

Seeking cooperation in order to achieve a two-state solution

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing. As others have done, I'd like to pay tribute to his tireless work in this role to de-escalate tension and advance peace between the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I look forward to continuing to work with Nikolay Mladenov in his new role and to welcoming his successor.

Mr President, let me first express the UK's sadness at the death of the Palestinian child, Ali Ayman Abu Alaya, following clashes between the Israel Defense Forces and Palestinian civilians. We have urged Israel to ensure that its investigation is swift and comprehensive. Unfortunately, the death of Abu Alaya is not an exceptional occurrence. He is the most recent of 23 Palestinian civilians to have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank this year. The toll is unacceptable, and the UK continues to urge restraint in the use of live fire and potentially lethal force by Israeli forces. We also condemn the killing of an Israeli civilian by a Palestinian in the same period.

As the Secretary-General's report notes, throughout this year, we have seen further settlement advancement, including in highly sensitive areas around East Jerusalem. We have seen the highest level of demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures since 2016 and ongoing evictions of Palestinians from their homes. In East Jerusalem hundreds are at risk, including those eight families facing imminent eviction in Silwan. The United Kingdom's position on these issues is clear and well known. Settlements are illegal under international law. They are an obstacle to peace and they undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution. Demolitions and evictions in all but the most exceptional of circumstances are illegal under international law and cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians. We urge the government of Israel to cease these policies in order to build confidence with the Palestinians and encourage the pursuit of dialogue.

However, as resolution 2334 recognises, settlements are not the only obstacle to peace. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. It is critical that the Palestinian leadership continue their efforts to tackle them. We also condemn violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians. The Israeli security forces must provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Mr President, I would like to raise the Commissioner General's urgent call for additional funding for UNWRA. The UK has contributed £51 million, or approximately \$69 million, to UNWRA in 2020 and engaged closely with the Commissioner General. We call on states who have cut their funding in recent years to support UNWRA now. We must do what we can to deal with the immediate needs of refugees throughout the region, to preserve stability and to ensure that those in need do not suffer. We are clear that we must work with UNWRA

in the longer term to help them to reach a secure and sustainable financial footing.

Mr President, recent Arab-Israeli agreements have shown that dialogue triumphs over hostility. We as the international community must now work with the parties alongside the incoming US administration to ensure that the closer ties and benefits of these normalisation agreements are also extended to the Palestinians. We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to also enter into a political dialogue, with the goal of ending the occupation and delivering a two-state solution.

To conclude, Mr President, unilateral steps will not deliver peace, a settlement to the conflict must be negotiated directly and reflect the religious and national interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Compromise will be needed on both sides. The U.K. continues to believe that a two-state solution is the only viable long term solution. It is the only way to end permanently the Arab-Israeli conflict and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity. As we move into a new year and a new era for the region, the international community must redouble its efforts to support the Israeli and Palestinian leadership in delivering this peace for both their peoples.

Thank you.