

The world cannot afford another conflict in the Persian gulf region

Thank you, Mr. President, and I want to start by thanking the Russian Presidency for holding this debate. The issue under consideration today is one of great importance. And as I start, let me just also say in response to Rob Malley, that I want to echo my German colleague on the case of Michael Kovrig, which causes us deep concern.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom remains concerned by the trajectory of violence, instability and hostile state-activity in the Middle East and Gulf region. Heightened tensions and insecurity serve no one's long term interest and instead put all at risk. We continue to call for de-escalation, dialogue and peace. The world cannot afford another conflict in the region.

As we have said repeatedly in this chamber, our commitment to the JCPoA remains resolute and it is at the forefront of our policy to support regional stability. Iranian nuclear armament would have catastrophic implications for the security of the region and beyond, and the JCPoA is the only vehicle currently available to prevent this. Nevertheless, while we remain committed to the nuclear deal, systematic Iranian non-compliance with its JCPoA commitments is putting it at risk. Iran must engage constructively with the Dispute Resolution Mechanism and Iran must implement its commitments under the deal. This is critical for security across the Middle East.

We have also frequently expressed our concern about Iran's wider activity in the region. Iran has consistently carried out arms transfers to regional non-state actors in violation of Security Council resolutions. There can be no doubt that such proliferation destabilises the region and escalates already high tensions. That is why we regret the expiry of resolution 2231's conventional arms restrictions. We will therefore continue to build our security cooperation with allies and partners and work to find a sustainable solution to Iranian proliferation. And we will redouble our efforts to ensure implementation of other Security Council resolutions, which prohibit arms transfers to regional non-state actors, including resolution 1546 in Iraq, resolution 1701 in Lebanon and resolution 2216 in Yemen. We will also ensure that the remaining provisions of resolution 2231, in particular the restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile program, are rigorously enforced.

Mr. President, for too long the region has been scarred by terrorism, war and other conflict. But though instability has increased, we must not lose hope. So we welcome the announcements of normalisation between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and we welcome the suspension of Israeli annexation plans. They must stay that way. The Abraham Accords demonstrate the potential for and the power of Jewish and Arab peoples in the region, breaking with the resentment and enmity of the past. Nelson Mandela once said, "resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies." The antidote to resentment and enmity is reconciliation and as Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said, we hope that other states will follow

the UAE and Bahrain's example and thereby secure a more peaceful Middle East. So we must build on the momentum of the Abraham Accords in order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which remains a wellspring for tension across the region. There is ultimately no substitute for direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians towards the ultimate objective of a two state solution. Here, as with many of the region's conflicts, mistrust can only be countered by measures to rebuild confidence and facilitate dialogue.

Conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Iraq continue to be sources of instability in the region. On Syria, the United Kingdom continues to support an inclusive Syrian-led political process, as provided for in resolution 2254. Following the latest Constitutional Committee talks, we again implore all parties to engage properly with the process. A political settlement is the only way to bring long term stability to Yemen and to address the worsening humanitarian crisis. We fully support the peace process led by the UN Special Envoy and we urge all parties, particularly the Yemeni parties, to engage constructively.

We remain committed to supporting a peaceful and prosperous Iraq, able to promote stability in the region. We are proud to work with Iraq within the global coalition to counter Daesh, a clear example of shared cooperation, effectively addressing one of the region's biggest security concerns.

Mr. President, we welcome the Secretary-General's participation in this debate and the United Nations' role working to resolve each of the aforementioned conflicts and sources of tension in the region. The Secretary-General can continue to rely on the United Kingdom's full support in each theatre.

However, as the concept note for today's debate suggests, there is a need to look beyond current crises and to engage on wider issues. In the longer term this will require a process within the region, which includes confidence building measures leading to a wider dialogue. The United Nations has a potential role to play as a trusted mediator and indeed, OP8 of resolution 598 makes provision for the Secretary-General to examine, with states of the region, measures to enhance regional security and stability. And while we hope that today's debate is a step in the right direction, we must be honest that an open debate in the Security Council, however well-intentioned, is not the forum for such conversations. Progress can only ultimately be made through candid conversations between all parties.

We are also not convinced that launching into security focused working groups will result in meaningful dialogue. We must remain realistic about the current level of regional mistrust. The issues involved are complex and sensitive, and an incremental approach is needed to build confidence and cooperation. More critically, as Russia points out, any dialogue needs to be shaped by regional participants. I want to welcome the commitment to regional security expressed by Iran in its letter of the 15th of October to the Council covering the Hormuz Peace Endeavour. But as a party to conflicts across the region, Iran is not an impartial actor, and it would not be appropriate for any initiative to be Iranian-led. More consultation is needed within the region to avoid another failed regional security initiative. We should learn from the many failed attempts in order to make a future

initiative a success. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe that led to the 1975 Helsinki Accords provide both positive and negative lessons, which we can draw on.

Mr. President, in conclusion, it is vital that we hear from all regional states and we would welcome discussions beyond the Council that could help identify political and practical steps to reduce mistrust within the region. Such discussions could include a potential mediation role for the United Nations. As I said at the outset, tensions and insecurity in the region ultimately serve none.

I thank the Russian Federation again for organising this debate on such an important issue. Thank you, Mr. President.