

Palestinian leader, at General Assembly, calls on 'duty-bound' UN to end Israeli occupation

20 September 2017 – From the podium of the United Nations General Assembly Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today called on the world Organization to face up to its responsibilities to end Israel's "relentless" occupation ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

"The United Nations bears a legal, political, moral and humanitarian obligation to end this occupation and enable the Palestinian people to live in freedom and prosperity in their independent state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the 4 June 1967 borders," he said.

"We recognized the State of Israel on the 1967 borders, but Israel's continuous refusal to recognize these borders has put into question the mutual recognition we signed in Oslo in 1993," he added, referring to the accord providing for a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace within secure borders.

He demanded that Israel commit to the borders of 1967 as basis for the two-state solution, urged those States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine, and called on the UN Security Council to approve full membership of the State of Palestine to the UN.

"The path we have chosen as Palestinian and Arabs, and the path chosen by the world, is that of international law and international legitimacy," underscored Mr. Abbas.

"I address the Israeli people, across the spectrum of their society and tell them: We want to live in peace," he stated. "Do not listen to those who try to convince you that peace between us is not possible."

[Full statement available here](#)

Côte d'Ivoire is inspiring example of UN peacekeeping success, country's leader tells Assembly

20 September 2017 – The President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, today cited the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations in his West

African country as an inspiration for the world Organization to increase its initiatives.

“The lessons of this peacekeeping operation, recognized as one of the rare successes of our world Organization in maintaining peace over the past several decades must inspire the United Nations further in initiatives in favour of peace,” he told the 72nd annual General Assembly general debate on its second day.

The UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire ([UNOCI](#)), which in 2011 helped restore legitimacy and stability along with French forces after violence broke out in the wake of an electoral crisis, with up to 7,000 uniformed personnel in the country, completed its mandate in June.

Turning to the issue of terrorism, Mr. Ouattara said that despite some encouraging operations in the Middle East, the world is struggling to find a satisfactory response in Africa. “These successes will remain empty and the terrorist threat a constant worry if Africa continues to be the soft under-belly of world terrorism,” he said.

He called for international support for the Security Council-endorsed G5 Sahel group, comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, which is slated to deploy its first joint force next month to combat terrorism and drugs, arms and human trafficking throughout Africa’s sub-Saharan Sahel region.

[Full statement \(in French\) available here](#)

[At UN, Azerbaijan urges respect for Security Council measures; cites support for cultural diversity](#)

20 September 2017 – Addressing the General Assembly, the President of Azerbaijan, spoke about the country’s successes in socio-economic development and support of cultural diversity and said that while Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from its territory have been ignored, Azerbaijan remains an “engaged” Member of the United Nations.

In his speech to the Assembly’s annual general debate, Ilham Heyday Oglu Aliyev said Security Council resolutions must be respected and that “double standards” regarding their implementation, including by Armenia, are unacceptable. Against the backdrop of Armenia’s continued occupation of its territories and violation of international law, Azerbaijan nevertheless remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

“The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council,” the Azerbaijani leader said, adding that Azerbaijan’s territorial “must be restored.”

Despite this challenge, Azerbaijan is an engaged member of the UN, he said. All fundamental freedoms are being fully provided, including the freedom of speech, media freedom, freedom of assembly and religious freedom. “Azerbaijan is a centre of multiculturalism,” with all religions and ethnic groups living in peace and harmony.

He stressed that Azerbaijan recognized multi-ethnicity as an asset and had hosted several interreligious dialogues in recent years, including one in partnership with the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Further, the main goal of the [Baku Process](#) is aimed at strengthening dialogue and partnership between the Muslim world and Europe, he added.

On the economic front, he said Azerbaijan’s economy continues to grow exponentially, while unemployment is among the lowest levels in the world at five per cent. Poverty is also on the decline. The country is also highly ranked on the human development scale, and exports not only agricultural goods, but also intellectual products, while its “zero tolerance” towards corruption and bribery make it attractive to investors.

[Peace operations ‘not a substitute’ for diplomatic efforts, Security Council told](#)

20 September 2017 – United Nations peace operations must be deployed in support of – not in place of – active diplomatic efforts, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council today, as he outlined some critical changes necessary to make these missions more effective.

“Today we gather to fortify this flagship UN activity,” Mr. Guterres said during an open debate on the reform of UN peacekeeping, noting that every day, peacekeepers create the conditions for lasting peace. Yet, he added, they also often face unreasonable and dangerous demands.

Over the years, 55 UN peacekeeping operations have successfully completed their mandate as have many political missions.

Mr. Guterres outlined his reform efforts, noting that they aim in part to bring about the critical shifts called for in the 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

First, the 'primacy of politics' must be recognized so that peace operations are deployed in support of active diplomatic efforts, not as a substitute," he stated. "If we can do better on prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, we can reduce the unrealistic and dangerous demands on our colleagues in uniform."

Second, peace operations should be properly equipped, and third, they must embody UN values, meaning that sexual exploitation and abuse are not acceptable.

Fourth, the UN must build stronger partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union and the European Union.

Recalling the framework for enhanced partnership signed by the UN and the African Union in April, the Secretary-General said he looked forward to signing a similar agreement with the European Union and to exploring the possibility of establishing trilateral collaborative mechanisms.

José Ramos-Horta, the former Chair of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, told the Council that the 2015 report "reflected the collective experience and recommendations of hundreds of people from many walks of life – retired and serving military and police officers who saw wars close up, community leaders and activists who live in the midst of conflicts."

He welcomed the Secretary-General's focus on conflict prevention and proposals for restructuring the peace and security pillar, including the delegation of authority to the field.

At today's meeting, which was scheduled to hear from around 70 speakers, including many from the highest levels of government, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution stressing that "the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict," and that conflict prevention remains a primary responsibility of States.

The 15-member body also reaffirmed its determination to pursue more prioritisation when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations.

Concerned at ongoing rights violations in Yemen, UN advisers back call for international probe

20 September 2017 – As civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict

in Yemen, two United Nations Special Advisers have voiced their concern over continued allegations of grave human rights abuses and expressed support for the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an international investigation.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner ([OHCHR](#)), the total number of verified civilian casualties since March 2015 stands at 13,920, including 5,159 people killed and 8,761 injured. The actual numbers are likely to be “far higher,” said the Office, which also noted that coalition airstrikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, including of children.

In addition, the UN estimates that 17 million people are food insecure, including seven million people on the brink of famine. The unprecedented rise in the cholera epidemic has reached over 690,000 suspected cases with 2,090 associated deaths – the largest ever outbreak in a single year.

“We call on the international community – and particularly the Security Council and Human Rights Council – to take action to end the carnage and remedy this man-made crisis,” Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Ivan Šimonovic, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, said in a [statement](#) issued on Tuesday.

“The international community has a moral and legal responsibility to support accountability in Yemen by immediately establishing an impartial international mechanism to comprehensively investigate allegations of serious abuses and violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict, and their allied forces with a view to ending impunity.

“The perpetrators must be brought to account. Justice must be served to the victims. It is incumbent on the international community to halt the suffering that is being inflicted on the Yemeni population,” the Advisers stated.

OHCHR said yesterday it was “very disturbed” that civilians, including children, continue to be killed in attacks carried out by both the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis and army units loyal to the former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, as well as by the Saudi-led coalition.

Just over the past five days, the Office has confirmed that three children died and seven others were injured in attacks by Houthi/Saleh forces in the Salah district of the city of Taizz; while a coalition airstrike in Marib killed a further five children along with seven adults.

These are just the latest in a series of incidents that demonstrate “the horrific impact on children and families, and all civilians, of the ongoing brutal war,” OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville [told](#) reporters in Geneva.

“Once again, we urge all sides to exercise restraint and to cease all indiscriminate attacks and take all possible precautions to properly distinguish military objectives from civilian objects and to ensure that their attacks are never directed either at civilians or civilian objects.”