



Security Council

Seventy-second year

8011th meeting

Tuesday, 25 July 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Liu Jieyi (China)

<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tileuberdi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Iceland, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam 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 the 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 Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following individuals to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Ms. Joanne Adamson, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I propose also that the Council invite the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: As we meet today to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the risks of escalation and violence in the region continue to increase, despite the emergence of newfound agreement among a number of countries of the need to stand united against terrorism and radicalism. As societies continue to fracture along ethnic or religious lines and non-State actors continue to control large swathes of territory, recent events in Jerusalem resonate across the Middle East. For nearly a century, despite myriad peace efforts, one conflict has evaded solution. Some say it is irresolvable. Others challenge the basic premise of international consensus on how it can be resolved. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not only about land and peace; it is about two peoples who both have legitimate national aspirations for statehood and recognition — two nations whose histories are intertwined and whose future is forever intricately linked.

Fortunately until now, Israelis and Palestinians have not succumbed to the torrent of violent upheaval that has engulfed the region in recent years. But half a century of occupation has produced tens of thousands of casualties and left deep psychological scars on both sides. Developments over the past 11 days at the holy sites of the Old City in Jerusalem, however, have demonstrated the grave risk of dangerous escalation that exists, a risk of turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one and dragging both sides into the vortex of violence along with the rest of the region.

On 14 July, two Israeli policemen were killed by three assailants at the Lion's Gate entrance to the Holy Esplanade. The attackers fled inside the compound before being shot by police. According to the Israeli authorities, the assailants had initiated the attack from within the compound. In the immediate aftermath, the Palestinian President condemned the attack, while the Israeli Prime Minister committed to upholding and respecting the status quo at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem. Citing security concerns, the Israeli authorities closed the compound to all — including, for the first time since 1969, to Muslims for Friday prayers — and restricted entrance to the Old City in order to secure the area of the attack, search for further threats and conduct an investigation.

Two days later, on Sunday, 16 July, the compound was reopened, first for Muslim worshippers and later

for visitors, with metal detectors placed outside its entrances. The Islamic Waqf immediately rejected that move as a change in the status quo and called on worshippers not to enter the compound through the metal detectors, but to pray outside the entrance and in the streets of Jerusalem. Palestinian factions also immediately rejected the security measures. Hamas and Islamic Jihad issued a joint statement warning that that was a red line that would lead to an escalation, and Fatah called for “a day of rage”.

Starting on 16 July, prayers and peaceful protests were conducted at the Lion’s Gate, followed by clashes with the Israeli police. Tensions rose by Friday, 21 July, as the Waqf announced the closure of all Jerusalem mosques for Friday prayers. In response, Israel announced a restriction of entry into the Old City for all Muslim men under the age of 50. Clashes that evening and the next turned fatal, with four Palestinian protesters killed and hundreds injured. Later on Friday, three Israelis were killed in a brutal terror attack at their home in the West Bank settlement of Halamish by a 19-year-old Palestinian assailant who in his last will made a clear connection between his act and the events in East Jerusalem. Overall, in clashes since 14 July, at least four Palestinians were killed and more than 300 have been injured.

I ask Member States today to unequivocally condemn the violence of the past few days. Our thoughts and prayers must go out to all the victims and their families.

On 21 July, President Abbas announced that the Palestinian Authority was freezing all contact with Israel, including high-level security coordination.

Let us make no mistake: while events in Jerusalem may be taking place over a couple of hundred square metres in the Old City, they affect hundreds of millions of people around the world. Therefore, I welcome last night’s decision by the Israeli security Cabinet to remove the metal detectors, while ensuring the security of visitors and worshippers to the holy sites. I hope that the Cabinet decision will lead to a calming of the current tensions and will enable a return of worshippers to the Holy Esplanade. It is expected that President Abbas will convene the Palestinian leadership later tonight to discuss those developments.

As we have seen over the past 11 days, it is vital that the status quo established since 1967 be preserved. Recognizing the special and historic role of the

Hashemite Kingdom, I encourage Israel to continue its intensive contacts with Jordan. All parties must refrain from provocative actions, show restraint and bring a conclusive end to this crisis in the next few days. In those efforts, constant discussion with the Islamic religious authorities in Jerusalem and the Palestinian leadership can greatly contribute to maintaining calm in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank.

As this crisis has unfolded, I want to reflect briefly on the views we hear from residents in East Jerusalem — people who have been caught in the midst of these events over the past few weeks. They often tell us that for many years they have felt that their religious and ethnic identity is under threat; that their very livelihoods in their own city are at risk while living under occupation; and that their children often live in fear of security operations and house demolitions. They want to pray in peace and live in security and freedom. Many of them feel alone. They talk of the special status that resolution 181 (1947) had bestowed on Jerusalem, yet they see the reality around them. That is why often they come to us, the United Nations, appealing for protection. It is critical that any decision made at the highest political and religious levels, if it is to be sustainable, take into consideration the fears and hopes of the people on the ground.

Jerusalem remains 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 international 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, Palestinian leaders have a responsibility to avoid provocative statements that further aggravate an already tense environment. In that respect, I am particularly concerned about statements made over the past weeks by some factions that have sought to fan the flames of violence. Such provocations are dangerous, and I call on all to condemn them.

This crisis has diverted us from the real tasks ahead, namely, how to restore a political process in order to find a solution that meets the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians — a solution that is based on United Nations resolutions and is achieved through negotiations; a solution whose ultimate goal is two States living side by side in peace and security.

Unfortunately, these latest incidents have taken place against a backdrop of other developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In July alone, plans were advanced for more than 2,300 housing units in East Jerusalem, which is 30 per cent more than were advanced during all of 2016. That includes plans for approximately 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements in north of East Jerusalem, as well as plans in Sheikh Jarrah, which may involve the demolition of Palestinian houses. I must once again emphasize that settlement activity in occupied territory is illegal under international law and undermines the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestine.

On a more positive note, some constructive steps have been taken that are in line with the recommendations of the report of the Middle East Quartet (S/2016/595, annex).

On 10 July, an interim power-purchasing agreement was signed, energizing the first Palestinian-owned and operated substation in Jenin. That will increase electricity supply in the northern West Bank and help the Palestinian Authority take control of the energy sector. Both sides should now move to negotiate a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian power-purchasing agreement that would be a landmark achievement towards Palestine's energy independence.

On 13 July, with United States facilitation, the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Government reached an agreement allowing for an increase in water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Under its terms, the Palestinian Authority will purchase some 32 million cubic meters of water from Israel — 22 million cubic meters for the West Bank and 10 million for Gaza. The water will come from a desalination plant to be constructed in Aqaba, Jordan. The implementation of such agreements is instrumental in rebuilding trust between Palestinians and Israelis. They are, however, all put at risk by the freezing of contacts between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Without a resolution to the current crisis, these hard-won gains will swiftly evaporate.

I now turn to the situation in Gaza with a heavy heart. Some 2 million people there have been taken hostage in the political standoff between Fatah and Hamas. The humanitarian impact of the punishing measures taken against Gaza is appalling. In some parts of Gaza, people have experienced electricity cuts of 36 hours.

No electricity means no drinking water. Hospitals are struggling to survive. An environmental crisis is in the making. Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should be paying the price.

I want to assure the Security Council that the United Nations will not give up on Gaza and its people. Despite the odds, we will continue our intense mediation efforts to resolve the standoff. I take this opportunity to thank Egypt for stepping in at a moment of need and facilitating the entry of badly needed fuel to increase electricity supply. Egyptian fuel, along with the nearly 900,000 liters of fuel per month provided by the United Nations for the most essential services, provide a temporary lifeline to the residents of Gaza. In this environment, the continued functioning of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism is more critical than ever to the people of Gaza. Recently, too, the State of Qatar has signed contracts for eight more residential buildings as part of its commitment to reconstruction.

Today, Gaza and the West Bank are further apart than ever. Palestinian leaders must make some hard choices about the future of their people. They can work to overcome their ideological divisions or they can continue along the path that will guarantee Gaza's complete collapse. They can work to unite Palestinians in pursuit of the goal of statehood or they can oversee the demise of the Palestinian national project. They can resolve the current crisis in Gaza or preside over the radicalization of their population and see it fall into the hands of extremists with ever more destructive agendas.

I know that this is not the future that President Abbas or the majority of Palestinians want for their country. I know that they want to build a State in which human rights are respected; a State that is achieved on the basis of negotiations, not violence; one that lives in peace and security with the State of Israel. For 10 years, however, the population in Gaza has lived in a state of chronic vulnerability. At what point will people say "enough is enough"? At what point will we say "enough is enough"?

Since violently seizing control of Gaza, Hamas has tightened its grip on power and suppressed dissent. The fact that no presidential or legislative elections have been held in Palestine since 2006 has also created a democratic deficit that undermines the legitimacy of institutions. Two different legal systems have emerged

and diverging laws have been enacted in Gaza and the West Bank.

I once again call on all Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the split. I encourage them to reach an agreement that would allow the legitimate Palestinian Government to take up its responsibilities in Gaza as a step towards the formation of a unity Government on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform, and agree to hold elections. Meanwhile, Hamas must ensure that calm is maintained by ceasing militant build-up against Israel and by maintaining security at the border of Egypt. At the same time, I encourage Israel to step up its measures to lift the closures and facilitate development in Gaza as overall calm persists in the Strip, in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

Turning very briefly to Lebanon, I should like only to refer to the briefing a few days ago by the Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Sigrid Kaag, who briefed the Council in detail on developments and risks under resolution 1701 (2006).

Meanwhile, I also want to note that the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic has been maintained, albeit in a volatile environment. I am alarmed by the recent spike in military activities in Syria, which has resulted in several spill-over fire incidents across the disengagement line and Israeli retaliatory actions. I join the Secretary-General in welcoming the announcement by the Governments of Jordan, the Russian Federation and the United States of a de-escalation zone and arrangements to support a ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian assistance in south-western Syria.

In closing, let me emphasize that the events we have witnessed over the past weeks in Jerusalem are a reminder of how easy it is to reach the precipice of a dangerous escalation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. We are not over the crisis yet, but I hope that the steps that have been taken by Israel will enable a return to relative calm in the next couple of days. I hope that as agreements between Israel and Jordan are implemented and a positive engagement with the religious authorities takes places, we will avoid a cycle of violence that would destroy all peace efforts for the foreseeable future.

We must not lose focus on the need to restore a political perspective or on the need to bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive

to negotiations on a final status arrangement and avoids turning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the Security Council presidency this month, confident of China's skilled leadership and guidance of the Council's important work. I also wish to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his briefing to the Council this morning.

Before proceeding, we also renew our deep appreciation to Bolivia for its wise leadership of the Security Council in June, including its convening on 20 June of the meeting of the Council (see S/PV.7977) to sombrelly mark and reflect on the fiftieth year of Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967. As reflected in the statements made by Council members that day, the international consensus is firm and clear that the two-State solution, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, remains the central pillar of a just, comprehensive and peaceful solution based on the relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Also clear are the responsibilities of the Council under the Charter of the United Nations to act to advance a solution to the conflict, which continues to impact international peace and security. And yet, we continue to face the tragic consequences of the illegal occupation and the rapid deterioration on all fronts, and the absence of a credible political horizon to end the occupation, end this injustice and realize the Palestinian people's rights, including to self-determination.

We come before the Council today amid escalating tensions and instability in our homeland and a profound sense of worry. The fragile situation in occupied East Jerusalem has been inflamed yet again as Israel, the occupying Power, presses forth with its reckless and destructive agenda against our people and holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which houses the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, in absolute contempt for international law and the will of the international community. The

situation that we have repeatedly warned against — the stoking of a religious conflict — is rapidly unfolding as Israel persists with its illegal actions in occupied East Jerusalem, including its aggressive behaviour and provocative violations of the historic status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, aggravating religious sensitivities to the point of eruption. We are clearly at the tipping point. We must therefore again warn against the dangers of such provocations and incitement and the fueling of yet another cycle of violence, which will surely have far-reaching consequences in this already volatile climate.

We condemn the closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israel and all other related provocative and inflammatory measures and we do not accept, under any circumstances or pretexts, the closure of that holy site to worshippers. At this time, occupied East Jerusalem is a city besieged from within and without by military checkpoints, occupation forces, settlements and armed and violent settlers. The Palestinian people in the city face negation, subjugation, discrimination, armed demolitions and violence, with the aim of forcibly transferring them out of their city. Israel openly and shamelessly pursues discriminatory plans and policies based on religious and national affiliation.

The Palestinian people are resisting the recent provocative measures, including the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the banning of the Friday prayers and restrictions and access to the holy sites by praying in the streets. They are peacefully — and I emphasize peacefully — expressing their rejection of the illegal measures against their rights and their holy sites. Yet, peaceful demonstrations and steadfastness in preserving the character and identity of the city are being met with violent repression. Such aggression, provocations and violations must be immediately halted in order to avert the complete destabilization and collapse of the situation.

We recognize the efforts undertaken thus far by concerned parties in the region and across the international community to de-escalate the situation in Jerusalem and affirm the Palestinian leadership's readiness to cooperate with such efforts. In that context, we recognize the important role and supervision of the Islamic Waqf at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, the first kibla and the third holiest site in Islam, and recall the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the city. Yet, Israel continues to ignore the international community.

A clear unified message must be conveyed to Israel to cease and reverse all such illegal actions and policies. Furthermore, explicit calls must be made for an end to Israeli incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, including by Government officials, regarding the city and the holy sites, such as remarks by Israel's Public Security Minister who brazenly declared that:

“Israel holds sovereignty over the Mount, no matter what other countries' positions are, and if we decide that a certain move has a certain advantage, then it is carried out”.

Such declarations are aimed at illegally asserting Israeli control over Al-Haram Al-Sharif in the heart of occupied East Jerusalem, which remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. De-escalation is urgent. We appeal for the continuation of all efforts to restore the historic status quo at Al-Haram mosque compound and achieve calm. That requires the lifting of all measures in violation of the historic status quo, including any hindrances or obstructions violating the access by Palestinians to that holy site and their freedom of worship. We recall the Council's press statement (SC/12052) of 17 September 2015, in which it was underscored that

“Muslim worshippers at the Haram al-Sharif must be allowed to worship in peace, free from violence, threats and provocations”.

We also recall the numerous relevant Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967 to the present day, the most recent being resolution 2334 (2016), which explicitly underlined the non-recognition of any changes to 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. We call for the full respect and implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. The Council has not only the power to enact the law, but a duty to uphold it. Its credibility and authority in this case and all cases depend on it. The question of Palestine cannot remain the exception to every rule.

The de-escalation of this perilous situation is contingent on respect for the law, including as enshrined in the relevant resolutions and that, in turn, is what will preserve the sanctity of the holy sites and preserve fleeting prospects for peace. The protection of human life is equally urgent. The protection of civilian Palestinians in the occupied territory, including in East Jerusalem is very urgent and important. International

humanitarian law and human rights law must be respected, without exception. We deplore the killing and injury of all innocent civilians. I repeat, we deplore the killing and injury of all innocent civilians, including innocent Palestinian civilians.

Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for its violations and negligence, including with regard to the terror inflicted by its settlers on the Palestinian civilians under its occupation; it cannot continue to be absolved of its legal obligations. We mourn the loss of five of our youth, who were brutally killed last week by the occupying forces, and pray for the recovery of the more than 1,000 peaceful demonstrators who were injured. In that connection, we commend the European Union, the Secretary-General and others who have asked for investigations into such crimes. We also deplore Israel's ongoing military raids and arrest of Palestinian civilians, including children, adding to the thousands of Palestinians unlawfully imprisoned and abused by the occupation.

We must remind the members in the Chamber that the Palestinian people are an unarmed, defenceless people. We must also remind members that Israel is the occupying Power and is not the sovereign in any part of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and cannot be permitted in any way to act as sovereign, whether in practice, policy or rhetoric. This occupation, entrenched and sustained by Israel's illegal policies and practices over the decades, is the context and harsh reality in which all of these disturbing developments are taking place. And all of it is happening against the backdrop of the Council's adoption of resolution 2334 (2016) — a resolution that was unequivocal as to the occupied status of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967 and the illegality of all measures aimed at altering the demography, character and status of that territory.

Resolution 2334 (2016) determined a clear path away from conflict and towards peace. We must not allow the occupying Power to continue dragging us in the opposite direction. In the absence of serious steps to implement resolution 2334 (2016), and in the absence of any consequences for Israel's flagrant disrespect of the resolution, the occupying Power has not only persisted with its violations — committing thousands since the resolution's adoption — but has also been encouraged and emboldened to accelerate its reckless colonization and annexation campaign.

The occupying Power's actions continue to endanger Palestinian civilians' lives and risk further destabilizing the situation on the ground, with potentially dramatic consequences for Palestinians and Israelis, for the region and the prospects for peace and security. We should not underestimate the risks. Despair, anger and tensions throughout Palestine are running extremely high, especially among our young people, who have not known a single day of freedom or dignity under this abhorrent occupation.

An hour from Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank, 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remain under Israel's illegal blockade in an act of massive collective punishment. For a decade, an entire population has been imprisoned — denied freedom of movement and access to livelihoods, basic supplies and even vital medicines; deprived of clean water and energy and forced to live in the ruins of war, even as reconstruction continues to be obstructed and at least 40,000 people remain displaced. That is the reality of their lives. This man-made catastrophe is deepening by the hour and requires urgent remedy through humanitarian, humane and political solutions. Gaza is unlivable for humans. That does not mean a decade from now, or even a few years or months. It is unlivable now, as we speak. While Palestinian unity is vital and a priority that we are working very hard to accomplish, only an end to the Israeli blockade can bring life back to Gaza. We therefore appeal once again for immediate action to save its Palestinian civilian population from this inhumanity and avert another explosive crisis.

Seventy years after the United Nations was first seized of the question of Palestine, the denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination still continues. How many Palestinian generations will have to endure the suffering caused by their persistent dispossession and exile and by the colonial and military Israeli occupation in all its manifestations? How many more years and decades do we have to wait? Here, before the Council, I have to say that if affirming and defending the Palestinian people's rights is equated with being anti-Israel, the logical conclusion is that only a negation of Palestinian rights can be considered pro-Israel. That is not just offensive and unacceptable; it constitutes an existential matter for the Palestinian people. Moreover, it implies that a just peace — one that recognizes the legitimate national aspirations and rights of the Palestinian people — is not possible and that somehow our collective pursuit of peace is

anti-Israel. We reject that equation and continue to believe that peace is possible, not by negating our rights but rather by ending the Israeli occupation of our land, securing Palestinian rights — including the right to self-determination and freedom — and ensuring a just settlement for Palestinian refugees, in conformity with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Palestinian leadership will continue to engage positively with every peace effort. We say that even at a time of great pain and turmoil for our people and our land, for we firmly believe that the path of peace and international legitimacy will rectify this grave injustice and ensure that one day the Palestinian people will live in dignity, freedom and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with Israel and all of its other neighbours, in peace and security within recognized borders. We appeal to the Council and all those present to uphold its role and responsibilities under the Charter in this urgent hour. We need the Council, and we need it to act.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): Last Friday, a disgusting act of terror took place in my country. The Salomon family had gathered together for the traditional Friday-night Shabbat meal. They came together to celebrate a joyous occasion, the birth of a new grandson. But it was only a matter of time before the family's festivities ended in horrific bloodshed. A Palestinian terrorist broke into their home. He murdered Yosef, the 70-year-old grandfather of the family, and Yosef's daughter Haya and son Elad. That terrorist slayed those innocents in cold blood before the eyes of the children and grandchildren. This family, including the youngest children, had to witness their loved ones bleed to death at the hands of terror. Had it not been for Elad's wife, the horrific attack would have taken the lives of the entire extended Salomon family. She hid the children while a brave neighbour who heard the victims' screams neutralized the terrorist before he could complete his massacre.

We cannot continue to ignore the basis for this ghastly assault. The attack did not happen in a vacuum. No, that terrorist committed a heinous crime following rampant, relentless incitements to violence by Palestinian officials. The Palestinian President,

Mahmoud Abbas, has publicly endorsed the practice of paying salaries to convicted terrorists and their families. Schools are named for mass murderers. Monuments dedicated to these killers stand at the centres of Palestinian towns and villages. Palestinians in Gaza even celebrated Friday's horrific events. The result is clear. Palestinians are radicalized and encouraged to kill innocent Israelis in cold blood. It is no secret that they have built an industry of incitement. How many more innocents will be murdered? How many more terrorists will be paid to kill? And how many thousands of dollars will be awarded to the Salomons' killer? This incitement, culture of hate and glorification of terror must end now.

We are assembled in this forum to examine the situation in the Middle East. So let us examine the real situation. The core of so much violence in our region and around the world comes from the unrelenting glorification of terror. We cannot continue to sideline the truth. Friday's unspeakable atrocity was not an isolated incident. This kind of encouragement to terror has been going on for decades. The Palestinians will not admit it. They make up excuses and divert attention from the truth. They have just claimed that Israel is seeking to change the status quo on the Temple Mount and that that is what prompted the violence. Nothing could be further from the truth. Israel's top priority is to maintain the safety and security of all Temple Mount worshippers and visitors. The Palestinians' top priority is to ignite violence.

Let me go back to 4 October 2003. Jews and Arabs were gathered together in Haifa's famous Maxim restaurant. Maxim was seen across the world as a symbol of coexistence, brotherhood and peace. While enjoying a family lunch, no one suspected the impending violence. On that October day, Hanadi Jaradat, a female Palestinian student from Jenin, disguised herself as a pregnant woman. Jaradat walked into the restaurant with one twisted intention in mind: to blow herself up and kill as many innocent people as possible. In cold blood, Jaradat took the lives of 21 Jews and Arabs and badly injured 51 others. Dead customers were still sitting upright in their chairs, with blood spilling from their bodies. Babies and young children were propelled across the room from the force of the blast. No plight or struggle can justify such disgusting acts of terror. No claim of victimhood can validate the cruelty and the insanity of such sick crimes.

Terror has many untold victims. Oran Almog is one of them. While only 10-years-old, Oran lost his father, grandfather, grandmother, brother and cousin because of Hanadi Jaradat. Oran was badly burned and blinded. Oran is here with us today.

Hanadi Jaradat's family — the family of the killer — has earned tens of thousands of dollars in payments for her crime. Jaradat's two accomplices have earned more than \$500,000 in total terror payments, and those sums are only increasing. The more prison days, the higher the terror wage. Jaradat's father declined all condolences and called his daughter a "gift". What a gift indeed. Jaradat's family earned a blank check for her suicide. In October 2012, the Arab Lawyers' Union awarded its top prize to that terrorist. The Union even sent a delegation to her family to present them with the award.

Professional women in Israel, like in many of the other members' countries, win awards in the arts, sciences and business. Professional Palestinian women win awards for murder. As Israeli women become chief executive officers, Palestinian women like Hanadi Jaradat become chief executive killers. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is just as guilty as the terror groups themselves. Abbas not only has the audacity to claim that he seeks peace, but actively funds, promotes and glorifies terror.

In 2016, the Palestinian Authority spent more than \$300 million — yes, members have heard correctly — on the salaries paid to terrorists and their families, on mass killers with innocent blood on their hands. The PA under Abbas dedicates approximately 7 per cent of its budget to funding terrorists and their families. How much of its budget does it spend on higher education? The answer is as low as 1 per cent. You do not need a university degree to determine where the Palestinian Authorities' priorities lie.

Mahmoud Abbas has made his position clear. He supports the policy of "pay to slay". Just recently, he said,

"I will not compromise on the salary of a martyr or a prisoner."

This is the leader of the Palestinian Authority who pays terrorists to kill. The truth is plain and simple: Israel values every life, while the PA praises every death. Not only does Israel cherish life, but Israel believes firmly in building a better future for every person.

In Israel we value the freedom of expression, the freedom of ideas and the freedom of religion — for all religions. In Israel we empower women and minorities. We protect the rights of Muslims, Christians and Jews to pray at their holy sites. We commit to ensuring the safety of all worshippers and visitors and to taking the necessary measures to guarantee their complete security. In Israel we teach our children to invest in democratic values and a genuine, enduring peace. The Palestinians do not. They teach hate. They invest in terror. And they celebrate death.

In Palestinian classrooms fourth-graders solve word problems to calculate the number of terrorists killed in suicide attacks against Jews. If children are surrounded by the praise of terror in and out of school, they are destined to kill. Israel wants nothing more than to simply live in peace with its neighbours. We extend a hand in peace, but the Palestinians continue to say no. Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated time and again that we are ready and willing to negotiate — anytime and anywhere.

The United Nations is an Organization dedicated to peace, human rights and justice. One might think it would be quick to condemn the glorification of terror wherever it happens, but that is hardly the case, especially with regard to the Palestinians. The PA has mastered the art of deceit, and the international community has fallen for it. The Palestinians spin. They call those who send suicide bombers to Israeli restaurants, stab Israelis in the streets and seek Israel's ultimate destruction "political prisoners". Worst of all, the Palestinians fund their terror scheme through the generous donations of other countries. That is right: the international community has allowed approximately 30 per cent of foreign aid intended to support the Palestinian's well-being to fund blood money.

Israel will not tolerate the bankrolling of terror any longer. We will not accept the glorified killing of our citizens. I turn to the Palestinian representative and ask him to look at Oran and tell him and the Council that the Palestinian Authority will stop paying thousands of dollars every month to the terrorists and abusing international aid and foreign funds to promote terror. His silence speaks for itself

As Oran has taught us,

"After what I have gone through, I know that even if they hurt you, they cannot defeat you. If we remain

united and continue to maintain our togetherness, no one can beat us”.

Oran is a true hero, a true patriot and a true model for the appreciation of life. Like Oran and all the people of Israel, the Council must value life over death. The blind acceptance of murder cannot go on. The silence in the face of terror must end.

I turn now to the Security Council, a body founded to ensure “the maintenance of international peace and security” for all. The Council must not sacrifice the core values of justice, morality and truth for cheap political victories and empty promises. Let us pledge to work together to end this vulgar exploitation of international aid. Let us hold the Palestinians accountable and ensure that they teach their children to seek peace. Only then, will we see the possibility of real peace in our region.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing. The United States shares everyone’s concern about the heightened tensions in Jerusalem. All parties should work to reduce these tensions, and we offer whatever assistance we can in helping to do that. At the holy sites, it is vital that both access and security be ensured. In keeping with Mr. Mladenov’s recommendation, I am going to refrain from further comment on this sensitive issue in the hope that wisdom will prevail over emotions.

This is our monthly gathering to discuss the Middle East. The complicated and seemingly unending conflict there is frustrating to many Americans. It is frustrating to me. But truth be told, the Security Council often makes the Middle East more complicated than it actually is. It obsesses over Israel, and it refuses to acknowledge one of the chief sources of conflict and killing in the Middle East. That is Iran and its partner militia, the Lebanese Hezbollah. Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. In its own words, it is “dedicated to the destruction of Israel”. It has the blood of hundreds of Americans and thousands of others on its hands. Together with its Iranian patron, Hezbollah seeks to cause destruction throughout the Middle East. Some regard Hezbollah as having two wings: a terrorist wing and a political and social wing. This is a convenient excuse for Hezbollah, but it is dangerous fiction. Just because a terrorist group also promotes political candidates for office does not make it any less a terrorist group.

For a glimpse of Hezbollah’s true nature, we need look no further than its work on behalf of the Syrian dictator. From its base in Lebanon, Hezbollah sends its men into Syria. There, they have been responsible for some of the bloodiest campaigns of a very bloody war. They are returning to Lebanon battle-hardened and their presence in Syria keeps open their supply route of sophisticated weapons from Iran. Simply put, Hezbollah has grown stronger. It is preparing its men and its arsenal for a future war. None of this is secret. The leader of Hezbollah boasts about the destruction that his group is capable of. He talks openly about the support Iran provides. Hezbollah even takes journalists on tours of its military operations on the border that Lebanon shares with Israel — operations that are in defiance of the Council.

It is no secret where the United Nations stands either. It has adopted multiple resolutions calling on Hezbollah to disarm. It has called on the Lebanese State to exercise control over its territory. But neither of these things has happened. The trend is very much in the opposite direction. Hezbollah openly defies these resolutions and impedes the Lebanese Government’s ability to exercise full control over its territory. For too long, the Security Council has chosen to pretend that the status quo is acceptable to the people of Lebanon. It is not. Hezbollah’s illegal weapons build-up is putting the people of Lebanon in great danger. Remarkably, the Council has not even been able to bring itself to use the word “Hezbollah” in recent resolutions or statements on Lebanon. Many here are happy to name Israel time after time, but Hezbollah is somehow off limits. It is absurd; worse than that, it is dangerous.

The least the American people expect from the Council is to acknowledge the obvious threats that are right in front of us. How can I explain to them that there is a terrorist organization preparing its men and its arsenal for war, but that the United Nations refuses to even say its name. That must change. We must show Hezbollah that it cannot get away with its illegal weapons. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has an important role to play. The United States supports UNIFIL, but there is much more that UNIFIL should do to help prevent another conflict. It can begin by acknowledging what is happening right under its nose. There are reports of UNIFIL not fully investigating alleged violations. Sometimes it fails to report what its investigators have found. If UNIFIL cannot acknowledge illegal weapons that Hezbollah

parades in front of the media, one wonders what else it is missing. We will have more to say about UNIFIL when its mandate is up for renewal next month.

The American people sympathize with the challenges facing the Lebanese people. We will continue to support them as they combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and host over a million refugees. We understand that the issues in the Middle East are complex, but we also understand right and wrong, and we expect our leaders to know the difference as well. Hizbullah is a destructive terrorist force. It is a major obstacle to peace and the dangers it poses are getting larger, not smaller. Simply acknowledging this and saying it aloud would be a significant step forward, but we must do more than that. We must begin to get serious about enforcing our own resolutions that have been routinely violated by Iran and Hizbullah.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Tileuberdi (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, Mr. Nikolay Mladenov, for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East. I also express appreciation to the Chinese presidency for convening today's open debate which highlights the crisis in the region and collectively seeks concerted action on several fronts in each of the critical countries.

The situation in the Middle East region is of great concern to Kazakhstan because the region is the epicentre of numerous armed conflicts of extreme complexity. These flash points and tensions have grave implications for international peace and security. Rivalry and the lack of trust, unity of purpose, justice, escalating stark economic and social inequalities and underdevelopment prevent the global community from achieving progress in the Middle East. As a result, today we are witnessing the rapid growth of terrorism and violent extremism, a grave humanitarian situation and violations of the most basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also see an unprecedented migration crisis and the suffering of millions of people. A most serious and dangerous problem is the fact that terrorism has spread all across the region. Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and Yemen are impacted and suffering from this scourge, and the international community needs to take a coordinated and united approach to combat this threat.

On the Palestinian question, we are concerned over the ongoing construction of settlements and the growing threat of violence, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and economic backwardness, all of which are unacceptable. The escalated tensions in the holy city of Jerusalem — sparked by the killing of two Israeli policemen, the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the imposition of restrictions on worshippers — are further worsening the fragile security situation. As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, we urge the Government of Israel to lift these restrictions, as such actions could escalate into a religious confrontation with dangerous repercussions. All acts of violence should end, and parties should refrain from conduct and actions that could lead to a further escalation of the already complicated situation on the ground.

The early resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, without any preconditions, is urgently needed. In this connection, we commend the efforts of the United States and Russia to facilitate the resumption of the peace dialogue within the framework of the Middle East Quartet. Kazakhstan supports a negotiated two-State solution, leading to the realization of the inalienable right of Palestinians to statehood and Israel's right to security. Both sides need to demonstrate the political will necessary to reach a historic and long-awaited peace agreement. One of the positive outcomes of the efforts undertaken thus far is the water-sharing agreement between Israel and Palestine, and we hope that it will create a positive atmosphere towards cooperation on other important issues on the bilateral agenda.

Kazakhstan welcomes the outcomes of the recent international high-level meetings within the framework of the Astana and Geneva processes and the recent agreements between the Russian Federation, the United States of America and Jordan regarding the de-escalation areas in south-western Syria. We call on all parties and countries involved to fully observe the ceasefire and continue to pursue every possible constructive interaction in order to restore peace and stability, for only then will we be able to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

We congratulate the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people on liberating Mosul from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This marks a significant turning point in the conflict and in countering international terrorism. The post-ISIL long-term recovery and reconstruction process will require unity,

inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation. We call upon the international community to support the Iraqi Government's new five-year national development plan, its 10-year reconstruction plan and its poverty reduction strategy.

Kazakhstan welcomes the consensus reached among the various political forces of Lebanon to adopt a new electoral law. The parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in May 2018 will positively promote the stabilization of the situation in the country and strengthen its State institutions. The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has exceeded 1 million. The international community must provide greater assistance to Lebanon for its generous gesture in hosting such an enormous number of refugees, in spite of its most limited resources.

The Yemeni crisis, which is a direct result of armed conflict, has no military solution but only a political one. My country is deeply concerned about the humanitarian and epidemiological situation in Yemen, where the cholera outbreak has further escalated an already acute humanitarian situation. We call upon all parties to the conflict to take decisive measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic by respecting international humanitarian law and to refrain from impeding humanitarian and medical access and supplies, which are obligations under international humanitarian law.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his comprehensive and detailed briefing.

Over the past two weeks, the Council has conducted two urgent series of consultations on the crises in Gaza and Jerusalem. The crises are localized, but they are not local. Each threatens to unleash a new escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine, as well as beyond the region. These acute crises only confirm the warning that many of us have regularly delivered to the Council. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not resolve itself. Let us be fully aware of the fact that the solution to the conflict does not lie in the principal actors acting on autopilot, on the basis of outdated software, nor on delusional shortcuts. There is no alternative to the difficult path to peace based on respect and negotiations.

Time does not make the Israeli-Palestinian conflict less dangerous. The rise in regional crises has neither normalized nor marginalized it. On the contrary, the lack of a solution to the conflict, which is particularly

serious in and of itself, constitutes an ongoing threat to international security. Given its gravity, its symbolic dimension and its place in the collective imagination of the parties involved, the impact of this unresolved conflict has structural dimensions and goes beyond the borders of Israel and the Palestinian territories. Any escalation in the conflict carries with it uncontrolled regional destabilization. For that reason, we cannot resign ourselves to a false status quo that conceals a daily regression, both on the ground and in peoples' minds. The end of the current path is clear. The idea of a two-State solution will disappear like a mirage in the desert. That would represent a leap into the unknown and the risk of a worst-case scenario.

The crisis in Jerusalem shows that a surge in violence can occur at any time in the region and beyond, given the spiritual, religious and symbolic weight of the Temple Mount. In the light of the alarming rise in tensions and violence in recent days, France has expressed its extreme concern and stressed the imperative for a return to calm. In that regard, we have taken note of the removal of the metal detectors, which is an encouraging signal. We hope that it will open the way to a lasting settlement of the situation. France also recalls that such appeasement requires respect for the historical status quo of 1967 and cooperation among the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian parties. We continue to monitor the situation with the utmost attention and reiterate our call for the utmost restraint. As Mr. Mladenov rightly stressed, there is a need to avoid transforming the political conflict, which can and must be subject to agreement and compromise, into a religious conflict that would make any compromise impossible.

In Gaza, the continuing humanitarian crisis for 2 million Palestinians has suddenly deteriorated due to cuts to the electricity supply, that have lasted more than three months. The inhabitants of Gaza live today with two to three hours of electricity per day on average. The energy crisis is paralysing medical, sanitary and water treatment infrastructure. It strikes the weakest in Gaza, not the leaders of Hamas. If nothing is done, the ongoing tensions could lead to a new deadly conflict of the sort seen three times in the Gaza Strip in less than a decade. That would be unacceptable. Israel must fully assume its responsibilities as the occupying Power by, *inter alia*, alleviating restrictions on the movement of goods and persons to and from Gaza. It is also critical that the Palestinians reach a reconciliation agreement. We know that there can be no viable Palestinian State

without Palestinian unity, based on the principle of the two-State solution. More critically, a lasting political solution must be found for Gaza, predicated on the lifting of the blockade and robust security guarantees for Israel.

The crisis calls for an urgent response, both from the parties involved and from the international community. But beyond that immediate demand, we must restore the prospects for a just peace, in which Palestinians and Israelis are ever less inclined to believe. Violence is proliferating in the current political vacuum, and that violence is unacceptable. The recent deaths of 10 people in attacks and clashes in Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories serve as a new tragic illustration of that. We condemn all violence, and the well-known, horrendous murders of three members of an Israeli family in a settlement in the West Bank, must be firmly repudiated.

In that context, it is essential to return to the negotiating table. Such negotiations are of course incumbent on the parties, but their outcome must not be pre-empted by faits accomplis. Settlement-building, which is illegal under international law, directly threatens the preservation of the two-State solution on the ground and the prospect for a fair and lasting peace for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The announcement at the beginning of the month of the construction of 1,500 new housing units in East Jerusalem is unprecedented. It is a very bad sign and will only fuel tensions on the ground.

It is therefore necessary to provide a genuine political horizon to both Israelis and Palestinians. France welcomes and encourages all initiatives undertaken to that end, in particular by the United States. It also recalls the fact that all attempts to partially address the conflict have failed. Economic development and security arrangements can make sense only in the context of a comprehensive agreement. The path to achieve that is not easy; sacrifices will be required on both sides. However, there is no alternative to internationally agreed parameters: two States living in peace and security along secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed-upon territorial exchanges, with Jerusalem as the capital of the two States.

France is a friend of both Palestinians and Israelis. That is why we will speak truth and steadfastly call for a return to the negotiation table. We will never

throw in the towel. Faced with the temptation to put off addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or to lose sight of the need for a final status agreement, it is essential to reaffirm the two-State framework. As President of the Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, said to the Palestinian President and to the Israeli Prime Minister, whom he hosted in Paris in recent weeks, France will remain firmly committed to this issue and will fully contribute to the efforts, which are more necessary than ever, to restore a credible and dynamic policy.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

Bolivia expresses its strong support for sincere, cross-cutting and transparent dialogue to achieve the two-State solution. We are convinced, like all other States Members of the United Nations, that both Israel and Palestine have the right to live in security as free and independent States.

As on other occasions, we endorse the initiatives that lead to a peaceful settlement to the conflict between Palestine and Israel, such as the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and others that seek to ensure a just and lasting peace for both peoples. In that regard, we reaffirm our full commitment to multilateralism and to debate framed by respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States.

On this occasion, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families of the Palestinian and Israeli citizens who died over the past few days in violent clashes in the territories of Jerusalem and the West Bank. As a pacifist State, we categorically reject all kinds of acts of force that result in the loss of human life, regardless of who commits them or the circumstances in which they occur. Our commitment to the sanctity of life prevails over all ideological speech or action that embraces violence as a valid means to achieve an end, regardless of how fair that end may appear.

Unfortunately, again and as on other occasions, we are participating in this open debate in a context that does little to inspire optimism for the long-desired

peace in the Middle East. The Israeli Government recently sought to justify a number of violations of international law, including practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, occupied since 1967.

Between 16 July and today, at least eight deaths have occurred in clashes that took place in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. As members of the Security Council, we cannot allow an escalation in the violence that adds to the deaths, be they Israeli or Palestinian.

On 21 July, last Friday, the Israeli police issued a communiqué announcing the implementation of a series of measures restricting the access of men under the age of 50 and Palestinian women in general to the Holy Esplanade. In imposing those new restrictions, which include metal detectors and metal barriers at the holy sites that surround the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Israel is violating the historic status quo. We must recall the historic General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 1947, which refers to the fact that the liberty of access to holy sites and sanctuaries and religious buildings, as well as freedom of worship, shall be guaranteed, in conformity with existing rights and subject to requirements of public order and decorum.

We join the nations that today are calling on the parties to heed the call of history and to sit down together to begin a frank and sincere dialogue, while refraining from any attitude whose outcome is to increase the violence in a land already steeped in volatility, a land in which various faiths and cultures should coexist and recognize their shared humanity.

We also call upon all parties to refrain from resorting to the use of aggressive rhetoric, which fans the flames of hostility between both peoples. It is crucial that every possible effort be made to avoid any escalation of violence, which ultimately affects innocent men, women, children and the elderly.

We express once again our commitment to the immediate implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), and we encourage all members of the Security Council to join forces for its implementation without further delay. We believe that all the resolutions adopted by the Council should be implemented with the same rigor and commitment that they demand, with the sole purpose of guaranteeing international peace and security.

In conclusion, we emphatically reaffirm that the only long-term solution to the conflict is the two-State solution, with an Israeli State and a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, within the pre-1967 international borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation, through me, would like to welcome the convening of this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for the clarity of his briefing. The information he shared with us once again confronts us with the extreme volatility of the situation on the ground and in the peace process, which has clearly been struggling since 2014.

Against the backdrop of the particularly tense situation in Jerusalem, a city that is a symbol of three monotheistic religions, my delegation calls upon the parties to work to reduce tensions, as Mr. Mladenov urged. We reiterate our call for respect for the status quo of the Muslim and Christian holy sites, including the Holy Esplanade, and welcome the important role Jordan continues to play in that regard.

The fourth International Conference on Jerusalem — which just took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 20 and 21 July, at the initiative of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in cooperation with the Organization for Islamic Cooperation — rightly drew attention to the centrality of the issue of that city in the search for negotiated peaceful solution to the conflict. While expressing our condolences to the relatives of the victims of the recent violence, we reiterate our disapproval and condemnation of all forms and manifestations of violence and terrorism, regardless of the perpetrators or motives.

On 19 and 20 June, here at Organization Headquarters in New York, that Committee, in accordance with its mandate from the General Assembly, organized a forum to mark 50 years since the Arab-Israeli war. On that occasion, Israeli and Palestinian participants, as well as experts and members of civil society from various backgrounds, with innovative ideas, urged the

international community — in particular the Security Council, in view of its international obligations — to work tirelessly in support of the two-State solution, which is the only viable solution, as it would guarantee peace and security to both Israelis and the Palestinians, who are condemned by geography to live together.

At a time when we agree on the need to give priority to conflict prevention, the disastrous humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza, which appears to be a time bomb, should receive our full attention. The Special Coordinator recently alerted us to the scale of the crisis, at the same time launching a call for \$35 million in funding to cover emergency needs.

In its report entitled *Gaza Ten Years Later*, the United Nations country team — which in 2012 had already pointed out that Gaza would become unliveable by 2020 should the trend continue — describes once again a most bleak humanitarian situation. In addition, there are structural problems linked to the supply of water and electricity, and to sanitation, not to mention the rebuilding of infrastructure. My delegation therefore urges Palestinian political actors to set aside their divisions in order to tackle humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges, in particular the electricity supply gap, which affects about 2 million people, half of whom are children. Against that backdrop, we reiterate our support for ongoing efforts to ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has predictable, adequate and sustained resources, with a view to enabling it to continue its vital work for the benefit of millions of Palestinian refugees.

Beyond the humanitarian aspect, however, with the support of the international community, the parties should work towards the recovery of the Palestinian economy, particularly in Gaza, which suffers from the decline in assistance from external partners. In these difficult circumstances, we renew our appeal to the parties, in accordance with their repeated commitments to the two-State solution, to open negotiations that would lead to a definitive peace that responds to the security needs of Israel and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for a sovereign State.

While renewing its support for the diplomatic initiatives undertaken by several countries — including Egypt, France, Jordan and the Russian Federation — my delegation also calls for the culmination of the ongoing efforts of the United States with a view to relaunching

the peace process, on the basis of existing platforms such as the Arab Peace Initiative, which was reaffirmed at the latest Summit of the League of Arab States.

Seventy years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the international community, in particular the Security Council, has no choice but to redouble its efforts to fully implement these texts, so that, like the Israeli people, who enjoy a prosperous State, the Palestinian people can see their legitimate aspirations for a sovereign and viable State fulfilled.

Senegal will continue to support any initiative to achieve the two-State solution.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to extend our gratitude to the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for the thorough briefing and for the efforts that he has undertaken.

We are deeply troubled by the escalation of tension in Palestinian-Israeli relations. We firmly and categorically condemn any manifestation of terrorism, which worsens the already difficult relationship between the parties and erodes the situation in the region as a whole.

We believe that a solution to the issue of Jerusalem, a sacred city for the three monotheistic religions, must hinge on General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The specific parameters of an agreement on the city must be arrived at through direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Prior to reaching such an agreement, the parties must refrain from any action that predetermines the final status of Jerusalem. In that regard, the aim of close coordination between Israel and Jordan is to help calm the situation at the holy sites in East Jerusalem and to maintain the status quo around them. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan plays a specific and important role in the management of Muslim holy sites.

The protracted pause in the peace process carries with it a high risk of further escalating the situation. The destabilizing factors have not been addressed; rather, they have worsened. Settlement activity is ongoing and, in recent days, in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, provocative rhetoric on both sides has been heightened.

The situation in the Gaza Strip requires specific attention. The humanitarian situation there remains dire. There are major disruptions in the provision of electricity. The unemployment level is among the highest in the world. What remains on the agenda is the need to provide for intra-Palestinian unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform and under the auspices of a legitimate Palestinian leadership. We support the mediation efforts of the parties, including those undertaken by the Arab Republic of Egypt. The solution lies not only in stabilizing the current situation, but — and this is important — in paving the way for a genuine political horizon for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement through direct talks between the parties on the universally recognized international legal basis.

Russia helps to facilitate progress in the political process, acting both bilaterally and through the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, which we view as a critical mechanism and which has been endorsed by Security Council resolutions. We are keen to further contribute to upholding unity within Palestinian ranks. We reaffirm our initiative on conducting a meeting in Moscow between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Our position was and remains steadfast: a comprehensive, fair and lasting peace can be achieved exclusively through the relevant international legal instruments, including Security Council resolutions as well as the Arab Peace Initiative, and through direct talks between the parties, without preconditions. Such negotiations must lead to a cessation of what began in 1967, namely, Israel's occupation of Arab lands, and to the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, coexisting side by side in peace with Israel and within secure and recognized borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and with West Jerusalem becoming the capital of the State of Israel. We see no alternative to the two-State solution. That is the sole realistic means to put an end to the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and to mutual recriminations.

The Middle East and North Africa region remains in crisis — old crises and new crises. The most recent wave of instability in the occupied Palestinian territories only confirms this lamentable reality. There are still terrorists in many parts of the region and beyond, despite the gains in combatting terrorism, who seek to gain possession of chemical weapons. Once again, last night the Russian Embassy in Damascus was

shelled twice. We call upon our partners to condemn such attacks.

We once again call attention to the fact that the destabilization of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa has significantly disrupted the fragile ethno-religious balance that has historically prevailed in the region. Extremists have exploited this religious factor, thereby unleashing a veritable genocide against Christians and other minorities with one end in mind: to stoke hatred and to swell their own ranks.

All of that serves to bolster our position in favour of concerted efforts on the part of the international community to forge genuine cooperation and build a wide-ranging counter-terrorism front to effectively repel the global terrorism threat, including depriving terrorists of access to chemical weapons and other types of weapons.

It is axiomatic that, in parallel with counter-terrorism measures, we must take steps for a political settlement to the myriad conflicts and to restore peace and stability in the Middle East and the North Africa region. With respect to resolving the crises in the Middle East, Russia has steadfastly called for a political and diplomatic process, for which there is no alternative, one that hinges on inclusive national dialogue. We continue to focus efforts on achieving effective and enduring results and will continue urging the belligerents to overcome the mistrust, without imposing any external solutions, in order to seek a political settlement. It is our hope that our partners share that approach.

We reaffirm our position in favour of respect and upholding the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. Efforts to settle regional crises must be premised on diplomacy, dialogue and engagement. History attests to the fact that with goodwill even the most intractable crises can be settled.

We call upon all international and regional players to overcome their differences and disagreements on an equal footing, without counter-productive rhetoric or mutual recrimination, in order to demonstrate a constructive position and self-restraint and seek mutually acceptable solutions. On that basis, we stand ready to work collectively.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I would like to align myself with the statement to be made later today on behalf of the European Union.

I would also like to thank Special Envoy Mladenov for his timely briefing to the Security Council this morning.

Together with Egypt and France, Sweden called for yesterday's discussion in the Council because we were deeply concerned by the heightened tensions and violent clashes, including loss of life in and around occupied East Jerusalem, particularly at Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. It is critical to avoid any further escalation of the situation, which, as highlighted by Mr. Mladenov, could have consequences far beyond the walls of the Old City.

Since the Council met yesterday, we have learned that Israel has decided to remove the metal detectors at the entrances of the Holy Esplanade — a key demand from the Palestinian side, as well as Jordan and many other Arab countries. That is a step that we hope can pave the way for de-escalation. It remains of great importance to uphold the historic status quo at the holy sites.

Jerusalem is home to three religions, and it has a special status granted by the United Nations in 1947. The special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and of His Majesty King Abdullah II, as recognized in the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, is key, and we appreciate the efforts that Jordan, as well as many others, are making to find a solution to the crisis.

While we are hopefully close to a solution to the immediate crisis, we must not lose sight of the urgent need to find a just, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Developments on the ground, unfortunately, continue to take us further away from the two-State solution.

We are deeply concerned about the recent Israeli announcement of the issuance of building permits for 1,500 new settlement units in East Jerusalem. As reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016), the establishment of settlements by Israel in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. Settlements further constitute a major obstacle to peace and, if not reversed, will render the two-State solution impossible. We call on the Israeli authorities to immediately reverse that decision.

We unequivocally condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terrorism. We condemned the attack on 14 July in the Old City

of Jerusalem and we welcome the swift and firm condemnation by President Abbas in that regard. In line with resolution 2334 (2016), we reiterate the call for immediate steps to prevent such violence, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, and for accountability in that regard.

We are extremely worried about the situation in Gaza, particularly the humanitarian consequences of the energy crisis and Israel's policy of closure. Civilians, including women and children, should not pay the price for this long-lasting crisis. However, they continue to do so on a daily basis. The energy crisis, which has resulted in lack of access to basic essential services, including water and sanitation, is an assault on their human dignity. Sweden is one of the major donors to Gaza and recently made additional funding available, given the gravity of the situation.

While humanitarian assistance is needed to mitigate the effects on the people of Gaza, it alone will never resolve the problem. All Palestinian factions must commit to finding a solution to the energy crisis. Furthermore, while fully understanding the legitimate security concerns of Israel and Palestine, full and sustained access for humanitarian actors and all donors is crucial. An immediate end to the Israeli closure policy is therefore necessary.

The question of Gaza should not be separated from the peace process. All Palestinian factions need to engage in good faith in a reconciliation process that leads to a unified Palestinian leadership and the reunification of Gaza with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Fifty years ago, the Council affirmed that the fulfilment of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations required the establishment of just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats and acts of force. Today, 50 years later, we have yet to realize that just and lasting peace.

Ending the occupation and achieving a two-State solution is the only way forward. The two-State solution reflects the consensus of the international community and must not be called into question. However, it is becoming more distant by the day. Unless we act, we are moving rapidly towards not only perpetual occupation, but a one-State reality, which would not be in the interests of the State of Israel.

The United States has always played a leading role in efforts to advance peace in the Middle East. We are encouraged by continued efforts by the United States Administration, and we welcome the holding of the Quartet meeting of 13 July. We hope that it will constitute the first step towards relaunching a meaningful peace process, leading to the achievement of the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing on the latest situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We thank him as well for always being as objective as possible. We understand how difficult the job is. I believe this must be said, although it might sound trite.

Let me start by expressing our deepest sorrow and sympathy in connection with the loss of lives in the recent outbreak of violence. We recall with appreciation the statement issued by the Secretary-General, who called on both sides to refrain from taking any action that would further escalate the situation. Violence must be condemned and also, as the Secretary-General said:

“The sanctity of religious sites should be respected as places for reflection, not violence”.

This sentiment was also echoed by the Quartet, which, in its statement of 22 July, noted the particular sensitivities surrounding the holy sites in Jerusalem and the need to ensure security, thus encouraging Israel and Jordan to work together to uphold the status quo. We are pleased that all concerned seem to have played their role in reducing the prevailing tension, and one hopes the situation will continue to be controlled. However, the danger should not be understated.

All this makes it self-evident that unless the underlying problems are solved peacefully, the kinds of reactions that took place over the past week are likely to happen again and again, eventually getting to a point of no return. That is why preserving the possibility of finding a solution through the two-State formula is absolutely critical. There is no other viable option. All arguments to the contrary are unrealistic and inconsistent with a firm commitment to seek a just and democratic solution to the problem.

It is indeed unfortunate that the outbreak of violence in Jerusalem overshadowed some of the modest but positive steps taken recently, which have the potential

to de-escalate tensions and contribute to advancing understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. Here I am referring to the agreement recently signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which the Special Coordinator mentioned earlier, to increase the electricity supply to Jenin. This is in addition to another agreement signed between the two sides that deals with addressing the issue of the water supply. It is positive developments such as this that demonstrate that the two sides can indeed cooperate, giving us reason not to lose hope in the quest for a lasting solution to the long-standing dispute between Israelis and Palestinians. These two very hard-working and intelligent peoples, who have, as the Special Coordinator said, an inextricably linked history cannot allow peace and the possibility of living side by side as equals to elude them. This is our hope.

We welcome the meeting of the Middle East Quartet that took place on 13 January aimed at discussing current efforts to advance Middle East peace as well as the deteriorating situation in Gaza. We believe that the continuous engagement of the Quartet with Israelis and Palestinians as well as other key regional stakeholders is absolutely essential to efforts to resolve the crisis. As far as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is concerned, Ethiopia's position has always been very clear. As much as we support the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, we also support the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of Palestine to exist as a free and independent State.

Let me reiterate that we think that the goal of two States living side by side in peace and security is the only viable option to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Any obstacle to this goal should be addressed so as to pave the way for progress in the peace talks. While it is the parties that should show the flexibility to engage in direct and meaningful negotiations so as to reach a final settlement on all issues, we believe that the international community, and particularly the Council, should help and encourage the two sides to do so. It is in this context that we support the initiatives that have been under way to facilitate negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. The efforts of the Middle East Quartet and its road map, the Arab Peace Initiative as well as the efforts of countries within and outside the Council are very much appreciated and should be encouraged to continue.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): The situation in the Middle East remains volatile and complex. Many issues affect

one another, further deepening their complexity. The Palestinian issue is one of the most complex.

Japan continues to support a two-State solution based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, which will achieve peaceful coexistence of a viable Palestinian State and Israel within secure and recognized borders. The final status of Jerusalem should be resolved through negotiations based on the assumption that it will be the future capital of both sides. We must continue to work together to achieve a solution that is just and sustainable.

Since the previous open debate on this issue (see S/PV.7929), we have not seen any breakthroughs. The familiar obstacles to peace that we have seen for years persist. Japan is seriously concerned about the escalating tension in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The attack that occurred in the Old City of Jerusalem cannot be justified for any reason, and Japan condemns it. Japan stresses the importance of respecting the peace of the holy sites.

The cycle of violence that followed shows how violent incidents can snowball into a highly volatile and dangerous situations. Violence is incompatible with the peaceful resolution of conflict, and the relevant parties must continue to work together to de-escalate the situation.

Settlement activities continue in both the West Bank and east Jerusalem. The physical expansion of settlements erodes the viability of a two-State solution. Japan has issued a series of statements deeply deploring such activities. Settlement activities are in violation of international law, and we have called upon Israel to freeze such activities. Japan does not recognize any unilateral change by either party that may prejudge the final resolution.

Resolution of the conflict through dialogue and agreement is also the spirit of resolution 2334 (2016). Reconciliation among Palestinians is another important element in promoting peace. The deepening divide between the West Bank and Gaza is concerning, and it is the people of Gaza who bear the burden of that divide. Japan believes that the re-establishment of effective governance by the Palestinian Authority over Gaza will contribute to the overall peace process.

The current plight of the people of Gaza is serious. Fatah and Hamas must find a way to alleviate this suffering. We should also recall that the blockade of the

Gaza Strip directly affects livelihoods in Gaza. Japan stresses the importance of improving the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip by further easing the blockade while securing the prevention of the inflow of arms.

International efforts to relaunch the dialogue continue against the backdrop of these persistent obstacles. We are encouraged by the Quartet's more visible engagement. Japan also appreciates the continued engagement by the United States, which is particularly crucial.

The agreement on the allocation of water through the Red Sea-Dead Sea project to Palestinians shows what dialogue can achieve. Confidence-building, though concrete cases of cooperation, is in line with Japan's efforts over the years. Japan believes that such confidence-building efforts constitute part of the endeavour to promote the overall peace process through negotiations. These include the Jericho Agro Industrial Park, which hosts six Palestinian firms, with some of their products being exported to Jordan. We encourage interested parties to come and see what cooperation between Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Japan can achieve.

The international community is playing an important role by encouraging dialogue and mutual trust. However, the political will of the parties is required first and foremost to relaunch negotiations and to rein in obstacles to peace. We must continue to encourage the parties to make difficult decisions. Japan will continue its engagement through the three pillars of political dialogue, confidence-building and economic cooperation.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his precise and clear analysis and briefing.

I would like to begin my statement by reaffirming our extreme concern to the Council about the spiral of tension and violence in Jerusalem and in all of the West Bank. We mourn the tragic loss of life. On 14 July, Italy condemned the terrorist attack that took place on the same day in the holy city of Jerusalem against the Salomon family. There is no justification for murders or for the glorification of violence, and we welcome President Abbas' condemnation of that attack. The deaths of two policemen in the holy city of Jerusalem and

those of the three Israelis in the Halamish settlement, in the West Bank, are also tragic.

We mourn the loss of life among Palestinians, with several young people killed during the recent clashes, and we reaffirm the right of peaceful demonstration. We take note of Prime Minister Netanyahu's assurance that no change to the status quo of the holy sites will be introduced. We stress the special role of the Kingdom of Jordan and His Majesty King Abdullah II, with regard to the sites. We call on all parties to do their utmost to diffuse the escalating violence, restore calm and uphold the status quo in the holy places in Jerusalem, in word and in practice. The decision of the Israeli Government to remove metal detectors is a step in the right direction. We call on Israel to further coordinate with Jordan on all measures concerning the holy places, including with regard to enhancing security. We also stress the importance of maintaining security cooperation between Israel and Palestine.

Let me now reiterate our full adherence to Italy's long-established position on the Middle East peace process, including with regard to the 1967 lines and to East Jerusalem, as set out in the relevant conclusion of the Council of the European Union, and our unwavering support for all efforts to resume peace talks between Israel and Palestine. We believe that just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine needs to be based on a two-State solution, as the only achievable objective of direct negotiations between the two parties.

Many obstacles need to be overcome on the road to peace, among them violence, as sadly confirmed by the most recent events I alluded to earlier in my statement, and settlements, which deserve special consideration. Italy condemns the intensified expansion of Israel's settlements following the recent approval by Israeli authorities of a plan to build almost 1,000 housing units in a settlement in East Jerusalem. We believe that that decision runs counter to the prospect for a two-State solution and undermines the chance of ensuring a future of peace and security for the parties.

The dire situation in Gaza deserves our utmost attention. The most recent report by the United Nations country team provides an alarming description of the de-development of the Gaza strip in the past decade. Italy supports President Abbas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian leadership and it upholds the goal of increasing pressure by the Palestinian authorities on Hamas in order to retake control of the

Gaza Strip and to restore the whole of Palestine under a single democratic and legitimate authority. While doing so, the humanitarian consequences on the people living in Gaza must be taken into account as a priority, particularly in the health sector.

Against that demanding background, I find it appropriate to acknowledge some positive, though limited progress. First of all, we always believe that technical collaboration between the parties in the delivery of basic services is critical, not as a substitute for peace but to crucially improve the living conditions of all Palestinians. Therefore, it is significant that two agreements on electricity and water have been signed in recent days. We encourage the parties to keep working on cooperation at the ground level and to devise new joint initiatives. Secondly, we welcome the recent meeting of the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet and wish to reaffirm the role that the Quartet can play in order to create an environment that is conducive to the resumption of peace talks.

Turning to Lebanon, Italy commends all Lebanese parties on reaching a historic agreement on the new electoral law. We are convinced that the renewal of the Parliament next year will be a milestone in terms of strengthening Lebanon's institutions. It is hoped that that will create better conditions for increasing the State's presence and authority across the country, as requested by relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, I would like to stress the essential work carried out by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the south of Lebanon, faithful to its mandate as a crucial player for the stability of the country and the geographical area plagued by conflict. Finally, while reiterating Italy's firm support to the Lebanese authorities, I would like to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of Prime Minister Hariri and his Government to the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), through its cooperation with the Special Coordinator and UNIFIL.

I would like to conclude by mentioning the liberation of Mosul from Da'esh, undertaken by Iraqi Government security forces, with the support of a global coalition, as a sign of hope in a geographic area marked by multiple crises. That result is a landmark in the joint fight against terrorism in the Middle East and points to future achievement in the region. While the military fight against Da'esh is not over and the need to ensure the protection of human rights must still be upheld, our attention should now also turn

to stabilizing the territory once under the control of Da'esh. Humanitarian assistance and the restoration of essential services are crucial in order to underpin the military victory and allow the return of internally displaced people.

Reconciliation in Iraq and a political transition in Syria remain the keys to preventing any resurgence of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the need to uphold and protect the right and freedom of all ethnic and religious communities in the region, including the Christian communities.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I join with others in commending you, Sir, on convening today's open debate.

I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his detailed briefing and, as we do every month, we reiterate Uruguay's full support for his efforts.

As the days go by, with a few exceptions, regrettably, the situation in the Middle East either remains the same or worsens. It is clear that, above and beyond its good intentions, the Council has not been able to honour its commitment to restoring peace and stability to the conflict-stricken region. Like most of us, the people of that region of the world want only to live in peace, far removed from the horrors of war, violence, terrorism and human rights violations. We recall the millions of faceless victims who have endured wars and invasions — some of them conceived from afar — the pillaging of their resources and wealth, constant changes to their land based on foreign interests, the actions of terrorist groups who insult the very religion with which they claim to be affiliated, and a slew of Governments and authoritarian regimes that are clearly out of touch with the desires of their peoples. All of this has created fertile ground for the fomenting of extremism and radicalism, which themselves have become both the result and the cause of new conflicts. Despite all of this, we continue to be optimistic and to hope that the peoples of the Middle East will soon be on the road to progress and cooperation in a peaceful environment. To achieve that, the continued support of the Council and the entire international community is essential.

With regard to the recently escalating situation in Jerusalem, which has spread rapidly to other areas

and threatens to become a major new crisis, Uruguay reiterates its firm condemnation of all the violent incidents, which have left more than 10 victims. This worrying situation creates distrust between the parties concerned and affects all the efforts designed to enable a resumption of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations aimed at reaching a two-State solution. The sacred sites of the city of Jerusalem, where three of the world's major religions converge, should be places of reflection and peace, not violence and terror. It is therefore crucial to maintain unrestricted access for the faithful to their temples and ensure that this is reflected in concrete action. In that regard, we were pleased by the Government of Israel's decision to act by removing the metal detectors installed last week. However, the critical situation in Gaza, to which the Council has not given enough attention, is threatening to result in a new humanitarian disaster very quickly. We should make every effort to prevent this scenario from leading to another war.

As it has done since 1947, Uruguay once again reaffirms its unfailing support to the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders in an atmosphere of renewed cooperation, free from any threats to peace or acts that violate it. We also reiterate our support to a solution based on two independent States in the belief that it is the only option that will enable Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace, and in that regard we once again urge for the resumption of direct negotiations between the two as a crucial path to that end. We welcome all international initiatives aimed at advancing the peace process in order to achieve a peaceful, just, negotiated and lasting settlement that accords with international law in taking into consideration the legitimate aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians.

However, in order to achieve that goal, it is essential to reverse the current trends on the ground, since Palestine will otherwise find it extremely difficult to consolidate its State. It is regrettable that, seven months after the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), little progress has been made in its implementation, while Israel's announcements of its expansion of settlements in the occupied territories are increasing. Similarly, the announcements of demolitions and the forced transfer of vulnerable communities such as Dakika, Khan Al-Ahmar and Susya only provoke uncontrolled reactions.

The recent violent incidents and terrorist attacks, and their encouragement and glorification through subsidy payments to the families of those who commit them or by naming schools, buildings and squares after them, do nothing to advance the cause of peace and put the possibility of reaching a two-State solution in jeopardy. However, just as in the past we have repeatedly emphasized that we cannot be silently complicit in the face of terrorist attacks, we would like to take this opportunity to appreciate the fact that President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority has condemned the 14 July shooting on the Mosque esplanade. On a somewhat more personal and timely note, I hope that we in the Council will soon see the day when our colleagues Mr. Riyad Mansour and Mr. Danny Danon can stop trading mutual accusations and blaming each other and instead inform us of developments in direct negotiations aimed at putting an end to this dreadful conflict once and for all. Our Colombian brothers have shown us that it is possible to leave behind the pain of 50 years of war and to embrace the commitment and risks of a peace agreement.

Uruguay is shocked by the serious plight of civilians in Yemen, where according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian crisis is even more serious than in Syria. It is regrettable that the situation there is still not receiving the same degree of attention from the Council as other regional crises are. Yemen is on the verge of famine. It is suffering from a rapidly spreading cholera epidemic and its hospitals, schools and markets continue to be the target of indiscriminate attacks. The prolonged stagnation of the peace process and the widespread violations of international humanitarian law and human rights committed by all the warring parties have left millions of civilians drowning in chaos and terrible suffering. Anyone perpetrating attacks or providing logistical support and weapons in Yemen, should cease hostilities immediately. Those responsible for the revolting atrocities that have already been committed should be brought to justice.

I would like to comment very briefly on the conflict in Syria. Despite the fact that the Astana ceasefire process has resulted in a considerable drop in violence in some parts of the country, we are still seeing sieges and famines, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, the use of chemical weapons, terrorist attacks and extremely serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, all while the Council's

frustrating inaction continues. We are concerned about the fact that although the political process in Geneva has made some progress, albeit modest, that has not resulted in any improvements in humanitarian access to the millions who are subsisting with no help at all in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. We reiterate that this horrific war can be ended only through a process of political transition, led by Syrians and mediated by the United Nations in accordance with the road map set out in resolution 2254 (2015).

In conclusion, where the recent situation that has arisen among some of the States of the Arab peninsula is concerned, we hope that the tensions can be overcome through dialogue and negotiations.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on some of the most burning issues in the Middle East and to express our appreciation to Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

The Middle East peace process remains at the core of all efforts aimed at restoring stability in the region. Ukraine has consistently supported that crucial process and the principle of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting in peace and security. We share the concerns of the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator about the escalation of tensions and violence in Jerusalem, which reflects the gravity of the situation in and around the Old City as well as in the wider context of the peace process.

The recent deadly terror attacks in the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif and in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank say a great deal about how far this pattern of escalation has gone. Unless both sides take swift and effective measures, these incidents could ignite further violence. We have stressed time and again that there can be no justification for any terrorist acts and have firmly condemned any attempts to glorify them. We are increasingly concerned about the violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in which at least three people have died. The decision of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to freeze contacts with Israel is a worrying sign that the situation could get out of hand very quickly.

We note the statement of Secretary General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit of the League of Arab States about the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. At the same time, we would like to take this opportunity to urge both

Jordan, as Custodian of the holy site, and Israel to find a reasonable compromise between public safety and freedom to worship. We also urge everyone to act responsibly so as to avoid escalation and calm the situation and prevent it from spiralling out of control. Ukraine reiterates its position that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement is to be found in the framework of the unconditional fulfilment by the parties of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

Turning to Syria, let me stress our dissatisfaction with the slow progress on the political track. Based on the latest rounds of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, I see only one party willing to work constructively on the agreed agenda. The Syrian regime's delegation, on the contrary, has so far demonstrated interest in discussing only one basket, which is counter-terrorism. I believe that the Security Council has made it clear on a number of occasions that one basket cannot be promoted at the expense of the other three. That is why we underscore once again that the Geneva discussion needs to be firmly entrenched in resolution 2254 (2015) and steered towards the previously agreed common agenda points covering the issues of governance, the Constitution, elections and counter-terrorism.

On the whole, the international community should avoid at all costs falling into the trap of short-term solutions with regard to the Syrian conflict. Such short-term fixes seem to provide temporary relief, only to set the stage for a deeper crisis in the long term. The fact that none of the root causes of the conflict has been addressed essentially means more opportunities for Da'esh and Al-Qaida to capitalize on the grievances of the disaffected population.

Ukraine is deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen: it is going from bad to worse. The cholera epidemic, which is quickly spreading in every major Yemeni province, has pushed the country's population to the brink of survival. We praise the efforts of the United Nations and all other humanitarian actors that are delivering lifesaving assistance to the Yemeni people. We urge the parties to ensure the sustainable delivery of commercial and humanitarian supplies; without them, millions of Yemenis are at risk of famine and death. In the political sphere, we are worried by the latest trends of an increasing polarization of key stakeholders in Yemen

and the further fragmentation of the Yemeni political landscape. We call on all parties to resume direct talks without preconditions, and to conduct them in the most flexible and constructive manner possible.

The situation in the Middle East is very worrying and full of challenges. We call on the Council to remain united in addressing them.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting today to consider the Palestinian question while the occupied Palestinian territories are experiencing serious and dangerous events, especially with regard to Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which have led to a deterioration of the situation not only in Al-Quds but throughout the occupied Palestinian territories — and perhaps even beyond the region, given the unique meaning that Al-Quds Al-Sharif has not only for Palestinians and Arabs but also for the entire Muslim world.

We have already warned of the grave repercussions of the recent events. We reiterate our call upon Israel to end the violence and the security escalations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as the grave toll in terms of dead and wounded among Palestinians. We also call upon Israel to respect freedom of worship and religion, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to practice their faith in freedom and security. We call upon Israel to refrain from taking additional measures that are liable to further fan the flames of the conflict, incite religious passions and worsen the suffering endured by the Palestine people, thereby undermining prospects for achieving a fair, lasting and comprehensive peace based on the two-State solution.

To us it is important to reiterate once again the Council's own pronouncements concerning the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In that connection, I refer to the Council's press statement of 17 September 2015 (SC/12052), which calls for upholding the historic status quo of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in word and in practice, including by safeguarding the right and freedom of Muslim worshippers to practice their faith. It is also important to refer to well-known measures adopted by the Council, including resolution 478 (1980), which reaffirms that all legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, that threaten to change the situation with respect to the holy city of Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded. Moreover, resolution 2334 (2016) does not acknowledge any change to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard

to Al-Quds, except with the consent of the parties through negotiations.

In that regard, I would like to reaffirm that Egypt welcomes the efforts aimed at de-escalating the current crisis, including those undertaken by Jordan in the light of the historic role of the brotherly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in connection with its custodianship of the sacred sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We have taken note of the Israeli decision to remove the metal detectors. We hope that the situation will return to normal, including with regard to Jordan.

If the current crisis were to continue, its consequences would not be limited to Palestine and Israel. It is necessary for us all and for the Council to be aware of that. For it incumbent upon the Council to maintain international peace and security, as well as shoulder the responsibility to monitor the crisis so that the situation does not spiral out of control, and maintain prospects for direct negotiations, including final status issues encompassing Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The occupation of Palestinian territories continues without any glimmer of hope of ending that tragic situation. Measures taken against the Palestinian people are increasing at an accelerated rate. Settlement expansion is also continuing. United Nations and Security Council resolutions that call for upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations are not being implemented. I am speaking principally of the right to self-determination.

All of those factors are causing great frustration, which has accumulated during the years of siege and occupation. What we see before us presently, in terms of risks and dangers, clearly shows that attempts to bury one's head in the sand are liable to have great consequences. All those who believe that the Palestinian question does not have the same importance compared to other issues plaguing the region have exhibited poor judgement.

We reiterate that the call to end the occupation and to implement United Nations resolutions, including resolutions of the Security Council, which is tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, is not aimed at delegitimizing any State. It is a call for the restoration of the rights-holders and for the implementation of international law. Ultimately, that would have beneficial and positive results for all the people throughout the region, including, of course, the Israeli people. We all recognize their right to live

in peace and security within their borders and to enjoy good-neighbourly relations with the States in the region.

Historically, Egypt has been a pioneer in the restoration of peace in the region, and we commit ourselves to persevering in our efforts along that path with the two sides, Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, the recent visit to Cairo by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is part of the coordination between the two parties. The Egyptian authorities have reaffirmed their steadfast position, and call for reaching a comprehensive and just solution that will guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to build their independent State, on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital. The Egyptian Government has also affirmed that the Palestinian question remains an utmost priority for Egypt, and that reaching a settlement is indeed a basic premise for the restoration of security and stability in the Middle East and for lending new momentum to development in the region. We reaffirm that our efforts to relaunch negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis will continue, and that those efforts will also help to forge closer ties among Palestinians and help put an end to the divisions.

In conclusion, if I may, I would like to reaffirm that the historic call of the Arab States — the Arab Peace Initiative — clearly attests to the fact that Arab countries have collectively committed themselves to the land-for-peace principle as the framework and foundation for a solution. The recent Arab Summit held in Amman led to a reiteration by Heads of States and Governments of their support for that very same Arab Peace Initiative. We have further noted that the Administration of the United States of America is open to reaching a lasting settlement, which we applaud. In that regard, we stand ready to lend our assistance in that regard.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Let me join others in thanking Nikolay Mladenov for his briefing and his tireless efforts on this issue. As he has set out so clearly this morning, the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories continues to be of the utmost concern for the Security Council. After generations of hostility, blood and tears and in the wake of years of pain and wars, we are determined to bring an end to the bloodshed and sorrow.

But such determination is not new. In fact, those words I just uttered come from the Washington Declaration, signed on this very day 23 years ago.

That historic document started a process that created a historic peace between Israel and Jordan, a peace that would have been unthinkable decades before. The symbolism of this particular anniversary should not be lost on anyone in the Council today. It should remind us all that the peace we seek is not impossible, no matter how far off it may appear, no matter the challenges ahead. It is a reminder of hope that the region desperately needs. One need look only to the recent abhorrent surge in violence to see that peace remains far from the minds of far too many.

I condemn the horrific terrorist attack that claimed the lives of three Israelis during a Shabbat dinner last Friday. I deplore the tragic murder of two Israeli policemen at the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif the Friday before. A spiral of tension and violence has swept across the West Bank and Jerusalem in recent days. I am deeply concerned about the loss of life, including the deaths of at least four Palestinians, and deplore the violence that left hundreds injured in clashes over the weekend. The relevant authorities must swiftly investigate all of those incidents.

We call on all parties to show restraint and restore calm. We call on all parties to avoid provocation and, through engagement, to reach a solution that ensures the safety and security of the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, one that upholds the status quo. We welcome the engagement between all parties to find a solution, and we welcome positive steps taken overnight. This is the path to de-escalation. This is the path all parties must take.

In parallel, we must not lose sight of other challenges to peace, such as the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the recent cut in electricity supplies is exacerbating already perilous conditions: over 30,000 persons displaced and insufficient clean water to meet the population's needs, with most only getting water for a few hours every three to five days. Over 70 per cent of Gazans are now reliant upon the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations for its efforts to alleviate the suffering of those in Gaza.

Ultimately, it is the decision of Hamas to choose violence and to reject the Quartet principles that lies at the heart of the tragedy in Gaza. There is a way out: Hamas must renounce violence, recognize Israel and accept previously signed agreements. That means

an end to the rockets, an end to the violence. Those countries in the region with influence over Hamas must encourage them to take these steps. We also need to see steps towards the restoration of the Palestinian Authority control of Gaza, and with it the restoration of effective and accountable governance. If we are to achieve a solution, Israel must lift restrictions on Gaza to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians. The United Kingdom stands ready to do all it can to support those efforts.

Beyond Gaza, we are also concerned at seeing settlement activity in East Jerusalem increasing, especially at a time of heightened tension. All settlements are illegal under international law, and I strongly condemn plans to build new settlement housing units. Many of those units are within Palestinian neighbourhoods, and some involve the demolition of Palestinian homes. That is unacceptable. I am also gravely concerned by proposals for the construction of a further 1,100 units between the West Bank settlements of Adam and Neve Yaakov. Settlements undermine the territorial contiguity of the West Bank and make a two-State solution harder to achieve.

There is a great deal for us to do if we are to make peace a reality. However, before concluding, let me return to the Washington Declaration. While the process that began on 25 July 1994 led to peace between Israel and Jordan, we should never forget the leadership shown by the United States, which was so instrumental in making that peace possible. It is that same leadership that President Trump and his Administration are now demonstrating in reinvigorating the Middle East peace process. That is to be applauded and supported. We call on the region as a whole, Israelis and Palestinians to seize the opportunity that such leadership offers, just as it was seized 23 years ago.

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

I wish to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing. China also listened carefully to the statements by the observer of Palestine and by the representative of Israel.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue and the main source of problems in the region. It is also a gauge for international fairness and justice. The international community should proceed from the need to maintain peace and stability

in the Middle East and the world, maintain a long-term vision, promote a political settlement of the question of Palestine by addressing both the symptoms and the root causes of the conflict, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people, keep the situation between Palestine and Israel from getting out of control and prevent the Middle East from sliding into a broader crisis.

China is a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people and an active mediator for peace between Palestine and Israel. Last week, China received a visit by President Abbas of Palestine. In his talks with President Abbas, President Xi Jinping made four proposals related to the promotion of the settlement of the question of Palestine under the new circumstances.

First, he emphasized the importance of a firmly advanced political settlement based on the two-State solution. The two-State solution best fits the reality on the ground and is the most universally accepted option. The parties concerned must continue to work on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. They must also persist in negotiations for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. China firmly supports the two-State solution and supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. We will, as always, play a constructive role for the settlement of the question of Palestine.

Secondly, President Xi Jinping proposed adopting the concept of common, integrated, cooperative and sustainable security. Palestine and Israel are neighbours that cannot be separated. The security of the two countries requires them to cooperate, work together and support each other so as to build common security through joint efforts. China calls for the effective implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). There must be an immediate cessation of all settlement activities on the occupied territories and an immediate adoption of measures to prevent violence against civilians. We also call for an early resumption of peace talks in order to expedite a political solution to the question of Palestine, and thereby fundamentally achieve common and lasting security.

Thirdly, President Xi Jinping called for further coordinating the efforts of the international community and strengthening synergy in the interest of peace.

For some time now, the international community has increased its attention regarding the question of Palestine. The parties concerned have conducted active diplomatic efforts to promote the relaunching of peace talks between Palestine and Israel. The international community should further strengthen coordination and come up with peace-promotion measures that entail joint participation. China is willing to join and support all efforts that are favourable to the political settlement of the question of Palestine. China plans to hold a workshop for peace activities in 2017 for Palestine and Israel in order to provide them with ideas for the settlement of the question of Palestine.

Fourthly, it is necessary to take integrated measures in order to promote peace via development. While promoting political talks, attention should be given to development, especially to the enhancement of the capacities of Palestine for economic development. China views both Palestine and Israel as important partners in the Belt Road initiative. China is willing to work under the concept of development for peace in order to promote Palestine and Israel in engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation, keep open channels for such cooperation and continue to support Palestine to expedite its development. That will help strengthen the basis of peace and harmony and reduce factors that disrupt the peace talks between the two sides.

China has announced an initiative to launch a tripartite dialogue mechanism among China, Palestine and Israel in order to coordinate the implementation of major projects of assistance for Palestine. The four proposals made by President Xi Jinping represent China's new endeavour relating to the settlement of the question of Palestine. It takes into account the current situation as well as the international environment. The proposals also represent the overall direction of China's efforts moving forward regarding the promotion of a political settlement. We hope that the proposals will be met with active responses and support from the parties concerned so that we can work together to achieve a breakthrough in the decades-long unresolved problem at hand.

Recently, the situation in Jerusalem has continued to worsen to the point of becoming extremely dangerous. The top priority now is to ease the tension and confrontations around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and achieve a settlement as soon as possible in order to reduce tension and avoid any escalation of the conflict. The Security Council and States in the region

need to carry out emergency diplomatic action and do their utmost to engage with the parties concerned in order to calm things down and avoid an escalation of tensions. Any escalation would cause even more serious consequences. The provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions must be implemented, including the provision that calls for upholding the historic status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem. We have taken note of the initiative taken by Israel today and we hope that the parties concerned will continue their dialogue and communication so as to re-establish calm at an early date.

China is willing to continue to work with all of the parties concerned to promote an early settlement of the current problems and the relaunching of peace talks between Palestine and Israel so as to realize at an early date a comprehensive, fair and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and establish peace and stability in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): Allow me to start by thanking Mr. Mladenov for his thorough briefing.

The difficult realities in the State of Palestine have been somberly summarized in a report by Human Rights Watch issued on the occasion of 50 years of Israeli occupation:

“At least five categories of major violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law characterize the [Israeli] occupation: unlawful killings; forced displacement; abusive detention; the closure of the Gaza Strip and other unjustified restrictions on movement; and the development of settlements, along with the accompanying discriminatory policies that disadvantage Palestinians.”

Lately, we were also reminded of the extent of the shocking Israeli practices in Jerusalem and at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound: killings, closure and the disproportionate use of force against worshipers and civilians, which constituted a clear attempt to escalate an occupation into a war of religions. Those practices are not only blatant violations of the Charter of the United Nations, principles of international law and resolutions adopted by the Security Council — and in particular of article 4 of The Hague Convention, article 39 of the

Geneva Convention and article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — to respect peoples’ rights to observe and practice their own religion. Suffice it to say, these are deliberate attempts to create new realities on the ground that make the two-State solution an objective that is practically impossible to achieve. It is time to hold Israel accountable and to compel it to cease and rescind all measures to tamper with the historic status quo at the Al-Aqsa mosque and its Esplanade.

Today the international community should be biased to upholding the principles of international law. It is high time to turn our commitment to the principle of land for peace into reality by ending the Israeli occupation and heeding the calls for peace and implementing the Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted in my country, Lebanon, in 2002, and reiterated by several summits and meetings, the latest being the Arab Summit hosted by Jordan in March.

Turning to my country, since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), there has not been a single day during which Israel has not continued to breach Lebanon’s sovereignty by land and sea, in total disrespect of its obligation under resolution 1701 (2006). Let me mention only the daily violations of Lebanese airspace by Israeli fighter jets. Despite all such flagrant violations, multiple smear campaigns, false allegations and threats by Israel to send my country back to the dark ages, the Government of Lebanon remains firm in its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), not only to preserve the gains of our collective investment in security and stability, but rather to multiply them.

It is in that context that my Government yet again encourages the Secretary-General to expedite his good-offices efforts and looks forward to receiving the results of the efforts of the Special Coordinator on the delineation of the disputed maritime border and exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel, while emphasizing that the non-resolution of this issue shall remain a source of conflict that threatens peace and security in our region.

Furthermore, my Government will also submit a request to renew the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for one year without any changes. Only a capable and efficient UNIFIL can maintain stability and security in the south of Lebanon, in particular in the light of the volatile

situation in region. As for the partnership between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and UNIFIL, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to all troop-contributing countries — a good number of them are around the table today or otherwise present in the Chamber — for their sacrifices and noble determination to protect civilians and to ensure full respect for Lebanon's sovereignty.

Our meeting today coincides with the visit of the President of the Council of Ministers to Washington, D.C., which was preceded by visits to the European Union and other friendly countries, with the sole objective of emphasizing the economic, social and security challenges facing my country and, most important, to reiterate our calls to assist Lebanon in its efforts to address the situation of refugees and their host communities and to strengthen the LAF capabilities in its commendable fight against terrorism.

All of those efforts are deeply rooted in the importance of protecting and preserving Lebanon as a model for the region: promising democracy, a liberal system, leadership in combating terrorism and a beacon of diversity and coexistence in a region raging with fear and exclusion. Let right prevail in the Middle East and for its peoples.

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

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your able and wise leadership of the Security Council throughout the month of July. I would also like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, for his very in-depth briefing.

The Council is meeting today in the light of the grave events that recently took place in the Middle East. Some States in the region are undergoing deep-rooted crises to which a political and humanitarian solution has not been found. Other countries are wracked by terrorism, while still others do not have the financial capacity to help their citizens when they are in dire need. The dangerous situation at the Holy Esplanade and at the Al-Aqsa Mosque is escalating tensions and risks exacerbating the crisis, threatening to plunge us into an era of despair and allowing extremists to use the situation to their own nefarious ends to further

undermine peace across the broader region beyond Israel and Palestine.

Jordan would like to warn about the potential repercussions of what has been happening recently — and continues to happen — in Jerusalem, which could lead to a destabilization of the region and constitutes a serious threat to peace. That could have a devastating impact on the region and could plunge us into a religious war, which would open the doors to further terrorism and exploitation of the roots of the conflict for criminal practices, and not just in our region but beyond. In order to address those tensions, a number of emergency measures will need to be taken.

First, Israel must respect the historic and legal status quo and must allow for full and immediate access by worshippers to Al-Aqsa Mosque, without any restrictions. It must also put an end to its unilateral measures to impose a new reality on the ground in the region, which are a violation of its international legal obligations as the occupying Power.

Secondly, the international community must shoulder its responsibilities and put an end to the tensions by respecting the historic and legal status quo of the holy sites and by compelling Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the legal obligations incumbent upon it.

Thirdly, the international community must unite its efforts, including within the Security Council, to prevent an escalation of the violence and prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. It must do so by tackling the deep-rooted causes that have led to this tension, as well as recent events, including steps taken by Israel to change the situation and conditions on the ground.

More must be done to put an end to tension, to restore peace and to prevent a deterioration of the situation. Jordan is working to those ends. We are also working in order to ensure that the holy sites are fully accessible. We will continue our efforts with our partners and our friends. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, we will not let up in our diplomatic efforts. As the Custodian and sponsor of Muslim and Christian holy places in East Jerusalem, he will continue to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the holy sites are respected, to guarantee peace and to ensure that conditions conducive to peace and stability are in place. Such steps will be taken with the

overarching goal of resolving the conflict on the basis of a two-State solution.

I would like to underscore the appeal made by Jordan that an emergency ministerial-level meeting of Arab States be conveyed to consider possible pathways and courses of action to respond to this issue. As the historic Hashemite Custodian and sponsor of Muslim and Christian holy places in East Jerusalem, Jordan will continue its efforts to rebuff any attempt to undermine the holy character of these sites. We will stand firm against any act of aggression and any attempt to try to cut off access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque or the entire Esplanade of mosques. We will do so through all legal and diplomatic means at our disposal. We will in no way let up in our tireless efforts and determination to find a solution to this conflict. The lack of such a solution would cause us to remain in the vicious cycle of violence and instability, would prevent people from living in peace and prosperity and would not allow us to realize the future that the peoples of the region deserve.

In the light of other events that have taken place in the region, Jordan would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that putting an end to the Syrian crisis will require a comprehensive political solution that guarantees peace and stability and the unity of Syrian territory. We have spared no effort in terms of our participation in the political efforts under way to put an end to the deaths and violence in Syria. As such, together with the United States and the Russian Federation, we have been able to put together an agreement to support the ceasefire and to put an end to the escalation of violence in south-west Syria. That is a crucial step towards reaching a complete cessation of hostilities in order to usher in stability in Syria. It is also a key step towards a political solution that will preserve the territorial integrity, the freedom, the independence and the sovereignty of Syria.

We would like to reiterate our determination to tackle terrorism and to destroy terrorist organizations and their affiliates. In that regard, we reiterate that the region will not know security and stability without the eradication of terrorist organizations, which lead people astray and employ what should be peaceful, religious principles and beliefs for their own nefarious ends.

We would like to congratulate our Iraqi brethren for their recent success, with the support of international forces, in wresting control of Mosul from the clutches of Da'esh. We also reiterate our full support to Iraq and

to its people as they seek to rebuild the city and their country and bring about stability. We also appeal for national reconciliation in Iraq in order to preserve the stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that brotherly country and to ensure that it can build upon what has been achieved thus far.

In addition, we support the efforts and actions of the international coalition and the international community to support the legitimate Government in Yemen to put an end to the crisis on the basis of implementation mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015).

In conclusion, we reiterate that more needs to be done to address the core issue in the Middle East, that is, the question of Palestine, which must be dealt with in order to resolve all other issues in the region. Indeed, a lasting, fair and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is key to unlocking the other crises in the region. That is why we must make serious efforts to put an end to what appears to be an insurmountable crisis that has dragged on for far too long, so as to address Palestinian and Israeli concerns and resume direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine that usher in lasting peace. In doing so, we must take into account all final-status issues related to key national interests, including those overseen by Jordan.

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

Mr. Estrada Meyer (Brazil): I thank the delegation of China for convening this important debate. I also thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his informative briefing. We believe that the United Nations as a whole — and the Security Council in particular — has a leading responsibility in seeking sustainable solutions for the complex and prolonged conflicts affecting the Middle East.

As the Security Council prepares to discuss the annual renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), allow me to stress the vital role played by UNIFIL in maintaining peace and stability in a vulnerable region. A particularly relevant component of the mission is its Maritime Task Force (MTF), which we have had the honour and responsibility of leading for over six years now. The MTF has successfully performed key security and humanitarian activities, ranging from the seizing arms, ammunition and illegal drugs to rescuing migrants and

refugees in the Mediterranean Sea. The Task Force also contributes to regional economic development by establishing a safer environment for maritime trade. Its core assignments — to prevent violations of the arms embargo and to train members of the Lebanese Navy — contribute to the maintenance of calm and stability in the region and remain as indispensable as ever.

The continued significance of the MTF was confirmed by the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006):

“[t]he UNIFIL Maritime Task Force has proved its operational effectiveness in its maritime interdiction operations at the request of the Government of Lebanon. [...] Those operations are a significant deterrent against the illegal entry of weapons or related materiel. Daily interaction and exercises with the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy have helped develop the Navy.” (*S/2017/591, para. 70*)

It is imperative to ensure that UNIFIL and the MTF continue to enjoy the strong political support of the Security Council, as well as adequate resources to carry out their mandate. That will be especially important in the context of considering the proposals from the strategic review conducted by the Secretariat earlier this year.

Turning to the question of Palestine, a highly symbolic milestone was reached last month: the fiftieth anniversary of the ongoing occupation of East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. During the recently held United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation, Brazil expressed its deep regret that the Palestinian right to a sovereign and independent State has not yet been fulfilled — almost 70 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and 50 years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

The recent electricity crisis in Gaza is yet another reminder of the severe social, economic and humanitarian consequences of the occupation. Brazil has consistently underscored that the two-State solution is the only just and acceptable solution to the conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, within internationally recognized and mutually agreed borders. As stressed by the Secretary-General,

“[r]esolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remove a driver of violent extremism and terrorism in the Middle East and open the doors to cooperation, security, prosperity and human rights for all.” (*SG/SM/18595-GA/PAL/1389*)

We are deeply concerned about the recent incidents of violence in East Jerusalem. We regret all loss of life and call on all parties to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation.

Recent developments concerning the crisis in Syria continue to demand the attention of the Security Council. It is key that the political dimension of the negotiations on Syria — the Geneva process — and the security initiatives encompassed by the Astana process continue to advance hand in hand. Strengthening the ceasefire regime is a fundamental component of international efforts to find a political resolution to the conflict, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), including the commitments to the unity, independence, territorial integrity, and non-sectarian character of Syria. In that regard, we took note with interest of the memorandum that creates four de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed last May, as well as the recent announcement by Russia, the United States and Jordan of measures to stabilize some of those regions. Such security measures create positive momentum and make it ever-more essential to advance on the political track. We need to ensure that the de-escalation zones serve as a step towards peace and the alleviation of the humanitarian situation.

Brazil reiterates its deep concern with regard to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We highlight the need for a full, impartial and comprehensive investigation of all reported incidents, such as those at Khan Shaykhun and Um-Housh, including visits to all the relevant sites.

Lastly, with regard to Iraq, Brazil congratulated the Government of Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi and the Iraqi people on the liberation of Mosul, announced on 10 July. That was a milestone in the fight against international terrorism, as well as a decisive step towards consolidating security, stability and the territorial integrity of the country. Many challenges remain in ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced persons and extending State authority and the rule of law in the liberated areas. We hope that important victory will be followed by a successful

process of reconstruction, economic recovery and national reconciliation in Iraq.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this

meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the consent of the members of the Security Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.