



New York, 24 July 2017

The following is a near-verbatim of today's (24 July 2017) Security Council Media Stakeout by Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, on the situation in the West Bank:

Good afternoon,

I want to start by thanking the Chinese Presidency of the Security Council for accepting the request by Egypt, Sweden and France to have a discussion on the situation in Jerusalem before the open debate tomorrow.

Allow me to say a few words about what I presented today to the Security Council.

Let me begin by once again calling on all parties to refrain from provocative actions, show restraint, and work towards finding a solution.

It is extremely important that a solution to the current crisis be found by Friday this week as the dangers on the ground will escalate if we go through another cycle of Friday prayers without a resolution.

I asked Security Council Member States to use their influence with all sides in order to encourage them to de-escalate, to ensure that while security is provided for worshippers and visitors to the holy sites in Jerusalem, the status quo that has been established since 1967 is preserved for all.

It is critically important that the status quo be preserved in Jerusalem, and I want to welcome once again the assurances that Prime Minister Netanyahu has provided that Israel has no interest in changing it.

I encourage Israel to continue its intense contacts with Jordan, in light with the Hashemite Kingdom's special and historic role in Jerusalem, to find a solution to the crisis.

I asked the Member States of the Security Council to unequivocally condemn the violence of the last few days. We have seen Palestinians being killed in clashes with Israeli security forces. We have seen an Israeli family being slaughtered in a terrorist attack in a settlement in the West Bank. All incidents deserve the full condemnation of the international community and our thoughts and prayers must go out to their families of the victims.

Jerusalem is perhaps one of the most critical cities in the world. It is an emotionally, religiously and historically charged place for billions of people. East Jerusalem is a final status issue that needs to be decided and negotiated between the two sides.

As the occupying power, Israel has a responsibility to uphold its obligations under International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Law, and must show maximum restraint in order to avoid further loss of life and an escalation of the situation.

At the same time, the Palestinian leadership also has a responsibility to avoid provocative actions and statements that further aggravate an already tense environment. I am particularly concerned by some statements that have been made by some Palestinian factions that seek to fan the flames of violence and I call on all to condemn such statements and actions.

Ahead of tomorrow, I hope that all Member States, when they speak at the open debate will be careful to avoid statements that further inflame the situation and to call on all parties to de-escalate and find a solution that is based on the status quo and the need to ensure security for all worshippers and visitors to the holy sites in Jerusalem.

In closing let me say that nobody should be mistaken that these events can be localized. In fact, they may be taking place over a couple of hundreds square meters in Jerusalem, but they affect hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people around the world. They have the potential to have catastrophic costs well beyond the walls of the old city, well beyond Israel and Palestine, well beyond the Middle East itself.

This crisis, in fact any such crisis, is a step backwards. It is a step away from what we need to focus on and that is how to bring the parties back to a political process in order to find a solution that meets the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians; that is based on UN Security Council Resolutions and relevant international law; that is achieved through negotiations and that has the ultimate result of two states, which is what the international consensus on how to resolve this conflict requires.

It is critically important to also understand that these events take place at a time of political vacuum, at a time when the political perspective is still missing. This is why it is important for all of us to focus on restoring a political perspective, on helping bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive to negotiations on a final status arrangement, and to do that in a manner that avoids turning that national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one.

Tomorrow I will return to Jerusalem and continue our direct engagement with all stakeholders in order to facilitate a quick end to this crisis and a return to the situation which would allow the status quo to be observed, as well as for people to have safe and secure access to the holy sites in Jerusalem.