

# Speech: Reaffirming UK commitment to a two-state solution which ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Thank you Mr President,

Thank you to the Secretary General and Mr Mladenov as well.

I'd like to welcome President Abbas and thank him for his address to the Council. I welcome his stated commitment to non-violence, and to engage constructively towards a two-state solution.

The United Kingdom remains committed to a two-state solution which ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and we will support all and any efforts to that end.

Our long-standing goal is a negotiated peace settlement that leads to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, with secure and recognised borders and with Jerusalem as a shared capital of both States.

US leadership on this issue is indispensable to achieving a solution that meets the aspirations of both parties, and we look forward to the announcement of peace proposals when the US Administration judges them to be ready. US efforts offer a significant opportunity to deliver peace and they should be supported and encouraged by all. We stand ready to provide political and practical support to help achieve a viable agreement.

We encourage the parties to make a public commitment to renewed peace negotiations, on the basis of a two-state solution. In order to move forward, it is important that they reaffirm their commitment to all previous diplomatic agreements which have taken us closer to peace. These agreements remain an important basis for renewed talks. We welcome the Palestinian Authority's continued recognition of the State of Israel, and the parties' continuing security cooperation.

Mr President, if a peace process is to succeed, it needs to be conducted in an atmosphere free from violence. We regret that too many people continue to undermine efforts to achieve peace. We condemn the detonation of an Improvised Explosive Device along the Gaza border with Israel on Saturday, wounding four Israeli soldiers, including two seriously. We also condemn the recent terrorist attack in the West Bank settlement of Ariel. There is never an excuse for terror, and our thoughts are with the family and friends of the victim, as they are with all those who have been affected by violence. Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. There is also a right to dignity and we condemn kidnappings as well as acts that prevent families from being able to properly grieve for their loved ones.

We will continue to press all sides to refrain from engaging in, or encouraging, incitement, hateful action or language. This only serves to stir up prejudice, and takes us further from the goal of achieving peace.

In that regard it is unacceptable for anyone to deny the legitimacy of the connection of either the Jewish or Palestinian peoples to the land. Inflammatory and unhelpful rhetoric on both sides weakens trust, corrodes mutual respect, and undermines prospects for peace. We call on both parties to act with restraint, and to show bold leadership. Only when both parties reject violence and work together to ensure calm and stability can peace have a chance to flourish.

We are concerned by the Israeli Government's recent decision to establish a settlement deep in the West Bank – the second in twelve months. These plans have also raised the possibility of the retroactive 'legalisation' of the illegal outpost of Havat Gilad. And there have been renewed threats from Israel to demolish structures in Susiya, in the occupied West Bank.

We call on Israel to immediately reverse its policies of settlement expansion and demolitions. They undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution and they call into question Israel's own commitment to peace.

Mr President, the lack of Palestinian unity continues to be an impediment to achieving peace. We therefore support reconciliation efforts which lead to the full return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza.

As Special Coordinator Mladenov informed us last week, conditions in the Gaza Strip are dire. Further deterioration of the humanitarian situation would not only continue to put lives at risk but would represent a threat to stability in the region. It is essential that all parties work urgently to improve the situation, and we call for an easing of access controls for people and goods into, and out of, Gaza.

The United Kingdom remains a committed supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It must be able to continue its vital work to improve the lives of Palestinian refugees, and to help maintain stability across the region. It needs appropriate funding to do so.

Mr President, all United Nations Member States have a role to play in nurturing peace and rejecting violence.

We are therefore concerned by incursions across Israel's border with Syria earlier this month. Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and we support Israel's right to defend itself.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom's position on an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement has not changed. It should be based on the lines as they stood on June 4, 1967 with equal land swaps to reflect the national, security, and religious interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Jerusalem should be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, and its status must be determined through a final status agreement. A just, fair, agreed and

realistic settlement for refugees is needed that is demographically compatible with the principle of two states for two peoples.

To conclude Mr President, like all in this Council, the United Kingdom strongly supports peace. We want to see renewed peace negotiations, supported by the international community, which lead to a safe and secure Israel, the homeland for the Jewish People, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, the homeland for the Palestinian people.

Let us all work together to lay the groundwork for peace.

Thank you Mr President.