

## KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve,  
Permanent Representative  
of Belgium to the United Nations

### MEPP Briefing to the Security Council

New York, 20/06/2019

---

Mr President,

I would like to thank the Special Coordinator, Mr Nickolay Mladenov, for his detailed briefing and for the work he is doing with his team.

Mr President,

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is stalling, the situation on the ground is constantly deteriorating in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and we now need to recall the obvious: this conflict, which has been the subject of many Council resolutions, will only find a positive outcome if those same resolutions and international law are respected, following a process negotiated between the parties.

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 for which the international community must aim is indeed the coexistence of two States, **with the city of Jerusalem as their future capital, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters.** For Belgium, this perspective is the only way to provide the necessary response to the aspiration of Israelis to live in the security of a State with legitimacy that must be recognised by all and to the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians for a sovereign, democratic and viable State.

This prospect can be supported by economic measures - and I would like to recall here that the European Union is the largest donor to the Palestinian people - but **these economic measures cannot be a substitute for a political solution.** The Palestinian economy can only fully develop if the **occupation ends** and Palestinians have free access to their land and resources, freedom of movement, access to the entire territory and the ability to join a regional market.

Mr President,

The continuation of the **settlement** policy is a flagrant violation of international law and the resolutions of this Council, including Resolution 2334. Settlement activity, accompanied by expropriations, demolitions and population displacements, undermines respect for the fundamental rights of Palestinians. Settlement activity also fundamentally compromises, soon irrevocably, the two-State solution that we support.

The recent publication of several calls for tender to allow the construction of more than 800 housing units in settlements in East Jerusalem is another illustration of this policy and Belgium firmly denounces and condemns these developments.

In this context, Belgium also expresses its deepest concern at the increase in tensions and violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians. Any use of violence is unacceptable, regardless of the perpetrators, who must be prosecuted. Belgium calls on the parties to avoid any provocation. We are particularly concerned about the deteriorating situation in **Hebron and East Jerusalem, including in the Old City of Jerusalem.**

We recall the obligation to respect international law, by which all parties are bound, as well as Israel's responsibility, as the occupying force, to ensure the protection of Palestinians in Hebron, East Jerusalem and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

Mr President,

The **recent escalation of violence in Gaza** is also undermining the prospect of a lasting and stable peace. We recall the obligation of the parties to respect international humanitarian law, including its principles of proportionality and distinction, and to ensure the protection of civilians.

It is essential to **invest at both humanitarian and political levels** if the trend in Gaza is to be reversed. We call on all parties to ensure free access for humanitarian actors. Politically, the only appropriate solution is a lifting of the blockade and the full opening of the crossing points, while taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns. This territory must be returned to Palestinian Authority control. We repeat our call for all parties to invest in intra-Palestinian reconciliation in a constructive manner.

Mr President,

We reiterate our request for a written report as part of this briefing, at least twice a year, in accordance with the usual practice of this Council, based on Note 507.

In conclusion, Belgium calls on all the parties to the conflict to work towards a solution in accordance with international law, with a view to just and lasting peace and a stabilised regional environment.

Thank you.