



## Kingdom of Belgium

Speech by H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

### Open debate on the situation in the Middle East

New York, 23 July 2019

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Mr President,

Belgium supports the statement which will be made on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Ms Rosemary DiCarlo for her enlightening briefing.

Mr President,

The situation on the ground is deteriorating daily with the continued policy of settlement activity as one of its principal catalysts. This policy, accompanied by measures such as forced displacement, evictions and demolitions is illegal under International Law.

We condemn the destruction, on 4 July, of the facilities of an Oxfam humanitarian project financed by Belgium in the village of Khirbet Ad-Duqaiqah, which had among other things, three water reservoirs and at least 2,500 trees. This project supported three communities and aimed to expand land use by restoring water supplies and using grazing management techniques. Thirty-five families were affected by the destruction, 63% of which were young people. And this is not rhetoric, these are not slogans, these are facts. Belgium recalls that the destruction of goods and items necessary for the survival of the civil population contravenes International Humanitarian Law.

Similarly, we condemn the recent demolitions and evictions in the Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, and the mass demolition of buildings yesterday in the community of Sur Baher, mostly based in Areas A and B of the West Bank but on the west side of the separation barrier. Such destruction once again illustrates the pressures exerted on the Palestinian presence in East Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings. They are contributing to a significant change in the demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem, which is detrimental to the negotiations on the final status of this city as the capital of two States. This continued policy challenges the prospect of a two-state solution.

The financial crisis in which the Palestinian Authority finds itself is another immediate concern. We are waiting for the economic and budget agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to be fully implemented, including Israel's obligations under the Paris Protocol. In the meantime, it is important that the Palestinian Authority continues to accept tax transfers on a provisional basis, which in no way constitutes a legal or political endorsement of Israeli deductions.

Mr President,

We continue to be concerned by the security situation in Gaza. We call upon the parties to continue to exercise the utmost restraint and to respect the ceasefire established through the efforts of Egypt and the United Nations Special Coordinator.

The social, economic and humanitarian crisis in Gaza must find a political, comprehensive and sustainable solution. This requires a fundamental change, including the lifting of the blockade and the opening of crossing points, while also taking into consideration Israel's legitimate concerns regarding its own security. A political solution to the current crisis also requires this territory to be returned to Palestinian Authority control. We call on the parties to return to constructive dialogue and welcome the Egyptian and Russian efforts in this regard.

Mr President,

Last month, the United States presented a series of economic measures entitled "Peace to Prosperity" at a workshop held in Manama with Bahrain. We took note of the recognition, when presenting this plan, of the need to integrate these measures into a political plan. Indeed, as we have already stressed, peace can only be comprehensive, just and lasting if it meets the legitimate aspiration of each of the parties to achieve their national destiny in peace and security, within a stabilised region. The prospect which the international community must work towards is indeed the coexistence of two States with the city of Jerusalem as their future capital, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters and yes, they have indeed been agreed.

This prospect can be supported by economic measures, but these economic measures cannot be a substitute for a political solution. The end of the occupation, free access for Palestinians to their lands and their resources, freedom of movement and access to the entire territory and the ability to join a regional market are essential in order to allow the Palestinian economy to develop fully.

Mr President,

In conclusion, now more than ever, it is time for the parties to resume the path of dialogue and act to build peace. We are convinced that this is in the best interests of Israel and the Palestinians. In this context, Belgium reiterates the key role of the Security Council as the guarantor of any global, fair and lasting solution, in line with its previous resolutions and in full respect of international law. Belgium will continue to work along these lines, within the Council and together with our Palestinian and Israeli friends.

Thank you.