

Political and economic progress in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Mr President, I'd like to start, if I may, on a different topic. I'd like to start by joining the Secretary-General in expressing our deep sadness at the passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. And I'd like to pay tribute to Mr Amano's tireless work in the pursuit of peace. And we send our deepest condolences to Japan and to his family and friends.

Turning to today's debate, Mr President, I'd like to start, as others have done, by talking about the recent Peace to Prosperity conference that was held in Bahrain at the end of June. US efforts to support the development of Palestinian economy are very welcome. It's crucial that we improve the daily life and prospects for Palestinians across East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. For the United Kingdom, Mr President, we are doubling UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories between 2018 and 2023. We are helping to address restrictions on movement and access and improving water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza. And we support efforts which complement this work.

As others have noted, Mr President, it is, of course, essential that political progress is made in order to unlock economic opportunities. And we encourage the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to engage and work with the international community to foster solutions that actively improve the situation on the ground. And what Dr Greenblatt said about the political aspect of the proposals was a welcome assurance.

For the record, Mr President, the United Kingdom's position on the two-state solution remains unchanged. But I wanted just to stress that in the interim, until there is political progress, steps need to be taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli occupation. We want to see increasing external trade opportunities for the Palestinians, a reduction in internal movement and access restrictions and sustainable investments in water and energy infrastructure. We also want the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority to be realised.

Looking to fresh negotiations, it's obviously essential to build a conducive environment. That means we need genuine and committed engagement from both parties, including the end of actions which undermine trust and threaten the viability of the two-state solution.

Therefore, Mr President, we urge the Palestinian Authority to address allegations of incitement, including in the education curriculum, and to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring these are needs-based, transparent and affordable. We remain deeply concerned, as other speakers have noted today, by ongoing Israeli settlement advancements, including over 200 units in Gilo

on 10 July and by the retroactive approvals of unauthorised settlement outposts. Settlements are illegal and they undermine the physical viability of a future Palestinian state. Settler violence, the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes should be opposed and condemned wholeheartedly. The demolitions since Sunday of a number of Palestinian properties in the Sur Bahir area of the Jerusalem governate are particularly egregious, in part because much of the area lies in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas. And we also condemn the eviction of the Siam family in Silwan on 10 July. Mr President, the Israeli authorities have a responsibility to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

We remain deeply concerned by suggestions that any parts, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, should be annexed. Such a move would be contrary to international law, destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged.

Let me be clear about our views on terrorism: we equally condemn in the strongest terms Hamas terrorism and that of other militant groups in Gaza. Since the Great March of Return began in 2018, there have been nearly 2000 rockets and mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. This is completely unacceptable and we call on Hamas and other militant groups to cease such attacks immediately. We recognise Israel's legitimate security need. However, we do have concerns about excessive use of force by the Israel Defense Forces. Measures used need to be appropriate and in line with international law. Accountability needs to be sought through swift, transparent investigations and we welcome the investigations currently being pursued by Israel under the Military Attorney General.

I'd like to join others, Mr President, in expressing the United Kingdom's gratitude to the UN and to Egypt for their efforts to mediate between the parties and picking up what the Under-Secretary-General said, we also encourage those involved in the reconciliation process to allow the Palestinian Authority fully to resume its government functions in Gaza.

Mr President, we believe that it's essential that the international community continue work to support Palestinian refugees. Status of Palestinian refugees needs to be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. But until that time, the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and refugees across the Middle East. And we welcome the successful outcome of the pledging conference on 25 June, for which we were able to include an additional \$25 million of UK funding, taking 2019-2020 support to over \$70 million.

Mr President, I just wanted to pick up on something the German Representative said about international law. We share his view. The Security Council's responsible for maintaining international peace and security and we all agree that the Arab-Israeli conflict is such a threat to international peace and security. So it's right that we've passed resolutions and we are bound by those resolutions. And we all have a responsibility, Mr President, to implement them, just as we do in other areas. Indeed, this is the very basis of the Council's work.

I was also asked by the Israeli Representative about the JCPOA, so although I didn't want to talk about Iran today, let me just address that point, if I may. Together with France and Germany, the United Kingdom is urging Iran not to take further steps away from the Agreement and to return to compliance. And the agreement itself allows for this. On the general point, we are clear that the nuclear deal is still the best option and in the interests of both Iranian and global security. It's critical that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. And this deal makes the world a safer place by taking the prospect of a nuclear armed Iran off the table. Indeed, Mr President, military representatives in some of the countries that criticised the deal have confirmed its role in national and international security. And I alluded earlier to the sad passing away of Mr Amano, where the IAEA is a critical part of looking at compliance of the deal.

Let me return, if I may, to the Middle East peace process. As I say, our position remains unchanged. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

Thank you.