



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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MEPP Briefing to the Security Council

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Madam President,

I would like to thank the Special Coordinator, Mr Nickolay Mladenov, and Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl for their informative briefings.

Madam President,

The recent escalation of violence in Gaza has been one of the most intense in recent years, bringing both sides to the brink of a new conflict. Such an escalation comes with a huge human cost and jeopardizes any prospect of peace. We strongly condemn the firing of rockets into Israeli territory and reaffirm our support for the mediation efforts undertaken by the United Nations and Egypt to reduce tensions. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and recall the imperatives of protecting civilians and respecting international humanitarian law, including its principles of proportionality and distinction.

We remain concerned by the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in Gaza. Free access to humanitarian actors and unconditional access to medical care are essential. In this regard, we would like to commend the role of UNRWA, whose mandate and action we fully support. UNRWA is doing a remarkable job despite a precarious financial situation and a difficult working environment, thanks in part to the tireless efforts and professionalism of its staff. UNRWA's efforts in the areas of education, health and protection - to name but a few - enable Palestinian refugees to exercise their human rights and have their dignity respected. I do not think that closing schools in Gaza is the best way to fight radicalization and violent extremism.

Madam President,

The resolution of the crisis in Gaza requires a fundamental change, including the lifting of the blockade and a complete opening of crossing points, while also taking into consideration Israel's legitimate concerns regarding its own security. A political solution to the crisis also requires this territory to be returned to Palestinian Authority control. We urge all parties to invest in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks in a constructive manner. Unity is in the interest of the Palestinian people and of peace in the region.

Madam President,

In April 2019, 63 houses and other structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, reflecting the ever-increasing pressure on the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem. These demolitions and the subsequent displacement of people are an integral part of a policy of settlement activity that is illegal under international law and constitutes a serious obstacle to a just and lasting peace. Belgium condemns in the strongest terms the settlement activity policy and its related measures and demands compliance with Resolution 2334.

The settlement activity policy undermines the viability of a solution involving two States, living side by side, in peace and within secure and internationally recognised borders. Therefore, any credible initiative to relaunch a peace process must be accompanied by measures to halt settlement activity, reverse the current trend and allow Palestinians full and free access to their resources and rights.

Madam President,

There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between the parties, but this can only be achieved by respecting international law and the relevant resolutions of this Council. The only possible outcome is a negotiated solution based on the coexistence of two States,

with the city of Jerusalem as their future capital, in line with agreed international parameters. These parameters must be the basis for any comprehensive, just and lasting peace plan that addresses both Israel's concerns for its security and the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians for a sovereign, democratic and viable State.

This Council has a key role to play in helping to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue, while ensuring compliance with its previous resolutions and international law. It is in this spirit that we will continue to oppose any unilateral initiative that runs counter to these values and principles.

Thank you.