



AUSTRALIA



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Plenary

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Statement to Resumed Tenth Emergency Special Session

Statement by HE the Hon Robert Hill Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Australia is committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict underpinned by a peaceful, negotiated settlement between Israel and Palestinian representatives. Australia supports a two State solution that recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognised borders in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

Australia shares the international community's concern over the escalation in violence since the kidnapping of Corporal Shalit by Palestinian militants from Gaza in June, and over the increasing number of casualties in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Australia calls on all sides to exercise utmost restraint and to avoid actions which lead to further violence or have an adverse humanitarian effect on the civilian population.

Australia recognises that Israel has a right to defend itself against terrorist attacks. Israeli Defence Force incursions have taken place in response to ongoing rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. It is vital the rocket attacks cease, in the interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

The resumption of this Emergency Special Session does not assist the cause of peace in the Middle East. We encourage the General Assembly to act responsibly and to address the issues in a balanced and even-handed way. Australia is concerned the proliferation of resolutions on the Middle East, particularly in Special Sessions, is unhelpful and wastes UN resources. The singling out of one side only for blame in a complex situation will do nothing to advance the cause of peace.

Only a return to the peace process and progress towards a two State solution will permit an easing of the current critical situation in the Palestinian Territories. A key to any revival in the Middle East Peace Process will be for the Palestinian Government to renounce violence and recognise Israel.

Australia, with the international community, has always stood ready to support the peace process. In recent months there has been renewed commitment by some key players to resume consultations, including by Arab States. Australia strongly supports continued international efforts for peace, and will look for practical ways to contribute to new initiatives as they emerge.

For any initiative to succeed, it will need the cooperation of the parties involved. We strongly urge both Israelis and Palestinians to work together and, with the support of the international community, to bring about a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.