

Lack of progress continues to impact negatively the lives of Israelis and Palestinians

Thank you Mr President, and may I welcome you back to New York. Thank you also to the Special Coordinator for your briefing and to our two civil society briefers Mr Daniel Levy and Dr Hanan Ashrawi for their thought-provoking contributions today.

Mr President, I'd like to start by welcoming the increased engagement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority over recent months. We are confident this dialogue will continue, and it is our hope that it will deliver tangible results to tackle immediate and long-term threats to peace and stability. The parties have our full support in this.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the increased calm in Gaza, and recent steps taken by Israel to reduce constraints on access for goods and people into and out of the strip. We now ask Israel to set out a full and transparent plan to improve movement and access in Gaza, in line with International Humanitarian Law, to allow for reconstruction and development to advance.

A number of positive signals notwithstanding, we continue to see negative trends in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. As we have heard, rates of demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes have continued to rise, and this year may see the worst rate of demolitions in five years. We urge the Government of Israel to ensure that Palestinian families living in the Occupied Territories can remain safely in their homes.

Violence in the West Bank, including settler attacks against Palestinian people and property, is also on the rise. The shocking attack on the Palestinian village of Umm Mufaqarah, in the South Hebron Hills, on 28 September resulted in a three-year-old Palestinian child being hospitalised. We call on Israel to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, to ensure all such incidents are investigated thoroughly, and for those responsible to be brought to justice. We welcome the Government of Israel's commitment to addressing settler violence and Foreign Minister Lapid's condemnation of the Umm Mufaqarah attack.

We are also concerned about the Israeli Security Forces' use of excessive force. We continue to urge Israel to uphold the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interests.

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) dire fiscal situation carries the risk that it is unable to pay salaries or its suppliers in full from next month onwards. Rapid action is needed to improve the situation. The UK will continue to work with the PA to help it implement necessary reforms, and we urge our international partners to do the same.

Lastly Mr President, as we celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child last week, we were reminded of the impressive educational attainment rates for girls across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We must celebrate this success and ensure that the vital provision of education, including to girls, is protected from the threat of instability.

In conclusion, the lack of progress in the Middle East Peace Process continues to impact negatively the lives of everyday Israelis and Palestinians, and the ongoing conflict is in need of a just and lasting resolution. We continue to urge all parties to renew their commitment to peacebuilding, and to work to deliver it. The UK continues to believe that a two-state solution offers the only meaningful prospect for durable peace.