

# In the absence of a political solution, it is vital that we improve conditions for Israelis and Palestinians

Thank you Mr President, and thank you to the Special Coordinator and Ms. Ero for their briefings.

Let me reaffirm at the outset that the UK remains firmly committed to a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines and with Jerusalem as a shared capital. In the absence of a political solution, it is vital that we continue to support efforts to improve conditions on the ground and promote stability for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

In that regard, we thank Norway for hosting the recent Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee and the parties for the spirit of cooperation they brought to it. In particular, we welcome the commitments made to reinvigorate the Joint Economic Committee and to resolve key technical issues, including an E-VAT pilot by the end of 2021. Further direct engagement between the parties, including to progress commitments made at the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee is essential, and we should all spare no effort in supporting it.

Mr President, on 19 November, the UK Government proscribed Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation, including its political wing. We remain clear that Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements. These conditions remain the benchmark against which its intentions should be judged.

I offer my condolences to the family of an Israeli civilian, Eliyahu Kay, who was killed in Jerusalem on 21 November, reportedly by a member of Hamas. We condemn Hamas' continued attacks against civilians, which are unacceptable and unjustifiable.

The decision by the Israeli authorities to designate six Palestinian NGOs, and the evidence which forms the basis of these designations, is a matter for the Government of Israel. The UK maintains its own criteria for designation. We continue engagement with a number of these organisations on human rights issues and respect the role that NGOs and civil society organisations play in upholding human rights and democracy.

Mr President, we have heard today of rising pressure and risk of instability in the West Bank, linked to the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, lack of UNRWA funding and increasing settler violence.

As we reiterated at the International Ministerial Conference on 16 November, the UK remains a firm supporter of UNRWA and values its importance as a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region. We encourage all efforts to

improve the Agency's serious financial situation, which threatens its service delivery.

We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians; this deteriorating trend must be reversed. We welcome Israeli authorities' discussion of how to address this issue, and urge Israel to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity.

We continue to call on the Government of Israel to reverse its decisions of 24 and 27 October, to advance the construction of settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The settlements being advanced around Jerusalem are a threat to the viability of a future Palestinian state and, therefore, to peace and stability.

Mr President, peace will be achieved only through real movement towards renewed dialogue between the parties. We encourage further and deeper engagement in this regard, aimed at creating the foundations for future progress towards a two-state solution.

Thank you.