

Remarks at the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC)

Under-Secretary-General Rosemary A. DiCarlo

New York, 27 September 2018

Foreign Minister Soreide,

Prime Minister Hamdallah,

Minister Hanegbi,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are grateful to Norway for convening and chairing this forum.

Last year and again in March, this forum noted the deeply worrying trends in the occupied Palestinian territory and the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian and socio-economic situation. Since then, the situation has worsened.

The situation on the ground cannot be divorced from the broader context: Israel's continued military occupation and settlement activity; Hamas' continuing hold on Gaza, its militant activity, including rocket attacks and tunnel construction; uncertainties about the future of the peace process and the two-state solution; unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts; political divisions between Gaza and the Palestinian Authority; and turmoil in the wider region.

The importance of the parties coming together with the international community to engage in meaningful dialogue at this critical time cannot be overstated.

The Secretary-General has expressed concern about the violence during the recent demonstrations in Gaza. He deeply regrets the loss of lives. He is also concerned about the dangerous military escalation in Gaza and southern Israel and calls on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, cease all provocations and attacks, and use lethal force only as a last resort.

The situation was also discussed by the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet, as reflected in their statement yesterday. We are grateful for the support of the US, Russia and EU, and are committed to pursuing our efforts to prevent further escalation, empower the legitimate Palestinian authorities in Gaza, and address all humanitarian needs.

Over the past two months, United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) and Egypt have engaged in diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring calm and returning to the 2014 ceasefire arrangements. I commend these efforts. For the de-escalation to hold, all sides must continue their engagement and do their part.

The Secretary-General has stressed that a negotiated two-state solution remains the only viable way to end the conflict and meet the legitimate aspirations and security needs of both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly called on all parties to refrain from unilateral actions that jeopardize prospects for peace and progress.

Continued Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is an impediment to the two-state solution. It is illegal under international law and needs to stop. The return of the Palestinian Government to Gaza is critical not only to help meet Gaza's humanitarian needs and advance its development objectives, but also the goals of self-determination and statehood.

State-building remains a cornerstone of our efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability. International donors and the parties themselves should meaningfully engage with this critical endeavour. The Palestinian Authority must continue implementing the National Policy Agenda. Progress on the state-building agenda depends on an end to settlement construction, violence, and the revitalization of the Palestinian economy. Concrete steps to prevent territorial fragmentation and increase Palestinian access to Area C must be prioritized.

Excellencies,

An unprecedented reduction in donor funding has brought into question the will and the ability of the international community to effectively respond to the increasing needs on the ground. As a result, this reduction in humanitarian and development assistance to Palestine, will leave a large gap of unmet needs. The impact of funding shortfalls on the economy and humanitarian situation, on the work of UNRWA, other UN Agencies and NGO's, has and will be significant.

To help mitigate these effects, the UNSCO's report has highlighted a number of the most critical humanitarian interventions required to support Gaza's failing energy, water and health networks. The United Nations has also established a Project Management Unit in Gaza to work with Palestinian and Israeli authorities to facilitate the smooth implementation of urgent projects.

We are also supporting the parties to conclude a timely and critical review of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, to improve its functionality, transparency and predictability. I would also like to acknowledge UNDP and the World Bank for taking on the challenge of job creation in Gaza, particularly their efforts to prioritize women and youth.

These steps will help advance a number of critical interventions for Gaza. The international community should offer as much support as possible. I welcome the recent announcements of contributions by several Member States and urge additional new funding including for UNRWA.

Excellencies,

The international community has invested extensive resources for years in Palestine's statehood. Now is not the time to give up. The parties must also realize that donor support will not continue indefinitely without a meaningful political horizon and without resolving the split between Gaza and the West Bank.

We should not lose sight of our central objective: fostering a climate conducive to meaningful negotiations that will end the conflict once and for all. This must be the foundation of all our efforts.

The UN remains committed to support peace efforts leading to a negotiated two-state solution.

I thank you for your continued engagement and support and wish you the best in your deliberations.