

## **Secretary-General's virtual briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Question of Palestine**

**24 June 2020**

I address you today with a deep sense of concern over the evolving situation in Israel and Palestine.

We are at a watershed moment.

Israel's threat to annex parts of the occupied West Bank has alarmed Palestinians, many Israelis and the broader international community.

If implemented, annexation would constitute a most serious violation of international law, grievously harm the prospect of a two-State solution and undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations.

I call on the Israeli Government to abandon its annexation plans.

The Palestinian leadership has reacted by considering itself absolved of all bilateral agreements with Israel and the United States.

Increased economic fragility as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced donor support, and the recent Palestinian decision to stop accepting clearance revenues that Israel collects on behalf of Palestinian Authority risk increasing the hardship of the Palestinian people.

As I said in February when I spoke before you and President Abbas in the Council, you have my full commitment to continue supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation, in line with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions, and bilateral agreements.

The goal is achieving the vision of two States – Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable Palestinian State – living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I will continue to consistently speak out against any unilateral steps that would undermine peace and the chances for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through meaningful negotiations.

Such actions also further hamper efforts to advance regional peace and to maintain international peace and security.

I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to commit to meaningful dialogue, with the support of the international community.

I encourage regional and international supporters of the two-State solution to help bring the parties back to a path towards a negotiated, peaceful settlement.

I call on fellow members of the Middle East Quartet to take up our mandated mediation role and find a mutually agreeable framework for the parties to re-engage, without preconditions, with us and other key States.

Leaders must act wisely and swiftly and demonstrate the will to advance the goal of a just and lasting peace.

Allow me to ask you to now give the floor to the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and my envoy, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, to brief the Council.