

Speech: Abstention of resolutions on long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people

Thank you Mr President and may I join colleagues in welcoming you to the Presidency for this month and saying that the United Kingdom looks forward to working with Russia. And may I also thank Poland for their very distinguished Presidency of this Council.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains extremely concerned by the situation in Gaza. We condemn the violent activities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organisations and we condemn them unreservedly. We have witnessed recently, unacceptable mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Such acts of terror are destructive to peace efforts and they need to stop. And in the past weeks, we have seen violence, Hamas' exploitation of peaceful protests and a disturbing volume of live fire. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organization by the UK since 2001 and the United Kingdom has sanctions in place against senior Hamas officials.

The recent violence has led to the tragic loss of life of over 100 Palestinians, and we reiterate that there is an urgent need to establish the facts surrounding past weeks' events.

Mr President, the deteriorating situation in Gaza should concentrate our minds on how we can work urgently towards a resolution of the long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people.

The United Kingdom has long supported UN action on Israeli-Palestinian issues. It is therefore regrettable, Mr President, that today's resolutions contain elements that are either imbalanced or too vague to be viable. For example, the Kuwaiti text fails to name terrorist actors including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And its suggestion of an international protection mechanism risks raising unrealistic expectations. We condemn Hamas, but at the same time, we regret that the American text does not adequately reference Israel's responsibilities and obligations with regard to Gaza. Therefore Mr President, the United Kingdom will abstain on both resolutions today.

I have set out our principled rationale and nothing more should be construed. Thank you.