

Middle East

22. The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Overview

During the period under review, the Security Council held 26 meetings, including one closed meeting,⁷²⁷ in connection with the item entitled “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” but adopted no resolutions or presidential statements. Meetings during 2012 focused mainly on the efforts by the international community to restart talks between Israel and Palestine that could lead to a resumption of peace negotiations; the Palestinians’ bid for upgrading their status to that of non-member observer State in the United Nations; and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. During 2013, the Council considered the escalation of activities that undermined a two-State solution following the General Assembly decision to grant Palestine non-member observer State status; the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israel; and the resumption of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in July for a nine-month period. Developments in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the overall political situation in the Middle East were also discussed during the period.⁷²⁸

Middle East peace process and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories

On 24 January 2012, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that meetings between Israel and Palestine had started in Amman on 3 January, after having remained suspended since late September 2010. He hoped that those preparatory meetings would lead to serious negotiations but he expressed concern over actions on the ground, including settlement activity in the West Bank and related violence. He also reported that the Palestinian Authority had continued to build its institutions, despite concern over its financial situation due to shortfalls in funding and a slowdown in economic growth. With regard to the situation in Gaza, he condemned any indiscriminate firing towards civilian

areas and called for the lifting of the closure in the framework of resolution 1860 (2009).⁷²⁹

The Permanent Observer of Palestine reaffirmed that recognizing the State of Palestine would constitute a genuine investment in the two-State solution for peace. He added that Palestine had fully cooperated with the efforts of the Quartet to advance the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders while Israel was acting to entrench the occupation by continuing its settlement activities. He stated that the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained critical owing to the Israeli blockade by land, air and sea, and that Israel had been using excessive force against peaceful protesters.⁷³⁰

The representative of Israel indicated that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was important but that, in the context of the Arab Spring, the misallocation of the time and resources of the Council was eroding its credibility. He said that the primary obstacle to peace was not settlements but the so-called claim of return, which would mean the destruction of Israel. He also expressed concern about the situation in the Gaza Strip and the rocket attacks by Hamas targeting Israeli cities and civilians.⁷³¹

Many speakers expressed support to the efforts of Jordan and the Quartet for a resumption of negotiations. They also condemned Israeli settlement activities and rocket attacks against Israel launched from Gaza, and urged the Council to step up its efforts in support of a two-State solution. Concern regarding the situation in Gaza was also raised. A number of speakers expressed support for the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations submitted on 23 September 2011 to the General Assembly.⁷³²

On 28 February 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that the talks

⁷²⁷ See S/PV.6863.

⁷²⁸ For information on these questions, see part I, sect. 23, “The situation in the Middle East”.

⁷²⁹ S/PV.6706, pp. 2-5.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., pp. 6-9.

⁷³¹ Ibid., pp. 9-11.

⁷³² Ibid., p. 6 (Palestine); p. 24 (Azerbaijan); and p. 31 (Egypt).

between the parties which had started on 3 January 2012 in Amman had stalled. While the Palestinians had reiterated that direct talks should not resume unless all settlement activity had been halted, the Prime Minister of Israel continued to insist that Israel wanted to continue the talks but without preconditions. He also noted that on 5 February 2012 President Mahmoud Abbas and the leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal had agreed to form a transitional Government of technocrats with Mr. Abbas as Prime Minister. Regarding Gaza and the West Bank, he stated that the situation in both remained dangerous and unsustainable, and noted increased tensions and violence between Palestinian and Israeli security forces around holy sites during the reporting period.⁷³³

On 27 March 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority informed the Council that the parties had not yet found sufficient common ground to resume direct negotiations and that the prospects remained slim. He regretted the fact that the agreements to strengthen revenue collection by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, which provided about 70 per cent of the net revenue of the Palestinian Authority, had not been finalized. Concerning the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, he reported on continuing and extensive escalation of violence, particularly in Gaza, but welcomed the approval by Israel of key United Nations projects, while calling for the unrestricted import through legal crossings of aggregate iron bar and cement. He also expressed concern over the situation of the approximately 4,400 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres and reported on continued settlement activity during the reporting period. He called on the Quartet to direct efforts towards overcoming gaps in trust and substance, in order to achieve the goal of a two-State solution.⁷³⁴

On 23 April 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported on the Quartet meeting held in Washington, D.C., on 11 April, at which the Quartet had underlined the need for continued international support for the Palestinian Authority's institution-building efforts and had reiterated its call to avoid actions that undermined trust. He also hoped that the exchange of letters between the Prime Minister of

Israel and the President of Palestine could provide an opening for future dialogue. However, he reported that clashes between the parties had continued to occur and that the Government of Israel had announced tenders for more than 1,000 housing units in the occupied Palestinian territories. He said that the Quartet had indicated that the situation in Gaza would remain unsustainable until Gaza was reunited with the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, adhering to the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and he noted the lack of progress in the reconciliation process.⁷³⁵

The observer of Palestine stated that the Palestinian people remained committed to peace, as confirmed in the letter dated 17 April 2012 from the President of Palestine to the Prime Minister of Israel, but added that belief in the two-State solution was diminishing as illegal Israeli settlement activity, the main obstacle to the peace process, continued all over the occupied Palestinian territories. He urged the Council to find the political will to act, as well as to make a positive decision regarding the proposed Council mission to the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.⁷³⁶

The representative of Israel reiterated that the primary obstacle to peace was the refusal by the Palestinians to recognize the right of Israel to exist. He urged the international community to stand up and to state that the claim of return was a non-starter and asked the Council to plant the seeds for a truly open debate on the Middle East.⁷³⁷

Many speakers expressed concern over the approval of new Israeli settlements, the incidence of violent clashes and provocative actions between the parties, and the economic, political and humanitarian situation in Gaza. They called for further efforts by the international community to help the parties to resume negotiations towards a two-State solution, especially by the Quartet and the Security Council. A number of speakers welcomed the initiative of President Abbas for the exchange of letters with the Prime Minister of Israel and urged the latter to respond.

On 29 May 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the parties had exchanged letters outlining their respective

⁷³³ S/PV.6725, pp. 2-5.

⁷³⁴ S/PV.6742, pp. 2-5.

⁷³⁵ S/PV.6757, pp. 2-5.

⁷³⁶ Ibid, pp. 5-7.

⁷³⁷ Ibid, pp. 8-11.

requirements for direct talks to continue and that the Quartet envoys would further encourage both sides to take mutually reinforcing confidence-building measures. He underlined the developments threatening to increase tensions, such as the Palestinian prisoner hunger strike that had started on 17 April and ended on 15 May with a prisoner agreement, and the clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in East Jerusalem on 20 May. He also reported on significant internal political changes: in Israel a new governing coalition had been formed, and on the Palestinian side the Cabinet had been reshuffled and Palestinian leaders had announced a new formula for progress on reconciliation achieved with the assistance of Egyptian mediation. He also reported on the continuation of settlement activity and clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank. Regarding Gaza, relative calm had prevailed during the reporting period, and the total value of approved United Nations work in the Gaza Strip had exceeded \$365 million, which meant that United Nations agencies were enabled to play a major role in international efforts for priority recovery and reconstruction in Gaza.⁷³⁸

On 19 June 2012, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported on the Quartet meeting held in Brussels on 15 June to intensify efforts to avoid a renewed deadlock, given the fragility of the situation and the announcement by Israel of the construction of approximately 850 settlement units in the West Bank. He further reported the continuation of clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank and that two prisoners had not ended their hunger strikes after the prisoner agreement of May. On Palestinian reconciliation, efforts continued — a reconciliation agreement reached on 20 May had been followed by meetings between Fatah and Hamas to discuss candidates for a transitional technocratic Government to be headed by President Abbas. He reported that the relative calm in Gaza since April had been disrupted on 1 June, following the attack by an Islamic Jihad-affiliated militant against a group of Israeli soldiers.⁷³⁹

On 25 July 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that in June efforts to restart talks had continued amid worrying developments on the ground. As the Palestinian Authority was facing an acute challenge in maintaining

solvency, he called on donors to make a timely donation and stressed the need for an improved mechanism for the transfer of the value added tax revenues Israel collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. He noted that Israel had approved 5,000 permits for Palestinian workers but that settlement announcements as well as violent clashes between the parties had continued. He reported that efforts to advance Palestinian reconciliation had been delayed due to a decision by the de facto authorities in Gaza to suspend the voter registration process that the Central Elections Commission had planned to conduct from 3 to 14 July 2012. Hamas had also rejected the call by the Palestinian Authority to hold municipal elections on 20 October 2012 throughout the occupied territory. Regarding the situation in Gaza, the Special Coordinator condemned indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and urged Israel to show maximum restraint.⁷⁴⁰

The observer of Palestine said that Palestine hoped to compel the international community to take serious and practical action to stop Israel from destroying the viability of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and to revive the prospects for achieving a peaceful settlement, and he called for the condemnation and rejection of all illegal Israeli settlement activities.⁷⁴¹ The representative of Israel stated that there was a crisis in Gaza, for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and it was called “Hamas”.⁷⁴²

Speakers in general called for a resumption of direct negotiations as the only way to achieve a solution to the Middle East peace process and expressed support for an enhanced role of the international community, especially the Quartet and the Security Council, to promote talks for the realization of a two-State solution. Many speakers expressed their opposition to the Israeli settlement activities, arguing that they undermined a two-State solution. A number of speakers also expressed concern over the financial crisis in the Palestinian Authority and articulated their support for Palestinian reconciliation. Several speakers encouraged the Council to visit the occupied Palestinian territories.

On 22 August 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported to the Council that there

⁷³⁸ S/PV.6775, pp. 2-5.

⁷³⁹ S/PV.6788, pp. 2-5.

⁷⁴⁰ S/PV.6816, pp. 2-7.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., p. 7-10

⁷⁴² Ibid., p.11.

had not been enough progress for sustained negotiations, but that the parties had been meeting to identify ways to enhance Palestinian Authority revenue capture by reducing illegal trade and tax evasion. He stated that the fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority was due in part to a decrease in foreign aid, compounded by a decrease in economic activity and an increase in unemployment. He added that Palestinian factions remained deadlocked on the way forward towards reconciliation. He further noted continuing Israeli settlement construction as well as the projected demolition of Palestinian housing units to be replaced by Israeli settlements. He indicated that violence persisted among the parties to the conflict, including a terrorist attack on 5 August on an Egyptian security post near Kerem Shalom in which 16 Egyptian border guards had been killed.⁷⁴³

On 17 September 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the parties had not yet engaged in meaningful dialogue and that President Abbas had expressed his intention to pursue an upgrade in the status of Palestine at the United Nations through the General Assembly. He also called on donors to urgently increase their contributions to the Palestinian Authority to ensure its fiscal viability in the short term. On Palestinian reconciliation, he noted that the Palestinian Central Elections Commission had continued preparations for local elections scheduled in the West Bank on 20 October 2012, while Hamas had reiterated that there should be no polling prior to reconciliation. The Special Coordinator stressed that a unified Palestinian polity was central to realizing a two-State solution, and transmitted the hope of the Secretary-General that Quartet partners would look for a new credible political way ahead.⁷⁴⁴

On 15 October 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that the rhetorical commitment of both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides was not translating into meaningful steps to renewed dialogue on the core issues. He also reported that President Abbas, citing the absence of a political process, had announced his intention to seek an upgrade of the status of Palestine to non-member observer State in the United Nations, a move that Israel rejected as an impediment to resuming negotiations. He expressed concern over security in the West Bank

involving settler violence. He urged the Government of Israel to curtail such acts and rejected the continuation of settlement activity, while urging all sides to exercise restraint and, more specifically, to safeguard the sanctity of religious sites. He noted that Palestinian local elections, on schedule for 20 October 2012 would be held only in the West Bank, as the de facto authorities in Gaza had not allowed the Central Elections Commission to proceed with voter registration and electoral preparations. Regarding Gaza, he welcomed the approval by the Government of Israel of an additional \$38 million worth of project work.⁷⁴⁵

The observer of Palestine stated that the political process had remained deadlocked and the situation on the ground had deteriorated. He drew the attention of the Council to the rising instability and pressure in East Jerusalem following an escalation of attacks on Muslim and Christian holy places by Israeli settlers and other extremist Jewish groups. On the Palestinian application for non-member observer State status, he stressed that the initiative was neither an alternative nor contradictory to the peace process, and that the Palestinian leadership would be ready to proceed with peace negotiations with the Government of Israel immediately after the adoption of a General Assembly resolution.⁷⁴⁶

The representative of Israel stated that the Palestinians had never responded to Israel's serious proposal in Amman in April. He also stated that the unilateral actions by the Palestinians were a clear breach of every agreement that they had signed with Israel, and stressed that a General Assembly resolution would not pave the road to peace. He noted that the Palestinians were a very long way from meeting the basic criteria for statehood as the Palestinian Authority had no authority in the Gaza Strip, and criticized the unrestricted flood of international aid to the Palestinian Authority by saying it would not bring the parties any closer to peace as long as the aid was being used to sponsor terrorists.⁷⁴⁷

Many speakers again condemned the continuation of Israeli settlement activity, rejected the acts of violence between the parties and called for the Council and the Quartet to step up efforts towards a resumption

⁷⁴³ S/PV.6824, pp. 2-6.

⁷⁴⁴ S/PV.6835, pp. 2-6.

⁷⁴⁵ S/PV.6847, pp. 2-6.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 9-12.

of negotiations. Several speakers also condemned the desecration of Christian and Islamic religious sites. Several speakers endorsed the aspirations of the Palestinian Authority to be granted non-member observer State status in the General Assembly as an interim step. Many speakers stressed their support for a two-State solution as a result of direct negotiations without preconditions between the parties,⁷⁴⁸ while the representative of the United States underlined that unilateral actions, including initiatives to grant the Palestinian Authority non-member observer State status in the United Nations, would only jeopardize the peace process and complicate efforts to return the parties to direct negotiations.⁷⁴⁹

On 21 November 2012, the Secretary-General briefed the Council on his three-day visit to Egypt, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and Jordan, undertaken to strengthen the efforts, led by Egypt, to reach a ceasefire. He welcomed the ceasefire announced that day, after a week of devastating violence, and stressed that the focus must now be on ensuring that the ceasefire held and on providing humanitarian assistance for those in need in Gaza. The Secretary-General also stressed that the ceasefire should be followed immediately by negotiations on the underlying issues.⁷⁵⁰

On 27 November 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported on the cycle of violence in Gaza and Israel that had concluded with the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire agreement of 21 November, in which the parties had agreed to stop “all hostilities” and begin discussions on long-standing issues for a durable ceasefire over the long term. He stated that there would be no progress if the legitimate security concerns of Israel were not addressed, while stressing that lifting the closure on Gaza would give Palestinians a strong stake in a durable calm. He further stated that, although the ceasefire understanding had provided a framework to address the opening of the crossing and facilitate the movement of

people and goods, its implementation was not sufficient. Concerning the Palestinian intention to present to the General Assembly a draft resolution on the status of Palestine on 29 November, he stressed that regardless of the outcome it was important to protect the achievements of the Palestinian Authority in building State institutions. He also reiterated that meaningful negotiations should remain the collective priority to achieve the vision of a two-State solution and the viability of the Palestinian Authority.⁷⁵¹

On 19 December 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that following the adoption of resolution 67/19, by which the General Assembly had accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, the Government of Israel had announced plans for the construction of 3,000 housing units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the decision to expedite the construction of 6,500 previously approved housing units. He stated that the plans would represent an almost fatal blow to the remaining chances of securing a two-State solution. He called on Israel to reconsider its decision to withhold Palestinian revenues and resume the transfer of revenues without delay. He also reported on the Quartet meeting in Brussels on 12 December 2012 to discuss ways to help the parties to avoid escalation diplomatically. He reported on the announcement by the Palestinian Cabinet of a second round of local elections, previously postponed owing to the outbreak of violence in Gaza, to be held on 22 December. He reported that the period of calm in Gaza brokered by Egypt on 21 November had largely held, and called on the parties to abide by the understanding of the ceasefire.⁷⁵²

On 23 January 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that regional and international partners were increasingly alarmed that the only way to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with resolutions and international law was slipping away and had questioned the effectiveness of international efforts. He expressed concern that, despite the Quartet meeting on 10 January 2013 in Amman, a clear and realistic path ahead was still lacking. He stressed that no international effort was sufficient without the requisite will of the parties themselves and that this was no time for actions that would further undermine mutual trust. After the

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20 (India); p. 22 (South Africa); p. 25 (Pakistan); p. 33 (Lebanon); p. 34 (Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States); and p. 35 (Brazil); S/PV.6847 (Resumption 1), p. 7 (Indonesia); p. 13 (Ecuador); p. 14 (Saudi Arabia); p. 15 (Bangladesh); p. 17 (Iceland); p. 18 (Qatar); p. 20 (Kyrgyzstan); p. 25 (Tunisia); and p. 26 (Turkey).

⁷⁴⁹ S/PV.6847, p. 13.

⁷⁵⁰ S/PV.6869, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵¹ S/PV.6871, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁵² S/PV.6894, pp. 2-6.

General Assembly decision of 29 November 2012 to accord Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, there had been a dramatic increase in Israeli settlement announcements. He called on Israel to restore the transfers of tax and customs revenues without further delay, highlighting that the current budget deficit of the Palestinian Authority was beyond \$1 billion. Regarding Gaza, he reported that the calm brokered by Egypt in November had held but remained tenuous, and that no rockets or mortar shells had landed in Israel during the reporting period. As part of its commitment under the ceasefire, Israel had begun to allow gravel for commercial use through the Kerem Shalom crossing, while a further extension of the fishing limit to at least nine nautical miles was necessary to increase the catch of the fishermen. With regard to Palestinian reconciliation, he informed the Council of the meeting between President Abbas and Khaled Meshaal on 10 January and the meeting between members of Fatah and Hamas on 17 January.⁷⁵³

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine stated that the support of Member States to General Assembly resolution 67/19 represented a long-overdue recognition by the Assembly of Palestine's statehood. However, he regretted that the period following the decision of the General Assembly had been characterized by an escalation of Israeli settlements, including in sensitive areas to the east and south of East Jerusalem, which were illegal and a main obstacle to a two-State solution. He added that a halt to settlement construction was not a precondition, but a legal obligation. He called on the Council to compel Israel to stop its breaches of the law.⁷⁵⁴

The representative of Israel stated that Israel had not seen a single gesture, statement or indication that Palestinians wanted to return to negotiations, and stressed that any efforts to alter the Palestinian status outside the agreed negotiating framework directly violated the agreements between the parties.⁷⁵⁵

Most speakers called for the parties to show the political will to restart substantive direct negotiations towards a two-State solution and stressed the need to refrain from counterproductive unilateral provocative actions. Many speakers condemned the escalation of

Israeli settlements, and called on Israel to reinstate the transfer of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority. The representative of the United States noted that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19 had not brought the Palestinians any closer to statehood and reiterated that the only way to establish a real Palestinian State was through direct negotiations on final status issues between the parties without preconditions.⁷⁵⁶ Regarding Gaza, several speakers welcomed the ceasefire mediation efforts brokered by Egypt on 21 November 2012 and said that those efforts should be followed by the lifting of the restrictions on Gaza.⁷⁵⁷ Several speakers condemned rocket fire and terrorist attacks on Israeli territories and called for the rejection of violence by all actors. Several speakers also expressed support for Palestinian reconciliation.

On 26 February 2013, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs informed the Council that a rocket fired from Gaza into Israel on that same day was evidence that the temperature between Israelis and Palestinians was again rising, and stressed the need for a revitalized and relevant Quartet. On the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority, he reported that Israel had decided to release Palestinian revenue clearances for January and reminded Israeli authorities that the full transfer of Palestinian tax and customs revenues in a timely and predictable manner was an obligation that Israel had accepted as part of the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations. Regarding the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody, he reported on the death in detention of a Palestinian man and the deteriorating health of four prisoners due to an extended hunger strike. He further reported that settlement activities and demolition of Palestinian-owned structures had continued over the reporting period. With regard to Gaza, he continued to condemn rocket attacks into Israel and called for a further extension of the fishing limit from 6 to 12 nautical

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., p.14 (Russian Federation); p. 15 (France); p.19 (United Kingdom);p.23 (Australia); pp. 24-25 (Morocco); p.30 (Pakistan); [S/PV.6906 \(Resumption 1\)](#), pp. 2-3 (Egypt); p.5 (Brazil); p. 8 (Malaysia); p.11 (Japan); p.15 (European Union); p. 16 (Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People); p.20 (India); pp. 21-22 (South Africa); p.24 (Democratic People's Republic of Korea); p.25 (Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement); p.26 (Indonesia); p. 28 (Turkey); 30 (Sri Lanka);and p.37 (Nigeria).

⁷⁵³ [S/PV.6906](#), pp. 2-6.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-9.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

miles and for the unrestricted entry of all construction materials. On Palestinian reconciliation, the Under-Secretary-General reported that the Palestinian Central Elections Commission had conducted voter registration in February in both the West Bank and Gaza, for the first time since 2007, and stressed that reconciliation under the leadership of President Abbas and adherence to Palestine Liberation Organization principles were essential for achieving a two-State solution.⁷⁵⁸

On 25 March 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the visit by the President of the United States to the region the previous week had marked an important opportunity to reinvigorate efforts towards a two-State solution. He also stated that the United Nations and the international community were mandated to bridge the differences between the parties concerning the terms of the two-State solution and the way to attain it. He reported that there had been no new settlement announcements, fewer incursions by Israeli security forces in the West Bank, and fewer demolitions of Palestinian structures during the reporting period. However, violence levels had remained high, with continued settler violence, clashes and stone-throwing between the Israelis and Palestinians. He also expressed concern over the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody. The Special Coordinator reported that on 21 March 2013 rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel for the second time since the ceasefire, after which Israel had rescinded the extension of the fishing limit back to three nautical miles, placed restrictions on Palestinian travel in and out of Gaza, and closed the Kerem Shalom crossing. He also reported no progress on Palestinian reconciliation efforts during the reporting period.⁷⁵⁹

On 24 April 2013, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs said that the fragile hope triggered by the renewed United States engagement, including the visit of the President of the United States and the subsequent trips of the United States Secretary of State over the previous month, must be sustained and translated into serious efforts on the part of the parties. He reported on the resignation of the Prime Minister of Palestine on 13 April, which put the State-building agenda at serious risk, in the absence of a credible political horizon. He expressed concern over the financial viability of the Palestinian Authority and said

that during the reporting period there had been a considerable increase in Palestinian casualties, resulting mostly from clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces. On the issue of Palestinian prisoners, he reported that the Secretary-General had urged for a solution to be reached without delay. He was also concerned over the continued settlement activity and reported on the occurrence of clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians as well as continuing demolitions and displacements. He stated that the situation in Gaza had become increasingly fragile and condemned the firing of rockets into Israel. He also reported on the continuation of efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation with the resumption of informal working-level meetings between Hamas and Fatah, but said there had been no advance in the discussions.⁷⁶⁰

The observer of the State of Palestine reiterated the position concerning the Israeli settlement activities and stressed that a number of actions by Israel were imperative for facilitating a meaningful and successful political process, including the cessation of Israeli settlement activities and withdrawal from the lands forcibly seized in 1967; the acceptance that only by negotiation could the borders of 4 June 1967 be adjusted between the two sides; the release of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees; and the lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip. He also reported that efforts on the internal Palestinian front to end the political division and achieve reconciliation were ongoing and hoped that elections could soon be held.⁷⁶¹

The representative of Israel stated that lasting peace in the region must stand upon three pillars, namely, a foundation of education for tolerance and coexistence; a clear recognition of Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people; and security. He said that President Abbas continued to publicly embrace Hamas, but that Hamas and its extremist ideology were the enemies of peace.⁷⁶²

Many speakers expressed support for direct negotiations between the parties towards a two-State solution and called for greater support of the international community, in particular the Security Council, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the

⁷⁵⁸ S/PV.6926, pp. 2-6.

⁷⁵⁹ S/PV.6940, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁶⁰ S/PV.6950, pp. 2-6.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

⁷⁶² Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Quartet, in advancing the peace process. They also expressed concern over the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and stressed the need to address the economic situation and political stability of the Palestinian Authority. Many speakers condemned the continuation of Israeli settlements, called for the lifting of the blockade of Gaza and condemned rocket fire from Gaza targeting Israeli territory. On Palestinian reconciliation, many speakers expressed support for Palestinian unity on the basis of the platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

On 22 May 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said that it was crucial for both sides to reverse negative trends on the ground and restore confidence in each other. He noted that there had been no new approvals or tenders issued for settlements in the West Bank or in East Jerusalem since March. He expressed concern over restrictions of access to holy sites in Jerusalem, but noted that despite the increased tensions events on the ground had been relatively contained. He reported that the United Nations continued to monitor with concern the condition of Palestinian prisoners, and that clashes between Palestinians and settlers in the occupied West Bank had intensified. He stressed that the six-month-old ceasefire understanding in Gaza continued to represent the best opportunity to start changing the negative dynamics and called on Israel to allow the unrestricted entry of construction materials. On Palestinian reconciliation, he reported on the meeting between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo on 14 May 2013, where the factions had reportedly recommitted to consultations on the formation of a national consensus Government headed by President Abbas. This was followed by a meeting between President Abbas and the President of Egypt in Cairo on 16 May to discuss the Middle East peace process and Palestinian reconciliation.⁷⁶³

On 25 June 2013, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported to the Council that there were too few encouraging signs on the prospects of breaking the deadlock on an Israeli-Palestinian peace and emphasized a need for broader regional and international engagement, including a substantive framework and a credible timeline in support of any peace effort, while the United States engagement was central as well. He added that progress needed serious

political commitments by leaders of both Israel and Palestine. He also reiterated the concern of the Secretary-General over reports of a large increase in the construction of new housing units in the West Bank compared to the same period in 2012. He said that a new Palestinian Cabinet had been sworn in on 6 June under the leadership of Rami Hamdallah, as an interim measure until a national consensus Government was formed. Mr. Hamdallah had tendered his resignation on 20 June, but stayed as caretaker until a successor would be named, creating renewed uncertainty for a Government that relied considerably on international support. He also noted mounting tensions including continued violence between Palestinians and settlers in the West Bank. On the situation in Gaza, he reported there had been relative calm until 23 June, when six rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel, reportedly by Islamic Jihad. He expressed concern over human rights and freedoms in Gaza, including four death sentences passed by military courts in Gaza, and two executions carried out on 22 June outside of the Palestinian legal framework.⁷⁶⁴

On 23 July 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the Secretary-General welcomed the recent intense diplomatic efforts of the United States Secretary of State and his announcement that a basis had been established for the resumption of direct final status negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. He stressed that progress could be expected only if a credible political horizon for a negotiated two-State solution emerged and called on both parties to promote conditions conducive to the resumption of the political process. He expressed concern over the situation of Palestinian prisoners and the detention of children and regretted the renewal of Israeli settlement planning in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. He described the situation in Gaza as relatively quiet, but affected by political developments in Egypt, where authorities had taken measures against the tunnels into Gaza, resulting in shortages of fuel and basic building materials. Concerned about further deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza, he called on Israel to liberalize the entry of key construction materials.⁷⁶⁵

The observer of the State of Palestine stated that the Palestinian leadership had never placed conditions on the peace process but called for the respect of

⁷⁶³ S/PV.6969, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁶⁴ S/PV.6986, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁶⁵ S/PV.7007, pp. 2-5.

international law and the United Nations resolutions that constituted the foundation of the process. He stressed that the two-State solution and the Israeli settlement campaign were completely irreconcilable, expressed the readiness of Palestinians to seriously engage in direct negotiations in good faith, and called on the Council to fulfil its duties.⁷⁶⁶

The representative of Israel welcomed the opportunity to resume direct negotiations with the Palestinian Authority to realize two States for two peoples — one Arab and one Jewish — living side by side in peace and security. He said however that the reports on the situation provided at the beginning of the monthly debate, including the current meeting, failed to address Israeli security concerns and were one-sided and short-sighted.⁷⁶⁷ The Special Coordinator expressed his determination to provide fair, balanced and factual briefings on a complex situation in the Middle East.⁷⁶⁸

Most speakers expressed appreciation for the efforts of the United States Secretary of State and LAS, and welcomed the agreement reached by the Israelis and the Palestinians which had established the basis for the resumption of direct final status negotiations. Most speakers called for the lifting of the blockade of Gaza and condemned the continuing Israeli settlement activity, some welcoming the European Commission guidelines concerning grants to and relations with the settlements. The issues of the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, Palestinian unity and reconciliation and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel were also addressed at the meeting.

On 20 August 2013, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that, as a result of the United States-brokered agreement, on 29 and 30 July, the Israelis and the Palestinians had resumed negotiations with the objective of achieving a peaceful and comprehensive settlement on all permanent status issues within a nine-month period. He reported on the visit by the Secretary-General to the region, on 15 and 16 August, to lend his support to the leaders on both sides, and stressed that, moving forward, both sides needed to sustain an environment conducive to the peace process and refrain from actions that would risk undermining prospects during the negotiations. He said

that the Secretary-General was encouraged by additional measures planned by the Israeli authorities to further ease restrictions on Palestinian movement and access, but remained deeply troubled by the continuing settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On the situation in Gaza, he reported tentative calm, while condemning six projectiles shot at Israel, and called on Israel to show maximum restraint. He also hoped that the Hamas de facto authorities would not hamper efforts to achieve the two-State solution. He further reported that access through Rafah had been restricted as a result of political developments in Egypt, limiting access to health care and causing shortages in key medical supplies, highlighted and said that access through legal crossings had become even more critical.⁷⁶⁹

On 17 September 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the Quartet had fully supported the resumption of direct negotiations and that the negotiating teams had been engaged in several rounds of talks. He encouraged both sides to accelerate and intensify their discussions and called on them to refrain from actions that would undermine the prospects of negotiations. He encouraged further steps to increase Palestinian and Israeli economic cooperation, ease restrictions on access and movement of Palestinians and lead to tangible improvements on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza, such as the decision by the Government of Israel on 8 September to increase the number of work permits for West Bank Palestinians. The Special Coordinator deplored the recent losses of life resulting from clashes in the West Bank, including that of an employee of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He reported on the continuing settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as well as continued clashes between Palestinians and settlers, and expressed concern over increased tensions in the Old City of Jerusalem, stressing that settlement construction was counterproductive and against international law. He stated that the calm in Gaza had mostly been sustained but expressed concern over the potential humanitarian impact on Gaza of the measures taken by Egypt to counter illegal activities in the Sinai and around Gaza. On the other hand, he welcomed the

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷⁶⁹ *S/PV.7020*, pp. 2-4.

approval of another package of United Nations construction works.⁷⁷⁰

On 22 October 2013, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that on 27 September, for the first time in 17 months, Quartet principals had met in New York with the Israeli and Palestinian chief negotiators, who had reiterated their commitment to reaching a comprehensive permanent status agreement. Referring to violent developments on the ground, he called all sides to refrain from violence and incitement. He further stated that the calm in the Gaza Strip had been showing worrying signs of erosion, with three tunnels discovered in a year, continued rocket fire by Palestinians and Israeli incursions. He reported that, following the discovery of the third tunnel on 13 October 2013, Israel had temporarily suspended the transfer of construction materials through the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza.⁷⁷¹

The observer of the State of Palestine stated that support for peace negotiations required meaningful action to help the parties to overcome the persistent obstacles, including by ensuring respect for the parameters of the solution. He further stated that illegal and provocative Israeli actions, such as the approval of 3,000 additional settlement units, were undermining the spirit and intent of the negotiations, and drew the attention of the Council to the dangers arising from settler-related violence, including around holy sites in East Jerusalem. Regarding the situation in Gaza, he noted that the Israeli blockade had been in place for over six years and called on the international community to protect the Palestinian civilian population and for the lifting of the blockade, including the opening of the Gaza Strip crossings.⁷⁷² The representative of Israel welcomed the resumption of the negotiations and called on the Palestinian leadership to condemn violence and terrorism. He said that Israel was not creating a humanitarian crisis in Gaza but that Hamas was using those resources from Israel to build smuggling tunnels into Israel instead of schools and housing, adding that the leadership in Gaza was committed to destroying the State of Israel.⁷⁷³

⁷⁷⁰ S/PV.7032, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁷¹ S/PV.7047, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁷² Ibid., pp. 6-8.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Many speakers welcomed the resumption of negotiations and expressed support for the efforts of the international community in that regard, including the Quartet, the initiative of the United States, and LAS, some urging the Security Council to play a more active role in ensuring a successful negotiation process. Most speakers also called on Israelis and Palestinians to adopt confidence-building measures and to avoid unilateral actions that could undermine the progress of the negotiations. Many speakers expressed concern over the continued Israeli settlement activity, tensions around holy sites of Jerusalem, the situation of Palestinian prisoners and violence and rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. Many speakers expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and called for the lifting of the blockade.

On 19 November 2013, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reported that international engagement in the Middle East peace process remained strong. However, he stated that the process had suffered significant setbacks due to a series of announcements of settlement plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which could not be reconciled with a negotiated two-State solution. Despite the submission of resignations by Palestinian negotiators in protest over the new plans, President Abbas had made it clear that that did not constitute a Palestinian departure from talks. He also reported on continued violence between settlers and Palestinians throughout the West Bank, and expressed concern over the continued demolition of unlicensed Palestinian infrastructures. He said that the situation in Gaza was deteriorating, with renewed violence and worsening economic and humanitarian conditions, owing to a combined energy and construction crisis.⁷⁷⁴

On 16 December 2013, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that Quartet envoys had continued consultations with each other and engaged with the parties and with Arab partners. He informed the Council that another important timeline in the negotiations, the third release of prisoners scheduled for 29 December, was approaching and urged both sides to refrain from taking any steps that could undermine the prospect for progress at that time. He stressed that the situation on the ground was fragile and reiterated that the continued settlement activity could not be reconciled with the goal of a two-

⁷⁷⁴ S/PV.7063, pp. 2-3.

State solution. He reported that violence between Palestinians and settlers had continued, and that demolitions of unlicensed Palestinian structures had been increasing. He also stated that Palestinians in administrative detention should be either charged or released. He highlighted the critical energy situation in Gaza since the power plant had ceased operations on

1 November 2013, while welcoming the decision of the Government of Israel to resume the transfer of construction materials for United Nations projects in Gaza and calling on Israel to begin allowing imports of such materials for the private sector.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁵ [S/PV.7084](#), pp. 2-3.

Meetings: the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6706 and S/PV.6706 (Resumption 1) 24 January 2012			27 Member States ^a	Permanent Observer of Palestine, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.6725 28 February 2012				Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.6742 27 March 2012				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority	All invitees	
S/PV.6757 and S/PV.6757 (Resumption 1) 23 April 2012		Letter dated 19 April 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council S/2012/247	27 Member States ^b	Permanent Observer of Palestine, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Head of the Delegation of the European Union	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.6775 29 May 2012				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	
S/PV.6788 19 June 2012				Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.6816 and S/PV.6816 (Resumption 1) 25 July 2012			23 Member States ^c	Permanent Observer of Palestine, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	All Council members, all invitees	

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6824 22 August 2012				Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.6835 17 September 2012				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	
S/PV.6847 and S/PV.6847 (Resumption 1) 15 October 2012		Letter dated 12 October 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2012/762)	28 Member States ^d	Permanent Observer of Palestine, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Head of the Delegation of the European Union	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.6869 21 November 2012					Secretary-General	
S/PV.6871 27 November 2012				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	
S/PV.6894 19 December 2012				Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.6906 and S/PV.6906 (Resumption 1) 23 January 2013			28 Member States ^e	Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine (Minister for Foreign Affairs), Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Holy See, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	All Council members and all invitees	

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6926 26 February 2013				Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.6940 25 March 2013				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	
S/PV.6950 and S/PV.6950 (Resumption 1) 24 April 2013			27 Member States ^f	Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Head of the Delegation of the European Union	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.6969 22 May 2013				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	
S/PV.6986 25 June 2013				Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.7007 23 July 2013			23 Member States ^g	Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Holy See, member of the delegation of the European Union, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.7020 20 August 2013				Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.7032 17 September 2013				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.7047 22 October 2013			29 Member States ^h	Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, member of the delegation of the European Union, Holy See	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.7063 19 November 2013				Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs	
S/PV.7084 16 December 2013				Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	

(Footnotes on following page)

(Footnotes to Meetings: the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question)

- ^a Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)), Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)), Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Malaysia, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^b Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt (on behalf of NAM), Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan (on behalf of OIC), Lebanon, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the Group of Arab States) and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^c Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Egypt (on behalf of NAM), Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan (on behalf of OIC), Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^d Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Egypt (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of, on behalf of NAM), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan (on behalf of OIC), Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Viet Nam.
- ^e Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti (on behalf of OIC), Egypt, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Iran (Islamic Republic of, on behalf of NAM), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Namibia, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^f Bahrain, Botswana, Brazil, Cuba, Djibouti (on behalf of OIC), Ecuador, Egypt, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of, on behalf of NAM), Israel, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^g Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti (on behalf of OIC), Ecuador, Egypt, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of, on behalf of NAM), Israel, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- ^h Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Cuba, Djibouti (on behalf of OIC), Ecuador, Egypt, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of, on behalf of NAM), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

23. The situation in the Middle East

Overview

During the period under review, the Security Council held thirty-nine meetings, including nine private, or closed, meetings,⁷⁷⁶ in connection with the

item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", adopting 11 resolutions and seven presidential statements. During the meetings, the Council considered: (a) the Syrian Arab Republic; (b) Yemen; (c) the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF); (d) the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL); and (e) peace and security in the Middle East.

⁷⁷⁶ See [S/PV.6957](#), in relation to the situation in the Middle East. For private meetings with troop- and police-contributing countries: in relation to UNDOF, see [S/PV.6787](#), [S/PV.6883](#), [S/PV.6978](#) and [S/PV.7079](#); in relation to UNIFIL, see [S/PV.6823](#) and [S/PV.7018](#); and in relation to UNSMIS, see [S/PV.6803](#) and [S/PV.6821](#).

The Council renewed the mandate of UNDOF⁷⁷⁷ four times for a period of six months each time⁷⁷⁸ and renewed the mandate of UNIFIL⁷⁷⁹ twice for a period of one year each time.⁷⁸⁰ In April 2012, the Council also established, for an initial period of 90 days, the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS),⁷⁸¹ and renewed its mandate once for a final period of 30 days.⁷⁸² In addition, on 27 January 2013, the Council conducted a mission to Yemen to reaffirm the continued support of the Council for the ongoing political transition process in the country.⁷⁸³

High-level meeting on peace and security in the Middle East

On 26 September 2012, the Council held a high-level meeting on peace and security in the Middle East. The Secretary-General stated that the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians remained stalemated, as the window for a two-State solution narrowed dangerously. In respect of the Syrian Arab Republic, he indicated that the conflict had become a threat to regional and international peace and security, and appealed to all with influence to persuade the parties that there was no military solution to the crisis. The Secretary-General highlighted the joint role of the United Nations and the League of Arab States in the region, and pointed out areas that merited special attention, including the exchange of information and conflict prevention.⁷⁸⁴

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States noted that Security Council resolutions on ending Israeli occupation of occupied Arab lands had not been implemented. Regarding the Syrian Arab Republic, he expressed regret that the Council had failed to achieve its objectives to resolve the crisis

because of a disagreement among its permanent members and said that the resolutions had remained “dead letters”. In regard to Yemen, he stated that efforts must be intensified to support the Government in overcoming the consequences of the political crisis in order to move forward towards the reconstruction and rebuilding of the State. He enumerated four proposals for cooperation between the League and the United Nations: (a) an update to the agreement on cooperation signed in 1989; (b) regular meetings between the two bodies; (c) enhancement of the status of cooperation meetings; and (d) attachment of greater importance to cooperation between the two organizations relating to humanitarian assistance.⁷⁸⁵

Council members welcomed the cooperation between the two bodies and the appointment of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi. Council members reiterated their concern over the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and their call for a political solution. Many Council members also highlighted the need to work towards tangible results in the Middle East peace process.

In the presidential statement adopted at the meeting, the Council, *inter alia*, recognized and further encouraged efforts by the League of Arab States to contribute to collective endeavours to settle conflicts in the Middle East peacefully as well as to promote international responses to the transformations experienced in the region, while reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of countries in the region and to the purposes and principles of the Charter. In the same statement, the Council expressed its determination to take effective steps to further enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the League, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.⁷⁸⁶

Renewal of the mandate of UNDOF

From June 2012 to December 2013, the Council adopted four resolutions by which it renewed the mandate of UNDOF, for a period of six months each time.⁷⁸⁷ The Council, in resolution 2084 (2012) of 19 December 2012, called upon all parties to cooperate

⁷⁷⁷ For more information on UNDOF, see part X, sect. I, “Peacekeeping operations”.

⁷⁷⁸ Resolutions 2052 (2012), 2084 (2012), 2108 (2013) and 2131 (2013).

⁷⁷⁹ For more information on UNIFIL, see part X, sect. I, “Peacekeeping operations”.

⁷⁸⁰ Resolutions 2064 (2012) and 2115 (2013).

⁷⁸¹ For more information on UNSMIS, see part X, sect. I, “Peacekeeping operations”.

⁷⁸² Resolution 2059 (2012).

⁷⁸³ For more information on the Security Council mission to Yemen, see part I, sect. 34, “Security Council mission”, and part VI, sect. II.A, “Security Council missions”.

⁷⁸⁴ S/PV.6841, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

⁷⁸⁶ S/PRST/2012/20.

⁷⁸⁷ Resolutions 2052 (2012), para. 6; 2084 (2012), para. 5; 2108 (2013), para. 7; and 2131 (2013), para. 6.