



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement delivered by

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Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the UN

Briefing Middle East Peace Process (report on implementation res.
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Mister President,

I thank the Secretary-General for his introductory remarks. I also thank Special Coordinator Mr. Nickolay MLADENOV for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the many ministers present today.

We welcome the written report and fully subscribe to its observations.

Mister President,

We share the deep concern expressed here today by the Secretary-General regarding the stated intention of the Government of Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. It is a concern largely shared by this Council and the wider international community, as was also stated in the report.

A unilateral decision formalizing an annexation, even limited in scope, would constitute a clear breach of international law, as the SG said, including the UN Charter, the 4th Geneva Convention and the resolutions of this Council. Belgium will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including Jerusalem, than those agreed upon by the parties through direct negotiations. The West Bank will stay an occupied Territory under international humanitarian law. We will continue to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

Following our obligations under international law and EU law, annexation will have an impact on the bilateral relations between Belgium and Israel and will also inevitably have significant consequences for the relationship between Israel and the European Union as was stated by the EU HR/VP Josep BORRELL. In addition to its legal, political and economic consequences, annexation also risks gravely imperiling the security situation on the ground and in the wider region, thus undermining efforts to achieve regional peace and stability.

Belgium is equally concerned by the negative impact of such a move on human rights and the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory, including through the potential imposition of a two-tiered system of unequal political, social and economic rights based on

ethnicity. Not only will it further exacerbate issues related to the occupation – such as movement and access restrictions, basic service delivery and land property – it will also further affect communities that are already among the most vulnerable in the Palestinian population, leading to an increased coercive environment that would further fuel instability. Furthermore, annexation would deliver a devastating blow to the viability of a Palestinian state and the two-state solution and would close the door for future negotiations.

We therefore strongly urge Israel to refrain from any unilateral decision that would lead to the annexation of any parts of occupied Palestinian territory. We also call on the international community, and especially those states with influence, to exert all efforts to prevent any such steps.

Mister President,

The intention of the Israeli government to annex parts of the occupied West Bank has led the Palestinian Authority to consider itself absolved of the agreements and understandings with Israel and the United States, in the security and civilian areas. On June 3rd, the Palestinian Authority announced that it will refuse to receive the clearance funds collected by Israel on its behalf. We are concerned about the consequences of these developments, specifically their socio-economic and humanitarian impact.

Only through meaningful and direct negotiations will it be possible to come to a two-state solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty.

We have taken note of the Palestinian leadership's willingness to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, as mentioned in the report. Against this backdrop it is all the more important that all Palestinian factions invest in the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic, national government. We strongly encourage the holding of elections once conditions permit it.

Mister President,

It is important that the international community puts its weight behind efforts to restart meaningful negotiations. In this regard, we welcome the conference call held on the 22nd of May at the level of Envoys of the Middle East Quartet. We hope that efforts within this format or an enlarged format can continue.

We are convinced that only through a negotiated solution based on the internationally agreed parameters and respect for international law, just and lasting peace can be achieved. The fulfilment of the aspirations of only one side will only lead to more instability in Israel

and Palestine, but also in the wider region, as well as to the perpetuation of conflict.

I thank you.