphaned in shocking numbers. More than 650,000 children are out of school, deeply traumatized and living in the rubble. They have already lost two years of learning. Palestinians are no strangers to loss. But for them to be dispossessed of education, which has always been a source of pride, is new. We cannot afford to lose an entire generation and sow the seeds of future hatred and extremism. That is why the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), beyond its life-saving operations, has resumed some learning activities in Gaza. Every day, we provide psychosocial services to thousands of children. We are building on those activities to help them read, write and do some basic arithmetic. Bringing children back to learning should be a collective and urgent priority.

UNRWA has also played a critical role in an emergency vaccination campaign against polio, which has returned to Gaza 25 years after eradication. Together with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, UNRWA vaccinated more than half a million children during short pauses in military activities. The second round of the campaign is planned for mid-October. We hope to succeed again. For that, we need sufficient political will.

Beyond Gaza, the West Bank is gripped by escalating violence. Nearly 700 people have been killed in the past year, among them were more than 160 children. Civilian life is becoming increasingly militarized, and settlement activity is expanding aggressively. The Israeli security forces routinely destroy public infrastructure during military operations, inflicting collective punishment on Palestinians.

Lebanon is the latest casualty of the widening conflict. Civilians are paying a heavy price. Air strikes by Israeli forces are killing and injuring thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands, while Hizbullah continues to attack Israel with rockets. UNRWA has opened 11 shelters in Lebanon, hosting more than 4,500 Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian displaced persons. The need for the Agency's services in Gaza,

the occupied West Bank and Lebanon has never been greater, and we have never been under fiercer attack.

The blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and the near-total breakdown of civil order is crippling the humanitarian response in Gaza. Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world for aid workers. Two hundred and twenty-six UNRWA personnel have been killed in 12 months. United Nations premises, including two thirds of UNRWA's buildings, have been damaged or destroyed. Our premises have also been used for military purposes by Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas and the Israeli security forces. Humanitarian aid convoys are looted by armed gangs and obstructed by Israeli soldiers defying their own chain of command. Without a lasting ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and unfettered humanitarian access, the aid operation will collapse, plunging 2 million people into chaos.

In the broader occupied Palestinian territory, the Agency's operational space is shrinking. Senior Israeli officials have described destroying UNRWA as a war goal. Legislation to end our operations is ready for final adoption by the Israeli Knesset. It seeks to ban UNRWA's presence and operations in the territory of Israel, revoking its privileges and immunities, in violation of international law. If the bills are adopted, the consequences will be severe.

Operationally, the entire humanitarian response in Gaza, which rests on UNRWA's infrastructure, may disintegrate. Coordination with Israel would cease, further disrupting the provision of shelter, food and healthcare to people in desperate need as winter approaches. More than 650,000 children would lose any hope of resuming their education and an entire generation would be sacrificed. In the West Bank, the delivery of education, primary healthcare and emergency aid to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees would grind to a halt.

Legally, the Knesset legislation violates Israel's obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It defies the will of the international community expressed through General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) on UNRWA, and it deepens violations recognized by the International Court of Justice.

Politically, the anti-UNRWA legislation, which is part of a broader campaign to dismantle the Agency, seeks to strip Palestinians of their refugee status

and change unilaterally the parameters for a future political solution.

Those attacks set a grave precedent for other conflict situations in which Governments may wish to eliminate an inconvenient United Nations presence. They target not just UNRWA, but any individual or entity calling for compliance with international law and a peaceful political solution. Failing to push back against attempts to intimidate and undermine the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territory will eventually compromise humanitarian and human rights work worldwide.

The Council must decide to which extent it will tolerate acts that strike at the heart of multilateralism and compromise international peace and security. The climate of impunity that prevails will not dissipate without decisive action. We can uphold the Charter of the United Nations and enforce international law, including the Geneva Conventions and the decisions of international courts, without exception. Or we can concede that the post-Second World War rules-based international order is at an end. The devastation of the past year should pull us back from the brink of creating dangerous new norms of warfare and reneging on our decades-long commitment to Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA is an integral part of the United Nations, which anchors the multilateral system. I urge Council members to shield that United Nations Agency from efforts to end its mandate arbitrarily and prematurely in the absence of a long-promised political solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lazzarini for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

Ms. Doughten: I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to update them on the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The past year has brought unimaginable suffering. It has been one year since the horrendous attack by Hamas and other armed groups in Israel. And rockets continue to be fired indiscriminately into Israel. Few times in recent history have we witnessed suffering and destruction of the size, scale and scope that we see in Gaza.

In the past year, the Council has been briefed repeatedly on the horror unfolding in Gaza, at least monthly on average. Once again, we find ourselves

at a critical juncture. Unfortunately, much of what I am about to say mirrors what we reported a month ago (see S/PV.9717). Widespread suffering persists while the humanitarian situation worsens. The recent evacuation orders issued by Israeli authorities for large areas of northern Gaza, along with intensified ground operations, risk more death, destruction and yet another mass displacement of civilians. Once again, utter chaos ensues as the world watches on.

Before we turn to the situation, we express deep concern about the ongoing legislation to stop the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That would be disastrous for the provision of aid and essential services to millions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Nearly every one of the more than 2 million people in Gaza receives some form of aid or service provision from UNRWA, along with nearly 1 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank. If approved, such legislation would be diametrically opposed to the Charter of the United Nations and in violation of Israel's obligations under international law.

Over the past year, relentless Israeli-issued displacement orders have affected almost 84 per cent of Gaza's territory. Approximately 90 per cent of Gaza's population is internally displaced. Hundreds of thousands of people are being pressured to move south to Al-Mawasi, but southern Gaza cannot accommodate more people. In Al-Mawasi — where civilians were told to go — 12 Palestinians were reportedly killed and at least 26 others injured when two tents were struck in the camp at Al-Mawasi on 1 October.

Evacuation orders are meant to protect civilians, but the exact opposite is happening. As we have said so many times, there is no safe place in Gaza. Three of the 10 partially functional hospitals in the north have been ordered to evacuate all patients without providing alternatives for relocating them. We have not been able to get fuel to other hospitals in the north. There has been no electricity since October last year. Without electricity or fuel for the generators, everything shuts down: medical facilities, water, sanitation and other essential services. And bakeries are closing, deepening the already high levels of food insecurity.

As the conflict persists, civilians must have the essentials for their survival. They must be allowed to seek protection. Those displaced must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return.

Severe impediments on the entry of essential commercial supplies and humanitarian access continue. For instance, in September, humanitarian workers spent a total of 212 hours — nearly 9 days' worth of waiting — to receive a green light from Israeli authorities to undertake life-saving missions. And in the past week, there have been no humanitarian movements to the north, while both land crossings have been closed for supplies entering Zikim and Erez. The north of Gaza has been cut off, putting at risk the second round of the polio vaccination campaign, scheduled for mid-October. Furthermore, essential commercial supplies entering Gaza have drastically reduced in the past week.

In recent days, on average 50 truckloads of goods enter each day — quantities that do not begin to meet the needs. Humanitarian assistance cannot be a substitute for the flow of commercial goods, and vice-versa. Aid workers are able to deliver only a trickle of humanitarian aid through Israeli checkpoints. Those are life-threatening restrictions. People are traumatized, hungry, digging with their bare hands in rubble for their loved ones. They are increasingly frustrated about the international community's failure to stop the hostilities. And, as the situation worsens, the anger is being increasingly directed at humanitarian workers.

The lack of adequate humanitarian access means that food insecurity and diseases are spreading fast. The severe lack of shelter supplies is likely to worsen health conditions and further undermine the dignity of vulnerable populations, potentially leading to life-threatening conditions this coming winter.

Humanitarian partners report that women and children are hard-hit by the trauma of this war. According to UNRWA, each day 10 children lose one or both of their legs. Gaza is home to the largest cohort of child amputees in modern history. Women are three times more likely to miscarry and three times more likely to die from childbirth. And yet humanitarians are not giving up.

We also remain deeply concerned about the worsening situation in the West Bank. Over the past year, Israeli military operations, along with rampant settler violence and house demolitions, have led to a sharp rise in fatalities, widespread destruction and forced displacement.

Just last week, on 4 October, 18 Palestinians, including women and children, were killed in an air

strike on a residential building in the Tulkarm refugee camp. This was the single deadliest incident carried out by Israeli forces in the West Bank since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began systematically documenting casualties in 2005.

In the West Bank, the use of lethal force must comply with international human rights law and the standards governing law enforcement. Tactics typically used during hostilities in armed conflict raise concerns about the excessive use of force. We urge full respect for international law and compliance with the determinations of the International Court of Justice. Maximum influence must be exerted to alleviate the suffering of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We cannot claim ignorance to what is happening, and neither can we afford to look away. That is why we repeat our calls for the Security Council and Member States to take action. That includes ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law by exerting necessary pressure and cooperating in pursuing accountability for international crimes. It means ensuring that all hostages are released. It means ensuring civilians are protected and their essential needs for survival met, wherever they are, whether they can evacuate or not. It means ensuring that humanitarian operations are protected and facilitated, including in accordance with the provisional orders of the International Court of Justice, for all civilians in need.

Urgent diplomatic efforts are needed to de-escalate the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and to prevent a wider regional descent into bloodshed. Member States must take steps to achieve an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a path towards sustainable peace. These atrocities must end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Doughten for her briefing.

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I would like to express my gratitude to the Swiss presidency for swiftly organizing this meeting at the request of Slovenia and my own country, Algeria. I also thank Mr. Philippe Lazzarini and Ms. Lisa Doughten for their briefings, which highlight the horrifying consequences of a merciless Israeli war machine that has spared no one in Gaza and is now extending its brutality into Lebanon.

Massacres and killings have tragically become a daily reality in Gaza, and they continue unabated. In Gaza, more than 42,000 people have been killed — 60 per cent of them women and children — and nearly 100,000 people have been injured, some of them now handicapped for the rest of their life. Shockingly, 6 per cent of Gaza's population has been killed or wounded in the past year alone. In Gaza, the Israeli military has annihilated 900 families, erasing them entirely from the civil registry. In Gaza, at least 17,000 children are unaccompanied, fully separated from their parents. They represent almost 1 per cent of the 2 million displaced people, nearly the entire population of Gaza.

In Gaza, 60 per cent of buildings and infrastructure have been destroyed. Gaza's cities now resemble ghost towns in apocalyptic scenes that are horrifyingly real. This is not a military operation against Palestinian military factions or Palestinian terrorists; it is a war against the Palestinian people themselves.

And the situation in the West Bank is not better, with continued illegal settlement activity and unprecedented annexation of Palestinian land. Last year was also the deadliest in the West Bank since the second intifada, which took place at the beginning of the century. The Israeli occupying Power's aim is clear: to push Palestinians out of their homeland, in keeping with the sinister goal of having no Palestinian west of the Jordan.

Yesterday the Israeli military threatened to forcibly remove patients, displaced persons and medical staff from Kamal Adwan Hospital, Al-Awda Hospital and the Indonesian hospital in northern Gaza. This comes in the context of the brutal military campaign Israel is waging against the Palestinian people in northern Gaza. It is a blatant violation of international law and international humanitarian law, and it is a criminal attempt to implement the displacement plans pursued by the occupying authorities. Is this how international humanitarian law treats patients and medical personnel? Is this the protection afforded under the Geneva Conventions?

The longer the international community turns a blind eye and remains silent in the face of these crimes, the more Israel's tyranny and arrogance grow. Silence has become more than mere complicity; it is now active participation in those crimes.

As we witness this barbarity, we must acknowledge that it is a glimpse into the future — a future world

devoid of morality, humanity and international norms. As we, the Security Council, failed to hold the Israeli occupier accountable, it became emboldened, believing itself to be above the law. Those who today remain silent about or try to justify what happened cannot claim to defend the rule of law tomorrow, because there will be no law, except the law of the jungle.

Despite the immense suffering, the occupying Power is not satisfied with the immediate devastation of Palestinian land. It is seeking to kill the Palestinians in Gaza slowly, through famine and starvation. It has tightened the blockade, restricting humanitarian aid. In September, according to the figures of the United Nations, only 52 trucks entered Gaza per day, down from more than 500 before October 2023. That is the lowest rate since November 2023. Meanwhile, 96 per cent of the population in Gaza faces crisis levels of food insecurity or worse. That is a deliberate act. The success of the polio vaccination campaign in Gaza demonstrates that, when the occupying Power commits, the scaling up of humanitarian efforts becomes possible.

The Special Rapporteur on the right to food is called Mr. Michael Fakhri. In his recent report (A/79/171), he detailed how Israel has weaponized starvation as part of its genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people. Security Council resolutions clearly prohibit using starvation as a method of warfare. It is a war crime, and the Council must act decisively to preserve what remains of its credibility. It is time to impose a ceasefire in Gaza.

Amid this catastrophe, the occupier has not spared humanitarian personnel — 222 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been killed, and two thirds of UNRWA's premises have been damaged or destroyed. Moreover, the occupier has advanced bills halting UNRWA operations. UNRWA is the witness of the international community's failure to uphold the rights of Palestinians and the backbone of humanitarian action in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in Gaza. For years, the Israeli authorities have made clear their will and desire to dismantle UNRWA because it symbolizes the Palestinian refugees and their inalienable rights. We reiterate that the rights of Palestinian refugees are not subject to statutes of limitations and are guaranteed by international law, which cannot be tailored to fit the occupier's agenda. The fate of the refugees must be, and

will be, decided by the refugees themselves, not by the occupying Power.

In conclusion, military force will not bring security or stability. The occupation will not last. Security in the Middle East can be reached only through achieving the Palestinian people's rights and ending the occupation of Arab lands. The Security Council should endeavour to make that goal a reality. If we do not act now, the Middle East will be engulfed in an unprecedented war.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I also want to thank Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Director Doughten for their briefings, sobering as always, as was to be expected.

A year ago, we woke up to shocking news from Israel. The events left us confused, and it took days for us to understand them. I take this opportunity to once again firmly condemn the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages. Slovenia is outraged by the terror committed that day by Hamas. Our thoughts have been with the hostages and their families every day of the past year. These days, we feel their pain even more. What unfolded in Gaza in the days, weeks and months after those events, however, is equally shocking. We fail to understand how the Israeli response to a terrorist attack can result in the indiscriminate, collateral killing of more than 40,000 civilians, most of whom were women and children. We firmly believe that the international community must do better in its response to such atrocities.

Over the past few months, the Security Council has spent countless hours in briefings, assessments of the situation and debates about possible solutions. Our calls for respect for international law — the foundation of international order — and for our resolutions remain ignored. People in Gaza are left without homes, hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure. They face repeated evacuation orders, without the possibility of finding safe shelters. They are denied access to life-saving humanitarian aid. Challenges related to the humanitarian space in Gaza are so complex that, even after one year of war, we cannot summarize them comprehensively. We hear calls from humanitarian workers for more decisive action from the Council. They say that only a ceasefire will enable humanitarian organizations to adequately address the tragedy in Gaza. And we agree. I think that the Council agrees. We should continue to call and take action for compliance with our demand for a ceasefire. However, while demanding compliance with our resolutions, we

continue to bear responsibility for easing the pain of civilians in Gaza.

We know that the tragic humanitarian situation of Palestinians will not magically disappear even once we achieve a ceasefire. A ceasefire will not automatically remove obstacles to humanitarian access. Gaza will not be safe until public order is restored. The territory of Gaza is littered with unexploded bombs, which put civilians at risk, in particular children. Reconstruction will last for decades. The lack of opportunity for social and economic recovery is an excellent breeding ground for hatred, division and extremism. We have seen that in multiple situations in the past. We should move forward with our reflections about what needs to change in order for the peoples of the region to live in peace and security for once.

Attacks on the United Nations are unacceptable. It was Member States that created the United Nations, and it is precisely the United Nations that has protected what was left of humanity in Gaza. It does the work on our behalf and carries the burden of our failures. Attacks on the United Nations are unprecedented. On the ground, people, assets and premises clearly marked as belonging to the United Nations are being hit. Equally alarming are attempts to dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides essential support to Palestinian refugees. We stand by the Shared Commitments on UNRWA, which are supported by 123 States Members of the United Nations, including all members of the Council. It is clear that the role and mandate of UNRWA must be protected. UNRWA is a lifeline for Palestinians in Gaza, without which, in the words of the Commissioner-General, the entire humanitarian response in Gaza might collapse. Attacks on the Secretary-General are unacceptable. As a Member State of the Organization and in line with its Charter, Slovenia stands by the work being carried out under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

Finally, the situation in Gaza has evolved into a threat to international peace and security. That is no longer an assumption or a risk. It has happened. It is a fact. Conflicts are spreading like an inferno across the Middle East region — an inferno that we must stop. More wars will not bring peace and security. More wars will not bring Israeli hostages home to their families. It is time to stop the wars, to bring the hostages home and to end the suffering of the civilians in the Middle East.

We call for an immediate, all-out regional ceasefire and for all parties to return to the path of diplomacy.

The world cannot forget Gaza. The Council cannot forget Gaza. And, first and foremost, we cannot forget that we bear the primary responsibility for international peace and security.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Director Doughten for their briefings.

I also want to take a moment to welcome the appointment of Tom Fletcher as the new Emergency Relief Coordinator and note how important it is for all of us to work very closely with him.

This Monday marked one year since Hamas perpetrated a horrific terror attack in Israel, murdering 1,200 innocent people, taking 200 individuals hostage, leaving their families clinging to hope and setting in motion this horrific situation. It is one year since Hamas unleashed a conflict that, despite our extensive diplomatic efforts, continues to inflict tremendous suffering and pain on the Palestinian civilians in Gaza and to destabilize the region.

Tens of thousands have been killed in a conflict that they did not start and cannot stop. Civilians have been displaced over and over again by the fighting. Parents do not know where they will get their next meal or if they will find a safe place for their babies to sleep. There are children whose earliest memories — whose only memories — are the sights and sounds of war and who are orphaned, injured and traumatized. And there are hostages who continue to struggle to stay alive in the squalor and darkness of Hamas' tunnels.

It is far past time for a hostage and ceasefire deal consistent with resolution 2735 (2024) in order to bring the hostages home, allow for a surge in humanitarian aid, ensure Israel's security in this war and move towards a two-State solution. But as we push for that deal, we must also continue to work to alleviate the humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes. For let us be clear: conditions are catastrophic and will further deteriorate if additional steps are not taken. Indeed, all parties must meet their responsibilities under resolution 2720 (2023). The flow of humanitarian aid through multiple border crossings to Palestinian civilians is desperately needed and must be allowed. To that end, we welcome the Council's extension of Senior Coordinator Kaag's reporting mandate. That will help ensure that

we have accurate, unfiltered information, including information about obstacles to aid deliveries.

As Senior Coordinator Kaag said, just the other week, United Nations humanitarian personnel are pursuing life-saving work. Through their efforts, we have seen some progress, most notably with the polio vaccination campaign carried out with the help of the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That was a textbook example of what the United Nations can accomplish when it has willing partners on the ground. We need and expect the same level of coordination to extend to other urgent humanitarian efforts, including efforts to provide displaced Palestinian civilians with the food, water and resources they need to cope with the coming winter.

The United States is concerned by the situation in northern Gaza, including the announcement by Israel of a new evacuation order for several communities. We are particularly concerned that Palestinian civilians have nowhere safe to go. Already there are devastating reports of the squalid conditions in the humanitarian zone in southern and central Gaza, where more than 1.5 million displaced civilians have fled. Those catastrophic conditions were predicted months ago, and yet they have still not been addressed. That must change. And we now call on Israel to take urgent steps to do so. And I reiterate the United States expectation that Palestinian civilians, including those evacuated from the north, be permitted to return to their communities and rebuild. Consistent with resolution 2735 (2024), there must be no demographic or territorial change in the Gaza Strip, including any actions that reduce the territory of Gaza.

We are also concerned by recent action by the Israeli Government to limit the delivery of goods into Gaza. When combined with new bureaucratic limits placed on humanitarian goods arriving from Jordan and the closure of most border crossings in recent weeks, those restrictions would only have the effect of intensifying suffering in Gaza. We need to see fewer barriers to the delivery of aid, not more of them.

In that same spirit, we are following with deep concern the Israeli legislative proposal that could alter UNRWA's legal status, hindering its ability to communicate with Israeli officials and removing privileges and immunities afforded to United Nations organizations and personnel around the globe. That

legislative proposal reflects the significant distrust between Israel and UNRWA. Israel has alleged, and the United Nations in some cases has confirmed, that a small percentage of UNRWA employees have ties to Hamas and other terrorist groups. Israel has also conveyed concerns about Hamas misusing UNRWA facilities, and the United States shares those concerns. At the same time, we know that United Nations personnel, including from UNRWA, are vital to the humanitarian response in Gaza and face tremendous danger while performing their work. Therefore, Israel needs to provide UNRWA with additional information regarding those allegations, and UNRWA needs to have in place a process to address those concerns seriously and urgently and make faster progress on the much-needed reforms outlined in the Colonna report. Simply put, it is in no one's interest for the neutrality of UNRWA's personnel to remain in doubt.

The challenges we have faced implementing resolution 2720 (2023) and other related humanitarian resolutions reflect a simple reality: Security Council meetings and resolutions alone will not end the suffering. But the Council can and must continue to support efforts on the ground by United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations. And we can and must continue to pressure Hamas to accept the deal on the table. That must be our charge.

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): I thank Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Director Doughten for the information provided.

One year into Israel's war on Gaza, the humanitarian situation has reached the depths of illegality, immorality and indecency. Amid a mountain of rubble, 2 million people are battling to survive. Gaza is both the most dangerous place for aid workers and the most dangerous place to be a child. The enclave now teems with the wounded, the diseased and the starved, as well as the displaced. If ever there were a crisis that the Council needed to address with urgency, it is the war in Gaza.

When the world learned of the brutal Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, condemnations were swift, and rightly so. Guyana maintains that there is no justification for the horrors that the people of Israel were forced to endure on that day. And we reiterate our strong condemnation of the 7 October attack on Israel. We condemn the infiltration of Israel's sovereign territory, the killing and injuring of innocent civilians and the taking of hostages. Guyana further reiterates its

calls for the release of all hostages and for accountability for all the crimes perpetrated on 7 October.

As Israel's response to the 7 October attack unfolded, the world was stunned by the brutality of the response and by the complete disregard for every tenet of international law, including international humanitarian law. The response continues to be characterized by the bombing of hospitals, schools, shelters, homes and other civilian infrastructure. It is characterized by incessant evacuation orders to civilians while bombing them as they move, bombing them while they are in shelters and bombing them even if they choose not to move. Humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel operate at great personal risk since they do not have the life-saving cover of functioning deconfliction and coordination mechanisms.

Guyana reiterates its condemnation of the illegalities that continue to be perpetrated in Palestine. We condemn the ongoing violations of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the resolutions of the Security Council and the orders of the International Court of Justice. We call on Israel and all other parties in the war to abide by the rule of law and to prioritize the protection of civilians.

As we contemplate the long-term prospects for the people of Gaza on account of the war, there are some extremely troubling realities that we must confront. For example, the war will set children and young people's education back by up to five years and has created a generation of permanently traumatized Palestinian youth. The implications of that setback for development cannot be overemphasized, neither should we underestimate the challenges that will be encountered as a result of the trauma that the war has created. Time is not enough to speak of the herculean task that reconstruction would involve and of the intense amount of resources that would be required.

The question of justice must also concern us. In Guyana's view, justice entails both accountability and redress. To be comprehensive, justice must reach beyond 7 October 2023 to May 1948. It must address the millions of Palestinians and their generations of children who have been gradually pushed off their lands, with many born as refugees and many who also died as refugees. Justice demands that those wrongs not only be acknowledged but also be corrected and that Palestinians are restored what is rightfully theirs. There should be no compromises on that point.

The question of the United Nations legitimacy must also concern us. The war has revealed staggering levels of impunity by Israel, whose actions have cut at the very core of what the Organization stands for. The Council and the General Assembly have been subjected to all sorts of vitriolic indignities over the past year. And we now watch as the Israeli Knesset prepares to brand the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) a terrorist organization. The backbone of the humanitarian operations in Gaza continues to operate with a sword of Damocles dangling over its head. The United Nations and all peace-loving and moral countries must not allow Israel to shutter UNRWA and, with it, life-saving support for millions of Palestinians. Let us act now to safeguard the purposes and principles of this Organization.

The history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has shown that seeds sown in blood cannot produce plants of peace and security. On the contrary, they produce weeds of fear, of turmoil, of chaos, of insecurity and of injustice and a constant looking over the shoulder, unsure of when the next bullet or bomb or rocket or stone will be used to perpetuate the cycle of violence. Israel must seek the only true path to peace — dialogue towards the two-State solution. Anything less is an injustice to its own citizens who live in the shadows of war and with a very fragile sense of security.

Allow me to issue three important calls.

First, the Council must take action to turn the tide on the ground. We cannot suspend our responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and hope that others will carry it out for us. Let us be united in the effort to halt the suffering across the Middle East in a war that is consuming Palestine's children. Guyana therefore reiterates its demand for a ceasefire and is ready to work with the Council to ensure that a ceasefire is achieved.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation, purely human-made, is a shock to the human conscience. Civilians in Gaza desperately need our intervention and not just with our resolutions or press statements. They need tangible action on the ground to secure urgent relief and permanent peace. Guyana therefore calls on the Council to enact measures that would deliver peace both in the short and long term.

Finally, Guyana reiterates its appeal for the prioritization of all civilian lives. That includes

Palestinian civilians detained in Israeli prisons without charge, persons taken hostage from Israel on 7 October, the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced across the Gaza Strip, innocent civilians in Lebanon and the Israeli citizens themselves. The actions of the parties to this war, including Israel, clearly demonstrate that no priority is being given to the lives of civilians.

I conclude by underscoring the need for urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and end the ongoing violence in the Middle East. Guyana is prepared to do its part to that end.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, and Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Lisa Doughten, for their briefings.

This Monday marked the first anniversary of the brutal terrorist attacks launched by Hamas against Israel. We have to keep in mind that more than 100 hostages are still held by Hamas in Gaza. These heinous acts must be unequivocally condemned, and the hostages must be released immediately.

However, as repeatedly pointed out, the terrorist attacks by Hamas do not provide any legitimate ground for another party's violation of any international norms, including international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions. Civilians must be protected, humanitarian aid must not be hindered and Council resolutions, including resolution 2735 (2024), should be implemented without delay.

In that regard, we are extremely worried, once again, about the recent enormous evacuation order issued by the Israel Defense Forces, combined with the reopening of massive military operations in northern Gaza, which used to be the most populous area in the Strip. Gaza is not a chess board, and neither are the civilians who remain there chess pieces.

When the current situation broke out one year ago, no one could assume that the armed conflict in Gaza would last for so long. Unfortunately, we are now witnessing the most unfavourable scenario in the Middle East. Indeed, Israel's ongoing bombardment and ground operations are deepening the unspeakable suffering of Palestinians in Gaza, and Hamas is still firing rockets. Destruction and violence are also

rampant in the West Bank, with an incessant expansion of Israeli settlements.

The dangerous spillover to Lebanon has become a dire reality, threatening not only Lebanese citizens, but also the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Houthi attacks in the Red Sea are intensifying. Iran's large-scale missile attacks against Israel and ensuing fears over massive retaliatory attacks by Israel are dragging the entire region into total despair. But let us be clear: short-term military victory will not deliver long-term peace.

Underlying the current conflict is intergenerational trauma, alongside long-lasting hatred and distrust. And now, we are witnessing a grave situation where such resentment and hatred are deepening and intensifying across the region and even point to United Nations institutions, including the Secretary-General and UNRWA.

We are extremely concerned about the bills advancing in the Knesset aiming to ban UNRWA's activities. Final approval for those bills would have a devastating impact on Palestinians — with no UNRWA, no deconfliction, no humanitarian activities and no health or educational services. That must not happen.

The Republic of Korea reiterates its support for the two-State solution, which enjoys the firm backing of the vast majority of United Nations Member States. If any party believes that the two-State solution is not a viable path, it will have to suggest a better alternative to guarantee durable peace in the Middle East. If there is no such alternative, no one should irreversibly destroy the basic conditions to realize this common goal for a brighter future for all.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Director Doughten and Commissioner-General Lazzarini for their briefings.

We, too, wish to extend our congratulations to Mr. Tom Fletcher on his appointment as the Emergency Relief Coordinator and, again, to pay tribute to Mr. Martin Griffiths for his outstanding service and to thank Ms. Joyce Msuya for her leadership over this period of transition. Now more than ever, we need strong voices to speak up for the humanitarian community, and we look forward to working with Mr. Fletcher and his team.

This week marked a sobering milestone. We are now one year on from the events of 7 October 2023

and Hamas' brutal terrorist attack against Israel — the darkest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust. As my Prime Minister has said, we honour those lost, and we continue in our determination to ensure the return of those still held hostage.

Sadly, the anguish did not end on 7 October. Each and every day since then, we have seen civilians suffer on a dreadful scale. We call upon Hamas and Israel to agree on a ceasefire deal that would see the release of the hostages, more aid entering Gaza and an opportunity to begin the work of reconstruction and progress towards a Palestinian State. We also call upon Hamas to stop endangering civilians.

With the conflict now having spread into Lebanon, we reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hizbullah and Israel and for diplomacy to take the place of violence.

While we continue to push for regional de-escalation, it is vital that we do not lose sight of the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Almost 42,000 people have been killed, according to Palestinian health officials. The majority of critical civilian infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, and civilians live in constant fear of air strikes. More women and children have now been killed this year in Gaza than in any other global conflict in the past two decades.

Despite Israel's commitment to flood Gaza with aid, the number of humanitarian trucks entering Gaza last month was the lowest we have seen since the start of the year. That is unacceptable and must be addressed immediately. Restrictions imposed by Israel have also led to significant drops in the flow of commercial goods, and those shortages are driving looting and attacks on aid convoys. Humanitarian aid is therefore not reaching those who need it most, particularly in northern Gaza, which is at risk of being completely cut off. As winter approaches, it is critical that Israel take action to avoid that. As we have repeatedly said in the Council, Israel must do much more to avoid civilian casualties and to ensure that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners can operate safely and effectively.

We are concerned about any efforts to undermine the United Nations or UNRWA, which plays an indispensable role. The United Kingdom fully supports the Secretary-General, UNRWA and the wider United Nations as they seek to secure peace through diplomacy and help the people of the Middle East. That is why my Government restored funding to UNRWA, in

order to support its vital work and to implement the recommendations of the Colonna report.

What the people of Gaza need more than anything is an immediate ceasefire. We urge Israel and Hamas to return to the table and secure a deal that would achieve that. As my Prime Minister has said, the United Kingdom will not falter in our pursuit of peace and our determination to secure a better future for the region.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lazzarini and Ms. Doughten for their briefings.

One year after the start of the war in Gaza, the scale of the catastrophe has reached unprecedented levels. Eighty per cent of civilian infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed. All hospitals have been hit, and none is fully functional. Famine has set in. The entire population has been displaced, often multiple times. The most recent evacuation orders issued by the Israeli army, which affect the entire population of northern Gaza, are extremely worrisome. France wishes to reiterate its categorical opposition to any forced displacement of the population.

De-confliction is ineffective. The delivery of assistance is hampered, and humanitarian personnel are under the constant threat of gunfire. Almost 300 of them have lost their lives. Everyone must respect international humanitarian law, including Israel. The delivery of aid must be safe, complete and unimpeded. In that context, aid cannot be delivered without the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). France reiterates its support for the Agency, which has played an essential role in the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria for 75 years. France calls on Israel to abandon its plans to criminalize the Agency's activities and close its offices in East Jerusalem. It calls on the Israeli authorities to respect their international obligations to UNRWA and the United Nations. Obstacles to the work of humanitarian personnel, including visa refusals, must be removed.

On Monday, we commemorated the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023. France has consistently condemned those attacks. The Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs visited Israel on the occasion of the commemoration. He reiterated France's unwavering commitment to Israel's security. However, in the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon, a ceasefire must be achieved immediately. Arms deliveries, the prolongation of the war and its extension to Lebanon

will not produce the security expected by Israelis and everyone in the region. A ceasefire is the only way to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis, as the Secretary-General recalled yesterday. In Gaza, the war must stop now. The hostages must be released without delay. The Council has demanded that through resolution 2735 (2024).

We must at last and without delay work towards a political solution and the establishment of a Palestinian State. France supports a reformed Palestinian Authority, capable of exercising its responsibilities over the entire Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.

We strongly call for Israel to cease its massive strikes in Lebanon and for Hizbullah to cease firing at Israel. Civilians, whether Lebanese or Israeli, must not be targeted under any circumstances. France is mobilized. It is organizing an international conference in support of Lebanon on 24 October in Paris.

We must develop the solutions necessary for the security of Israel and everyone in the Middle East without delay. France is determined to contribute to those solutions.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Algeria and Slovenia for requesting this meeting and Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Ms. Doughten for their briefings.

Since October 2023, the Gaza conflict and the situation in the Middle East have been at the forefront of the Security Council's work. Yet the situation has not improved so far. Instead, it has continued to deteriorate. Two million people in Gaza are struggling under the blockade and fire, and one out of every 50 people has suffered a violent death. The authority of international law seems to exist in name only for certain States, and the bottom line of international humanitarian law has been repeatedly broken.

The occurrence of such a tragedy is unimaginable and unbelievable in the twenty-first century. Like many Council members, China is shocked, disappointed and outraged. However, we do not believe that the Palestinian people are destined to suffer. And neither do we believe that the Council as a collective has exhausted all efforts to maintain peace. We cannot accept that death and hunger have become the new normal in Gaza. Gaza is already a hell on Earth. Humanitarian aid gives people there hope for survival. The role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is indispensable and irreplaceable.

China firmly opposes Israel's smearing and suppression of UNRWA and is gravely concerned about the relevant Knesset bills targeting the Agency. We urge Israel to stop weaponizing humanitarian assistance, to lift the blockade of Gaza and the restrictions on humanitarian access and to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

We cannot allow the conflict to drag on and expand. And neither can we sit back and watch the entire Middle East plunge into all-out war. The harsh reality has proved that winning a war does not necessarily mean having peace, that military might alone cannot guarantee lasting security and that the obsession with force creates only more killing and hatred. Israel must cease all military operations in Gaza and put an end to the collective punishment of the Gazan people. The intensified settlement activities and violence in the West Bank were a de facto obliteration of the foundations of the two-State solution and must stop immediately. Lebanon must not become the next Gaza. China calls on all parties to exercise restraint and achieve a ceasefire. We urge Israel in particular to stop taking actions that would further escalate the situation.

We cannot ignore the marginalization of the Council. There is broad consensus among the vast majority of Council members on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. After repeated vetoes of the Council's demand for an immediate ceasefire, the United States put forward a ceasefire initiative in May, claiming that Israel had accepted it and requesting the Council's support for an agreement through diplomatic talks. However, over the past five months, the so-called diplomatic efforts have seemed to be going in circles, and more time and patience have led to greater civilian casualties and more reckless military adventurism. It is necessary to take a deep look at the current impasse and reaffirm some self-evident principles.

Security Council resolutions are binding for all States, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, and there is no room for distortion or interpretation in that regard. The implementation of international humanitarian law is a non-negotiable obligation and cannot be used as a bargaining chip. The principles of international law are universally applicable to all States. Double standards and selective applications would set a terrible precedent, with wide-ranging negative consequences. We certainly cannot lose faith in genuine diplomacy. To that end, we strongly urge the country concerned to put saving lives first,

show political will, take an impartial stand, give up its political calculations and exert all available influence on the relevant party. At the same time, we support the Council in utilizing all options in its toolbox to take further action to end the war and restore peace as soon as possible.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to thank the representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for their briefings and to reiterate my country's appreciation for the work of the United Nations and its agencies and its support for their demanding and indispensable work.

One year and two days have passed since the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and other militant groups, in which some 1,200 people were killed in southern Israel, thousands were injured and 250 were kidnapped, of whom 100 are still being held. The atrocities committed that day, including sexual violence, and the fate of the hostages cannot be forgotten and pass without condemnation.

It is deplorable and incomprehensible that, one year on from those acts of terror, which are the direct cause of the war that has devastated the Gaza Strip, the Security Council has been incapable of issuing a clear condemnation of those acts and the perpetrators. As we did one year ago and will continue to do, Ecuador yet again condemns the terrorist acts and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still under the control of Hamas.

Ecuador recognizes the inherent right to self-defence that vests in Member States of the United Nations in the event of any armed attack, but we underline that that right must be exercised pursuant to the terms laid down in Article 51 of the Charter.

The civilian population of Gaza has had to endure the consequences of one year of this war, which has left tens of thousands of people dead or wounded, including women and children, who are the ones bearing the brunt of the conflict. The violence must end now. The fighting, the bombing, the rocket fire and the acts of terrorism that continue to jeopardize the lives and integrity of innocent civilians must end. It is vital to consider that the observance of the rules of international humanitarian law is not optional for any of the parties involved in this conflict. Non-compliance incurs grave international responsibility that cannot be disregarded.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza, as we have heard, is catastrophic. Thousands of civilians are suffering the consequences of the conflict, as they face shortages of food, water, medicines and essential services, such as children's education. The crisis demands not only an urgent response, but also the ongoing commitment of the international community to alleviating the suffering and safeguarding fundamental human rights. The four resolutions adopted by the Council have not been implemented. Implementation must happen now, without delay or excuse. An agreement must be implemented to allow for an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages and the influx of sufficient and timely humanitarian aid. Now is the time for bold political decisions that prioritize the common good. Now is the time to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and respect the organizations that are helping them. Any action aimed at obstructing or impeding the work of the United Nations agencies providing such humanitarian assistance is alarming and dangerous.

The ultimate resolution of this conflict will not be achieved by force. Nearly eight decades of unsuccessful attempts down that road should suffice. I have said so many times before and so I say again on this occasion: the only way out is to move towards a negotiated, peaceful, final and just solution for the parties, with the existence of two States — Palestine and Israel — on the basis of the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions. Only then will both peoples be able to live in dignity and security.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Algeria and Slovenia for convening today's meeting to discuss the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We also thank the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their objective and honest assessments of the unprecedented catastrophe in the occupied Palestinian territory, where the Israel Defense Forces have been conducting a military operation for a year now.

Russia has unequivocally condemned the acts Hamas perpetrated against inhabitants of border areas of Israel on 7 October 2023, when they killed civilians and took hostage women, elderly persons and children. To our profound disappointment, one year on, approximately 100 people remain in captivity. The

necessary diplomatic efforts required by the decisions of the Security Council are not being made to secure their release. The victims include Russian citizens. We believe that there is no, and neither can there be, any justification for those terrorist methods and that the violence against peaceful Israelis and Palestinians alike is unacceptable.

Nonetheless, all who still have a sense of compassion are outraged at the fact that this tragedy has already been exploited for one year in order to inflict inhumane, massive collective punishment on the Palestinians, who are confronting a humanitarian catastrophe unprecedented since the Second World War. The toll stands at close to 42,000 dead — mainly women and children — close to 100,000 wounded or missing and 2 million internally displaced. Such is the toll taken by the stubbornness of the Israeli leadership and West Jerusalem's American allies, who are preventing the Security Council from ending this depraved cycle of violence.

The territory of the Strip has become the world's largest open-air prison, as it comes under massive bombardment and shelling on a daily basis, with no safe place left for civilians in Gaza. Civilian infrastructure is being deliberately destroyed, and emergency aid to the civilian populations is being blocked. Humanitarian convoys are fired upon before the eyes of the international community. In total, more than 300 aid workers have been killed — 226 of them UNRWA staff. At the same time, bloody operations by the Israeli military continue in the West Bank, with the local population clashing with settlers. Just yesterday, in a raid by security forces on the Kalandia refugee camp, a 12-year-old Palestinian was killed, at least eight people were wounded and at least 45 were arrested. In total, more than 11,000 Palestinians have been held in Israeli jails since 7 October 2023, where they endure cruel and degrading treatment.

Given the circumstances, essentially only the polio vaccination campaign, which has reached 500,000 Palestinian children under the age of 10, can be regarded as a relative success by the United Nations humanitarian wing. And, according to reports, even within that campaign, United Nations humanitarian bodies have yet to secure the consent of West Jerusalem to even a brief humanitarian pause to allow for the second stage of the vaccination campaign and the distribution of aid.

Against that backdrop, we are particularly alarmed and perplexed by the fact that the Foreign Policy and

Security Committee of the Knesset is considering two bills: one prohibiting UNRWA activities in Israel and to the other revoking the privileges and immunities of its staff. If those bills are passed, not only will the continuation of all of UNRWA's work in Gaza and the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, be jeopardized, but so will the prospects of providing assistance to Palestinian refugees in neighbouring Arab countries, such as Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, whose capacities are already severely weakened by the catastrophic shortfall in funds owing to the United States decision to suspend funding to UNWRA until March 2025.

Those Israeli plans for UNRWA are in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. They would have the most adverse repercussions on the Middle East region and the United Nations system as a whole. In essence, Israel is arrogating to itself the right to impose arbitrary bans on the work of specialized agencies that are not to its liking. We are duty-bound to prevent that.

The sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing dismantlement of UNRWA in the occupied Palestinian territory demand our urgent intervention, which is precisely what the entire international community expects of the United Nations. It is necessary to defend UNRWA, which has unique capabilities in the provision of social, educational and medical services, which are of critical importance not only in this time of great hardship but also for the post-conflict reconstruction of the Strip and the prevention of the radicalization of Palestinian society. We underscore that the attack on UNRWA's mandate may see Palestinians lose their refugee status, which could ultimately thwart all efforts to achieve a just resolution of the Palestinian question, which is fundamental to the entire Middle East.

Almost one year ago, Secretary General António Guterres rightly stated that the events of 7 October did not occur "in a vacuum". What prompted the tragedy was the systematic disregard for the Security Council's decisions, which are binding pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, and the almost 80-year-long stalling tactics with regard to of consensus-based resolutions on establishing an independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

In that context, I would like to remind Council members that, in 1949, the State of Israel was granted membership in the United Nations on the condition

that it would implement two key General Assembly resolutions, namely, General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which contained a plan for the partition of Palestine into two States — an Arab and a Jewish State — and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) on refugees, which is the very basis of UNRWA's mandate. In addition, the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem*, endorsed by the General Assembly resolution ES-10/24, also clearly stipulates that the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip is unlawful. Therein lies a paradox — by sabotaging the implementation of the aforementioned resolutions, Israel is in fact knowingly and purposefully undermining the decisions and arrangements that paved the way for Israel to join the United Nations. At the same time, the Palestinians have been denied full-fledged membership in the Organization. And that denial has been occurring with the active connivance of the aforementioned American allies of Israel, who are unilaterally casting vetoes such as the relevant draft resolution S/2024/173 submitted by Algeria.

On the whole, we regret that we must conclude that the United States, in order to allow Israel to do as it pleased, blocked on five occasions substantive Security Council decisions to bring about a cessation of hostilities. In June, Washington put forward resolution 2735 (2024), which eventually was adopted by the Council. Yet, as we warned, the resolution appeared to have been nothing but a ruse, as it is thwarting any new initiatives to ensure a ceasefire in Gaza. It was clear to us from the outset that the Israeli leadership was not willing to comply with the so-called Biden plan approved in that document. That American-Israeli manoeuvre resulted in a series of assassinations in the region, which only confirms that West Jerusalem is not interested in resolving the conflict by peaceful means and is instead opting for the use of force. And that is the current situation: the dialogue on a ceasefire in Gaza is at a serious impasse, the release of the remaining hostages is no longer being discussed either in Washington or in West Jerusalem and the region is facing a large-scale escalation in Lebanon and the prospect of a direct war between Israel and Iran. However, our American colleagues on the Council continue to hide behind resolution 2735 (2024), as if nothing happened, asserting that supposedly any new

steps taken by the Security Council will only hinder such efforts.

Today we were told that the Council's decisions will not help the cause, but that the United Nations can and must take action to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground in Gaza. I apologize, but such assertions border on blasphemy.

How can we call on the United Nations to discharge its humanitarian mission when bombings are incessant, humanitarian assistance is being hindered, United Nations and other humanitarian workers are being killed and UNRWA risks being shut down? We can demand that the United Nations discharge its mandate only on one condition, that is, a ceasefire. That is what we have been discussing since day one. That is what has also been discussed by other Council members, except for one member which put forward resolution 2735 (2024) — a resolution destined to failure. That is what the Secretary-General has stated clearly and what other representatives of various United Nations agencies have been calling for. But it is all in vain. West Jerusalem remains deaf to those calls, and those providing cover for West Jerusalem, as we mentioned previously, are hiding behind the disingenuous resolution 2735 (2024).

We all understand that the current catastrophic situation can and must be resolved exclusively through political and diplomatic means with the active involvement of all Middle Eastern countries and Powers from outside the region. Our common objective is to ensure the implementation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and to stop the bloodshed that may spill over to the entire Middle East. And, most importantly, we need to guarantee that Palestinians can exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, which would allow them to establish — not in words, but in deed, on the ground — a territorially contiguous and viable State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Security Council can and must act to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Only our collective determination and principled stance will enable us to compel the United States of America and Israel to respect international law and comply with the decisions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. We are counting on the solidarity and active involvement of all our colleagues — I stress, all of our colleagues — on the Security Council.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I thank Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings.

One year into this conflict, it is still a sad reality that the bloodshed continues in the Gaza Strip, since the unjustifiable and horrific attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians, which resulted in more than 1,200 deaths, as well as injuries, displacements, sexual violations and hundreds of men, women and children taken as hostages. We repeat our condemnation of that heinous act and call for the release of the remaining 101 hostages still held in Gaza, without any indication of their health conditions or access by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as required by international humanitarian law.

One year on from the response by Israel, the Gaza Strip has witnessed a period of repeated violence and intensified hostilities that has claimed more than 42,000 lives, injured tens of thousands more, destroyed almost all infrastructure, shattered families and destabilized the entire community. The Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, in its paper “The Human Toll: Indirect Deaths from War in Gaza and the West Bank, October 7, 2023 Forward”, states that the additional indirect deaths in Gaza and the West Bank stand at more than 67,000. Undoubtedly, civilians remain central in all of this, as they have been stripped of the protection accorded them under international law, with seeming impunity.

For the past months, reports by United Nations officials and other humanitarian experts have painted a dire and devastating picture of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, often referring to it as a humanitarian disaster and a massive human rights crisis. It has been reported that more than 1.5 million civilians did not receive their food rations in September, even though more than 100,000 metric tons of food supplies were stuck outside the Gaza Strip owing to various factors of access restriction, damaged roads and heightened insecurity. The food shortage in the Gaza Strip is worrisome for a population that has been forced by prevailing circumstances to rely exclusively on humanitarian aid. On that note, we recognize the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff and other humanitarian personnel, who despite the

challenges, continue to do their utmost in delivering aid and providing assistance to civilians in need.

Evacuation orders are significantly impacting humanitarian operations, particularly between southern and northern Gaza. Schools and hospitals can no longer be utilized for their intended purpose, as they have been either destroyed, lack the basic facilities or used as shelters for displaced populations.

The mandate of UNRWA, a United Nations Agency and the backbone of humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip, is at risk if the proposed legislation in the Israeli Knesset is approved. It will weaken UNRWA’s influence in the region and curtail its operations. Since the start of the conflict, we have seen repeated attacks on its personnel, premises and mandate. Such actions will only compound the crisis for the 1.9 million internally displaced people relying mainly on the services of UNRWA to survive and thrive.

As several challenges continue to stretch humanitarian personnel beyond their abilities and to expose an entire population to malnutrition, disease, starvation and death, Sierra Leone would like to emphasize three points.

First, we reiterate the call made by the Security Council in its resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which, consistent with international law, demanded the continuous, sufficient and unhindered provision of essential goods and services important to the well-being of civilians throughout the Gaza Strip. In virtue of those resolutions, we request that all access restrictions to the Gaza Strip be lifted.

Secondly, Sierra Leone reaffirmed its support for UNRWA and all other humanitarian partners operating in the region, considering the particular operational, political and security context in which they work. We will continue to implore UNRWA to commit to implementing the recommendations outlined in the independent review group report, entitled “Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality”.

Thirdly, we emphasize that all civilians must be protected at all times, in conformity with international law, including international humanitarian law, which requires a distinction between military targets and civilians.

In conclusion, we urgently call for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the region. Experts have advised that the prevailing conditions will be more catastrophic as winter approaches. An immediate halt in the fighting is therefore essential to save this generation from the scourge of war. We call on all parties to the conflict to exercise their political will and engage constructively in order to achieve a tangible outcome.

Sierra Leone remains committed to resolving this conflict and achieving lasting peace, with the two-State solution as the ultimate end.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I would like to thank Ms. Lisa Doughten, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Commissioner-General Lazzarini, from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), for their briefings.

Today's meeting marks a grim milestone for the Council. One year has passed since the terrible 7 October attacks by Hamas in Israel, in which more than 1,200 people were killed. One year has passed since Israel launched its devastating military campaign in Gaza, which has killed at least 41,600 people, injuring countless more, and has decimated the Gaza Strip. It has been one year of captivity, uncertainty and fear for the hostages who are still held by Hamas and unending suffering for the thousands held in Israeli administrative detention sites.

Over the past year, the Council has held countless meetings and has adopted four resolutions. These remain woefully unimplemented, and the situation continues to deteriorate. That is personified by the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. Civilians are subject to unimaginable hardships and repeated displacement, deprived of essential access to health care, shelter, food, electricity and the lifeline of humanitarian aid.

Tragically, children have suffered the most. They have been subjected to unspeakable violence, which will have a marked effect on their psychological well-being. They have been deprived of adequate food, affecting their physical development. They have been denied the right to education, losing an entire year of schooling. Schools, once safe havens, still suffer continuous strikes. Hospitals, health-care workers and places of worship have also become targets of systematic attacks.

These actions represent a grave assault on the principles we stand for. Malta once again stresses that international humanitarian law must be adhered

to. Military force must not be used to target civilians and civilian infrastructure. The full and immediate implementation of the orders of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures is essential. We underline that all Member States are bound by international law, as reflected in the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Malta condemns the fact that humanitarian efforts, vital to survival, face repeated obstructions and attacks. As we heard today from Commissioner-General Lazzarini, more than 220 UNRWA personnel have been killed in the past year, making it the highest death toll for the United Nations in its history.

We are extremely concerned about the latest news regarding the Knesset legislation against UNRWA being adopted. The Agency operates out of a decades-old General Assembly mandate and is an irreplaceable actor for humanitarian efforts in the occupied Palestinian territory. This legislation risks compromising the Agency's ability to provide life-saving assistance. Its inability to work in the region, including in the West Bank, would have devastating consequences. We call for a reversal of such actions so that Palestinians can continue receiving the support they desperately need.

More broadly, attacks against the United Nations, including measures directly targeting the Secretary-General, do not help improve the current desperate situation.

The untenable and immoral nature of the situation is painfully clear. However, the path out of this catastrophe and towards peace is also clear. An immediate and permanent ceasefire, in line with resolution 2735 (2024), must be agreed. The hostages must be released, and Israel must allow humanitarian aid to flow unhindered into Gaza through all possible crossings. The fighting must stop. States with influence over the parties to the conflict must exert it in the direction of peace.

Gaza is the eye of the storm of conflicts raging across the Middle East. Elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory, the situation in the West Bank remains of grave concern. The worsening situation, including settler violence and an increase in settlement-building, undermines the achievement of the two-State solution.

We need to ensure that de-escalatory efforts and diplomacy are prioritized in order to ensure ceasefires in both Gaza and Lebanon. The Council has the responsibility to act decisively towards that end. This approach will allow us to work for a credible political horizon and the irreversible realization of the two-State solution, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters. Only that path can guarantee peace for Israelis, Palestinians and the wider region.

One year of war is a year too many. We cannot afford to delay peace any longer.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I thank Switzerland's presidency for convening this briefing, and I thank Algeria and Slovenia for requesting it. We also thank Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the updated information on the current humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The briefings we heard today paint a stark picture of the crisis — one that demands our immediate and concerted attention.

Two days ago marked one year since Hamas militants attacked civilian targets in Israel, an act that we condemn and deplore. Concurrently, 7 October also marked a year of Israel's response — a disproportionate military attack on the Gaza Strip that resulted in unprecedented casualties, displacement and destruction of civilian infrastructure.

In December, the appalling human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma led the Secretary-General to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations as an exceptional measure. Ten months later, the conflict persists unabated.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is deeply concerning. The ongoing conflict constitutes a full-blown humanitarian crisis, underscoring the urgent need for sustained humanitarian assistance and protection for both civilians and aid workers. We must emphasize that denying humanitarian access to innocent civilians is both morally and legally unacceptable. The collective punishment of civilians and the targeting of infrastructure that is critical for their survival are clear violations of international humanitarian law. All parties must prioritize the protection of civilians and

allow unimpeded humanitarian aid to flow freely. That appeal will remain valid as long as the situation persists.

The Security Council has adopted measures to address the crisis in Gaza, including resolutions 2720 (2023) and 2735 (2024), with the latter proposing a comprehensive three-phase ceasefire deal to end the conflict in Gaza. That includes an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, the exchange of prisoners and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas in Gaza. Regrettably, the implementation of those resolutions continues to face significant challenges, including a lack of political will, security guarantees and the effective delivery of humanitarian aid. Given the worsening situation and its potential regional implications, it is imperative that we explore viable alternatives to address the crisis in Gaza. To that end, we propose the following key recommendations.

First, we must intensify diplomatic efforts to bring all parties to the negotiating table, engaging influential nations, including members of the Council, to leverage their influence to de-escalate the conflict and reach a sustainable ceasefire.

Secondly, we must ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid by enforcing international laws that prevent the obstruction of aid reaching those in need.

Thirdly, we must work towards a constructive and sustainable political solution that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict, including issues of self-determination and human rights for the Palestinian people.

Fourthly, we must strengthen existing resolutions by adopting more robust and enforceable measures that mandate immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza.

Fifthly, we must invest in Gaza's economic development and infrastructure to help to alleviate some of the underlying issues, including improving access to clean water, electricity, delivering food and medical supplies and creating job opportunities.

Lastly, we must mobilize international support for the reconstruction of Gaza, including rebuilding infrastructure, schools and hospitals, to improve living conditions and foster long-term stability.

While challenging, combining immediate humanitarian relief with long-term political solutions offers a pathway to a more stable and peaceful future for Gaza and the broader region.

In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering support for and solidarity with the Secretary-General, and we reaffirm our full confidence in his vital work towards promoting lasting peace, justice and stability in the Middle East and beyond.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I also thank United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Director Doughten for their valuable and sobering briefings.

We express our deepest condolences to the families of the aid workers who lost their lives performing their duties, including 226 UNRWA staff members. We also pay tribute to those who are bravely working on the ground despite the unimaginable conditions.

An entire year has passed since the current conflict in Gaza began. Japan once again firmly condemns the acts of terror and the taking of hostages by Hamas and others on 7 October last year and onward. Since then, Gaza has been reduced to ruins, and the number of casualties continues to mount. The relentless hostilities have created nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe. Approximately 90 per cent of the population is internally displaced, and much-needed humanitarian assistance is not getting into the hands of the desperate people there. Amid that calamity, the role of UNRWA has been indispensable. It has provided food, medicines and other basic human necessities to vulnerable Palestinian refugees. Without UNRWA, their lives would be in jeopardy. It has also provided critical child healthcare services, such as the recent polio vaccine campaigns. Therefore, UNRWA has been, and will be, vitally important for both the present and future generations of Palestinian refugees.

Japan is deeply concerned about the bills recently approved by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Israeli Knesset, which would severely restrict the activities of UNRWA. We listened carefully to Mr. Lazzarini's sobering remarks, according to which the bills could have a devastating impact on UNRWA and those who depend on it. Japan has been a partner of UNRWA since 1953, even before we joined the United Nations. We will continue to support the work of UNRWA, as we have done for seven decades. Our message is clear: the Agency must be protected and guaranteed a safe and unhindered operating space. We would also like to recall the important role of the United

Nations in resolving armed conflict and mitigating the humanitarian impact in the Middle East.

As everybody knows, an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the delivery of humanitarian aid at scale are crucial to ending the ongoing nightmare. The deal outlined in resolution 2735 (2024) has been on the table for months, and we strongly call on the parties to accept it without any further delay. Japan remains hopeful that the tireless and commendable mediation efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar will achieve a breakthrough soon. In the meantime, we will continue to engage in diplomatic efforts. Earlier today, our new Minister for Foreign Affairs had a call with the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs and called for Israel's maximum cooperation to strengthen humanitarian assistance activities. Moreover, since October 2023, we have already contributed \$128 million to Palestinians in dire need, and we will continue to provide emergency humanitarian assistance.

Beyond Gaza, the humanitarian situation in Lebanon is especially worrisome. Thousands of civilians have reportedly been killed or wounded there, and approximately 1 million people have been displaced. Japan strongly urges all parties to take all measures to prevent civilian casualties. We stand ready to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the people in need.

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

Like my colleagues, I thank the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, and the Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Lisa Doughten, not only for their briefings but also and above all for their considerable efforts in the most difficult of circumstances.

One year after 7 October 2023, Switzerland remains deeply shocked by the acts of terror and hostage-taking perpetrated by Hamas in Israel. My country reiterates its firm condemnation of those acts and expresses its deepest sympathy to the victims and their families. Our thoughts are also with the relatives of those hostages still being held in Gaza, some of whom I have had the honour of meeting. We share their grief and admire their courage. And we repeat: the immediate

and unconditional release of the hostages has been demanded by every resolution adopted by the Security Council on this subject since 7 October 2023. We also condemn the firing of rockets by Hamas against Israel, including those fired the day before yesterday.

However, since 7 October 2023, as we have heard from everyone today without exception, the massive escalation in violence, in particular through the Israeli military operations, has exacerbated the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza immeasurably. We are aware of the figures. More than 41,000 people have died, and 2.2 million people — the entire population — are living in catastrophic conditions, without any protection and subject to incessant hostilities, famine and epidemics. The human toll of the conflict is also devastating in the West Bank. Switzerland condemns the fact that the hostilities and other acts of violence are claiming countless civilian casualties in the occupied Palestinian territory, many of them children. The hostilities and repeated evacuation orders have forcibly displaced several million civilians. Switzerland calls, yet again, for the four resolutions adopted by the Council since 7 October 2023, which are binding, to be implemented with immediate effect, and that entails an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The humanitarian aid reaching Gaza is woefully insufficient, as we have heard. It is the duty of all the parties to authorize and facilitate swift, unimpeded humanitarian access in accordance with international humanitarian law. Hunger is spreading in Gaza. The use of starvation as a method of warfare is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The orders of the International Court of Justice, which are binding on the parties in question, require Israel to promptly take, in close cooperation with the United Nations, all necessary and effective measures to ensure that basic services and urgently needed humanitarian assistance are delivered to the population, without restriction and at scale, through all crossing points and throughout the Gaza Strip. Those measures are also crucial with the second phase of the polio vaccination campaign about to commence. The first phase has shown that, if the political will exists, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, namely, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and UNWRA, are capable of fulfilling their humanitarian mission bestowed on them by international humanitarian law.

As resolution 2730 (2024) underscores, humanitarian personnel in particular are protected

under international humanitarian law, and attacks must not be directed against them. And yet, since 7 October 2023, the conflict has taken the lives of more than 300 aid workers. Switzerland has spoken out against the attacks and violence to which United Nations personnel have been subjected, including the attacks by Israeli settlers on UNRWA offices in East Jerusalem this year. The UNRWA mandate was conferred upon it by the General Assembly in 1949, and the Agency is the most significant humanitarian actor in occupied Palestinian territory and is playing a crucial part in averting even greater regional instability.

In the West Bank, amid looming regional escalation, violence is intensifying, as evidenced by the military means deployed. Air strikes are being used on a scale unprecedented since the second intifada. That has included the incident in Tulkarem at the end of last week, in which there were civilian casualties. The use of force in Israeli security forces' operations must satisfy, among other requirements, the criterion of proportionality and be consonant with the right of all to life and security of person.

At a time when the entire region is becoming increasingly mired in violence, we urge Member States to reaffirm their support for the United Nations under the Charter. Switzerland also renews its unreserved support for the work of the Secretary-General and his senior officials and condemns the recent statements made about them. Through its humanitarian action in Gaza, its good offices and its peacekeeping operations in the region, particularly in Lebanon, the United Nations remains crucial in quelling the regional escalation, which is threatening international peace and security. We call on all parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law at all times and in all circumstances. Furthermore, we underline that it is the duty of all States to ensure adherence to that law. To that end, we urge all States to bring their influence to bear. In that vein, Switzerland condemns all violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The universality of the Conventions marks a genuine success on the part of multilateralism. However, the untold human suffering in the region is a sobering reminder that the Conventions and the gamut of rules of international humanitarian law are now being flouted. The violation of those rules constitutes a threat to

the international peace and security of which we, as members of the Security Council, are the guarantors. We must join forces to make adherence to international humanitarian law a political priority. Adherence to international law is the lodestar of dispute resolution and is required to avert an even graver regional escalation and limit suffering. Observance of the Charter and international humanitarian law and human rights law form the inevitable path that all parties to the conflict must take.

Lastly, we underline the urgent need to re-establish a political horizon that is consistent with the United Nations resolutions. The solution consisting of two democratic States — Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza forms an integral part — living side-by-side in peace within their secure and recognized borders is the only possible way forward.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Allow me, at the outset, to thank Slovenia and Algeria for requesting this meeting. I also thank the briefers, Mr. Lazzarini and Ms. Doughten, for their words but more importantly for the actions undertaken by their agencies — notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) — in impossible circumstances, as they try to preserve whatever is left of life and dignity for more than 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Humanitarians are operating at risk to their lives, and they are among the primary targets of the Israeli attacks that form an integral part of its attempts to deny the Palestinian civilian population any protection. It is clear beyond any doubt, at this stage, that Israel has taken the decision to launch an all-out war against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, destroying part of the population in order to get rid of all that remains of it. Israel also considers that anyone helping to sustain life in Gaza is also an enemy and a target. That is why it is killing doctors, medical workers, humanitarian workers, members of rescue teams, United Nations staff and journalists on a scale unprecedented in recent years.

This is evident in Israel's ongoing massacres in the north of Gaza, which are accompanied by orders to evacuate hospitals, such as the three hospitals in the area that were mentioned in this Chamber. Hospitals, homes and shelters alike are bombed, besieged and

attacked. The threat of the destruction of the population as a whole serves to forcibly displace it, not for its safety, but to seize control of the territory and to force the population into submission.

The unprecedented attacks against the United Nations and its Secretary-General, the attacks against UNRWA, the physical attacks on its staff through killing, maiming, detention and torture, the attacks against UNRWA headquarters, the bombings of UNRWA schools, shelters, offices, storehouses and distribution centres and now the threat of legislation to prevent UNRWA from operating at all in the occupied Palestinian territory have to be understood in that context. In that connection, we totally support UNRWA and what Mr. Lazzarini has said, which we take very seriously. UNRWA is an absolutely indispensable organization, which should be protected by all means. It is the greatest success story in the history of the United Nations. If the Israeli aim is to make Gaza uninhabitable, then it must attack the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza, which is UNRWA. The real target of the attacks on the United Nations in general and UNRWA in particular are the Palestinian refugees the Agency serves and the entire Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, who became dependent on UNRWA's support for survival during this genocide.

Israel, the occupying Power, has the obligation to protect that population and provide for it. Not only is it failing to do so, not only is it attacking the population instead of protecting it, but it is also attacking those who are responding to the needs of the population given Israel's failure to uphold its own obligations in that regard. It is not listening to any Council member. Council members keep repeating themselves. We had dozens of meetings. I heard the word "must" maybe 100 times in this meeting — there must be a ceasefire, there must be humanitarian assistance, they must do a long list of things. One country is not listening to Council members, and they are collectively refusing to use the tools available to them to implement their resolutions. The most recent one, resolution 2735 (2024), starts with a ceasefire. Council members repeat that, and they ask for it, and they say: we must have a ceasefire. And one Member State is not listening, but rather ignoring them.

At times in the past, representatives of that Member State used to lecture the Security Council, asking: why are Council members wasting their time on this discussion? They should be paying attention to another country. Now they have changed their style. Council

members talk; they play with their cell phones. They are ignoring Council members. And Council members keep repeating the same thing. The Security Council does not have teeth. Council members are not using the tools that are available to them in order to make them listen to them. They keep repeating the same thing. The people watching us, especially in Palestine and in the Middle East, have heard that record so many times before. Who is stopping the Security Council from forcing the resolution to be implemented to have a ceasefire?

There is one Member State standing in the Council's way, and Council members are refusing to use their tools. They keep "calling for", "appealing for", "must do this", "must do that", and that one is not listening. I think Einstein, if I am not mistaken, said that to keep repeating the same thing and expecting different results when one fails is an exercise in futility. And the Security Council is a perfect example of that saying of that brilliant man, Einstein.

Israel is breaching international law by occupying this land, by annexing it, by failing to protect the occupied people, by attacking the people under its occupation and by preventing those who wish to protect them from doing so. It is a multilayered breach of the most fundamental rules of international law, from the Charter of the United Nations to the Geneva Conventions, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the Rome Statute, with the aim of annihilating the Palestinian people. That is the objective.

Israel has killed and maimed the Palestinian civilian population and those who could protect them or heal their injuries. And we sent the Security Council a few days ago a long seven-page letter, giving Council members all the details of our story over the course of the past year. Therefore, I do not need to repeat to Council members all the details. Some Council members referred to the details. It forcibly displaced the population and bombed the shelters and those who were trying to help them find a safe haven. It has starved the population and killed and maimed and obstructed those who could have provided them with food and help. It has committed atrocities and attacked those documenting and reporting on them, including today by shooting in the neck an Al-Jazeera journalist Fadi Al-Wahidi in Jabalya refugee camp where massacres are ongoing. That is genocide. And Council members must make sure that nothing they do and nothing they say enables that genocide. And Council members

must act to stop it, as the Security Council, as States in their national capacities and as members of the international community.

We denounce complicity, and we denounce complacency, and we denounce self-inflicted powerlessness. More and more countries are calling for an arms embargo to make sure not to provide Israel with weapons it could use against the civilian population. If one is calling for a ceasefire, one does not feed the fire by sending weapons and ammunition. More and more countries are calling for accountability against perpetrators of crimes to prevent their recurrence. If one calls oneself a champion of international law, one does not help shield perpetrators of atrocities.

Israel could have ended the genocide in Gaza, and that would have prevented any further escalation. Instead, it is widening its killing, destruction and forcible displacement spree in the West Bank and in Lebanon. The Israeli Prime Minister warned Lebanon against falling in the abyss of destruction and suffering, as Gaza did — an abyss he created in Gaza, through genocide and is recreating in Lebanon, killing 2,000 Lebanese — overwhelmingly civilians — and displacing more than 1 million in less than one month.

We are watching the same failings in stopping Israeli atrocities in Palestine repeat themselves in Lebanon. Is our blood cheap? Are our civilians less worthy of protection? Are our lives less sacred? What else could explain why Israel for a whole year has gotten away with murder and keeps extending the scope of suffering and loss without being stopped, because the Security Council is not acting either as a group or, for some members, in their national capacity? Did Council members grow accustomed to our death? Did they grow accustomed to seeing entire neighbourhoods flattened on the heads of their inhabitants — children, women, men and the elderly? Is that now the new normal? Did they get accustomed to seeing the Israeli Prime Minister ignoring and insulting the world and still expecting its support, still expecting Council members' weapons, their trade and their relations to serve his colonial agenda?

Israel must be stopped. It cannot have a veto right over the ceasefire or there will be no ceasefire. The Israeli Government does not care about Palestinian lives or Lebanese lives or even Israeli lives. It has been creating insecurity for a century. Israel will protect its occupation and domination at any cost, and Netanyahu will protect Netanyahu at any cost. Civilians are the

ones paying the price. We want international law to prevail, freedom to prevail, justice to prevail and peace to prevail. We do not want any civilians to be harmed. There cannot be a right to commit atrocities under any pretext or any justification.

Firefighters do not negotiate with arsonists; they prevent them from spreading the fire. The fire is now threatening to engulf our entire region. Stop the arsonists. Do members have the backbone, collectively or in their national capacity, to stop the arsonist? They know his name, his address, his methods, his lies and his goals, and yet he feels that he can continue spreading the fire in total impunity, while the entire world tries to figure out how to stop it when there is no will to stop the arsonist. It takes him seconds to destroy, and it takes us entire years or decades to rebuild, and the reality is once the fire has started, nothing is ever the same. Hear the screams of those enduring the fire on their flesh and tell us how to explain to them that, for 365 days, the world has watched the 365 square kilometres of Gaza turned into rubble and ashes. The outrage displayed by members' countries, the solidarity they have demonstrated every single day in the streets must turn into an unstoppable wave to put out the fire. If we do not put it out, everything else we are trying to do and say in the Chamber will be meaningless.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, I would like to address Mr. Mansour's words about resolution 2735 (2024). He did not mention an important sentence about the release of the hostages. That is why we are sitting in the Chamber, because that is what started the war — the kidnapping of Israeli civilians. And I am very disappointed, Mr. Mansour, not in Hamas — we had no expectations of Hamas — but in him and the Palestinian Authority —

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): [unintelligible]

The President (*spoke in French*): I would like to repeat what I said at the beginning of the meeting. The Security Council is a place of respect, and I request that, in their statements, all speakers abide by the relevant rules with regard to time, language and content. We do not interrupt one another.

I once again give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): I am disappointed, not in Hamas — we had no expectations of Hamas, we know they are savages — but the Palestinian Authority (PA) are the moderate, the educated, and after a year it is not able to say that it condemns the atrocities of 7 October 2023 and Hamas. It makes us wonder about the future, about ideas, but the PA is not able to say that, and neither was President Abbas in the General Assembly, not one word. Mr. Mansour mentioned the Palestinians, but Israelis are also watching us and asking themselves if there is a difference between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, when 70 per cent of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria support the atrocities of 7 October 2023. I think that, yes, we want to see a day when there will be peace, but for that to happen, a distinction must be made between good and evil, and Mr. Mansour has not done that.

It has now been one year since the darkest day in Israel's history, the 7 October 2023 massacre, a day when innocent lives were brutally taken and one that scarred an entire nation. Over the past year, Israel has endured unimaginable pain. Families continue to grieve, not only for those they lost, but for those who remain in the grip of Hamas, held as hostages in Gaza.

I would like to thank the members of the Security Council who joined us on Monday for the commemoration of that horrific event, at which they heard the heart-wrenching stories of the families of the victims. They listened to a mother, who was here at the United Nations, tell the story of her two daughters, who were murdered at the Nova music festival. She will never walk her daughters down the aisle, never again feel their warm embrace. Members heard the story of a rabbi whose son's body is still being held by Hamas terrorists. He endured more than 160 days of not knowing whether his son was alive, and he shared with us that his wife felt a sense of relief on hearing the news of his death because she told him that at least the pain was now only theirs to experience. Then we heard from a Muslim Bedouin Israeli, who shared his horrid experience with his brother, who remains a living hostage in the Hamas terror dungeons. It is not only Jews. There are Christians, Muslims who are being held today by Hamas, not only Israelis. In those stories, members saw the full extent of Hamas' depravity — a terror organization that makes no distinctions. It does not care about age, religion or nationality. Its sole mission is to murder everyone.

Some here in the Chamber support Israel's firm position that Hamas cannot remain in the ruling regime in Gaza. Others remain in the middle, indifferent. And tragically, some even offer their support to Hamas and its murderous objectives. However, if any of the Council members want these discussions to be productive and to reap any sort of benefit, every conversation should centre around this simple truth: the future of Gaza must be a future without Hamas. We can discuss other options, but we must agree about that, and I want Mr. Mansour to discuss that idea and acknowledge that: that there is no future for Gaza if Hamas is there. We know what happened to his colleagues from the PA when they were ruling Gaza, when Hamas took over. We know why he and President Abbas have not visited Gaza for more than a decade, because they know what will happen to them there. We must start to envision a Gaza freed from the clenched grip of terror. What would it look like? How would it work? How could Gaza thrive when it is free of that destructive regime?

I like many Israelis have a vision for Gaza without Hamas. Aid would finally reach those who truly need it. Members spoke about aid, but do they know that in one day approximately 50 per cent of the trucks were hijacked by Hamas? I did not hear that from any of the briefers today. Fifty per cent were hijacked, not one or two trucks. In future, the trucks carrying that aid would no longer be violently hijacked. Money intended for civilian welfare would not be diverted by terrorists. The money being donated would be poured into schools and hospitals, not weapons. The fuel sent to Gaza would be used in homes for cooking, not for launching rockets. Concrete would be used to build highways, not terror tunnels. Hamas has exploited the suffering of its people, using the misery in Gaza as a propaganda tool, to line their pockets and boost their arsenals. Our vision of Gaza is not an impossible dream, it is within reach. But it cannot happen while Hamas remains in control, diverting aid, exploiting resources and worsening the suffering of its own people.

On 7 October this year, two days ago, Hamas fired several rockets into civilian areas in Israel. The fact is that this fight is not over, unfortunately. The Israel Defense Forces will continue to operate until all the objectives of the war are met, until Hamas' military capabilities are dismantled and all our hostages are returned.

Despite the ongoing threats on seven fronts, despite the unspeakable atrocities committed against our people,

Israel's humanitarian efforts in Gaza have been nothing short of extraordinary. The facts are clear. Over 52,000 trucks have entered Gaza under Israeli coordination, delivering more than 1 million tons of aid — 700,000 tons of it food. Israel imposes no restrictions on humanitarian aid. In fact, 82 per cent of all requests for humanitarian coordination have been approved and implemented. Our humanitarian coordination covers a broad range of needs as they arise. And yes, we are working with United Nations agencies. We have worked closely with global partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, to vaccinate over half a million Gazan children against polio in a matter of weeks. The second stage of the vaccination campaign is commencing next week. That is the cooperation that we strive for with our partners. We are willing and able to work on the ground. In addition, we have expanded the Al-Mawasi humanitarian area in terms of both size and facilities and with an increased supply of food, water and medical equipment.

Compare our efforts to the failures of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). While Israel cooperates with international organizations, such as the WHO and UNICEF, to improve the lives of civilians, UNRWA-Gaza has allowed Hamas to infiltrate its ranks. That infiltration is so ingrained, so institutionalized, that the organization is simply beyond repair. The contrast could not be clearer. While Israel fights to protect and uplift civilians, UNRWA leaves them to suffer.

Israel has been warning for months about Hamas' infiltration into UNRWA, yet no significant action has been taken. And when the gentleman from UNRWA spoke about the casualties, I did not hear him say how many of them had been affiliated with Hamas. We gave the names to UNRWA. The recent revelation that Fatah Sharif, Hamas' commander in Lebanon at the time, was also an UNRWA school principal — believe it or not — and that he was the head of its teacher's union and the head of Hamas in Lebanon is beyond imagining. It is not merely a failure of oversight. That is the absurd reality we are facing. An organization that claims to be providing education and humanitarian aid has been infiltrated to the point that terrorists are running classrooms, indoctrinating future generations and hiding in plain sight under the banner of the United Nations.

We have been going round in circles, debating this issue for months, to no avail. The focus of the discussion

must shift from the symptoms to the disease itself: the Islamic regime of Iran. Today we are discussing the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Tomorrow we will be having a discussion about Lebanon. What will be next? Yemen? Iraq? We all know the true cause of the suffering: Tehran's desire for supremacist expansion. Iran's aggression continues unrestricted. Just last week, Iran launched hundreds of missiles in the largest ballistic attack in history. No State in the world would tolerate such assaults on its people, and neither will Israel. We will choose when and where our response takes place. It will be decisive, and we will not hesitate to defend ourselves.

One year has passed since the 7 October 2023 massacre — one year of pain, mourning and resilience. Yet what have we learned in that time? Have we truly confronted the evil that seeks to destroy us, or are we still debating and still pointing the finger? And I agree with Mr. Mansour: we come here; he blames Israel; we blame him. I agree with him. While the origin of all of this suffering, the real evil — Hamas, Hizbullah and their puppet masters in Tehran — continues to sow terror and death. The Council must get beneath the surface and address the deeper disease, which has plagued the region for far too long. Words alone will not end the situation in Gaza, or anywhere else. Only decisive collective action can root out the terrorists and bring about a future of peace and security for all.

Israel will not wait. We will defend our people, our land and our future. We stand as guardians of the very principle that the Council was built to protect. It has been one year since the massacre of 7 October 2023. We cannot afford another.

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

Mr. Mohamed Laghdaf (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of the Group of Arab States, I would like to thank the representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for their briefings. I also thank Algeria and Slovenia for requesting this meeting.

One year ago to this day, Israel began to wage a war of retaliation against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, an unconventional war of extermination in which it has deployed the most immoral and inhumane means of ensuring the annihilation of the Gaza Strip's

population. Speeches of Israeli officials attest to that, with their slogans of no electricity, no food, no water and no fuel for the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, who are described by those Israeli officials as human animals and against whom they have called for using nuclear weapons.

In October 2023, Israel carried out its threats and began an unprecedented war of extermination, whose toll is before us today. The 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza, besieged in an area of just 365 square kilometres, have been subjected to an entire year of intensive bombardment. A total of 70,000 tons of bombs were dropped — an unprecedented amount for this century — leaving 42,000 martyrs, 100,000 wounded, 10,000 missing and hundreds of thousands displaced — mostly women and children — not to mention the hundreds of paramedics, rescue workers, doctors, journalists and United Nations workers whose lives were lost. That comes on top of the loss of vital infrastructure, such as schools, places of worship and hospitals. In short, in the past 12 months, the Gaza Strip has been reduced to rubble and a mass grave before the world's very eyes.

The Arab group underscores the need for taking immediate action before it is too late. In that regard, we pay tribute to the tireless efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Qatar towards reaching a ceasefire agreement and alleviating the suffering in Gaza. Despite the suffering and the distressing reality, the Security Council has persistently failed to impose a ceasefire, let alone hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes against unarmed civilians — a failure that is exacerbating the situation on the ground, where hunger and the lack of basic services, together with the Israeli war machine, have made life in the Gaza Strip a living hell. That failure has raised many questions about the effectiveness of the Council and its relevance as a guarantor of international security and stability, while it is incapable of stopping a year-long genocidal war that continues to rage.

In parallel with that failure, Israel continues to enjoy unlimited political and military support from allied countries that are supplying it with weapons and equipment, despite the increasing calls for a ban on arming Israel as the occupying Power — calls that were also made in General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 of the tenth emergency special session on Palestine, held on 18 September 2024, following the advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice dated 19 July 2024

on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in Palestine, in which the Court held that the illegal Israeli presence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, must end as soon as possible.

The Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms the repeated Israeli aggression on Syrian territories, which over the past few days has targeted residential buildings, causing innocent civilian casualties, including women and children. The Arab Group reiterates the need to take immediate measures to deter the occupation entity from continuing its criminal approach, which is based on killing innocent people, spreading destruction and chaos and threatening peace and security in the region. The occupation entity must be held accountable for those crimes and must not go unpunished. The Arab Group also reiterates the need to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions to end the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.

The time has come to take all possible measures, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law, to end the genocidal war, which is entering its second year, in order to save what remains of the population of the Gaza Strip and what remains of the credibility of the Council and the United Nations system as a whole. Otherwise this war, which has already begun to spill over to include all countries in the region, including Lebanon and Syria, will become an all-out war that will ravage the region and the whole world owing to the intransigence and arrogance of the extremist Netanyahu Government, which continues to drag the region into total chaos and destabilize security and stability in the world to satisfy its bloody chauvinist aspirations.

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

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): I also thank Algeria and Slovenia for requesting this timely meeting, as well as Commissioner-General Lazzarini and Ms. Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. We appreciate the invaluable leadership of Commissioner-General Lazzarini and his unwavering commitment to humanitarian work under the direst conditions.

As the Chair of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for

Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Türkiye extends its deepest gratitude to all Council members who stood in support of UNRWA today.

I also want to honour the memory of the brave UNRWA staff who lost their lives in Gaza, making the ultimate sacrifice in their honourable mission. More than 226 UNRWA personnel were brutally killed in Gaza and more than 200 UNRWA facilities have been damaged. Severe restrictions on the Agency's operations have made it nearly impossible to fulfil its mandate. Furthermore, UNRWA has been subjected to an ill-intended and politically motivated defamation campaign that has worsened its financial strain.

Let us be clear: UNRWA, with its mandate, functions, institutional structure and over 70 years of experience supporting Palestinian refugees on the ground, is simply irreplaceable. We must not forget that UNRWA is not only a vital humanitarian Agency but also a stabilizing force in the region. Diplomats who serve in the region know that very well.

Since 7 October, the Agency has been the backbone of humanitarian operations in Gaza. For 75 years, it has played a crucial role in providing essential services and emergency aid to approximately 6 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Attacks on UNRWA have serious implications for international peace and security. The Agency exists because a political solution does not yet. Therefore, it is imperative that the Security Council act swiftly to protect UNRWA amid the unprecedented attacks on all fronts. We also call on Member States to scale up their contributions to the Agency. This year Türkiye donated an additional \$2 million to UNRWA, in addition to its voluntary contribution of \$10 million and other aid.

The bills in the Knesset to designate UNRWA a terrorist organization, to revoke UNRWA's privileges and immunities and to prohibit UNRWA's operations contravene Israel's legal obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice's indication of provisional measures in its order on the *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, the General Assembly's mandate for UNRWA and various other international legal commitments. The Secretary-General warned yesterday that the legislation, if implemented,

could severely impact the international humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Without UNRWA, the distribution of food, the provision of shelter and access to healthcare for the majority of Gaza's residents would come to a standstill. Furthermore, Gaza's 660,000 children would lose their primary source of education, jeopardizing the future of an entire generation. Additionally, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, crucial health, education and social services would also be terminated in the absence of UNRWA. In the long term, the collapse of UNRWA would undermine any future political resolution. Allowing such a catastrophic scenario to unfold would set a disastrous precedent for the United Nations, the global multilateral system and the future of international law as well.

When we add it all up, it is clear that the intent behind the attacks on UNRWA is to dismantle the Agency. UNRWA represents the right of return and dignity for Palestinian refugees. The ultimate target is the Palestinian refugees and their refugee status, as indicated by several speakers from Israel.

In the past year, more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed, predominantly women and children. Thousands remain missing and are believed to be trapped under rubble. Millions are displaced. The conflict is now spreading throughout the wider region. The situation in the Middle East is deteriorating by the hour, with countless civilians caught in the crossfire. This must end.

Let me conclude with three appeals to the Council, as this issue directly affects international peace and security, as a country of the region.

First, I urge the Security Council to take concrete steps towards enforcing an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon, as mentioned by previous speakers.

Secondly, I call on Council members to uphold General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) and protect UNRWA.

Thirdly, I call on the Security Council to commit to a genuine political process that can lead to a lasting solution and peace in the region. That begins with the recognition of the State of Palestine and its admission as a United Nations Member. Indeed, the recent 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* and General Assembly resolution ES-

10/24, which was recently adopted, constitute a good ground for that purpose.

Türkiye will continue to support UNRWA's vital work and all efforts towards achieving a two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Palestine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I was reluctant to take the floor, but it seems that the Israeli representative keeps pushing for a reaction. In that connection, let me say the following.

I am not asking his Government to condemn the killing of Palestinian civilians. I am telling his Government to stop killing them.

I do not want to condemn them. My Government does not kill Israelis. Their Government killed 42,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. They speak of distinction when they are responsible for targeting of civilians with bullets to their heads and of indiscriminate killing at a scale not seen in recent decades. They want peace but refuse to recognize the Palestinian people, statehood for them and the two-State solution.

We have called for upholding international law for the benefit of all civilians, while they attacked the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, the Security Council and the General Assembly. The whole world says they are blocking humanitarian aid, and yet they keep claiming there is no starvation in the Gaza Strip. The whole world denounces their attacks on humanitarians, and they find excuses for the inexcusable. The whole world denounces their colonization of our land, and they say it is their right. Their ideology and hatred blind them. Even their closest allies are ashamed of their actions, but they have no shame.

Finally, the representative of Israel is not qualified to lecture me about part of my history in the Gaza Strip. We also know what they did to Rabin because he wanted to have peace with us.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.