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BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

18 AUGUST 2014

Mr. President,

1. We meet today against the backdrop of a restive region, with heightened political tensions and a severe security threat by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al Nusrah Front (ANF) as well as the recent attacks by violent extremist groups from Syria against Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces in the Lebanese town of Aarsal. Given that the Security Council has already been seized of those very worrisome situations – with its adoption on 15 August of Resolution 2170 on countering the threat of ISIL and the ANF, and with its press statement of 4 August on Lebanon – I would like to focus my briefing today on the situation in Israel and Palestine, with an emphasis on Gaza.

2. As we meet, the temporary ceasefire between Israel and Gaza is holding, now on the fifth and last day of its current extension, with Israel and Palestinian delegations in Cairo meeting separately with Egyptian authorities in a crucial effort to break the deadlock of violence and retaliation. I recently travelled to Cairo in support of these important talks, and the Secretary-General has continued to engage with the parties and stakeholders to end the violence and reach a durable ceasefire. The hopes of the people in Gaza for a better future, and the hopes of the people in Israel for sustainable security rest on those talks, and we call on the delegations to live up to this responsibility. By the deadline later today – midnight Cairo time, or 5 pm New York time – we urge the parties to reach an understanding on a durable ceasefire which also addresses the underlying issues afflicting Gaza, or make substantive progress towards it. At the very least, we hope that the ceasefire will be extended and the situation remains quiet.

3. I think we all share the relief that no blood is being shed at the moment. But we all also regret that it has taken too much time, and too many lives, to achieve this pause. The toll of this third major escalation in Gaza in six years is appalling. A total of almost 2,000 Palestinians have been killed, of whom 459 are children and 239 are women. This total includes more than two thirds civilians. Some 10,000 Palestinians, roughly a third of them children, have been injured. 64 IDF soldiers, two Israeli civilians and one foreign national have reportedly been killed. A few dozen Israelis have been directly injured by rockets or shrapnel.

4. In the face of this devastation and loss of life, the United Nations has mobilized its every effort, including through the personal engagement of the Secretary-General, and working closely with regional and international stakeholders, to end the violence. We did not relent, despite setbacks, because the loss of civilian life was so unbearable. On two occasions, we were successful. On 17 July and on 26 July, humanitarian pauses allowed civilians a much-needed respite from the violence. The temporary ceasefire that currently prevails has granted civilians another such reprieve for the past eight days, and I would like to commend the Government of Egypt for brokering it. It is essential that the guns remain silent to allow civilians to resume the

necessities of their daily lives, and to allow for increased humanitarian and early recovery efforts, addressing the manifold needs of the people in Gaza, such as urgent repairs of water and electricity networks, and finding more viable shelter for those displaced who are not able to return to their destroyed homes.

Mr. President,

5. It remains my conviction that we must not leave Gaza in the condition it was in before this latest escalation. Otherwise, the restrictions on the Strip – on exit and entry of goods and people – will continue to fuel instability, underdevelopment and conflict, and I am afraid the next escalation will be just a matter of time.

6. As I told the General Assembly recently from Cairo, the basic equation must consist of ending the blockade on Gaza and addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. This has become even more urgent given the unprecedented amount of destruction wrought on the Strip during this latest escalation and the corresponding unprecedented level of humanitarian needs. The assessment of Gaza's reconstruction needs has not yet been completed – but there are indications that the volume of reconstruction will be about three times that needed after the so-called operation "Cast Lead" in 2009. Approximately 16,800 housing units have been destroyed or severely damaged, affecting some 100,000 Palestinians.

7. Reconstruction is the main priority, while exports and transfers are crucial to help Gaza's economy get back on its feet. Construction materials must be allowed into Gaza to this effect – aggregate, bar, and cement. And their access to Gaza must be facilitated in such a way that fulfills Israel's security concerns. The United Nations stands ready to lend its support in this regard. For years, the UN has been importing construction materials for UN projects under a mechanism, agreed with the Government of Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), that comprises robust measures to monitor the exclusively civilian use of all materials entering under that mechanism. This system has demonstrably worked, prevented diversion of materials, allowed successful implementation of crucial projects, and built trust. Reconstruction of the magnitude which is now needed can only be addressed with the involvement at scale of the Palestinian Authority and the private sector in Gaza, meaning larger quantities of materials are required to enter Gaza. We stand ready to explore with the relevant stakeholders how the UN's proven mechanism can be expanded to monitoring a PA-led, private-sector-driven reconstruction programme in Gaza.

Mr. President,

8. The engagement of the donor community will also be indispensable to help Gaza back on its feet. We support today's announcement by Norway and Egypt to co-host a donor's conference once a durable ceasefire is in place and once adequate access conditions have been established.

9. I am heartened that the Government of National Consensus is resolved to spearhead the reconstruction agenda for Gaza, as part of assuming its rightful responsibilities as the legitimate Government of Palestine, in cooperation with the United Nations and other international

partners. Last week, I met with Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Abu Amr in Gaza. I appreciate that he was able to enter Gaza via the Erez crossing. After seeing with my own eyes the massive destruction, in which whole residential neighborhoods have been flattened, I discussed with the Deputy Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers the way forward. Mr. Abu Amr assured me that the GNC is committed to addressing the urgent and daunting challenges of governance, reconstruction, and security, as part of bringing Gaza back under one legitimate Palestinian Government that adheres to the PLO commitments. I reiterate the appeal that I made last week in Gaza: I call on all in Gaza to rally behind the Government of National Consensus and empower it to take charge and effect the positive, transformative change that Gaza so badly needs. Right now, Gaza urgently needs houses, hospitals, and schools – not rockets, tunnels, and conflict. We expect Hamas, and all other factions, to act responsibly in this regard and refrain from any actions that run counter to this agenda.

Mr. President,

10. We have been extremely troubled during this escalation by breaches of the inviolability of UN premises. On three occasions, there was a direct hit on UNRWA schools that were being used at the time, with full knowledge of the parties to the hostilities, as shelters for Gazans who had fled their homes to seek safety from the fighting. A total of 38 people were killed in those three incidents, and 317 were injured. 11 UNRWA colleagues were killed in the line of duty. They, as many others, have been paying the ultimate price for their heroic effort trying to protect the most vulnerable and alleviate suffering, for which we honor their memory. An estimated 108 UNRWA installations have been damaged. On 29 July, the Gaza branch of my own office, UNSCO, in Gaza, was hit by a number of projectiles, which caused damage to the main building and to United Nations vehicles. On three occasions, rockets were found in UNRWA schools, vacant at the time. These incidents are intolerable, and they are examples of the parties' disrespect for the vital provisions of international law that safeguard UN installations and staff, and that protect civilians. The Secretary-General has called for a thorough investigation into these incidents to ensure full accountability.

11. It is not yet clear, Mr. President, what kind of ceasefire understanding will emerge from these talks, and whether it will be reached by the fast approaching deadline. That said, in any case, we believe that a sustainable solution must address the issues of governance, reconstruction, and security, all in the context of the return of one legitimate Palestinian Authority to Gaza, which will undertake institutional restructuring, including of the security sector, and which should also gradually assume the effective and exclusive control of the use of force through the deployment of Palestinian Security Forces to border crossings and throughout Gaza. None of this will be easy, but we see no other way to change the dynamics in Gaza. As needed, and in cooperation with other partners, such as the European Union, the United Nations will support the Government of National Consensus in these tasks, taking advantage of our presence on the ground. We are ready to take on this role provided that we are resourced and mandated accordingly. We also underline the importance of an international monitoring arrangement in support of ceasefire understandings. Given the implications for peace and security in the region, I trust that the Council will consider taking whatever action is needed in support of a durable ceasefire at the appropriate time.

12. The flare-up in Gaza has also been accompanied by increased tensions and violence in the West Bank. Since 23 July, demonstrations against the Israeli military operation in Gaza took place across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, almost on a daily basis, especially around checkpoints and refugee camps, often resulting in clashes with Israeli security forces. The most significant took place on 24 July during the holiest night of Ramadan when approximately 4,000-5,000 Palestinians, including some Palestinian Authority officials, marched onto Qalandiya checkpoint. In East Jerusalem, demonstrations and clashes have spread as well.

13. A total of 17 Palestinians were killed, including two children, and some 1,400 injured during this reporting period. Israeli security forces conducted almost 300 search and arrest operations, arresting 623 Palestinians. 17 Israeli security forces personnel were also injured. Settler attacks resulted in one Palestinian killed and 19 others injured. Twelve settlers were injured by Palestinians.

14. And on 4 August, on a street near the Green Line in Jerusalem, an excavator driven by a Palestinian ran over and killed an Israeli pedestrian, and then turned over a bus injuring five Israelis. The Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli police on the scene. On the same day, an unknown motorcyclist shot and injured an IDF soldier in the Mount Scopus area in Jerusalem.

Mr. President,

15. Last but not least, we must not lose sight of the bigger picture. The increasingly restive situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, together with the Gaza crisis, should be a bleak warning to all concerned what the future will bring if we do not reverse the current negative trend towards a one-state reality, which is now on the parties' doorstep. The slide toward a state of permanent conflict and hopelessness must be halted at once. The conflict and the occupation that began in 1967 must be ended. The two-state solution is the only viable scenario in this regard, and we must urgently call on and support both parties to return to meaningful negotiations towards a final status agreement in which Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security.