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PROCESS

BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE
MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

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Madam President,

Members of the Security Council,

Last week, we commemorated three years since the horrific terror attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent start of the devastating war in Gaza. Countless lives have been lost or irrevocably changed, homes destroyed, and communities shattered.

As we mark this grim milestone, Palestinians and Israelis deserve more than short-term fixes. They deserve a credible path to peace and finally, an end to this conflict. But they cannot do it alone.

The international community must move beyond words and take concrete action to ensure a future of security and dignity for both peoples. It is time to return to a genuine peace process.

Madam President,

Recently, we also marked another anniversary: one year since the ceasefire was declared in Gaza. While some progress has been made, the situation remains extremely fragile. Israeli military operations continue, causing some 1,500 Palestinian fatalities, including more than 320 children and 140 women since the ceasefire came into effect, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

During my visit to Gaza on Sunday, I witnessed that, for Palestinians living along the Yellow Line, the ceasefire exists in name only. In Shuja'iyya, I met families from a community of some 950 households, including women, children and elderly, living in constant fear. Women told me that they had not experienced 40 consecutive minutes without shooting over their land in a year. Their most basic request was for safety, yet many have nowhere else to go.

Families throughout Gaza continue to live in squalid conditions in worn out tents, overcrowded displacement sites, and severely damaged buildings, with water and sanitation systems devastated. Most of Gaza still lives in darkness.

The absence of privacy and safe living conditions leaves women and girls increasingly exposed to protection risks, including exploitation and abuse.

As winter approaches, time is running out.

An estimated 950,000 people are living in areas with medium or high risk of flooding. More than 4,000 buildings, in which people have sought shelter, are at risk of collapse. We are working with communities to evacuate these unsafe buildings, but with few alternatives available, families are often left with little more than a tent.

I spoke to a man in tears as he watched his family's home being demolished — the home he had spent his entire life working to build. The impossible choice facing many families:

leave the homes they have returned to, or remain in a building at risk of collapse, knowing they may pay with their lives.

For the fourth consecutive year, restrictions on the entry of essential equipment, spare parts, engine oil, and other supplies continue to impede humanitarian and recovery efforts. With the onset of El Niño, severe winter storms and flooding are expected. We know what is needed to prepare, but lack the essential materials and equipment to act at the scale required.

Humanitarian access must be expanded and predictable, restrictions on essential and critical items classified by Israel as dual use must be lifted, and adequate resources mobilized. The operational environment, conditions for commerce, and transparency must improve. Coercion of civilians, including humanitarian personnel and commercial actors, must cease. People in Gaza must not be forced to endure another winter without safe shelter and basic services.

As I drove away from Gaza, I saw children carrying blue UNICEF backpacks. Amid the devastation, that small sight moved me to tears. Despite everything these children have endured, 564,000 have been enrolled in temporary learning spaces. My heartfelt thanks to our UNICEF and our education cluster partners. Thank you for making this possible. Children in Gaza – like children everywhere - want to learn. They still hold on to the hope of a future. We must not let them lose that too.

Emergency assistance alone is not enough. Sustainable recovery and political progress must advance together. We need a single, coherent, transparent aid architecture in Gaza, bringing together all stakeholders under a mutual accountability framework. Palestinian ownership and leadership is imperative. Established coordination mechanisms must be preserved and fully utilized. The role and operational independence of the humanitarian system, led by the United Nations, must be respected as we work collectively to advance the recovery that Gaza so desperately needs.

Madam President,

There is no time to lose. Continued paralysis risks hardening the status quo into a permanent reality.

Each day without movement towards recovery amplifies security, sanitation, and health risks. These will not remain confined to Gaza, and they will make the eventual work of rebuilding Gaza that much harder.

I welcome the continued efforts to break the deadlock in implementing Security Council resolution 2803 (2025). The Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict must be implemented in full, with all parties abiding by its terms. This includes the disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Strip, and the deployment of the International Stabilization Force.

The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza must be enabled to assume its transitional governance responsibilities, working in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and other relevant partners. Civil society, including women's and youth organizations, must be enabled to deliver.

Equally, all stakeholders must create the conditions to enable the private sector to operate effectively, as a key component of Gaza's recovery.

These arrangements must contribute to the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian Government.

Madam President,

The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate. Israeli military operations, rampant and unchecked settler violence, Palestinian attacks against Israelis, displacement, and movement restrictions are taking an increasingly severe toll.

Settler violence continues at extremely high levels, with daily attacks on Palestinians, their homes and other property, often in the presence of Israeli forces. The annual olive harvest remains a target of systematic settler attacks, and this year is no exception, with attacks already recorded as the harvest begins.

While Israeli authorities arrested several perpetrators, the vast majority have not been held accountable. Israeli authorities must do more to protect Palestinians against violence and intimidation, ensure safe access to their land, and hold perpetrators accountable. Palestinian attacks against Israelis must also cease.

Settlement expansion has also continued at an alarming rate.

On 28 September, Israel's Attorney General determined that 19 October is the deadline for bidding on tenders for settlement units in the E1 area, though tenders could only be awarded after the 27 October election date. I call on the Israeli authorities to cease all settlement activity, in accordance with their obligations under international law.

On 9 October, Palestinian President Abbas issued a decree postponing the legislative elections that had been scheduled for 28 November. They are now scheduled to take place together with presidential elections on 11 September 2027.

The announcement has caused deep frustration for many Palestinians, who once again face delays in electing their representatives. Elections will be crucial for renewing Palestinian national institutions and allowing Palestinians to realize their democratic aspirations.

The United Nations will continue to support the Palestinian Central Election Commission, as requested, to ensure the technical preparations are in place when elections are held.

Madam President,

In my briefings to this Council, I have tried to give a realistic picture of the situation on the ground. Today, I feel obliged to sound the alarm.

In Gaza, desperation is palpable. One year after the ceasefire, too many people have seen little or no improvement in their lives. This frustration cannot build indefinitely. The risk of a return to war has never been higher. This must be avoided at all costs.

The West Bank is also at boiling point. Palestinians face constant threats to their safety and livelihoods. Communities are forcibly driven into ever more fragmented areas, eroding the territorial basis of a future sovereign Palestinian state.

Madam President,

The choice before us is clear. The ceasefire in Gaza must become the foundation for genuine recovery and a durable political settlement. The unlawful occupation must end across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

During the General Assembly's High-level Week, the international community reaffirmed its sustained support for the two-State solution. This support must be translated into coordinated, concrete measures on the ground.

Resolution 2803 and the Comprehensive Plan, the New York Declaration, and the Global Alliance provide complementary elements of an international framework that can move us down a more constructive path.

We must integrate these instruments in pursuit of our collective goal: two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I thank you, Madam President, and the Council members for your attention.