



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

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**Debate on the Middle East:
"Maintenance of international peace and security:
Challenges to peace and security in the Middle East"**

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Mr President,

I wish to start by thanking Ms Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her instructive and encouraging speech on this difficult subject that concerns us all.

Building peace and security for all in the Middle East and the Gulf region is indeed a major goal for the United Nations and this Council. We welcome being able to discuss this issue in a cross-cutting manner today under your guidance, Mr Minister, and in the presence of their Excellencies Mr Pompeo and Mr Michaelis.

Belgium is also aligning itself with the intervention of the European Union.

Mr President,

The Middle East and the Gulf region are currently prey to many tensions and conflicts which appear regularly on the agenda of this Council.

The conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya; the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; the threat of instability in Lebanon; tensions in the Strait of Hormuz; the Iranian nuclear issue; the fight against Daesh and Al-Qaida; all these elements threaten regional security but also, through their internationalisation, endanger international peace and security of which this Council is the guarantor.

However, these points on our agenda are all too often considered in an isolated manner.

Yet, as it was shown in this Council, during the Informal interactive dialogue on the Middle East and North Africa on 21 March, and during the Briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States on 13 June, it is crucial to develop a regional and multidimensional approach.

Such a regional approach helps to take account of the root causes of the tensions and conflicts, the regional dynamics, and the common security challenges that underlie them, and can be divided up into three essential and interdependent areas that continue to be topical:

(1) political and security aspects with a view to defining and building a common space for peace and security;

(2) economic and financial aspects with a view to building a zone of shared prosperity;

(3) social, cultural and human aspects with a view to favouring new inclusive social contracts based on education, economic opportunities for young people, equality for women, respect for human rights, and the equitable sharing of national wealth.

In terms of the first point and the security aspects, weapons of mass destruction - in particular chemical and nuclear - remain a key point of attention. Use of chemical weapons under any circumstance is unacceptable and contravenes international laws. For my country, disarmament, non-proliferation, and the fight against impunity in the use of chemical weapons are priorities. It is essential that responsibility is established for the chemical attacks in Syria.

In the same spirit, resolution 2231 remains the best multilateral basis available for committing Iran to the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and their impact on regional stability and international security. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) must be preserved and the challenges it currently faces must be overcome. Through the verification mechanisms agreed with the IAEA, it helps to build the confidence so needed.

Mr President,

Belgium intends to create peace and build consensus and, to that end, it will continue to lend its full support to reinforcing the role of the United Nations and this Council with a view to a regional, horizontal and multidimensional approach to tensions and conflicts in the Middle East and the Gulf. Only a concerted approach, which includes all the region's actors and tackles all the problems, will be able to ensure stability and a sustainable peace in the region in accordance with multilateralism and a global order based on the rule of law.

Finally, let us recall that during the Arab Spring of 2011, the populations mobilised themselves to demand more rights, freedom, equality, democracy, and economic opportunities. Some of these demands have remained unanswered. Any lasting solution in the region must be based on *ownership* of it by the societies and the populations.

Thank you, Mr President.