



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 20 February 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

[I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Representative of Malta]

I would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and Deputy Commissioner-General Stenseth for their insightful briefings.

I also recognise the presence of the Observer State of Palestine, Israel and Qatar.

I am also pleased that the council has acted in a united manner and adopted a PRST this morning.

We continue to monitor with deep concern the latest developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The significance of maintaining calm and avoiding unilateral inflammatory actions by all parties cannot be overstated. The resumption of dialogue and coordination between parties on the ground, including security cooperation, is essential for this conflict not to escalate further.

In the context of a stalled peace process, Malta strongly reiterates its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East



conflict based on a two-State Solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future Capital of two states living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with the relevant UNSC resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Settlement activities are a clear violation of international law and Security Council resolutions, and an obstacle to peace. The recent decision by the Israeli government to advance settlement units and to legalise, under Israeli law, settlement outposts in the occupied West Bank moves us further away from a viable two-State solution.

We call on the Israeli authorities to halt settlement expansion and to reverse these latest decisions. We also remain concerned at the growing incidence of demolitions, forced evictions and related settler violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

At the same time, Malta underlines the importance for the Palestinian Authority to organize the postponed national elections without further delay. We are encouraged by the signing of the Algiers Declaration of October 2022, and continue to urge the Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process. Malta also calls for the re-broadening of support and a safe enabling environment for Palestinian civil society to be actively engaged in the peace process.



In 2023, we have continued to witness violence, with casualties suffered by both sides. The protection of civilians must be ensured at all times. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, Malta underlines that any operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. We equally condemn the terrorist attacks committed against Israel.

The current state of affairs must not be allowed to continue. Both parties must find a way to engage in a meaningful dialogue that aims for the creation of two states living side by side. This is the only path that can lead to long term de-escalation.

Malta is deeply troubled at the number of victims of violence, especially the marked increase in incidents involving children, including in acts of terror.

In this vein, the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict also underscored the disproportionate impact of the conflict on children following her recent visit to Israel and the OPT. Malta echoes her call for all parties to establish measures which ensure the protection of all Palestinian and Israeli children.

We cannot mention the plight of children without commending UNRWA's role as a pillar of support to Palestinian refugees in the region. We also welcome UNRWA's tireless provision of schooling to over half a million children and the maintenance and operation of hundreds of schools for



Palestinian refugees. We equally condemn actions of any party that seek to bring the Agency's reputation into doubt.

UNRWA remains the strongest pillar of support and humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people, and a stabilising force in the region. Malta reiterates its call for severely needed international financial support for the Agency to ensure the realisation of its new Strategic Plan.

There is no alternative to a negotiated two-state solution. It is important to reverse the negative cycle of violence and to avoid any future loss of life.

We underscore that a re-commitment to the peace process by all parties is imperative. Restoring stability and securing peace, which safeguards the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people, should continue to guide our efforts.