

# Speech: Allowing peace and stability to prevail in the Middle East

Thank you Mr President, and thank you to Special Coordinator Mladenov for your briefing.

Mr President, the UK is deeply concerned by recent violence in Gaza and southern Israel, including civilian casualties. We must do everything we can to avoid another devastating war, which would compound the already awful humanitarian and security conditions faced by ordinary Gazans, and further threaten the security of Israeli border communities.

We urge restraint from all parties and welcome the return to calm in recent days. We strongly support the mediation efforts of the international community led by Egypt and the UN and urge continued talks aimed at finding an enduring peace in Gaza under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr President, we strongly condemn the firing of projectiles from Gaza towards Israel. Our Ambassador to Israel visited communities affected by the rocket fire on Tuesday. Hamas and other factions must end such attacks immediately. The recent deaths on both sides of the conflict are alarming.

In order to protect civilians it is crucial a ceasefire is agreed and maintained as part of a political process that sees the Palestinian Authority return to Gaza and the lifting of restrictions on the Gazan people and economy. As Mr Mladenov has made clear today, no effort must be spared to reverse the spiral of violence.

Mr President, the cycle of conflict in Gaza has gone on for too long, and the civilian populations in Gaza and Israel have suffered the consequences. We call on Hamas, the Palestinian Authority and Israel not to take any action that could lead to a further deterioration.

We remain deeply concerned about humanitarian situation in Gaza and have frequent discussions with the Government of Israel about the need to ease restrictions on Gaza. The UK welcomes the recent efforts to improve the humanitarian situation. In particular, we welcome the increase in electricity supply from 4-6 hours a day to 12 hours a day, and Palestinian Authorities' continued payment of salaries and other costs. We likewise welcome, as others have done, recent contributions to close the funding gap of UNRWA and reiterate the UK's support for the agency.

Political resolve is required to improve the situation in Gaza. The reconciliation agreement of October 2017 was a good start, but now all the Palestinian factions must work together to implement an agreement. We strongly support the efforts of Egypt, the UN Special Coordinator and the wider international community to achieve this.

The UK will continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards

reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. Such a durable solution is the only way to improve the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza and guarantee Israel's long-term security.

Mr President, in conclusion, the people of Israel and Gaza have the right to live without constant fear for their security. Both peoples have the right to live safely in peace. Urgent steps must be taken now to address the underlying causes of the conflict. It is in everyone's interest for peace and stability to prevail in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Now more than ever, we need a political process that delivers a two-state solution.

Thank you Mr President.