



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9608

th meeting

Thursday, 18 April 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Niu Xiaoqiang
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mrs. Paolini
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Buanahagi
Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Dongjoon
Russian Federation	Mr. Chumakov
Sierra Leone	Ms. Baimarro
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was resumed at 3 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. They are also kindly asked to show respect to all other speakers. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after two and a half minutes. They may submit their full statement in writing later.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Mr. Murillo Urrutia (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia is here to speak about solutions for peace and vital human security.

We thank your country, Madam President, for convening this open debate and recognize the important work that you have carried out this month as President of the Security Council.

The lack of a substantive solution to the Palestinian question is putting to the test the capabilities of the United Nations, in particular the Council's ability to fulfil its primary mandate: the maintenance of international peace and security. This cannot be an exception to international law or to the Council's authority. The Council must ensure the prompt implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) of 25 March 2024, which called for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of hostages, an expansion of humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians in Gaza.

The incessant violence that we have been witnessing in the Middle East for more than six months is unacceptable. Despite repeated calls by almost all Member States to bring an end to the attacks in the Gaza Strip and the escalating violence in the West Bank, we are facing a humanitarian disaster and a conflict that is not only persisting but that has spread. The mass destruction of infrastructure, the more than 33,000 dead, the approximately 76,000 wounded and a looming famine have made the Gaza Strip uninhabitable, disproportionately affecting women and children.

As we have stated in other international arenas, ending the violence and solving the Palestinian question require the recognition and admission of Palestine as a full Member of the Organization. Such recognition is essential to ensuring a sound legal and political framework for the Palestinian people and to thereby finding a way out of this conflict that will contribute

to peace and stability in the region. We would like to stress that the conflict can only be resolved definitively through the two-State solution. To that end, Palestine being a full-fledged Member of the Organization legitimizes and strengthens its interactions as a State and with a view to negotiations, which, as proposed by President Petro Urrego in the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session (see A/78/PV.4), could take place as part of an international peace conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): We have gathered countless times in this Chamber since 7 October 2023. We have made very strong statements, and we have unequivocally condemned the atrocities committed by Israel, which led to unspeakable destruction and an unprecedented civilian death toll. The numbers are very clear: approximately 30,000 in a short time.

Nevertheless, the Charter of the United Nations — the bedrock of international law — is still being routinely breached. Security Council resolutions are still being ignored by Israel. The question should be asked: how long will this continue? After all, United Nations officials themselves have told us that the rate of killings in Gaza is the highest in the world since the Rwandan genocide, which was commemorated a few weeks ago.

It is no wonder that today Israel is on trial before the International Court of Justice for violating the Convention on Genocide. Israel's actions and policies aimed at changing the character and status of the occupied Palestinian territories are also violations of international law. Türkiye has contributed our written and oral statements to the International Court of Justice in response to the advisory opinion request of the General Assembly.

International law is universal. It applies to all States without distinction or discrimination. No country has been given immunity from international law. Can anyone therefore explain to us why no action has been taken so far by the Council in view of brazen violations of international law and Security Council resolutions by Israel?

Various speakers before me, including the Secretary-General, vividly depicted the current scenery and scale of the catastrophe in Gaza. The simple fact that people — women and children — are dying from

hunger in Gaza as we speak should be enough to put things in perspective. The reason is that Israel not only kills civilians indiscriminately, but also prevents the entrance and distribution of sufficient humanitarian assistance in Gaza. Again, Israel has not implemented the relevant Security Council resolutions.

It is our solemn duty to remind the Security Council yet again that the maintenance of international peace and security and taking effective measures for prevention and removing threats to the peace are its number one task. The Security Council is supposed to be the voice of the international community.

Where the international community stands on this matter is pretty obvious, as summarized by the Secretary-General. The international community is looking to the Council to implement the job needed. Simply coming together for regular meetings in the Chamber to make the same points over and over again and leaving the Chamber empty handed will not solve any problems.

We need new and decisive steps. The full recognition of the State of Palestine is one of them. We all agree that the two-State vision is the sole basis for a permanent solution. One of the States, Israel, has been enjoying its statehood for decades, whereas the other State, Palestine, has been denied its inherent rights. It is the time to fix this unjust, lopsided approach.

Türkiye does not shy away from its responsibilities in the region and from doing whatever it can to contribute to ending this bloody conflict and bringing permanent peace and stability to the region. The idea of a guarantee mechanism is an example of this. It is very encouraging to see that this idea is being very well received. We will and should continue to join hands with those sharing the same objectives for a better and safer world. We are sure that this Organization would be better with the State of Palestine as a full member.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Szejna (Poland): At the outset, I would like to state that we fully subscribe to the statement to be delivered by the European Union's Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, speaking on behalf of the European Union. Now I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Poland condemns, in the strongest terms, the attacks launched by Iran on Israel. It brought the entire

Middle East, already in turmoil, to the brink of a full-scale conflict. The escalation may have devastating and long-lasting consequences. Stability and peace in the region are also paramount for maritime security and global supply chains. Poland supports Israel's right to defend itself against external attacks.

At the same time, we reiterate that self-defence must take place in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. It must not result in the suffering of innocent civilians or in the death of those who come to help them.

We cannot overlook the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the fate of the hostages or the potential military operation in Rafah. We express our grave concern regarding Israeli military activities in the vicinity of Rafah, where the civilian population is sheltering. Those civilians are at risk of being forced towards Egypt, the only direction available.

In the face of the current crisis, it is important to continue assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels. Poland will remain committed to supporting the Organization's broad-based efforts to stabilize the Middle East and deliver humanitarian assistance to the region.

We stress the need for constructive dialogue between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community, potentially opening the way for a productive partnership conducive to conflict resolution. We need to encourage and support the Palestinian Authority's return to Gaza. We also need a clear commitment from the Palestinian Authority to ensure the security of Israel.

Full cooperation between regional and global partners is essential to decrease the risk of escalation in the Middle East. The United Nations plays a crucial role in that effort. We must restore respect for international law, which is fundamental to the rule-based order and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Poland appreciated the words of solidarity and the calls for the investigation and accountability from United Nations partners after the deadly strike on World Central Kitchen volunteers. One of the fatal victims of the attack was a Polish citizen, Damian Soból, a volunteer with a long-standing commitment to humanitarian causes.

Last but not least, in the face of suffering, all conflicts are equal. The pain inflicted recognizes no

degrees. Yet, the flare-up in the Middle East diverts global focus from the ongoing war in Ukraine. This is a particularly harmful for Poland, my broader geographic region and beyond. Let us not forget that both of these developments pose a significant threat to global peace and security.

In conclusion, we remain committed to supporting the United Nations in its efforts to stabilize the Middle East and deliver humanitarian assistance to the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

Mr. Naseer (Maldives): The Maldives supports the State of Palestine in its efforts to become a full Member State of the United Nations. The Maldives also calls on the other 192 Member States of the United Nations, including the permanent members of the Security Council, to give their full, unconditional support to Palestine becoming a full Member State of the United Nations.

I wish to thank Malta, the President of the Council for the month of April, for convening this timely open debate on the situation of the Middle East.

The situation in the Middle East remains on the agenda of the Council for one reason, and one reason only — Israel continues to invade, occupy and colonize Arab lands in the region, in violation of international law, defying international norms and challenging the basic principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Today Israel is waging a genocide and a gruesome war against Palestine, in which Israel has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians and wounded more than 76,000 people.

Still, the Council is unable and unwilling to stop Israel. The Charter requires the Council to take punitive action against those that violate its resolutions. It is therefore time that the Council imposed sanctions, including an arms embargo, on Israel. The application of Palestine, seeking full membership of the United Nations, provides yet another opportunity for the Council to be on the right side of history. Palestine has the support of more than 140 Member States. That is well beyond the majority required by the General Assembly to admit a new United Nations member. Yet, as was the case when the application was initially submitted, in 2011 (see S/PV.6484), it rests in the hands of the Council.

The Council has failed the people of Palestine time and time again. Over the past five months, it failed them each time a veto was cast, thus preventing a ceasefire in Gaza. It failed them each time the Council failed to enforce its resolutions, resulting in the loss of countless more lives. The Palestinian people have been subjected to horrors that no people should have to endure. They are still suffering from Israel's impunity and genocidal aggression. They are still being deprived of humanitarian assistance and their basic human rights.

The starting point for an enduring solution to the situation in the Middle East is the granting of full United Nations membership to the State of Palestine. That is the basic ingredient of the two-State solution. After that, the immediate next step is for Israel to recognize and respect the sovereignty and independence of Palestine on the lands that Israel has occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. At the same time, Israel must immediately and unconditionally withdraw from the Arab and Palestinian lands it has occupied. It must allow the safe return and the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forcefully driven out of their homes since 1948.

The Council has before it a once-in-a-generation opportunity to be on the side of justice and to say yes to the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and to say no to Israel's racism, apartheid and occupation, which means saying no to illegal settlements and expansion, saying yes to Palestine's full membership of the United Nations and saying yes to Palestine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. I call on the members of the Council to say yes to Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Koopmans.

Mr. Koopmans: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

The European Union sees the urgent need for a sovereign, secure and peaceful State of Palestine, alongside a sovereign, secure and peaceful State of Israel, and is ready to contribute to that goal. I will today propose a novel, untried way to get closer to that goal, but let us first focus on the immediate horrendous crises.

Our first priority must be to end the suffering in and around Gaza. The unfathomable killing of thousands of children and other civilians; the despicable

hostage-holding that started with Hamas's terror attacks of 7 October; and the man-made famine that Israel must decide to halt. We reiterate the need to implement resolution 2728 (2024), including through reaching an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the full and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance at scale.

Resolution 2728 (2024) must be implemented immediately, as must the orders of the International Court of Justice. The European Union has recognized the right of Israel to defend itself in line with international humanitarian law. We strongly urge Israel not to undertake a ground operation in Rafah. Gaza in its entirety needs to be returned to the rule of the Palestinian Authority and be part of the future free State of Palestine.

Our second priority must be to avoid a regional war, which can arise from the worsening occupation and terrorism in the West Bank, the deliberate weakening of the Palestinian Authority, and the aggression that we have repeatedly condemned among Hizbullah, Iran and Israel, including the unprecedented attacks on Israel of last weekend, which we have roundly condemned, as well as the preceding attack in Damascus, and the attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea. We launched maritime Operation Aspidos to protect shipping in the Red Sea. We urge all to implement the Council's resolutions and to de-escalate.

Our third priority must be comprehensive regional peace. Last September we, the European Union, joined with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the League of Arab States to launch the Peace Day Effort. Today we call for a peace conference. But for such a conference to succeed, there must first be a ceasefire and secondly a preparatory meeting among those willing to contribute to peace to help to reverse engineer the solution. Let me explain briefly.

The parties are not all ready to make peace. But the more their friends and partners prepare for their peace, the more we can help them to move towards it. We — all of us — should spell out what we can contribute. How can we all help to ensure Israel's security? What can we contribute to a stable State of Palestine? How can both be integrated in the region politically, economically and in cooperation on security, water, energy and climate change? What can regional normalization for both Israel and Palestine mean in practice? Those questions all of us, as contributors to peace, can start to address

today, even when one or more of the parties are not ready. We do not need another uncertain road map. We need to reverse engineer the peace by starting at the end, practically elaborating the day of peace.

To that end, I call for the organization of a preparatory peace conference soon after a ceasefire. Let us — we the contributors — start to map out our support if and when there is a two-State solution. Let us also reiterate the well-known, self-evident framework for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and let us then invite the parties separately to tell us what they need from us to accompany their peace. And let us be clear about the consequences we will attach to engagement or non-engagement with such a global initiative.

It is not just the Israelis and the Palestinians, and it is not just the members of the Council, but all of us who have a responsibility to prepare for peace. We owe it to those killed, those taken hostage and those now dying of famine to try this new approach to reach peace.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Zaki.

Mr. Zaki (*spoke in Arabic*): After a six-month wait, the Security Council took action and adopted resolution 2728 (2024) calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for the entry of humanitarian assistance through all land crossings. The steadfast people of Gaza are still waiting for the implementation of the Council's resolution, and the occupying Power continues to tamper with and reject the will of the Council as it continues its brutal war to destroy people and objects in Gaza. What does the Council intend to do?

The continuation of that war will inevitably lead to the expansion of the conflict and the entry of other parties into the arena in a way that will become difficult to control. That is something we have been warning about since the beginning of the war.

The urgent goal of a ceasefire in Gaza, relief for its population living on the brink of famine and the immediate return of the displaced to their towns and homes must not distract attention from the fact that renewed confrontations and the future outbreak of violence will remain a strong possibility if a clear mechanism is not reached to settle the Palestinian question under which the two-State solution is implemented.

Many paths and endeavours have been tried over the past three decades to achieve that settlement but have always encountered a major impediment, namely,

the insistence of Israel on continuing its occupation of Palestinian lands. That occupation has taken even more brutal and extreme forms, to the point that the occupying Government has turned into a Government of settlers and extremists working to protect the brutality of settler groups in the West Bank against the Palestinian population and even publicly declaring at all levels of its leadership that there will be no two-State solution, enacting laws for that purpose and trying to convince international Powers to adopt the Government's logic.

Today the international community, with its active will represented in the Council, is called upon more than ever to act, because the alternative is the acceptance of such a shameful and disgraceful reality and the possibility of renewed violence, murder and the widening of the conflict, as we have seen a few days ago.

Therefore, we hope that the Council sees the situation for what it is: the Israeli occupation will not voluntarily give up territory and control. Rather, it is growing more extreme and racist over time, to the extent that it no longer hides its goals of gaining control of all the land from the river to the sea and establishing an apartheid State while the international community looks on. All that is the result of the existing silence and the slow pace of adopting an international resolution to put a stop to the crimes of genocide that Israel perpetrated — and continues to perpetrate — in its illegal war against Palestinian civilians.

As a representative of the League of Arab States, I inform the Council that the Palestinian people have proven their full eligibility for establishing their independent State and to be a full Member of the United Nations. We consider that Palestine has fully met the specifications of a State, as noted by the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. Therefore, any talk of postponing what must become a reality offends the aspirations for Palestinian independence and belittles the legitimate rights of a people with a glorious civilization who seek only to achieve independence and freedom. After being sacrificed in a game of nations for over eight decades, the Palestinian people are today the only people in the world subjected to the ugliest forms of arrogant military occupation.

We would like to remind members that, after the General Assembly adopted the famous resolution on partitioning Mandatory Palestine — resolution 181

(II) — the Security Council recommended to the General Assembly that Israel be given full membership in the United Nations in Council resolution 69 (1949), of 4 March 1949. Why are some actors now trying to obstruct the implementation of the second part of resolution 181 (II), using flimsy excuses while trying to tie the international community's hands in the matter?

We consider that the Council must shoulder its full responsibility in that regard, and it must not once again be the source of disappointment for the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for independence and for membership in the United Nations as a full Member, something granted to many other peoples who have gained such membership, especially recently. Moreover, giving Palestine full membership means that any further negotiation between it and the occupying Power would be done on an equal footing from a legal perspective, and would stop the occupying Power from preventing a State from being established and internationally recognized.

The League of Arab States recommends that the Council recognize the State of Palestine and grant it membership in this international Organization as a path towards peace — and not as an obstacle on that path, as said by those who support the mindset and narrative of the occupation.

The active efforts to discredit the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to question its impartiality and professionalism are an attempt to cut off its funding and convince countries to stop making contributions to its budget. We completely reject those efforts and look forward to the day when Palestinians will no longer need UNRWA's services, when they receive their sought-after independence. The Agency, which was established by a United Nations resolution, must be allowed to continue its services, providing relief aid and works to millions of Palestinian refugees.

In conclusion, the continued crime in Gaza constitutes an assault on the moral and legal principles of the international order. Remaining silent about that crime will undermine the legitimacy of that order and the credibility of the Council. We hope that the Council will implement its resolutions, because it is important to maintain its credibility, with Arabs and all peoples who oppose injustice and support the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including the right to live a dignified life free from the bloody grasp of the occupation.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Kamel.

Mr. Kamel: I wish to thank you and Malta for the opportunity afforded to the Union for the Mediterranean to address the Security Council on this very important matter.

As members know, the Union for the Mediterranean came about as a result of the revival of the Barcelona process, which was launched 30 years ago based on the hope brought about by the Oslo Accords, with a promise of shared peace, stability and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region, a promise that could be attained only through a solid peace built solely and exclusively on the two-State solution. Unfortunately, that is also the same promise that we collectively have failed to achieve.

Referring to what the Secretary-General said this morning on the scale of the catastrophic situation in Gaza, he mentioned that civilians in Gaza are suffering widespread starvation; he stressed the need for a quantum leap in humanitarian aid in Gaza; and he recalled resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire during Ramadan, leading to a lasting ceasefire, and the release of all hostages.

On 27 November 2023, Union for the Mediterranean Foreign Ministers met in Barcelona to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Union's co-Chairs issued a joint communiqué that identified points of convergence during the meeting, which are: Union for the Mediterranean member States expressed grave concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza; stressed the need and obligation to protect civilians and to respect international humanitarian law by all and at all times and condemned indiscriminate killing and targeting of civilians; stressed their rejection of any displacement of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank, as well as the internal displacement of Palestinians inside Gaza; reaffirmed the collective responsibility to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue on the basis of the two-State solution, and emphasized their commitment to working together to realize the two-State solution to ensure freedom and dignity for Palestinians, sustainable security for Israelis and lasting peace and stability for the entire region; and called for implementing the two-State solution with clear time lines and agreed implementation mechanisms, with two sovereign and secure States, Palestine and Israel, living side-by-side

in peace and mutual recognition on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines.

More than 30 years ago, we made a promise to our citizens. It is time to deliver on it. Israel and Palestine are founding members of the Union for the Mediterranean, and we believe that we can be a keystone in shaping a new vision for the future of the region. War and vengeance can lead only to more brutality. The only way to ensure security for both Israelis and Palestinians is to collectively exert the necessary pressure to stop the conflagration, and to stop it now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on Malta's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We express to you our sincere thanks and appreciation for the genuine and tireless efforts that you have made throughout your presidency, which undoubtedly reflect your great appreciation and responsibility in holding the presidency of the Council. We also thank you for holding this historic meeting, which is being held amid extremely complex and sensitive circumstances that require the solidarity and cooperation of the entire world to put an end to them.

The delegation of Algeria, as the representative of the Group of Arab States in the Security Council, has thankfully submitted a draft resolution (S/2024/312) that has been long-awaited by Arab and Islamic peoples and by peoples who love justice and peace. That draft resolution recommends granting the State of Palestine full membership in United Nations. That is a legitimate demand that embodies the right of the Palestinian people, who have suffered decades of injustice, oppression and marginalization as a result of a number of coercive and discriminatory measures against them, including depriving them of their right to self-determination and independence.

The Arab Group's actions complement the efforts made by the Palestinian Authority, in coordination with the groups of countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I must also thank those States that intend to vote in favour of justice and of the Palestinian people's rights. I would like to say to them that they are

taking an honourable stance that reflects the nobility of their values and the greatness of their humanity. The Palestinian people and the Arab, Islamic and other peace-loving peoples will not forget their historic stance. Those peoples will not forget those who will vote against the draft resolution, because in doing so they are depriving the Palestinian people of their legitimate right to full membership and standing with the Israeli occupying Power, which rejects the two-State solution altogether and continues to practice the harshest punitive measures against the Palestinian people.

More than 140 countries—an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the Organization — have recognized the State of Palestine, and there are other countries that will join this process and are now in the final stages leading to their decision to recognize the State of Palestine. That recognition is in line with what is stipulated in most of the resolutions of the Council, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016), along with General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (II), all of which stipulated the imposition of the two-State solution and the Palestinian people's attainment of their dignity, sovereignty and the independence of their State.

This will not be the last of our attempts as an Arab Group, as we will continue to knock on the doors of the Council again and again, demanding the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, because we are fully convinced that Palestine's attainment of full membership in the Organization is an important step on the road to achieving peace and stability in the region.

More than 190 days have now passed since the aggression against the Gaza Strip began, and we are all still witnessing the Israeli war machine targeting civilians in the Strip and practicing the most extreme forms of collective punishment, such as displacement, starvation and siege. That is happening amid shameful international hesitation, which encourages the occupation forces to carry on their inhumane practices. Those occupation forces even declare their intentions of launching a ground attack on the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip — the last refuge for the people of Gaza — in flagrant violation of resolution 2728 (2024) and other relevant resolutions. The Security Council has been unable to perform the role it was established to play because some of its members have been held hostage to political calculations and narrow interests

that have prevented the Council from playing its role of maintaining international peace and security.

Therefore, the Arab Group reiterates its call upon the Council to adopt a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations that guarantees that Israel, the occupying Power, complies with a ceasefire, permits the entry of humanitarian assistance, halts the brutal aggression against the Palestinian people and provides them with protection. The Arab Group stresses the importance of compelling the occupying State to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and to abide by international law, international humanitarian law and the two orders recently issued by the International Court of Justice on the issue of genocide perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people.

The Arab Group affirms that it will continue its actions at all levels and in all international forums to assist in establishing peace and security in the region. The Group will continue its efforts to compel the occupation State of Israel to establish an immediate and lasting ceasefire and to allow the unhindered passage of humanitarian aid. In that context, the Arab Group commends the efforts of the State of Qatar and the Arab Republic of Egypt to reach a humanitarian truce to alleviate the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip, release prisoners, protesters and detainees from both sides and allow the entry of a larger number of humanitarian convoys and humanitarian aid. The Group expresses the hope that those efforts will contribute to establishing a ceasefire, ending the siege and alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on Council members to support the draft resolution, which will contribute to achieving peace and stability in the region and is consistent with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The President: While I recognize the importance that is attached to this meeting, I have to ask every speaker to please respect the three-minute limit for statements because we really do have a long list, and we are not going to be able to get through many speakers today if we continue at this rate.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Madam President, for your efforts regarding the request that Palestine be admitted to the United

Nations as a full Member State. I would also thank sisterly Algeria for its initiative to put the draft resolution (S/2024/312) to the vote, in addition to all those delegations that intend to vote in favour of it, thereby supporting and recognizing the inherent right of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian people as equivalent to that of all other States and peoples. The Palestinian demand is simple — equality in rights and legal status for all human beings, and equality of the Palestinian human being with his Israeli counterpart. That is undoubtedly what is just and what is right.

Israel's illegal and criminal war on the Gaza Strip has continued for more than six months, claiming more than 32,000 martyrs and injuring 75,000 people. More than 175 United Nations staff members have been killed. Israel's continued disdain for, and disregard of, the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, as well as the decisions of the International Court of Justice, puts the credibility of the Organization and of the entire international peace and security system at stake. Their inability to stop this vicious war is a failure that is almost impossible to explain to all conscientious people, whether Arab, Islamic or any other peace-loving people. What has led us to this miserable impasse in the Middle East region is the neglect by some of logic, the rules of justice, the application of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate aims of our demands, foremost among them the demand for a ceasefire.

The Middle East has reached the brink, if we have not already passed it, because of the escalation of hostile behaviour by Israel, stemming from its belief that it is beyond accountability and above the law. It is launching attack after attack on neighbouring countries, and even on diplomatic premises, in flagrant violation of international law concerning the inviolability of diplomatic premises and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, leading to a vicious cycle difficult to keep from spilling over into military escalation in the region. Everyone will lose, and nothing good will come of it.

Egypt stresses its rejection of Israeli efforts to trigger regional escalation in the Middle East and open new war fronts to distract international public opinion from the brutal war it is waging in Gaza, and the terrible human tragedy that has resulted from it. Egypt also condemns the Israeli attacks against Lebanon and Syria. Israel is not the policeman of the region, and

neither is it entitled to, or justified in, its aggression against others under any pretext. Egypt warns that tolerating Israel's continued attacks on neighbouring countries will gradually plunge the Middle East into a catastrophic spiral. We will all pay a high price — in the Middle East and in the whole world. Perhaps the Secretary-General's warning in the Security Council on 14 April (see S/PV.9602) that neither the region nor the world can afford more war will sound the alarm to wake up before it is too late. Egypt therefore appeals to all parties to exercise maximum restraint and responsibility and to desist from resorting to force to resolve disputes.

There will be no peace, security and stability in the region without resolving the Palestinian question. It is therefore important to focus primarily on immediately stopping the war on Gaza and providing assistance pursuant to resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024). There is no greater priority, and we state clearly before the Council that we will not allow or tolerate any attempt by Israel to take advantage of the current circumstances in the region or to use flimsy excuses to attack Rafah or expand the scope of its military operations in Gaza.

Egypt has always been in favour of peace and working towards promoting it despite all obstacles. Notwithstanding the obstinacy it is facing, Egypt will continue its mediation efforts in cooperation with Qatar and the United States to bring an end to the war and ensure humanitarian access and the release of Palestinian detainees and Israeli hostages. In that context, Egypt once again calls upon the Security Council to adopt a draft resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and obliging Israel to open all border crossings around Gaza and to allow access to aid, which is still tied up despite Israel's repeated claims that it has allowed the aid to enter and has opened the crossing points. It must support the establishment of a mechanism for the entry of humanitarian aid under the supervision of Sigrid Kaag and according to resolution 2720 (2023). Israel must stop the forced eviction, whether inside Gaza or to neighbouring States. We also ask the Council to adopt a draft resolution that would prevent the export of weapons to Israel pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions. It must also hold Israel accountable for its crimes and oblige it to pay reparations.

Egypt calls on the members of the Council to support the State of Palestine's request for full membership. It is a State that has fulfilled all requirements. It has historic borders that were recognized by General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 on the partition of Palestine, whose land was occupied by Israel in June 1967 and has permanent residents in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem and an active and effective Government. Palestine maintains diplomatic ties with many countries around the world. It is a State recognized by 140 States Member in the United Nations, and it has acceded to a large number of international multilateral conventions. Moreover, Palestine is a member of many international organizations, such as UNESCO, and fulfils all the practical requirements under the concept of a State, as well as those set out in Article 4 of the Charter in a manner that qualifies it to join the United Nations just like any other State.

General Assembly resolution 67/19, which discussed Palestine's status in the United Nations in 2012, expressed the hope that the Council would positively consider Palestine's request for full membership in the United Nations. Egypt therefore calls on the members of the Council to consider that request and the implementation of United Nations resolutions, which have, for decades, demanded the fulfilment of Palestinian people's right to self-determination. That comes under the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the equality of all people. That membership would be a positive push for the peace process and negotiations on the implementation of the two-State solution, with the State of Palestine and the State of Israel both being equal, with sovereignty rights and membership in the United Nations.

In conclusion, the Middle East will not see any stability without resolving the Palestinian question and the establishment of the independent Palestinian State based on the 4 June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is the only just and comprehensive solution to the most serious crisis in our contemporary history. We must all implement that solution, as there is no alternative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank you, Madam President, and congratulate your friendly country on its presidency of the Security Council, and we commend your wise leadership of

the Council's work. We also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta at today's morning meeting. And we thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

We align ourselves with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The alarming developments in our region over the past few days prove the validity of what the State of Qatar has repeatedly warned about, which is, the expansion of the scope of violence if bloodshed in the Gaza Strip does not come to an end. In the light of those developments, the State of Qatar reiterates its call on all parties to de-escalate and to exercise maximum restraint, and it calls on the international community to act immediately to diffuse the tensions and prevent the region from spiralling into new conflicts.

The situation in the Gaza Strip constitutes an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, and the State of Qatar reiterates its condemnation of all forms of targeting civilians and civilian objects and all practices by the Israeli occupying authority regarding its collective punishment policy and the withholding of food, medicine and basic services. We reject using starvation as a weapon and attempts at the forced displacement of people. We warn against the humanitarian and security repercussions of such acts. The State of Qatar rejects any military operation by the occupation forces in the city of Rafah. Such a situation requires full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. All measures must be taken to put an end to the humanitarian disaster and prevent famine. That requires the delivery of humanitarian aid at large scale immediately and in a safe and unhindered manner. Humanitarian actors have stressed that the only way to achieve that is through an immediate ceasefire.

We once again welcome resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip leading to a sustainable ceasefire. That has been the aim of the State of Qatar's diplomatic efforts. We reiterate that the resolution should be binding under the Charter of the United Nations. The international community and the Council bear the responsibility of implementing international law without double standards. We also stress that the orders of the International Court of Justice, which relate to Israel taking effective measures

to prevent genocide in Gaza and ensure the delivery of necessary aid, should be implemented.

In its resolution 2728 (2024), the Council recognizes the continued diplomatic efforts of the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States. My country attaches great importance to those efforts, which have achieved tangible results in alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the people in Gaza and the hostages on both sides. My country will not shy away from continuing its efforts to facilitate negotiations in order to ensure the release of the hostages, the delivery of sufficient international humanitarian aid and the establishment of a lasting ceasefire. We reiterate the need to put an end to the continued escalation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The occupation authorities must stop their crimes, their violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and the seizure of their land, as well as the expansion of illegal settlements. They must also uphold the historical and legal status of Jerusalem, with its Muslim and Christian holy sites.

The State of Qatar condemns Israel's systematic targeting of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and reiterates that sufficient funding should be provided to the Agency. The State of Qatar has therefore increased its funding for UNRWA by \$25 million, in addition to previous contributions. My country has continued to fully support the brotherly Palestinian people by sending thousands of tons of urgent aid to date through the El Arish airport on 92 planes, in addition to the evacuation of 22 groups of Palestinian injured people to receive treatment in Doha, including dispatching Qatari medical teams to treat the injured in El Arish.

The only guarantee for achieving sustainable peace is a lasting ceasefire that leads to meaningful talks and a political process resulting in a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement of the Palestinian question in line with resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and a two-State solution that ensures the establishment of an independent sovereign State of Palestine along the borders of 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and with the brotherly Palestinian people enjoying all their inalienable rights and the enjoyment by the State of Palestine of its status as a full Member of the United Nations. In that regard, the State of Qatar supports the draft resolution submitted by Algeria (S/2024/312), the Arab member of the Council, which recommends the acceptance of the State of Palestine as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations and

calls on all Council members to support that legitimate request, which constitutes an important step that promotes the two-State solution and the settlement of the Palestinian question.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. El-Sonni (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Algeria, the Arab representative on the Security Council, and by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State is a natural, historical and legal right of the Palestinian people. It is a right guaranteed by international law and international humanitarian law. The recognition of the international community, represented by the United Nations, of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a position enshrined in multiple resolutions that I do not need to enumerate now. Those in doubt can go back to the list of relevant resolutions, starting with resolution 181 (II) of 1947. The State of Palestine also fulfils all the conditions stipulated by the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.

The Palestinian people have continuously lived on their land. The United Nations has repeatedly recognized their right to self-determination in all its resolutions, as did the International Court of Justice in 2004. The State of Palestine also fulfils the membership conditions of the United Nations. It is committed to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and has both the ability and willingness to abide by its obligations. Most importantly, Palestine is a peace-loving State, contrary to what the buffoon representative of the Israeli entity tried to promote today in a desperate attempt to fool everyone that the resistance to occupation by the Palestinian people amounts to terrorism.

As usual, that buffoon also described the Council and the United Nations Organization as multilateral supporters of terrorism. In doing so, he ignored the fact that it is this same Council that granted the Israeli entity full membership in the Organization in 1948. But I and many others consider it to be only a pro forma membership, as it lacks a moral component, given the atrocities that the entity has committed for seven decades, during which the Palestinian people have

been patient and suffered all forms of oppression and injustice and have explored all avenues of peace. The Palestinian people are a peace-loving people. If that buffoon, the representative of the Israeli entity, does not recognize the Organization, then he must withdraw from it. Why does he address us and participate in meetings if he does not recognize the Organization and if we support terrorism?

Draft resolution S/2024/312, submitted today by the State of Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, on granting Palestine full membership in the United Nations, comes at a time when 140 States around the world have recognized the State of Palestine, that is nearly 75 per cent of the peoples of the world. Nevertheless, some are still talking about the importance of reviving the peace process and the peaceful settlement of the crisis on the basis of the so-called two-State solution. What is the reason behind that contradiction and why are they insisting on hindering the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations? Is not that a requirement for the peace process?

Libya will remain steadfast in its support of the just cause of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, to the return of the refugees and to the establishment of their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

For those who are still trying to distort the truth, I reiterate what we have repeatedly said: one cannot limit the current crisis to 7 October, and one cannot forget the violations and massacres committed for more than seven decades in all of the occupied territories, as if the usurpation of the territories in 1948 and the displacement of the people from their land were not the real cause of the current conflict. Those actions were followed by the expansion of settlements, blockade, humiliation and displacement.

Libya will therefore not tolerate the condemnation of the resistance of the Palestinian people or their characterization as terrorists. Nor will we accept the existing silence or any justification for the terrorism committed by the occupation forces and its extreme right under the pretext of self-defence. What self-defence and against whom? Is it against those whose territories were usurped and occupied? On top of that, the occupier plays the victim even as he is the executioner. How can the colonizer and the occupier be the victim? Who among us has achieved freedom

and independence from a colonizer without resistance, especially when an impasse has been reached and there are no peaceful solutions or justice?

We have all been hearing and seeing the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The scenes have unmasked many people and uncovered the fake slogans of human rights. The Council was unable to implement its recent resolution 2728 (2024), calling for a ceasefire. We therefore associate ourselves with the Arab Group in its call to implement Chapter VII of the Charter, impose a ceasefire and immediately deliver humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, we know that this will not happen because we are living in an era of double standards.

In conclusion, I would like to address our people in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip, and to tell them that Libya stands with them. Whatever we do today is the least we can do to honour their sacrifices. It is our attempt to wake up those who are in deep sleep. Like them, we have lost our trust in the international community, but they can rest assured that the Libyan people and all the free peoples of the world will not give up on them in their struggle. We will stand by them and support their right to resistance and to self-determination. The countries of the world have to prove today that the human conscience is still alive and that they will confront this aggression and blatant injustice against Palestine and humankind as a whole. They have to firmly support the granting of full membership to the State of Palestine. That is not a goal in itself, and it is not charity or pity. It is an inherent right and a first step to recover all the just rights of the steadfast heroic Palestinian people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein continues to be extremely worried about the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip and the increasing escalation and instability in the wider region. We are deeply concerned about the large-scale loss of civilian life, in particular the shocking number of children killed, the massive displacement of the civilian population, as well as the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation and acute food insecurity visited on the people of Gaza.

Three months on from the previous open debate on this topic (see S/PV.9534), Liechtenstein was pleased to see the Council adopt resolution 2728 (2024), which addressed the ongoing protection-of-civilians crisis

in Gaza by demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, many months after similar calls by the General Assembly. We commend, in particular, the 10 elected members of the Security Council on their crucial role leading up to the successful adoption of resolution 2728 (2024). However, we deplore that the holy month of Ramadan has now ended without its implementation.

We were also disturbed to witness a counterproductive and unfounded suggestion that resolution 2728 (2024) might not be legally binding. We simply wish to quote the text of Article 25 of the United Nations Charter, that:

“(t)he Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter.”

If there is any doubt, especially in the minds of Council members, that this is an unequivocal statement on the legally binding nature of Council decisions, there is little reason left to aim for Council action.

Further action by the Security Council to protect civilians and to bring about an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian ceasefire is urgently needed. Such a ceasefire is crucial to ensure unhindered and sustained humanitarian access, as well as to enable the release of all hostages. In that regard, we call upon all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, including by granting immediate, full and unhindered access to humanitarian organizations. And we condemn again, in the strongest possible terms, the heinous 7 October terrorist attacks by Hamas and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Instability in the wider region is closer than ever to spilling over into active hostilities. Liechtenstein condemns the Israeli air strike against the Iranian Consulate in Damascus at the beginning of this month. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the drone and missile attacks by Iran against Israel last weekend. Liechtenstein calls on all parties to exercise utmost restraint. In all circumstances any use of force must strictly comply with international law, including Articles 2 and 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and all parties must strictly comply with international law at all times. Diplomatic buildings must not be targeted, and civilians and civilian infrastructure must in all situations be protected. De-escalation remains of the highest priority, and we welcome any statements

and concrete actions to end the cycle of violence in the region.

Liechtenstein is committed to the rule of law at the international level and supports the role of the International Court of Justice in the settlement of disputes, including under the Genocide Convention. Liechtenstein is following the ongoing proceedings in the case brought by South Africa against Israel closely, including the consideration of provisional measures, and emphasizes the importance of compliance with any measures ordered by the Court.

In conclusion, Liechtenstein reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its strong support for a two-State solution as the only way to bring a peaceful, stable and sustainable solution for the region. Liechtenstein is of the view that Palestine fulfils the basic criteria for statehood under international law. In that regard, we also note the renewal of Palestine’s application for full United Nations membership.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Lagdameo (Philippines): First, allow me to express our sincere gratitude to Malta for organizing this crucial debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We commend Malta’s leadership and commitment to fostering dialogue on this pressing issue.

The Philippines expresses its serious concern over the increasing tensions between Israel and Iran. We urge all parties to refrain from escalating the situation and to work towards a peaceful resolution of their conflict.

The Philippines has long advocated for all States to adhere to the principles of international law and to the peaceful settlement of disputes. In line with our commitment to peace and stability in the region, the Philippines reaffirms its support for a two-State solution. We believe that Israelis and Palestinians deserve a common future in which their rights, aspirations and security are upheld. We thus urge all parties to refrain from unilateral actions that undermine the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and endanger the life and livelihood of citizens and migrants alike.

The dire situation in Gaza demands immediate attention. With over 90 per cent of the population facing food insecurity and critical shortages of electricity and water, the suffering of innocent civilians is intolerable. The scale of the displacement and the destruction of

homes and schools is alarming, threatening the future of an entire generation. We stand in solidarity with the affected communities and emphasize the imperative of providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to alleviate their plight.

We call for the protection and safety of civilian seafarers passing through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aden and other contiguous areas, not only to ensure a free flow of commerce but also to safeguard innocent lives.

Protecting the rights and welfare of seafarers is a key priority for the Philippine Government. In that regard, we seek the support of the international community in sparing no efforts to have them released and returned home as soon as possible.

We reiterate the belief that the interrelated conflicts in the region should be resolved through diplomacy and adherence to international law, leading to free and unimpeded commerce and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

The Philippines welcomes and recognizes the paramount significance of resolution 2728 (2024), which addresses the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The ongoing humanitarian crisis demands swift and unified action from the international community. In that regard, we urge all parties to fully implement resolution 2728 (2024) without delay in order to alleviate the suffering of innocent civilians caught in the crossfire.

To date, the situation in Gaza remains dire. Tens of thousands have died and millions are displaced. The Philippines is one with the international community in calling for a lasting, sustainable ceasefire, the safe release of all hostages and the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

Furthermore, we reiterate our firm support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and urge the international community to provide sufficient and predictable funding to ensure the continuity of its vital humanitarian work and development work, including on education.

The enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a pivotal determinant for peace and stability in the Middle East. Recent exchanges between Iran and Israel further exacerbate the tension and threaten to accelerate the spiral of violence in the region.

The Philippines ardently urges all parties to elevate dialogue as the primary tool for a peaceful and lasting resolution. We strongly advocate the prevailing of diplomacy in resolving differences. The Philippines stands ready to support efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

More than ever, the Philippines emphasizes the importance of upholding the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions as the foundation for a just and peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts to promote dialogue, de-escalate tensions and work towards a future of peaceful coexistence of the populations of Israel and Palestine for the peace, stability and prosperity of the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): We would like to thank Malta for convening this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East and for providing all United Nations Member States an opportunity to address the Council on developments in the region.

South Africa aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Republic of Uganda on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

It has been six months since the current war in Gaza began on 7 October last year. Almost 34,000 people have been killed of which almost 14,000 have been children. Thousands have been displaced and are at risk of famine.

Developments in the Middle East following the retaliatory action by the Islamic Republic of Iran against Israel, following Israel's attack on Iran's Embassy in Damascus, are of grave concern to South Africa. Clearly there is a very real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation. All parties must exercise the utmost restraint and avoid any act that would escalate tensions in particular in that fragile region.

South Africa has continuously stressed that, irrespective of whether States believe that their use of force is lawful, it is never wise to resort to war as inevitably it is ordinary people who bear the brunt of the conflict. The international community, and the United Nations Security Council in particular, must act in the pursuit of sustainable and just peace for all people.

The Security Council, as an organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, has convened numerous debates and has adopted several presidential statements and resolutions on matters pertaining to the protection of civilians. For example, resolution 2417 (2018) calls on all parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. It underlines the importance of safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflicts. It strongly condemns the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and strongly condemns the unlawful denial of humanitarian access, of depriving civilians of objects that are indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supply and access for responses to conflict-induced food insecurity.

It is not enough for us to sit, debate and agree on paper, but fail to act when we face the real-life manifestations of what Council members are committed to preventing and the other outcomes of those horrendous actions. The Security Council must take concrete steps to prevent massive humanitarian suffering, pursuant to its own commitments. Otherwise, why bother adopting statements and resolutions that would become meaningless if they are ignored?

Nothing can justify the deliberate killing and injuring of civilians and the use of famine against hopeless and traumatized civilians. There is no doubt that the entire population of Gaza is enduring destruction at a scale and speed without parallel in recent history. Nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the ongoing historic injustice, with decades of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, continues to pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

It has been three weeks since the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demands an immediate ceasefire. However, Israel continues its devastating attacks on the Palestinian people. The proliferation of global conflict will continue if we, as the international community, do not commit ourselves to an end to war and the establishment of conditions under which justice and respect for international law are maintained.

As Palestine pursues its right to seek membership of the United Nations, the international community must avoid any retributive actions that could stifle the very existence of the State of Palestine. South Africa

believes that the right of the Palestinian people to their own fully independent State must be recognized by all, and their aspiration for membership of the United Nations should be supported.

In conclusion, acknowledging the legitimate concerns of all parties involved is a crucial step towards fostering stability and harmony in diversity. And let us remind ourselves that the central issue in the Middle East is the materialization of a two-State solution, whereby Israel and Palestine can live together, side by side, in peace and security, as two independent and sovereign States.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Shatil (Bangladesh): We commend the Maltese presidency Malta for successfully steering the work of the Council in April 2024, and especially for convening this high-level open debate. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Uganda and Mauritania, respectively, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

In the past six months, we have been making repeated urgent calls, in the Council and in the General Assembly, for an immediate ceasefire to save innocent civilian lives in Gaza. However, the reality continues to be absolutely frustrating, and it is unacceptable that the death toll is rising; people are dying in front of us, and we are here every time, reporting the rising number, which has passed 34,000 now. Even though three weeks ago the Council was finally able to adopt resolution 2728 (2024), calling for an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan and leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, nothing has changed on the ground. Attacks against and the killing of innocent civilians by Israel have continued. We are also now being told that Security Council resolutions are not binding.

We are witnessing the continued, unabated and planned killings of civilians, unprecedented killings of United Nations staff and humanitarian workers, the destruction of hospitals and shelters, forced starvation and the blocking of humanitarian assistance, while millions of people are in dire need of emergency life-saving assistance. Unfortunately, the killing of civilians has not been stopped and life-saving assistance

has not been delivered. The prospect of a negotiated ceasefire, despite repeated hopes, still remains elusive. Apart from the ongoing unhindered carnage in Gaza, we are also witnessing increasing violence by Israeli forces and settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Now the question is: what else can we do on the multilateral level to stop the indiscriminate attacks against and killing of civilians, which are tantamount to genocide and crimes against humanity? The calls of the Council are ignored and disregarded. And not only decisions of the Council, but those of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the International Court of Justice are all being blatantly disregarded by Israel and its allies.

We commend Malta, as the current President of the Council, for calling upon the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to expeditiously complete the ongoing investigation, which we fully support and echo. Bangladesh, in line with its strong values-based position against mass atrocity crimes, was one of the five Member States that referred the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories to the International Criminal Court in November 2023. We are also deeply concerned that Israel is not following the directives of the International Court of Justice. Today we call upon all Member States of the United Nations to abide by the recent Human Rights Council resolution calling for, among other things, the cessation of arms transfers to the occupying Power (Human Rights Council resolution 55/28).

We do not know what is actually preventing the Council from accepting the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations while the overwhelming majority in the General Assembly voted for it and almost all Members support the two-State solution. We strongly urge the Committee on the Admission of New Members to recommend admission of the State of Palestine as a State Member of the United Nations. We call upon all members of the Council to unanimously support the draft resolution (S/2024/312) approving Palestine's full membership in the United Nations. Please note that there is overwhelming support in the General Assembly in favour of the full membership of the State of Palestine.

Bangladesh strongly condemns the attack of 1 April 2024 on the Consulate building of the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, Syria. Bangladesh stresses that the principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and

consular premises and personnel must be respected in all cases. We are also deeply concerned about the current developments and serious escalation between Iran and Israel, which threatens peace and stability in the Middle East. We call upon all parties to work to avoid any further escalation of conflict.

We believe that the root cause of all past and present instability in the Middle East is the prolonged Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, its repeated aggression and atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories and its apartheid-like treatment of the Palestinian people. Regrettably, they are doing all that with total disregard for the will of the international community, expressed in numerous United Nations resolutions calling for the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State as envisaged in the two-State solution. Without solving that core issue, we cannot expect peace in the region. We also believe that supporting the two-State solution but opposing full United Nations membership of the State of Palestine is surprisingly contradictory.

We once again urge the Council to take immediate measures to stop the Israeli atrocities in Gaza by taking all possible measures to implement resolution 2728 (2024) and to bring an end to the decades-long Israeli occupation and aggression against Palestine. In that regard, we would like to reiterate that the only solution to the crisis — the only way to establish peace in Palestine and the whole region — is to establish an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and granting the admission of the State of Palestine as a Member of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Ian Borg for presiding over this morning's meeting. And we congratulate Malta for assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his participation and important briefing.

The United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The United Arab Emirates calls on all Security Council members to vote in favour of the draft resolution (S/2024/312) that recommends granting Palestine full membership in the United Nations. When the General Assembly adopted its resolution 67/19 in 2012, expressing its hope that the Security Council would respond to Palestine's request for full membership, it was clear that the majority of Member States supported the request. That is because Palestine has fulfilled the requirements. Therefore, what is the Council waiting for in order to support that request? Palestine has proven to be an active member of the international community. There are 140 countries that already recognize the State of Palestine. Palestine has a proven record that demonstrates its commitment to the United Nations Charter and its support for peace. It has also joined many international conventions and treaties. Palestine plays an active role in regional and international organizations, particularly within the United Nations, as illustrated through its successful chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China in 2019. I repeat, what more is the Council waiting for in order to support Palestine's full membership?

Our discussion regarding Palestine's full membership is an integral part of the historical commitments of the United Nations, especially the Council, towards the Palestinian people. By adopting General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, on partitioning of Palestine, this Organization committed to establish two States in Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish. It tasked the Security Council with taking the necessary measures to implement that resolution. While the State of Israel was established pursuant to the resolution, the Palestinian people are still waiting for the establishment of their State. Granting Palestine full membership is a crucial step that would consolidate peace efforts. The international community would confirm in word and deed the two-State solution as the only way to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The events of recent months have proven that the international community's approach to managing the conflict instead of taking concrete steps towards resolving it remains a futile approach. Today Gaza is facing a bloody war that has claimed the lives of more than 30,000 people. As for those who have survived, they continue to face bombardment, famine, disease and the threat of displacement. The West Bank is also experiencing its bloodiest two-year period in 20 years due to Israel's continued unjust practices against

the brotherly Palestinian people. The continuation of those events will lead only to an increase in violence and drag the region into new levels of instability. The recent escalation in the region, especially in the past few weeks, confirms that.

In order to address acts of violence and escalation, the international community, in particular the Security Council, should take carefully considered steps to bring peace to the region. Defusing violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and ending the escalation in the region must be a priority. That includes reaching an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, saving people from starvation and using diplomatic means, negotiations and dialogue to peacefully resolve conflicts. Israel must also stop all its escalatory and illegal actions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It must bring an end to settler violence, including their acts of armed aggression against Palestinian villages and cities, as happened last weekend. Perpetrators of such serious crimes must be held accountable.

We must be firm in demanding that all parties concerned comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. They must take all necessary measures to implement relevant resolutions, including resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024). That means allowing humanitarian aid to enter through all available crossings and ensuring its safe and unobstructed distribution. That also includes supporting the efforts of Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must continue its indispensable relief efforts. The protection of civilians and humanitarian workers must be ensured and civilian facilities, especially health facilities, must not be targeted.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the killing of many humanitarian aid workers, including the recent targeting by Israel of the World Central Kitchen convoy, which significantly impacted humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, we stress that ending the repeated rounds of violence in a sustainable manner will be possible only by reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in line with a workable plan for implementing the two-State solution. We must ensure that the parties return to a serious and credible negotiation process with a clear time frame.

That is the only way to guarantee the security, stability and prosperity of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as the entire region.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Niang.

Mr. Niang: At the outset, I would like to congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and for convening today's meeting at the ministerial level, elevating the Council's attention to the gravity of the prevailing crisis. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his briefing and his tireless efforts towards achieving a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People rejects linking the origin of the current crisis solely to the abhorrent attacks of 7 October 2023 in Israel. The historical context, spanning more than 76 years on the United Nations agenda, helps us to understand the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Decades of documented human rights violations, grave breaches of international humanitarian law and 17 years of blockade of the Gaza Strip — addressing such issues is essential for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, including the current catastrophic crisis in Gaza.

Our Committee welcomed the Security Council's belated adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. However, the Committee deeply regrets that the resolution was not implemented. Ramadan is over, and thousands of Palestinian civilians continue to be killed and maimed. That must stop. Israel's war in Gaza has resulted in a high number of civilian deaths among Palestinians, extensive displacement, the denial of food and medicine as a weapon, plausible genocide and consistent violations of international law, including disregarding International Court of Justice orders. Blatant disrespect for international law undermines the United Nations and its authority, eroding the multilateral system and the Council's standing. In the six months of this horrific war, the occupying Power's military operations have killed more than 33,000 Palestinians and injured more than 76,000, mostly women and children. The deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid has plunged 1.1 million civilians into

starvation, disease and death. Gaza is today the victim of an openly admitted human-made famine.

At the same time, Israel's occupying forces and armed settlers continue to inflict violence and dispossession on the Palestinian population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since the start of 2024, according to the Israeli organization Peace Now, Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land and settlement expansion has grown massively as compared to previous years. Israel's illegal settlement activities and its illegal occupation must stop.

The Committee commends the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations on aid efforts in Gaza, while condemning Israel's deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers and infrastructure. We note the disparity in attention devoted to those incidents, including the killing of 178 staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other entities and the equally horrendous World Central Kitchen staff tragedy.

We continue to demand unrestricted humanitarian access in Gaza. We also demand a stop to the targeting of journalists — more than 150 of them have been killed in Israeli attacks. Moreover, the international press must be allowed access to Gaza.

The Committee strongly denounces Israel's persistent efforts to undermine UNRWA, the only entity with the capacity to address the needs of civilians in Gaza. The Committee opposes any attempts to alter the status of Palestinian refugees as established in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. We must not let UNRWA collapse, as the ramifications go beyond mere humanitarian concerns. Its collapse would threaten to ignite new flames of tension and conflict in an already volatile region. The Committee urges donors to promptly resume funding UNRWA and to support the full implementation of its General Assembly mandate.

The Committee welcomes the Human Rights Council resolutions of 5 April (Human Rights Council resolutions 55/28, 55/30 and 55/32), which, among other measures, urge preventing the forced transfer of Palestinians and halting arms sales to Israel. We acknowledge the efforts made by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to achieve a permanent and sustainable ceasefire and the release of all hostages, and we hope for an agreement. We must strive for peace in Gaza in order to prevent escalating conflicts that threaten

global security. The Committee urgently calls for an immediate halt to Israel-Iran escalation, while emphasizing adherence by all to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Committee urges the Security Council and Member States to support the application of the State of Palestine for United Nations membership. That crucial step will support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the realization of the two-State solution. We salute the ongoing efforts of the European Union countries planning to join the 140 Member States that already recognize the State of Palestine.

We welcome the appointment of a new Prime Minister in Palestine to lead the Government in helping to streamline recovery and reconstruction efforts.

I conclude with a plea to all Member States, including Council members, to heed the calls of the General Assembly and those of civil society, civil servants and citizens throughout the world who are clamouring daily for an end to the carnage in Gaza, for accountability for egregious crimes committed by all parties and for vigorous efforts to achieve a just, lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): Indonesia appreciates Malta's strong leadership in continuously supporting the Palestinian cause.

It has often been heard in this Chamber that peace in the Middle East will be realized only when Israel's occupation of Palestine ends, with the realization of a two-State solution. Today the Council has the opportunity to move us closer to that goal. Indonesia therefore commends Algeria for submitting the draft resolution (S/2024/312) recommending full membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations. That is a long-overdue course of action to uphold justice, to help restart negotiations leading to a two-State solution on equal footing and to give hope to the Palestinian people. How can we achieve lasting peace if Palestine is

continuously denied its right to equal standing in peace negotiations? Indonesia therefore calls on all members of the Council to use their moral compass and support the draft resolution. Denying Palestine its rightful place in the United Nations will undermine the credibility of the multilateral system, perpetuate the cycle of violence and render peace even more elusive.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has gone on for far too long. The current crisis in Gaza has cost more than 34,000 lives and counting, a majority of them innocent women and children. In its provisional measures, the International Court of Justice stated that Israel's attack amounts to genocide. The Council must stop that catastrophe and pull the Middle East back from the brink of a wider regional conflict. We call on Council members to walk the talk by ensuring an immediate ceasefire, the scaling-up and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza and the implementation of all resolutions on a political settlement of the conflict.

Let us not forget the daily realities of millions of Palestinian refugees. A just and lasting peace must address their legitimate rights, including the right of return. Until there is a final political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we must double down on our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is a lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees and a stabilizing force in the Middle East. We must ensure that UNRWA is able to implement its mandate fully.

In conclusion, Indonesia challenges members of the Council to stand on the right side of history. Let us embrace humanity over atrocity, diplomacy over discord and dialogue over division. Together, we can pave the way for a future where peace prevails.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until next week.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m.