**‘A Thousand Cuts’ Destroying Two-State Solution, Top United Nations Middle East Envoy Tells Security Council during Quarterly Debate**

**23 JULY 2015**

**United Nations**

[**http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11980.doc.htm**](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11980.doc.htm)

**SC/11980**

**7490th Meeting (AM)**

* [**SECURITY COUNCIL**](http://www.un.org/press/en/un-bodies/security-council)

[**MEETINGS COVERAGE**](http://www.un.org/press/en/type-document/meetings-coverage)

Calling for decisive action to reverse the growing perception that the two-State solution was dying a death “by a thousand cuts”, the top United Nations Middle East envoy today urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders to engage in a broad political framework with the goal of achieving a final status agreement, during the Security Council’s quarterly open debate on the subject.

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is increasingly entangled in the tectonic shifts in the Middle East,” Nickolay Mladenov, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, told the 15-member body.  Given the region’s massive transformation, it was imperative that a permanent settlement be found based on the concept of two States, Israel and a sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

Welcoming recent positive movements, he said the current situation on the ground was not sustainable as the two-State solution remained under threat, including from settlement construction, security incidents, occupation-related violence and lack of Palestinian unity.  In the absence of a political process, the rise of violent extremist and terrorism in the region presented a danger as much to the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians for statehood, as to the security of Israel.

Advancing the two-State solution required a fundamental change in policy with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mr. Mladenov said, stressing the need to end unilateral activities in the West Bank, including settlement construction, so-called legalization of outposts, demolitions and evictions.

For their part, the Palestinian people, he added, rightly expected their leaders to advance unity and empower their Government to take control of the border crossings in Gaza, implement civil service integration, pay public sector salaries and ensure that the governance framework between the West Bank and Gaza was integrated under a single authority.

Gaza’s painstaking emergence from last summer’s conflict was undermining belief among the population that genuine progress could be achieved, he said.  With the frequency of security incidents in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the situation remained tense.  Intra-Palestinian talks to form a national unity Government had faltered as the Palestinian Authority faced significant financial challenges, Mr. Mladenov stressed.

Turning to the wider region, he said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Envoy for Syria would brief the Council next week on their recommendations for moving the political track forward.  In Yemen, Libya, Iraq and Libya, too, the Organization was working to promote political dialogue.

Expressing deep concern about the unprecedented financial crisis of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), he said that would have grave implications for Palestinian refugee children in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and for the stability and security the region, urging donors to step up support.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine said peace was no closer than a year ago when he had appealed to the Council to stop what he called “Israel’s slaughter of innocent Palestinian children, women and men” in Gaza.  He reiterated the call on the Council to “uphold its Charter duties and act without delay to adopt a resolution aimed at breaking the political impasse”.

Israel’s representative recalled that, 10 years ago, his country had disengaged from Gaza and dismantled four settlements in the West Bank, uprooting Israeli families from homes and pulling all soldiers out of Gaza.  Unfortunately, Gaza thereafter became a haven for terrorists.  Israel, he said, did not have the luxury of waiting for the rest of the world to wake up to reality about the communality of such threats.

In the ensuing debate, Council members and the wider United Nations membership highlighted the urgency of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to bolster regional and international peace and security.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, whose delegation presides the Council for the month of July, stressed that the Secretary-General’s good offices alone were not enough to resolve the crisis in Syria.  He urged key players in the region, as well as on the Council to broker a political solution.

Similarly emphasizing that a negotiated two-State solution was the best way to bolster peace and security throughout the region, the representative of the United States said the Council’s endorsement earlier this week of the agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme could create a conducive climate to address other crises.

The representative of the Russian Federation said the foreign invasion of Iraq and continued external meddling in Syria had created a new challenge in the region in the form of the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIS/ISIL).  The international community should avoid double standards and work towards addressing the common threat of terrorism.

Speaking on behalf on the Non-Aligned Movement, the representative of Iran said the question of Palestine had been on the United Nations agenda for more than 67 years, not for lack of attention, but because of the repeated failures of the Council to uphold its responsibilities.

In a similar vein, the representative of the United Arab Emirates, speaking for the Arab Group, said the Council should not limit its efforts to hold “routine” periodic briefings, but should rather take steps to halt Israel’s violations so as to create an environment for resumed negotiations.

Highlighting the complicated and interlinked challenges affecting daily life in the region, Jordan’s representative stressed the need to entrench the two-State solution as the only way forward, with all issues therein addressed in line with international law.  By ignoring the problem of the occupied Syrian Golan, said that country’s representative, the Council’s agenda item had been distorted.

Also making statements today were the representatives of Malaysia, Chad, France, Spain, China, Nigeria, Venezuela, Chile, United Kingdom, Angola, Lithuania, Lebanon, India, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Brazil, Norway, Indonesia, Guatemala, Morocco, Egypt, Ukraine, Japan, Kuwait (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Kazakhstan, Iceland, Namibia, Maldives, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Cuba and Bangladesh.

The Head of the European Union Delegation and the representative of the Observer State of the Holy See also spoke, as did the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The representatives of Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia made further statements.

The meeting began at 10:13 a.m. and ended at 4:41 p.m.

Statements

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said that, regrettably, peace was no closer than a year ago when he had appealed to the Security Council to stop what he called “Israel’s slaughter of innocent Palestinian children, women and men” in Gaza.  He recalled the death toll and cited the Human Rights Council’s denial of Israel’s claims about respect for civilian lives and international humanitarian law.  Justice had been denied, families remained traumatized and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was facing the most severe funding crisis yet.  While Gaza was being “suffocated and dehumanized”, he said, “the rest of occupied Palestine continues to be ravaged by Israel’s vicious settlement campaign, settler terror and repression”.

Clearly, he said, the moment that Israel launched its war last summer, and considering all the illegal actions perpetrated thereafter, it had “intentionally aimed to sabotage the prospects for peace”.  In the context of the region’s destabilization, he reiterated dangers posed by lack of progress.  A just, peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would “open doors for a new era in the region”.  He regretted, in that context, Israel’s rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative, adding that peace and coexistence must be based on freedom and justice, requiring a complete end to the occupation, as well as what he called “colonial, racist policies”.

He reiterated the call on the Security Council to “uphold its Charter duties and act without delay to adopt a resolution aimed at breaking the political impasse”.  In that regard, he continued to welcome and support the French initiative, calling on Council members to move forward now on reaffirming the parameters for peace, based on internationally recognized agreements, so as not to lose the opportunity for a just and lasting settlement.

RON PROSOR (Israel) recalled that, 10 years ago, Israel had disengaged from Gaza and dismantled four settlements in the West Bank, uprooting Israeli families from homes and pulling all soldiers out of Gaza.  Unfortunately, Gaza thereafter became a haven for terrorists.  “Apparently, they didn’t get the memo that an Israeli withdrawal was supported to end the jihad against its people,” he said, noting that 15,000 rockets and mortars had subsequently been fired against Israeli civilians and tunnels were dug to attack towns and communities.  Hamas’ aggression and refusal to recognize Israel had been ignored by the international community, and Gaza — supposed to be a model of a stable, self-governing society — became the model for lawlessness, violence and destabilization.  Since then, a similar model had proliferated across the Middle East, and terror attacks were rife internationally.

Israel, he said, did not have the luxury of waiting for the rest of the world to wake up to reality about the communality of such threats.  “Before the West had to deal with the Islamic State halfway around the world, Israel had to deal with the Hamas terror State on our doorstep.”  One year ago, Israel had been forced to protect its people after Hamas terrorists kidnapped and killed three Israeli youth, launched hundreds of projectiles at Israel and rejected or violated every truce offered to the parties, with attacks carried out from populated areas.  In Gaza, there was no money to rebuild hospitals or pay teachers, but there was money to dig and expand terror tunnels.  That work continued, as did smuggling, stockpiling and developing weapons.

Meanwhile, he maintained, the United Nations had done nothing to weaken Hamas, but plenty to criticize Israel.  The Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry failed to even draw conclusions about the intent of Gaza’s tunnel-building.  “Maybe these tunnels were intended to be the new metro system in Gaza,” he suggested.  He contrasted that report with the detailed one submitted by Israel on Hamas operations and Israel’s response.  He also enumerated human rights crimes being ignored in the region, as well as Israel’s efforts to get materials in to rebuild Gaza despite Hamas’ lack of cooperation.  The Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, had avoided responsibility there and would not condemn terror attacks.  Turning to the Iran nuclear agreement, he maintained that the accord had given Iran the money to further support terrorism in the region and the time and opportunity to develop a bomb.  It was another example of the world failing to see reality as it was, he said, calling on it again to disengage from delusions.

MURRAY MCCULLY (New Zealand) said that the adoption of resolution 2231 (2015) by the Council on Monday represented a major victory for diplomacy.  It was necessary to bring that kind of political courage to other issues that afflicted the region.  The credibility of the Council was at stake.  The Secretary-General’s good offices alone were not enough to resolve the crisis in Syria.  Key players in the region, as well as those on the Council needed to broker a political solution.  The humanitarian situation in Yemen continued to deteriorate alarmingly, while Iraq was facing ongoing challenges on a number of fronts.  In Libya, the recent initialling of the Libyan Political Agreement represented an important first step towards lasting peace.  Turning to the Middle East peace process, he added that, while it was encouraging that the Middle East Quartet had re-engaged, the Council must also do so, and “act to create a pathway back to the negotiating table”.

SAMANTHA POWER (United States) said the world this month crossed the calamitous threshold of 4 million refugees in Syria requiring urgent humanitarian assistance.  Yet, funding had fallen far short of needs, with profound effects on the people and considerable repercussions for Syria’s neighbours, who were assuming a disproportionate burden. On the other hand, the Syrian regime was stepping up the aggression against its people with horrific consequences.  Terrorist groups were exacerbating the humanitarian situation through ever brutal methods.  The international community must come up with practical and pragmatic responses through proper funding, ensuring accountability of abuses and establishing a framework for a political settlement.  On Gaza, only 28 per cent of funds pledged for its reconstruction had been disbursed, she said, stressing that UNRWA’s resource gaps threatened further dire humanitarian consequences.  Achieving a two-State solution through negotiations was the best way of bolstering peace and security throughout the region.  The Council’s endorsement of the agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme could create a climate conducive to peace and stability in the region and provided lessons on addressing the other crises there.

DINA KAWAR (Jordan) said the region faced complicated and interlinked challenges affecting the daily lives of the people, and failing to address it would threaten the international community.  She called for a comprehensive dialogue on the range of challenges facing the region, including the core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  The priority must be to entrench the two-State solution as the only way forward, with all issues therein addressed in line with international law.  That required serious commitment in word and deed, and the avoidance of unilateral moves, such as the construction of settlements and the expulsion of Palestinians.  Jordan, which had a major stake in regional peace, was committed to seeking a durable and effective framework for negotiations.  The international community must work towards putting an end to the humanitarian suffering in the Gaza Strip through the lifting of the Israeli siege and reconstruction of the territory.  Although the region was mired in conflict today, it was rich in resources that promised a better tomorrow.

RAMLAN BIN IBRAHIM (Malaysia) said his country had co-hosted an Arria Formula meeting on 20 July to discuss the situation in Gaza one year after the Israeli military offensive.  The expansion of Israeli settlements, the ongoing blockade of Gaza and construction of the apartheid wall, as well as the systematic denigration of Palestinians backed by overwhelming military superiority were leading to a one-State reality.  Accordingly, the time had come for the United Nations and the international community to realize the two-State solution and end the status quo in occupied Palestine.

MAHAMAT ZENE CHERIF (Chad) said that the Palestinian people had a right to an end to the occupation and a State of their own.  The status quo was no longer tolerable; the impasse was due to Israel’s intransigence, its settlement activity and other practices.  He appealed to the parties to relaunch negotiations.  The Council must fully assume its responsibilities in the region; he called for a framework for progress towards a two-State solution that conformed to previous agreements.  On other situations, he expressed deep concern over the Syria crisis, urging the Council to do its utmost to put an end to the violence and advance a political solution.  He also called on all parties to respect Lebanon’s sovereignty and on the Lebanese, in particular, to keep out of the conflict, and focus instead on stability and national interests and electing a president as soon as possible.  On Yemen, he called for all parties to respect international humanitarian and human rights law and to pursue a negotiated agreement.

FRANÇOIS DELATTRE (France) expressed concern that the two-State solution was becoming less and less possible, while acts of violence were increasing.  It was urgent to recreate political prospects for a just and lasting peace.  It was an illusion that progress could occur without wide international support and encouragement to the parties to commit to the compromises needed.  For that purpose, a framework for negotiations was needed; that was where the Council could have an important role.  France had been working on such a framework and he called for its support.  On Syria, he reviewed the figures of death and destruction, blaming the Assad Government’s use of barrel bombs for much of the carnage and stating that there was no future for Syria with Mr. Assad in power.  In that context, the political track must move forward.  Expressing concern over the effects on Lebanon of the Syrian crisis and other tensions, he called for a ministerial meeting of the international support group for the country.

ROMÁN OYARZUN MARCHESI (Spain), associating with the European Union, said progress must be made on confidence-building measures between Palestinians and Israelis, and Palestinian reconciliation must proceed apace.  Gaza must be part of any Palestinian State, and its reconstruction must be accelerated.  The so-called economic peace was welcome, but other measures were needed, such as lifting of the blockade.  The presence of ISIL cadres in the region has undermined the urgency for progress.  Sooner or later, the Council would have to offer the region a framework for progress in the overall Israeli-Palestinian peace process.  On Yemen, he reiterated the need for a humanitarian pause in the fighting and called on the parties to respect international law.  On Syria, he said that the tragedy and disregard for international humanitarian law had surpassed all limits.  Those responsible must know they would be held to account.  Above all, a political solution was needed, based on the parameters of the Geneva communiqué.  He called on all stakeholders to play their part.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said his country was committed to a two-State solution based on agreed road maps and he called for the resumption of negotiations to that end.  The Russian Federation, which recently hosted a conference between Israelis and Palestinians, supported the relaunching of negotiations through a bilateral or multilateral framework.  The foreign invasion of Iraq and continued external meddling in Syria had created a new challenge in the region in the form of the emergence of the ISIS.  The international community should avoid double standards and work towards addressing the common threat of terrorism.  All States should undertake steps to implement the Council’s resolution on ending financing of terrorists.  The persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had given an ideological basis for terrorist recruitment.  The recent agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme gave room for optimism regarding the other crises in the region, he stressed.

WANG MIN (China) reiterated his country’s commitment to peaceful negotiations as the basis for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  That required strategic determination and patience, he said, urging both sides to resume talks.  While Israel should avoid unilateral actions such as settlement construction, its legitimate security interests must be addressed.  China supported the establishment of a Palestinian State that could join with Israel in pursuit of peace and prosperity.  The question of Syria was closely related to international security and peace, and therefore, required a framework for a political settlement that responded to the aspirations of all sides.  To that end, it was necessary to ensure the broadest participation of stakeholders and maintain unity within the international community.

KAYODE LARO (Nigeria) said the status quo did not provide a sustainable solution to Israel-Palestinian conflict and he urged both sides to resume negotiations at the earliest on the basis of established agreements.  Nigeria looked forward to positive outcomes of the Quartet’s outreach to Arab states, which was vital to lasting peace.  On Syria, it was important for the parties to find consensus on resuming negotiations, as a military solution was unattainable.  On Yemen, he called for a total cessation of hostilities that had already left thousands dead, injured and displaced.

RAFAEL DARÍO RAMÍREZ CARREÑO (Venezuela), associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, said that interference in the internal affairs of States had led to institutional collapse and instability in the Middle East, allowing terrorist groups to oppress populations.  The financing of non-State armed groups, which eventually turned out to be terrorist groups, had caused great suffering.  In that context, he stressed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict must be resolved.  Israel was flagrantly flouting international law and had brutalized Gaza, for which it must be held accountable.  He also condemned detentions of young Palestinians and other rights violations by Israel.  He urged it to end such practices, including expelling Palestinians from their land.  It should also withdraw from the Syrian Golan.  It was time for the Council to take a firm stand on furthering the two-State solution and support full membership of Palestine in the United Nations.  He supported all initiatives that paved the way for Palestinians to realize their rights.  He welcomed the Iran agreement and urged for similar diplomatic promotion of peace in the Middle East.

CRISTIÁN BARROS MELET (Chile) said that the status quo in the Middle East must be ended, and the Council must play its part by promoting effective negotiations.  Trust must be built and cycles of violence must be eliminated, as well as actions that undermined the resumption of negotiations, such as settlement activities.  He supported initiatives to move the peace process forward through defining parameters and providing timelines.  He condemned continuing violations of international law in Syria and reiterated the need for accountability and humanitarian access.  He supported the Special Envoy’s efforts to bring about a political solution.

MATTHEW RYCROFT (United Kingdom) said that urgent action was needed to salvage the two-State solution, with the ending of settlement activities and evictions and creation of conducive conditions on the ground necessary for the resumption of negotiations.  The humanitarian situation in Gaza was unacceptable; there must be accelerated efforts to remedy the situation, and restrictions on movement must be eased.  Palestinian reconciliation must be advanced and donor commitments for Gaza fulfilled.  On Syria, he called for support to the Joint Investigative Mechanism, as well as to the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.  Noting his country’s humanitarian contributions, he called for further support to refugees and underlined the need for all parties to work for stability in Lebanon.  Reiterating support for the Iran nuclear agreement, he pointed to it as a model for constructive Council work to resolve conflicts.

MOURA LUCAS (Angola), associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, also welcomed the Iran nuclear agreement while regretting the lack of progress in political solutions to other crises in the region.  The momentum from that agreement should be used to make progress in other areas.  However, in many case, disunity in the Council hobbled it.  The two-State solution was still the only viable option for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and the Council must work harder to bring it about.

JULIO HELDER MOURA LUCAS (Lithuania) said that Gaza needed immediate and genuine reconstruction and development, citing the risk of further radicalization of the Strip.  A key indicator of the prospects for peace would be improvement in humanitarian and economic conditions in the area.  UNRWA was about to run out of funds, overwhelmed by mounting challenges.  Welcoming the recent easing of restrictions in Gaza by Israel, he urged that country to immediately and unconditionally lift the closure of the Strip, enable a free flow of people and goods, and halt plans for forced transfer of the population and demolition of Palestinian housing.  In Syria, chlorine gas attacks were fast becoming a daily reality.  The use of chemical weapons could be prevented only through attributing responsibility to specific individuals, entities and Governments, for which the Council must take action.

CAROLINE ZIADE (Lebanon) said that, a year after Israel unleashed its military operation against Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the situation there continued to deteriorate.  In the midst of that desolation, the historic agreement between the Vatican and the State of Palestine was a ray of hope.  The Council should do much more to establish a new credible and comprehensive framework for negotiations to be conducted in a defined timeframe and based on established parameters.  On Syria, Lebanon continued to work relentlessly with the international community to alleviate the humanitarian crises, but was alarmed by the underfunding of initiatives.  The month coincided with the commemoration of many atrocities around the world.  For all the victims, the world’s message should be “never again”.

ASOKE K. MUKHERJI (India), reaffirming his country’s political support for the Palestinian cause, stated that India had also extended technical and financial assistance to Palestine to bolster its nation-building efforts.  Dialogue remained the only viable option for peace in the region, and India urged both sides to resume the peace process.  The activities of radicalized and extremist groups in the Middle East, especially in northern parts of Iraq and Syria, were strikes against humanity.  India was also concerned at the targeting of United Nations peacekeepers there.  Further, with major shipping lines passing through the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, the situation in Yemen had a considerable impact on the cost of transport, and in turn, regional and global trade.  Welcoming the conclusion of negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iran nuclear question, he added that his country had contributed $2 million to the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan of 2014 and had pledged another $2 million during the third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, in 2015.

BASHAR JA’AFARI (Syria) said that the statements delivered today did not respect the mandate given to “the donors of the peace process”.  By ignoring the problem of the occupied Syrian Golan, the agenda item had been distorted.  The representative of the United States had “departed from the rules of diplomacy”.  The United Nations had a legal and moral responsibility to ensure implementation of the relevant resolutions, and Israel must honour them.  The Organization had implemented half of resolution 181 (1948), but had forgotten the question of returnees, thus holding the Palestinian people hostage.  Condemning the “fallacious recipes” and “theatrical statements” made by some delegations, he stated that none of them had said a word about the end of Israeli occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan.

ABDALLAH AL-MOUALLIMI (Saudi Arabia) said that one year after the launch of the Israeli campaign targeting Gaza, which had lasted 51 days and destroyed 12,000 homes, the Palestinian people continued to live on a daily basis with its repercussions.  Saudi Arabia held Israel directly responsible for the suffering of the people of Palestine.  The racist and colonial actions of Israel must end.  Gaza continued to suffer a humanitarian crisis because of the blockade.  The report of the fact-finding commission had stated that Israel had violated international law and perpetrated crimes, which could qualify as war crimes, by targeting residential areas and using explosive weapons.  Israel must be held accountable.  It was strange that Israel’s name was not to be found in the Secretary-General’s report on children in armed conflict, which indicated “a double-faced approach”.  Saudi Arabia looked forward to the accession of the State of Palestine to the United Nations as a fully sovereign State.

MALEEHA LODHI (Pakistan) said Israel’s inflexible posture had frozen prospects for a resumed peace process, while the failure to implement various recommendations regarding Israel’s violations all but guaranteed their systematic recurrence.  “This impunity must end,” she said, stressing that full implementation of the 1 July Human Rights Council resolution, spearheaded by Pakistan, would be a step towards ending that cycle.  The blockade of Gaza, excessive force against Palestinian civilians and illegal settlements continued, and only 28 per cent of the $3.5 billion pledged in Cairo had been disbursed.  The Council must adopt a resolution outlining timelines and parameters for establishing an independent Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and an international mechanism — a “Quartet Plus” — steering the process.  In Syria, she looked forward to a peace plan that she hoped would be supported by the parties to the conflict, while in Yemen, she urged a return to the negotiating table.

ANTONIO DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA (Brazil) said the peace process between Israel and Palestine was paralysed, and under such circumstances, the status quo was not an option.  It was crucial for the Security Council to fully carry out its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter, and that it support the peace process.  It was Member States’ collective responsibility to initiate a renewed negotiating process that would lead to the two-State solution.  Turning to the security and humanitarian situation in Iraq, Brazil strongly condemned the gross violations of humanitarian law by the so-called “Islamic State”.  Accordingly, he called upon the international community to fight against international terrorism, and tackle its root causes, in compliance with applicable international law.

MAY-ELIN STENER (Norway) welcomed the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme, which he hoped would bring economic progress to Iran and a window for settling other issues in the region.  On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, now was the time to help parties reinvigorate the peace process, and he welcomed the European Union initiative to discuss how a “broader echelon” of friends could work together in that regard.  He urged Israel — together with the Palestinian Authority in arrangements established by the Oslo Agreements and the Paris Protocol — to settle outstanding problems, increase space for Palestinian economic activity and improve the Authority’s financial sustainability.  Norway would convene an ad-hoc liaison committee meeting at the ministerial level in New York in September to provide political guidance to donor efforts to the Authority.  He urged Israel to lift restrictions on Gaza, and Palestinians to reunite the administration of Gaza and West Bank under the Authority.  On Iraq, he said the threat of ISIL/ISIS underlined the need to resolve conflicts that had allowed extremists to gain ground.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING (European Union) reaffirmed its commitment to a two-State solution, with an independent, democratic and sovereign State of Palestine.  In fact, there was no alternative.  The regional context, including the ongoing radicalization and the spread of terrorism, made the end of the conflict even more urgent.  The Union urged all Palestinian factions to find common ground; it would work with all sides to allow for the socioeconomic development of the West Bank, as well as the empowerment of Palestinian institutions for statehood.  Turning to Syria, the fight against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS)/Da’esh and other terrorist groups should be conducted in parallel with the search for lasting political solutions — the Assad regime could not partner with other nations in the fight against Da’esh.  The United Nations, centred on the Security Council, would have a key role in stopping the flow of all foreign fighters, countering ISIL/Da’esh financing and ending its incitement.  The countries in the region had made considerable efforts to protect and shelter Syrian refugees.  Humanitarian aid could not sustain the response; the situation required a longer-term, resilience-based effort to support neighbouring countries’ capacities to provide services and opportunities to Syrian refugees.

GHOLAMALI KHOSHROO, (Iran), speaking on behalf on the Non-Aligned Movement, said that, for more than 67 years, the question of Palestine had been on the United Nations agenda, so it was not for lack of attention that the conflict and injustice continued.  Rather, the lack of political will and the repeated failures of the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities had left the Palestinian people little hope of realizing their right to self-determination and freedom, as well as peace and justice.  Despite decades of the Palestinian leadership’s good-faith participation in peace efforts and a clear commitment to international law, the plight of Palestine had worsened on all fronts.  One year ago, Israel was carrying out a military aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip that lasted 51 days, during which it inflicted widespread death, injury and trauma on the Palestinian civilian population, in addition to massive destruction to homes and infrastructure.  The scale of the devastation of Gaza was unprecedented, and the Israeli occupying forces had committed serious violations of international law, tantamount to war crimes for which Israel had not been held accountable.  It was unacceptable that this humanitarian disaster remained without redress.

Moreover, he said, the Security Council must not remain on the sidelines in the quest to find a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.  The Non-Aligned Movement believed the message was clear worldwide:  it was high time to end the abhorrent Israeli occupation and impunity that had brought so much suffering, caused so many crises, sown so much instability and anger throughout the Middle East, and continued to undermine global peace and security.  The Movement would not relent until the Council provided a solution to the conflict.

DESRA PERCAYA (Indonesia), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), expressed pleasure at the growing recognition of the State of Palestine by various countries and entities, the accession of Palestine to several international treaties, and its admission to international organizations.  The continued stalemate on the road to peace was a concern and it was necessary to review the role and mandate of the Quartet.  It was now over one year since Israel’s assault on Gaza which had left 2,200 Palestinians dead.  The youth of Gaza faced a bleak future with unemployment at its highest in the world.  The Council must renew efforts to resume the peace process, beginning with ensuring the compliance of Israel with relevant international laws and United Nations resolutions.  Capitalizing on the momentum created by the historic agreement between the “Group of 5+1” and Iran on the country’s nuclear programme, the Council must find a comprehensive solution to the situation in the Middle East.

MÓNICA BOLAÑOS PÉREZ (Guatemala) stated that Israel’s campaign against Gaza in 2014 was responsible for some of the worst fighting seen in Gaza since 1957.  In its aftermath, the suffering of the civilian population continued today.  According to the report published by the Independent Commission of Enquiry established by the Human Rights Council, Israel’s actions could be considered as war crimes.  While there had been progress in reconstruction, the blockade continued to affect progress.  The situation in the West Bank had deteriorated further because of forced settlements and displacements of Palestinians.  It was crucial to establish a political timeline to reach a lasting agreement, while also necessary to take into account the legitimate security concerns of Israel.  The parties must continue to build trust with each other.

BERNARDITO AUZA, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, expressing concern about the situation in Syria, said “we should not continue to look helplessly from the side-lines while a great country is being destroyed”.  The so-called Islamic State was a challenge, not only for the region, but also for the entire international community.  Having to take care of millions of refugees, Lebanon and Jordan also bore the brunt of the conflict.  While the entire population was suffering, ethnic and religious groups were experiencing the crisis in particular ways, with Christians forced to leave their homes in a region where Christianity had been present since the very beginnings of the religion.  The Holy See appreciated the agreement between Iran and “5+1” group.  He hoped that the comprehensive agreement signed by the Holy See and the State of Palestine on 26 June would be a stimulus to the achievement of the two-State solution.

OMAR HILALE (Morocco) welcomed the agreement that allowed for an exit to the Libyan crisis and establishment of a modern State.  Libya should be able to reach its aspirations based on the principles of justice and dignity.  He deplored the situation in Palestine, especially Jerusalem, whose status must be protected, welcoming efforts by Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and the League of Arab States to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent State along the 4 June 1967 borders.  Morocco would continue to support the inalienable rights of Palestinians, and a State whose capital was East Jerusalem.  In Yemen, some were trying to ignore the results of the national dialogue, undermining the political transition process.  The parties should withdraw from the invaded region and stop the violence, and ensure respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.  On Syria, he saw “no ray of hope”, stressing that the solution required dialogue and that Morocco supported the Geneva communiqué.

AMR ABDELLATIF ABOULATTA (Egypt) said Israel’s occupation, the longest in history, continued unabated, with no solution found to the issue of refugees.  Millions of Palestinians lived in tents, camps or as guests in other countries, which undermined the Council’s credibility.  The body must ensure its resolutions were respected.  He urged continued pursuit of negotiations and an innovative solution, ensuring that political will supported, rather than hindered, the prospects for negotiations.  Israel’s land-grabbing through its settlement policy undermined attempts to find a solution and establish a contiguous Palestinian State.  On the Syrian crisis, there was “no glimmer of hope” for a lasting solution and he reiterated that Egypt would work with all partners to help find a solution.  He urged Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Golan, in line with international resolutions.

ANDRIY TSYMBALIUK (Ukraine) reiterated his country’s commitment to a “balanced and impartial” approach to the Middle East issue, stressing its willingness to develop stable relations with Israel and Arab States alike.  The only way to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was through an agreement that ended all claims and fulfilled both sides’ aspirations.  The parties should renew their commitment to the two-State solution.  On Syria, he reaffirmed Ukraine’s commitment to strict observance of human rights, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and sovereignty, condemning ongoing violence in the country.  In an 18 June letter, Ukraine and 70 other countries expressed outrage at the “unchecked brutality” in Syria, especially the use of barrel bombs.  He condemned the violence committed by ISIL/ISIS, which could amount to crimes against humanity, stressing that the fight against such terrorists should foster political transformation in the region.

MOTOHIDE YOSHIKAWA (Japan), welcoming the Iran nuclear agreement, expressed hope that it would strengthen stability in the Middle East.  At the same time, he voiced deepening concern over the humanitarian situation in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, noting Japan’s humanitarian assistance, and he condemned recent terrorist attacks in Iraq and Turkey.  He stressed the importance of political solutions to ongoing crises.  In that regard, he called for support to the Special Envoy’s efforts on Syria and those of Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in Yemen.  On Gaza, he called for disbursement of pledges made for reconstruction, as well as an easing the blockade while taking security concerns into account.  He welcomed the French initiative to advance the peace process, noting Japan’s contributions to Palestinian development.

ABDULAZIZ ALJARALLAH (Kuwait), speaking on behalf of the OIC, welcomed the agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme, expressing hope it would compel Israel to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).  On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel was not living up to its commitments, which called for redoubled efforts to stop its illegal policies.  Amid growing frustration over Israel’s illegal conduct, denial of Palestinian rights and violation of international law, its policies would never lead to peace and stability.

Underscoring the United Nations’ responsibility on the question of Palestine, he reiterated support for the Palestinian decision to internationalize the issue, and for the Council to adopt a resolution outlining a timeframe for ending the occupation.  An expanded Quartet mandate should include enforcement of the relevant resolutions, in order to realize the two-State solution on the basis of pre-1967 borders and an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.  Further, the Council should ensure the immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade against Gaza, while the international community should urgently fulfil Cairo pledges.  He also renewed the demand for Israel to implement resolution 497 (1981), calling for its withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

KAIRAT ABDRAKHMANOV (Kazakhstan), expressing concern over the condition of the Palestinians, called for urgent action to mitigate their suffering, as well as to bring about a lasting two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  He reiterated opposition, in that context, to Israeli settlement activity.  Noting his country’s hosting of a regional conference on countering violent extremism, he underlined the need for an urgent and bold response to combat what he called quasi-State entities committing atrocities on local populations in various parts of the region.  Expressing concern over the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Yemen, he called for emergency relief and reinvigorated international efforts to create conditions for political solutions to all such conflicts.  He cited initiatives of his country for non-violent settlement of conflicts and promotion of tolerance and peace.  He pledged his country’s readiness to share its experience of maintaining harmony among more than 100 ethnic groups on its territory.

EINAR GUNNARSSON (Iceland) said that both sides needed to commit fully to a two-State solution, and they must refrain from actions that would undermine the only path to peace.  Israeli leaders had yet to dispel, by actions on the ground, the very serious doubt cast on their commitment to the two-State solution during its pre-election period.  In fact, Israel’s acts continued to damage the chances of an accord.  There remained no let-up to settlement expansion, nor the expropriation of land in Palestine — a clear breach of international law.  Furthermore, the highly abnormal living conditions in the Palestinian territory had a disproportionate impact on women and children.  Durable peace and reconciliation required the equal participation of women at all decision-making levels on both sides; their absence was noticeable.  Finally, the recent report by the High-level Panel on Peace Operations underlined the primacy of politics in achieving and maintaining peace.  Managing a crisis was not enough — the aim must be to solve it.  The Council should create a clear way to end the occupation and establish a plan for two States to live side by side in peace and security.

WILFRIED I. EMVULA (Namibia), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, condemned the violations and aggressive measures being carried out by Israel against Palestinians.  The failure to hold Israel accountable had bolstered its impunity.  While condemning rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, he said such attacks did not justify the disproportionate use of force against the 1.7 million Palestinians in that area.  If Israel continued to disrespect international law, measures to ensure an end to those violations must be taken.  The Council needed to address the crisis, and the blockade against Gaza should be removed.  He urged both parties to commit to the peace process, reaffirming support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

AHMED SAREER (Maldives) said that peace would never be achieved through violence and bloodshed.  With the breakdown of talks since 2014, lasting peace between Palestine and Israel remained a distant dream.  While hope was dim, Malaysia reiterated its call for a two-State solution.  On Syria, he underscored the importance of achieving an inclusive political solution based on the Geneva talks.  His delegation was also deeply concerned about the situation in Yemen, which affected the stability of the entire region.  Concluding, he condemned terrorism in all its forms, and underlined that such acts should not be associated with any religion, race, culture and society.

LEVENT ELER (Turkey) said the situation across the Middle East continued to be a grave concern for all.  Terrorism, violence and humanitarian crises had escalated, and engulfed millions of innocent people in the region.  The international community must focus on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  Failing to do so would further destabilize the region, leading to more extremism.  He hoped that Israel would engage with the peace process in a sincere and result oriented manner, and demonstrate its commitment to the two-State solution.  On Syria, a collective response was needed to address the magnitude of the crisis.  Turkey, as the biggest refugee hosting country in the world, was gravely concerned by the humanitarian and security impacts of such crises.  Accordingly, he reminded that burden sharing was an international responsibility.

SAUD HAMAD ALSHAMSI (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said lost opportunities to achieve peace had led to prolonged suffering for Palestinians and the emergence of extremism in the region.  The Arab Group, whose peoples bore the largest burden of those challenges, condemned Israel’s illegal practices and systematic violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settlement expansion.  Urging donors to fulfil their Cairo commitments, he stressed the shared responsibility to lift the Israeli siege on Gaza and urged increased international support for the Palestinian Unity Government.

For its part, the Council should not limit its efforts to holding “routine” periodic briefings, he said, but rather, take steps to halt Israel’s violations so as to create an environment for resumed negotiations. He urged support for efforts by the Arab Ministerial Committee on Ending Occupation, saying the Council should also respond to the Group’s repeated calls for a resolution that “rescued” the peace process and determined the terms of reference for negotiations based on a two-State solution.  He supported France’s efforts in that regard.  On the Syrian crisis, he urged increased assistance for displaced Syrians and burden-sharing in terms of refugees with neighbouring countries.

ROHAN PERERA (Sri Lanka) said that the ongoing settlement activities by Israel were illegal under international law and had to end.  The blockage of Gaza had added to the pain and frustration of Palestinians living in the Strip.  Another key challenge was to rebuild Gaza from the 2014 destruction.  Terrorism originating from the Middle East had the potential to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of all nations.  In today’s interconnected world, it was easy for agents of extremism to spread their ideologies across national borders.  Sri Lanka supported Palestine’s application for admission to full membership in the United Nations, and recognized that the viability of the two-State solution would depend on the political unity and economic advancement of the Palestinian people.

FODÉ SECK, Chairman on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, welcomed the Council’s endorsement of the Iran nuclear agreement, hoping it would it a have positive effect on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, he maintained, was the major source of instability in the Middle East and beyond.  After 47 years of occupation, it was high time that the Security Council acquired the means to settle the conflict on basis of the two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders.  Given the impasse in progress, as well as the frequent violence, a collective process was needed, perhaps a larger Quartet, perhaps involving an international conference or perhaps a resolution along the lines of the French initiative.  His Committee reiterated its plea for the realization of the rights of Palestinians for self-determination, and he noted the international meetings it had organized this year for that purpose.

VUSUMUZI NTONGA (Zimbabwe) associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, said that violence continued despite the known parameters of the Israeli occupation of Palestine enshrined in numerous United Nations resolutions.  The scale of Gaza’s devastation was unprecedented, according to the 22 June report of the independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council:  a total of 2,251 Palestinians had been killed, including 1,462 civilians, and 11,231 Palestinians were injured.  Moreover, Israel approved further construction of illegal settlements, maintained the eight-year blockade and kept the wall of shame in place.  The Security Council had not held Israel to account for any of those violations.  The latest demonstration of the Council’s paralysis was its failure to adopt a resolution on 30 December 2014, which would have set a timetable for Israel’s withdrawal from the Palestinian territory.  Current efforts to negotiate a similar resolution would give the Palestinian people a ray of hope.  Endless open-ended negotiations without clear objectives had not served the Palestinians’ interests, but had only bought time for Israel to change facts on the ground.

RODOLFO REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba), associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, said, despite open debates, which had shown overwhelming support for the Palestinian cause, the Council had not adopted a single resolution demanding that Israel cease its occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories.  The anti-democratic right of veto, which had enabled Israel to act with impunity, must end and the Council must promote a negotiated solution that delivered an end to occupation, the peaceful coexistence of two independent States and a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees.  He condemned Israel’s destruction of Palestinian property, forced displacement of families and movement of Israeli settlers into Palestinian territory.  He supported all efforts to promote recognition of the State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as its right to full United Nations membership.  A negotiated dialogue was the only alternative to the situation in Syria, he said, stressing that those with the goal of regime change were responsible for the victims during four years of fighting.

A.K. ABDUL MOMEN, (Bangladesh), said he regretted that the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued and that the international community’s repeated appeal to improve the Palestinian’s deteriorating conditions remained unheeded.  Gaza borders had been subjected to a regime of closure without precedent anywhere else in the world — the equivalent of the strangulation of an entire population.  Israel had also kept up its settlement campaign unabated, despite the international community’s unanimous confirmation of the campaign’s illegality.  Moreover, there was great concern about the grave financial crisis besetting Palestine’s Government, which undermined the accomplishments of its national institution-building programme.  The crisis had been exacerbated by Israel’s decision, announced on 3 January, to withhold the tax receipts it collected from Palestinians on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, as mutually agreed through the Oslo Accords.  Israel must fulfil its legal obligation to ensure that all Palestinians were safeguarded against all acts of violence.  It must also cease illegal detentions, destruction of homes and lift its embargo against Palestinians, by immediately opening all border crossings.  The people of Israel, who had suffered for years, knew that neither force, nor extermination, nor illegal occupation, subjugation and deprivation could win peace and bring sustainability.

Taking the floor a second time, Mr. AL-MOUALLIMI (Iran) thanked those Council members that had taken a positive approach to the recent deal reached with his country.  Israel had raised baseless allegations against Iran, which he categorically rejected, saying that it wanted to see the controversy over the Iran nuclear issue persist forever as a smoke screen to hide its own criminal policy against Palestinians, including its blockade and atrocities in Gaza.

He said he would not be surprised to see Israel increase its baseless accusations against Iran and the countries that had concluded the nuclear deal.  With that accord in hand, Israel would now find it more difficult to turn a deaf ear to calls for it to end its occupation, or to stand as the only obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Its stockpiling of nuclear warheads threatened peace and security in region.  The Council should live up to its responsibility and take actions to neutralize that threat.

ISRAEL NITZAN (Israel), asking why all the delegates who spoke so strongly against Israel could not stay until the end of the debate, proposed that the Lebanese delegate tone down rhetoric against Israel and look at the dangers posed by Hizbullah, which was again building up armaments among the population in southern Lebanon.  It should investigate the situation of Palestinian refugee camps in her country.  Iran’s statements were particularly ironic as it was occupying many areas through the armed groups it sponsored, and it violated many Council resolutions, not least through its support for the Assad regime in Syria.  Saudi Arabia, similarly, while decrying Israel’s human rights practices, was devastating Yemen and executing its citizens by the scores.  Among other critics of Israel today, Venezuela, he said, was suppressing its citizenry and Malaysia was training Hamas terrorists.

Mr. AL-MOUALLIMI (Saudi Arabia) said it was ironic that Israel’s representative was giving a lecture on killing civilians in warfare as it had killed thousands one year ago in Gaza.  His country, on the other hand, was executing only criminals.  It was high time for the Council to end such Israeli arrogance, he maintained.

SITI HAJJAR ADNIN (Malaysia) categorically rejected the statement made by Israel about her country and stressed that what was relevant today was Israel’s treatment of civilians.  Malaysia was not occupying another people.  Israel should concentrate its energy on dealing with the issues raised today and not try to change the subject.

Speaking a third time, Mr. NITZAN (Israel) responded to comments by his Saudi Arabian counterpart, saying:  “Words are cheap.”  The Saudi delegate had proved that phrase valid with his cynical arguments about protection of civilians, double standards and commissions of inquiries.