

Securing peace between Israel and the Palestinians

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to Mr Mladenov for his briefing.

Mr President, as others have done, I would like to say a few words about Lebanon. The devastating explosion in Beirut has caused enormous suffering and damage, as Mr Mladenov also set out. Our sympathies go out to all those who have been affected by this tragedy and who have lost loved ones. The UK stands with the Lebanese people in this hour of need. Our 25 million pound package of humanitarian support, as well as our technical experts who were deployed within days of the explosion, will help to address some of the critical needs of the most vulnerable in Lebanon. And the deployment of HMS Enterprise, one of our naval ships, on the 10th of August, also complements these efforts. Our support to the Lebanese army in their efforts to respond to the disaster is also critical.

Turning to the topic of today's discussion, Mr President, I would like to start by welcoming the announcement on the 13th of August, as set out by Ambassador Kelly, of the normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and, in particular, the suspension of Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank.

As my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have said, this is an historic step which sees the normalisation of relations between two great friends of the United Kingdom. The UK has consistently made clear in this Council our firm opposition to annexation, which would have been contrary to international law, counterproductive to securing peace in the region and a severe blow to the prospects of the two-state solution. We therefore profoundly hope that this moment can be used as a step towards direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, as there can be no substitute for direct talks in order to reach a two-state solution and a lasting peace.

My Foreign Secretary is in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories today, encouraging both leaders to push forward on this momentum of this announcement. The UK stands ready to support this endeavour.

Mr President, despite this positive development, we are concerned by other negative trends on the ground. The number of Covid-19 cases continues to rise across the region. Meanwhile, Hamas has been launching IEDs and firing rockets into Israel. Such actions by Hamas are unacceptable, and we call on them to cease immediately.

The current situation continues to have a devastating impact on the people living in Gaza in particular. As ever, dialogue can be the only way to address the situation. We call on Israel to lift movement and access restrictions and allow fuel to enter Gaza, which is vital to power hospitals, water and sewage treatment. More broadly, we encourage the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel to urgently resume cooperation across all files – security, economic and civil – at this critical time.

While the shadow of annexation appears to be lifted, we remain concerned about the potential for further settlement advancements, continued demolitions and evictions. Mr President, we are also concerned by continued acts of violence and we're alarmed to hear of the shooting on the 17th of August at Qalandiya checkpoint of a Palestinian who was unarmed and deaf. The use of lethal force should only be deployed as a last resort.

I would like to finish by reiterating the UK's longstanding position on the Middle East peace process. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian 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. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting such efforts towards peace in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr President.

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Many thanks, Mr President, and thank you for your brief update to the Council just now, with which the UK concurs. I want to say a few other things. The first is that the UK remains resolutely committed to full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231, through which the JCPoA was endorsed in 2015. This is in order to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, our priority. In order to preserve the JCPoA, Iran must return to nuclear compliance without delay. Along with our E3 partners, France and Germany, we urge Iran to engage urgently and constructively with the dispute resolution mechanism. As E3 Foreign Ministers set out in their statements on the 19th of June and the 20th of August, we do not support a move to snapback at this time, which would be incompatible with our current efforts to preserve the JCPoA.

With regard to the question of my Russian colleague on the letter set out by the United States on the 20th of August and your own summary, Mr President, I would like to align with the position expressed by France and Germany. It is the UK's opinion that the United States ceased to be a participant to the JCPoA following their withdrawal from the deal on the 8th of May, 2018. Our position regarding the effectiveness of the United States' notification pursuant to Resolution 2231 has been very clearly explained to you the Presidency, and all Council members.

I would like to also make clear that we share the United States' concern about the expiry of the arms restrictions on Iran in October this year. As E3 Foreign Ministers have said, the expiry of the restrictions could have serious implications for regional security, given Iran's continued destabilising activities. The last UN Secretary-General report, which the Council discussed back in June, detailed how Iran has continued to violate Security Council Resolution 2231, Annex B, including through illicit arms transfers in the region, ballistic missile proliferation and attacks on its neighbours.

The United Kingdom will continue to enforce remaining restrictions

rigorously, including on the proliferation of arms to non-state actors covered by other Security Council resolutions, ballistic missile restrictions under Annex B, and the EU-UK arms embargoes that will remain in place until 2023. We continue to work with the remaining JCPoA participants and this council to seek a path forward to address arms restriction expiry in October.