

# Dialogue is key to improving stability for Israelis and Palestinians: UK at the UN Security Council

Thank you Madam President, and my thanks to the Special Coordinator for his briefing today.

Let me start by once again reinforcing the need to prevent a return to the violence we witnessed in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories last year. We share concerns about the escalating tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We must all work to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions. In this regard, we welcome the announcement by the Israeli Police Commissioner that there will be a pause on demolitions in East Jerusalem during Ramadan.

We are concerned about the rise in security incidents and violence in the OPTs, including the death of nine Palestinians this month by Israeli security forces' live fire. Where there are accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate swift, transparent investigations.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence. In exercising this right, it is vital that all actions are proportionate.

We welcome the dismantling of West Bank outposts by the Israeli authorities, including Moaz Esther, Givat Habaladim and Battir. The violence from settlers against Israeli security forces during the operations is inexcusable. Outposts are illegal under international law and Israeli law, and are an obstacle to peace.

Madam President, as we celebrated International Women's Day this month, we were reminded of the importance of ensuring equitable access to a quality education for all children and the power of educating girls as a tool for peace. We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to pass the necessary legislation to protect and progress women's rights. And we reiterate our strong support for UNRWA and their vital work to help Palestinian refugee children, including girls, fulfil their potential.

The UK remains focussed on work to improve the economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza. We welcome the beginning of the electronic-VAT pilot, and ongoing work between the parties towards a more efficient tax system. The UK encourages both parties to continue to make progress on other priority fiscal issues, and to reconvene the long-stalled Joint Economic Committee, in order to enhance dialogue on economic issues.

Finally, as we look towards the convergence of religious holidays next month, the UK strongly discourages unilateral actions that may increase tensions. We reiterate our support for the historic Status Quo in the Old City of Jerusalem – that is the best means of preserving the right to peaceful

worship for the three Abrahamic faiths.

It is only through dialogue that we can improve stability across the region and build the foundations for peace. The UK remains firmly committed to a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines, and with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

Thank you, Madam President.