



# Security Council

Sixty-first year

*Provisional*

**5515**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 22 August 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Nana Effah-Apenteng . . . . .	(Ghana)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina . . . . .	Mr. García Moritán
	China . . . . .	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo . . . . .	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark . . . . .	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France . . . . .	Mr. Duclos
	Greece . . . . .	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Pereyra Plasencia
	Qatar . . . . .	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia . . . . .	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania . . . . .	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Bolton

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President:** I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Norway, Pakistan and the Sudan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gillerman (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.*

**The President:** I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 August 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2006/676 and which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council being held on Tuesday, 22 August 2006, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.*

In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation, under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in the course of its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Gambari:** Last Friday, the Secretary-General reported on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (see S/2006/670). The Council has been regularly briefed on the situation in Lebanon and northern Israel. Indeed, the Secretary-General's Envoys Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar are today concluding meetings in Israel, after earlier consultations in Lebanon, as part of the process of preparing the report requested by the Council in paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). Today's briefing will therefore be focused on the Palestinian issue. In the light of the emphasis, in paragraph 18 of resolution 1701 (2006), on the need for comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions — starkly highlighted by events of the last two months — it is necessary, in our view, to step back from the events of the past month and consider the state of the peace process in the region in the light of the developments of the past year. For that reason, I will not report in detail on the events of the past month alone, serious as they have been.

This time last year, Israel was disengaging from Gaza and part of the northern West Bank. Led by the Quartet, the international community was working to ensure that that step would lead the parties back to the road map, and to the revival of the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory. Sadly, those hopes have not been fulfilled. Far from advancing towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, we have seen that vision slip further away during the past year. There are, in our opinion, several reasons for that unfortunate development.

The first is the political positions and actions of the parties. While President Abbas remains firmly committed to his platform of peace, the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, appointed pursuant to the 25 January elections, has not fully committed itself to the basic principles of the peace process: non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements. Although factional tensions persist, a broad spectrum of political and other Palestinian forces are currently engaged in a dialogue to put in place a national unity Government with a new programme. In the meantime, while efforts to strengthen Palestinian border management and the security services that fall under the purview of the President continue, the Palestinian reform agenda is largely frozen, and with it Palestinian compliance with road map obligations.

On the Israeli side, the coalition Government has stated a readiness to commence negotiations if the Palestinian Authority accepts the basic principles of the peace process and implements road map obligations. But Israel has not transferred approximately \$500 million it owes to the Palestinian Authority under the Paris Protocol, and has itself failed to implement road map obligations, including the freezing of settlement activity and the removal of outposts. Meanwhile, it has been planning for the future based on unilateral moves to disengage from parts of the West Bank while consolidating Israeli presence in other parts.

The second measure of the stagnation of the peace process is the degradation of the Palestinian Authority, the most tangible symbol of Palestinian hopes for statehood, as well as of Israeli hopes for a viable partner. The Palestinian Authority was already facing serious difficulties at the end of 2005. While the international community praised aspects of the Palestinian Authority's response during the disengagement process, the Authority's performance in the months following disengagement was at best mixed. The wage bill continued to grow as the Palestinian Authority recruited more officers into the security forces; security in Gaza deteriorated; and rocket attacks on Israel continued.

By December of last year, key donors were reconsidering their support to the Palestinian Authority's budget, which was already depleted. The Authority's domestic revenues have plunged further since the January elections. The cumulative worth of value-added-tax transfers collected by Israel but withheld from the Palestinian Authority will be

between \$480 and \$560 million by next month. Palestinian Authority workers, who support a third of the Palestinian population, have received only a fraction of their salaries over the past six months. Absenteeism in some areas of the civil service has now reached over 40 per cent.

Restrictions on movement mean that the Palestinian Cabinet has actually never met in one place, and that ministers are confined either to Gaza or to the West Bank. Moreover, several cabinet members, including the deputy Prime Minister, and now both the Speaker and the Secretary-General of the parliament, are in Israeli detention. Other ministers are in hiding or abroad, leaving ministries without policy direction and creating disillusionment among the managers and employees who remain at their posts.

Several ministry buildings in Gaza have been damaged by Israeli shelling. Ministries increasingly resort to United Nations assistance for fuel, transport support and office equipment. As an indicator of the deteriorating position of the Palestinian Authority, no annual budget was published for the year 2006. The Hamas Government's approach to running ministries — for example, its promotion of Hamas members into senior civil service positions — may have also contributed to disillusionment. There have also been constant tensions between the presidency and the Government over the security services.

Mechanisms such as the Temporary International Mechanism and the consolidated appeal of the United Nations itself have been put in place to ensure that basic goods and services are delivered and that minimum cash payments are made to the needy. But those mechanisms cannot replace the Palestinian Authority. They do not generate economic growth and they do not provide hope for Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority has shown major weaknesses in the past on security and on fiscal management. But today its capacity to deliver is in rapid decline. The continuation of that trend could lead to the collapse of a key provider, stabilizer and interlocutor in the region, to say nothing of Palestinian hopes for a Palestinian State.

A third measure of the state of the peace process is the most terrible of all, that is, suffering, destruction and death from violence. Israeli land, air and sea operations, despite being said to be aimed at militants or military targets, have killed large numbers of

civilians, including many children, and have caused heavy damage to civilian infrastructure such as private homes, bridges and power plants — particularly in Gaza, where violence is a daily fact of life. In the West Bank, too, Israeli incursions are a regular occurrence, particularly in Nablus and Jenin, often causing fatalities.

There have also been several Palestinian suicide attacks in Israeli cities over the past 12 months. The last was in April, but Israeli authorities report that they have foiled many other attempted operations. Israeli civilians living in towns and kibbutzes near Gaza have endured regular Qassam rocket attacks. No Israeli civilians have yet been killed by those rockets since disengagement, but there have been injuries. If the attacks continue, it will only be a matter of time before there are fatalities.

The cycle of attack and counter-attack only leads to increased human suffering, which is intolerable, on all sides. As an illustration, in the past year a total of 41 Israelis have been killed, and nearly 480 injured, by Palestinian violence. In the same period over 450 Palestinians have been killed, and over 2,500 injured, by Israeli violence. One hundred and ninety of those deaths occurred since the capture of Corporal Shalit, on 25 June; meaning that the rate of Palestinian casualties is comparable to the rate during Operation Defensive Shield, at the height of the second intifada.

Meanwhile, no progress has been made in securing the release of Corporal Shalit, despite calls for his unconditional release. His parents have not even received a “sign of life”, which is the least his captors could provide. Nor have the long-standing efforts of President Abbas to secure Palestinian prisoner releases yet borne fruit, despite his unrelenting efforts.

A fourth reason for the lack of progress towards a negotiated two-State solution is the creation of facts on the ground that would appear to prejudice final-status issues. Settlement activities continue, with some 3,000 units reportedly under construction within existing settlements. And despite several statements of intent which have been reported to the Security Council, unauthorized settlement outposts have not been dismantled.

The barrier, large parts of which are on occupied Palestinian territory, is now 51 per cent complete, despite the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Once it is finished, in

addition to the 180,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem, approximately 60,500 West Bank Palestinians will reside in areas between the barrier and the Green Line, with restricted access to health, education and employment services in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In East Jerusalem, the combination of settlement activity, including in the E-1 area, barrier construction and other administrative measures points to the encirclement of the city that is intended to serve one day as the capital of two States, while effectively dividing the West Bank into two separate geographical areas.

A fifth measure, in our opinion, is the economic situation, since development is a building-block of peace. The impoverishment in the Palestinian territories is more severe now than it has ever been, including during the period at the height of the second intifada. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, some 70 per cent of Palestinians are living below the poverty threshold, and 85 per cent of the population in Gaza is currently receiving food aid. One simple indicator of increasing Palestinian desperation is the fact that the number of applicants to the emergency job creation programme of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has doubled since December 2005.

The single biggest impediment to Palestinian economic growth, according to the World Bank, is the closure regime. The number of Israel Defense Forces-manned and unmanned physical obstacles in the West Bank has increased by 43 per cent since Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, despite the terms of the Agreement on Movement and Access, which are designed to achieve exactly the contrary. Meanwhile, the Rafah and Karni crossings have been only partially operational, at rates far lower than foreseen under the Agreement on Movement and Access, in the light of Israeli security concerns. Although the recent trends have been positive, at least for imports, our monthly reports show that, during 2006, less than 10 per cent of Gaza’s minimum daily export targets under the Agreement have been achieved. Rafah has been closed for all but two days of the past seven weeks, preventing people from leaving or entering Gaza. Thousands of Palestinian expatriate workers, who had come home for family visits, are at risk of losing their visas and jobs if they are not allowed to leave Gaza to return to the

countries where they work. Other aspects of the Agreement on Movement and Access, including the Gaza-West Bank link and progress on the airport and seaport, are dormant.

The sixth measure of the state of the peace process is perhaps the most worrying development of the past year, difficult to quantify but easy to discern. It has been in the attitudes of ordinary women and men. Opinion polls suggest a woeful decline in confidence in the peace process and in the prospects for a negotiated settlement on both sides. This trend, already plain before the recent conflict between Hizbollah and Israel, may well have been strengthened by it. Few people on either side believe that an end to the conflict is in sight. On one side, the result could well be further radicalization and support for violence and terror, while, on the other, it could well be support for harsh and excessive military action and unilateral measures. Positions may thus be hardening, and they could harden further unless a credible political process is somehow revived.

I have described the reality of the peace process today by seeking to describe what has actually happened in the past 12 months. I have given reasons why, in our view, we have reached this sorry juncture in the Middle East peace process so that we can reorganize and address the challenges ahead of us all. The purpose is not to assign blame; no useful purpose is ever served by that. I also recognize fully that making peace is not easy. But the absence of a credible political horizon, while in large part a consequence of decisions, actions and inaction by the parties themselves, is also partly a cause of some of those decisions, those actions and that inaction. We must also remind ourselves, as the Group of Eight stated at its summit in July, that the absence of a comprehensive solution is the root cause of the region's problems. Progress towards a two-State solution would undoubtedly facilitate the resolution of conflicts elsewhere in the region, and vice versa.

The stalled state of the peace process should therefore be regarded as unacceptable, both on its own merits and because of its broader regional implications. There are many concrete steps, some immediate, which need to be taken in order to get out of the current crisis and back towards a political path. As the Secretary-General stressed on 11 August, something more is needed: a renewed international effort in which the various crises in the region are addressed not in

isolation and not bilaterally, but as part of a holistic and comprehensive effort, sanctioned and championed by the Security Council, to bring peace and stability to the region as a whole. The tragedy we have witnessed in the last month should, in our view, be converted to an opportunity to take prompt, concerted action by all parties to resolve the problems and issues in the region, which have confronted us, without resolution, for far too long.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are strongly urged to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his thorough presentation.

Argentina notes with satisfaction that the parties are generally complying with the cessation of hostilities called for in resolution 1701 (2006). However, the incidents that occurred on 19 August demonstrate that the situation continues to be extremely fragile and underscore the need for the parties to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from taking measures that could affect the delicate balance achieved after intensive negotiations.

As the Secretary-General has said, the Israeli operation in the Bekaa valley last Saturday constitutes a violation of the cessation of hostilities. Regrettably, Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continue, in contravention of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and other decisions of the Security Council.

We would like to recall that all States, and in particular the neighbours of Lebanon, have an obligation to fully comply with the arms embargo established in resolution 1701 (2006). Any transfer of arms not authorized by the Government of Lebanon is a clear violation of the obligations set out by the Security Council.

My country welcomes the fact that the Lebanese armed forces began to deploy in the south of the

country following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some sectors. The priority for the forthcoming days will be to keep up and intensify that dynamic so as to attain the objective set out in paragraph 2 of the resolution: that all Israeli forces should withdraw from southern Lebanon and that the Government of Lebanon should fully fulfil its responsibilities between the Litani river and the Blue Line.

The assistance of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in that process is essential. We are grateful to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for its efforts in recent weeks to accelerate the deployment of additional troops. We hope that after the circulation of the draft rules of engagement and concept of operations of UNIFIL it will be possible to ensure that substantive contributions to the force are made.

We should also continue to work to achieve the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hizbollah and to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of the Lebanese prisoners.

Looking beyond these issues, it is essential to establish foundations for a lasting solution to this conflict on the basis of the principles mentioned in resolution 1701 (2006), in particular with regard to the disarmament of Hizbollah and other militias, compliance with the arms embargo and resolving the outstanding territorial problems, especially in respect to the Sheba'a Farms. In this connection, we support the mission undertaken by Mr. Nambiar and Mr. Roed-Larsen and look forward to having a comprehensive report by mid-September.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in Lebanon, we express our appreciation for the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the humanitarian agencies. In the current circumstances, the priority is to secure access to the affected population in southern Lebanon and to assist persons who are returning to their homes. The presence of a great number of unexploded munitions creates an additional challenge for these activities.

In relation to the aforementioned, it is essential that Israel lift the maritime and aerial blockades and suspend the restrictions imposed on the Lebanese land crossings. The Lebanese authorities, on their part, should assume their responsibilities with a view to ensuring that the lifting of these restrictions does not

affect the implementation of paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006).

The tragic events during the last month between Lebanon and Israel should not distract us from what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Argentina is extremely concerned by the humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people and by the death of innocent civilians as a result of the violence and the Israeli excessive use of force and Palestinian extremist activities.

We continue to attach importance to the immediate and unconditional liberation of the Israeli soldier and to the fulfilment by the Government of the Palestinian Authority of the principles set out by the Quartet. Likewise, we believe that Israel should immediately and unconditionally release all Palestinian officials and legislators, end military activities in Gaza and take urgent measures to contribute to the improvement of the humanitarian situation in that territory. Unilateral Israeli measures in the West Bank must immediately stop, as must any other practices that contravene international law.

The parallel crises in Lebanon and Gaza have demonstrated once again that there is no military solution to this conflict. Only negotiated political solutions will be sustainable in the long term. Argentina will continue to support a just solution to the problems of the Middle East, based on the resolutions of this Security Council, the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

In political, economic and humanitarian terms, the situation is a source of serious concern. Now more than ever before joint efforts by the international community are needed to prevent an escalation and to establish appropriate conditions for progress in the political settlement process in the region.

Over several weeks, the Security Council worked hard to find a way out of the Lebanese-Israeli crisis. The outcome of that intense activity was the unanimous adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), which if properly implemented would, beyond the Lebanese dimension, have great significance in reducing tension in the entire Middle East region.

We are generally satisfied with how the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) is proceeding. The Lebanese army is gradually taking control of territory in the south of the country, while the Israeli army is withdrawing from areas it had occupied. The main task now is not to allow any disruption of this process, to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is maintained and becomes a lasting ceasefire, and to prevent attempts to undermine agreements that were so difficult to achieve.

While working to enhance positive developments in the Lebanese-Israeli settlement, we must not lose sight of what is taking place in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The situation in the Palestinian territories continues to be extremely unstable. Israel has not ended its use of force in Palestinian Authority areas, and this has led to an increasing number of victims among the civilian population. What is also destabilizing the situation is the practice of arresting heads of Palestinian self-governing bodies and members of the legislative body, which is leading to paralysis in the work of the autonomous governing structures.

Such developments once again confirm that it is impossible to fully resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict if a solution cannot be found to its root cause — the Palestinian problem. In the absence of such, the Security Council will continue to deal with chronic Middle East conflicts and to react to new challenges that constantly arise in the region. Therefore it is necessary to resume as soon as possible the Palestinian-Israeli political dialogue, which should aim at finding a constructive solution to all existing problems in relations between the parties.

Russia, through its contacts with the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, members of the Quartet of international mediators, countries of the region and the League of Arab States, continues actively to support effective, collective efforts by the international community to achieve lasting progress on a Middle East settlement in all its dimensions and on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the provisions of the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

**Mr. Bolton** (United States of America): I, too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

It has been 11 days since the passage of resolution 1701 (2006). We believe this resolution is an important step forward and, when fully implemented, that it will help lay the foundation for lasting peace in the region. The United States is now actively engaged with others to turn this opportunity into a reality.

The United States takes seriously the imperative of fully implementing resolution 1701 (2006), starting with its call to take immediate steps to extend financial and humanitarian assistance to the people of Lebanon. The United States has pledged \$50 million in humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, over half of which has already been distributed. As President Bush announced yesterday, we will increase this humanitarian and reconstruction aid to more than \$230 million in the weeks ahead. The President has also announced his intention to work with Congress to extend the availability of loan guarantees to help rebuild Israeli infrastructure damaged by Hizbollah's rockets.

In addition to alleviating the humanitarian problem in southern Lebanon, it is imperative that we move as quickly as possible to secure the peace by enhancing the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and providing robust rules of engagement. We urge potential troop-contributing countries to expedite their internal decision-making processes as we strive to reach our goal of an expanded 15,000-member international force. Delay in this case does not serve the interests of anyone, except of those who oppose a sovereign, free and democratic Lebanon, one which is no longer used as a base to launch terrorist attacks against Israel, killing its innocent civilians.

As we plan for this deployment, we should be encouraged that, broadly speaking, one of the important goals of resolution 1701 (2006) has been achieved — a cessation of hostilities. We are concerned, of course, by reports of sporadic violence, but we stress that resolution 1701 (2006) guarantees Israel's right to defend itself and its forces.

Israel has said that the operation in the Bekaa Valley this past weekend was targeted against arms shipments to Hizbollah from Iran and Syria. Such arms shipments are, of course, legally prohibited by the arms embargo established by resolution 1701 (2006) unless specifically authorized by the Government of Lebanon. All States must comply with their obligations to

observe it. Failure to strictly observe that embargo will significantly enhance the risk of future hostilities. The burden of abiding by the arms embargo, and the attention of the world, fall especially on Syria and Iran.

But resolution 1701 (2006) is not just about a cessation of hostilities. It correctly emphasizes not only the need for an end to violence but “the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers”. It is impossible — indeed, dangerous — to divorce the two issues. If the international community applies only a temporary band-aid solution to the problem and allows Hizbollah to regroup and rearm, then the suffering of the people of Lebanon and Israel may very well intensify in the near future.

We must keep in mind that responsibility for this conflict rests squarely on the shoulders of Hizbollah. As President Bush stated unequivocally last week, it was an unprovoked attack by Hizbollah on Israel that started this conflict. Hizbollah terrorists targeted Israeli civilians with daily rocket attacks. Hizbollah terrorists used Lebanese civilians as human shields, sacrificing the innocent in an effort to protect themselves from Israeli response.

If we are to achieve the goal of lasting peace in the region, we must put an end to Hizbollah’s operating as a State within a State. To do that requires that we address the backing of Hizbollah by Damascus and Tehran. Their continued support to Hizbollah in the form of financing and training and supplying armaments does not just perpetuate this crisis; it sustains it. Cutting off those supply lines, as mandated in resolution 1701 (2006), is a matter that can no longer be ignored. The United States calls again upon Iran and Syria to comply immediately with that resolution. The United States remains deeply concerned at the attitude of Syria and Iran in this crisis. The leaders of both States have called for the destruction of Israel in recent days.

We recognize, as President Bush stated last week, that the conflict in Lebanon is part of a broader struggle between freedom and terror that is unfolding across the region. We believe that full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) will lay the foundation on which to achieve a lasting peace and realize the goals outlined originally in resolution 1559 (2004) — a sovereign and democratically elected Government in

Lebanon, free from coercion by all outside Governments.

The United States also remains deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, instigated by the 25 June attack by Hamas inside Israel, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed and Corporal Gilad Shalit was kidnapped. The United States is keenly aware of the humanitarian impact of the current crisis, which has been caused by the refusal of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government to govern responsibly. Indeed, the Hamas Government has made a strategic decision to reject peace and to continue to embrace terrorism. In order to ease the hardships faced by the Palestinian people due to the intransigent policies of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government, we have increased humanitarian assistance to more than \$270 million, including more than \$50 million in response to the emergency appeal by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the West Bank and Gaza. We have also substantially increased our support for the promotion of democracy and civil society and the development of the private sector.

In the days ahead we look forward to the continued implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), but we cannot stress enough the urgent need to move quickly to implement fully the obligations imposed on us in accordance with that resolution. The price of failure in this case is to condemn the people of Lebanon and Israel to further violence and tragedy.

**Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

In the past month the Middle East region has undergone two bloody conflicts. The peoples of Palestine, Lebanon and Israel all incurred heavy and saddening costs. We are deeply distressed and gravely concerned at this. With the concerted effort of the international community, the Security Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006) on this issue on 11 August, requiring parties to the Lebanese-Israeli conflict to cease hostilities in a comprehensive manner.

In the past week both Lebanon and Israel basically abided by their ceasefire commitments. We should say that this is a victory of diplomatic efforts. We hope that the Lebanese and Israeli parties will both earnestly honour their commitments, demonstrate the



greatest good will and do their utmost to implement resolution 1701 (2006).

The adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) opens a new chapter in the settlement of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict. Whether the current peaceful situation can be consolidated depends on the political will and efforts of the parties concerned. The next few weeks will be critical. We believe the top priorities for the international community lies in the following four areas.

First, the Lebanese Government must be helped to exercise effective control over its entire territory. To that end, the capacity and role of the Government's forces should be strengthened so that they can truly shoulder the responsibility for maintaining peace and security in Lebanon.

Second, the expansion of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) must be stepped up. Countries in a position to do so should swiftly contribute troops to ensure UNIFIL's early deployment.

Third, humanitarian assistance to Lebanon must be increased. Parties to the conflict should cooperate with the efforts of the international community, including ensuring safety in the humanitarian corridor. Israel should also lift the various blockades imposed on Lebanon as soon as possible.

Fourth, Lebanon should be helped to undertake post-war recovery and reconstruction. Currently the country is a scene of devastation and suffering, with everything screaming to be rebuilt. The international community should extend a helping hand so that Lebanon can re-emerge from the rubble of war.

While paying attention to the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, we should not forget the suffering of the Palestinian people. We are deeply concerned over the steadily deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Once again we urge all parties concerned to abide strictly by international humanitarian law, avoid harming innocent civilians and assist and facilitate the humanitarian relief activities of the international community.

Both Israel and Palestine should create conditions for political settlements. The Israeli side should release the democratically elected Government officials of Palestine at an early date, while the Palestinian side

should take measures and work towards an early release of the abducted Israeli soldiers.

The question of Palestine has always been at the centre of the Middle East issue. Without success and reasonable settlement of the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people, tension in the Middle East cannot be eased at its roots and genuine peace will not be realized. We hope that with the joint efforts of Israel and the Arab countries, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and on the principle of land for peace, the Middle East peace process can be revitalized and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace will be achieved in the region soon.

**Sir Emyr Jones Parry** (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing and to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670).

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

On Lebanon, the objectives of resolution 1701 (2006) are clear: to bring about a full cessation of hostilities, to create the space for an urgent humanitarian relief effort, and to begin a process leading to a permanent ceasefire and lasting peace.

The United Kingdom welcomes the progress already made towards achieving those objectives. The cessation of hostilities has largely held. The Secretary-General reports that this has greatly improved the frequency and quantity of humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, and we underline our full support for his efforts to secure the political agreement necessary for a long-term solution, including through the current visit to the region by Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar.

The progress in planning for the enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deployment is encouraging. The priority now is to give UNIFIL the resources to do its new job and to turn the many welcome offers to contribute into forces on the ground, as some have already done. The United Kingdom has already made a firm offer of air and naval assets and stands ready to deploy them quickly if the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) takes up our offer.

But recent events have underlined the fragility of the cessation of hostilities and the need for both sides

and others in the region to avoid any action which could undermine it. It is also clear that the humanitarian effort faces serious challenges, not least in securing access to all those parts of Lebanon affected by the conflict. In that context, we support the Secretary-General's call for the air and sea blockade on Lebanon to be lifted as soon as possible.

No one should underestimate the difficulties inherent in securing political agreement on issues where the two sides have such divergent views. In this context, it will be important to find arrangements that facilitate direct contacts between the two Governments.

However, the progress reported by the Secretary-General is grounds for cautious optimism. It also reminds us why it was right to work for a resolution that had a realistic chance of making an immediate impact on the ground and that also looked beyond the short term and held out the prospect of a lasting solution. At the heart of that lasting solution, and at the heart of resolution 1701 (2006), is the need to pursue the twin objectives of Lebanese sovereignty and Israeli security. We need to achieve both if we are to deliver a lasting peace. That is why the Council unanimously adopted a resolution setting out a framework for re-establishing peace, security and stability in southern Lebanon on the basis of extending the Government of Lebanon's control throughout its territory, and in particular through implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006).

To achieve that, we look first and foremost to all the parties to respect the terms of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). But we also look to others with influence to play their part. This includes Syria and Iran. A key provision of resolution 1701 (2006) is the requirement to ensure an end to all arms shipments into Lebanon other than those destined for its sovereign Government. The attitude of Syria and Iran, as well as that of others in the region, will be central to our success in implementing this and other provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

We have also heard today about the continuing crisis in Gaza. During the past month, the focus of the Council and of the international community has, inevitably, been mainly on Lebanon, but today's briefing reminds us that the suffering of those caught up in this conflict has not been any less simply because the focus of our attention may, understandably, have been elsewhere. We continue to be deeply concerned

about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Gaza. The United Kingdom has just announced a £3 million contribution to the temporary international mechanism.

But, more generally, it is vitally important that all sides act to de-escalate this conflict and create the space for negotiations to resume. In particular, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of Corporal Shalit and an end to the firing of rockets into Israel. We underline the need, on the other hand, for Israel to act in accordance with international law and to protect civilians. Those members of the Palestinian legislature detained in Israel should be either released or charged and accorded due legal process. We are particularly concerned about the kidnapping of the New Zealand and United States journalists and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Under-Secretary-General Gambari's briefing is also a reminder that real peace in the region, and, indeed, real sovereignty for Lebanon and real security for Israel can be achieved only on the basis of a lasting, comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. There is no military solution to these problems; negotiation is the only viable way to bring peace and prosperity to peoples throughout the Middle East. The Middle East remains a top foreign policy priority for the United Kingdom. Our Prime Minister is committed to doing what we can to help re-energize that process and plans to visit the region soon.

Our priorities in the medium term will rightly be Lebanon and Gaza. But ultimately, however, those issues cannot be solved independently of a solution to the broader problems in the region. But nor should progress in those two areas be held hostage to the overall objective. It is therefore vital that we work in parallel to resolve specific issues as soon as we can and, more broadly, to re-energize the Middle East peace process and create the conditions for an early resumption of negotiations based on the Quartet road map.

**Mr. Faaborg-Andersen** (Denmark): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his thorough briefing.

Denmark aligns itself with the statement to be given shortly by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Denmark is pleased to note that the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah by and large seems to be holding, that the Israel Defense Forces has initiated its withdrawal, and that contacts are ongoing between the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese armed forces on the schedule for the withdrawal of the remaining forces.

The situation is, however, still extremely fragile, as evidenced by the incident that took place this past weekend. Denmark calls on all parties to show the utmost restraint and to refrain from any action which could undermine the current ceasefire.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and to give it the capacity to implement the full mandate contained in resolution 1701 (2006), including enforcement of the arms embargo. As already announced, Denmark is, for its part — pending parliamentary approval — ready to support the naval component of an enhanced UNIFIL. Now that the outstanding issues concerning the rules of engagement and the concept of operations seem to have been cleared up, additional Member States will, hopefully, be able to provide similar specific pledges.

There is also a need to assist the Government of Lebanon through capacity-building and the provision of matériel to exercise its authority throughout its territory, not least to secure its borders and prevent the illicit delivery of weapons.

Denmark welcomes the urgency and diligence with which the Secretary-General has approached the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). It particularly welcomes the timely decision to dispatch Special Envoys Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen and Mr. Vijay Nambiar to the region in order to help facilitate negotiations on the political conditions for a lasting ceasefire, which would require, among other factors, the disbandment and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as stipulated in resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). We look forward to receiving their proposals on implementing resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including proposals to settle the disputed border areas, such as the Sheba'a farms. There is also an urgent need to find a solution to the question of the abducted Israel soldiers and the Lebanese prisoners in Israel.

All Member States must actively back these efforts by the Secretary-General and his envoys

through their own channels. As stressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark in the Security Council on 11 August (see S/PV.5511), Denmark pledges its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in this regard and stands ready to assist wherever possible.

In spite of the ceasefire, the humanitarian situation in Lebanon is still disturbing. It is of paramount importance that the Government of Lebanon receive support. The Government of Lebanon urgently needs the capacity to be the lead player in humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts. The Danish Government has already disbursed \$4 million in support through bilateral and multilateral agencies. Danish experts have been seconded to United Nations agencies, and a Danish team is part of the general effort to clean up after the huge oil spill along the Lebanese coast.

We look forward to the donors conference in Stockholm next week where we expect United Nations agencies to be able to present revised plans. Substantial amounts have already been committed. It is important that both donors and agencies demonstrate flexibility so that the new efforts can be geared towards the real needs on the ground.

In addition to Lebanon, Denmark is particularly concerned about the situation between Israel and the Palestinian territories, in particular, in the Gaza Strip. There remain ongoing hostilities, the humanitarian situation is deeply worrying and the economy is almost completely broken down. Also, the political situation continues to deteriorate. I think that it is obvious that the long-term negative consequences for the territories as well as for the Middle East as a whole could be far more serious if we do not find a solution to all aspects of this crisis as soon as possible.

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of Corporal Gilad Shalit of the Israel Defense Forces and urge the Palestinian leadership to undertake all necessary efforts in this regard and to stop the firing of rockets into Israel.

We are also concerned about the detention of elected members of the Palestinian Government and legislature. This issue should be resolved without delay. We call on Israel to exercise restraint. Israel must ensure that its response is proportional and measured and carried out with full respect for a State's

obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in time of war.

Whether in Lebanon or in the Palestinian territories, all parties must do their utmost to avoid escalating the situation. The parties have to be ready to make concessions and to act responsibly and with a sense of proportion. Additional violence will only serve to promote the agendas of extremists. Only by returning to peaceful negotiations can we hope to reach a comprehensive political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has already generated so much suffering and hatred in the region.

**Mr. Duclos** (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement that will be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I would like to commend Mr. Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing and welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670). France welcomes the determined action by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to ensure the full implementation of that resolution.

With regard to the situation in Lebanon, France is happy to note the first positive effects of resolution 1701 (2006). The cessation of hostilities has now entered, as of yesterday, its second week. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report, the two parties have generally respected the agreed time of Monday, 14 August, for the cessation of hostilities.

The Israeli military operation in the Bekaa valley last Saturday was a source of considerable concern for us. France calls on all parties to demonstrate the utmost restraint and to respect the obligations incumbent upon them under the terms of resolution 1701 (2006). It calls upon them to continue and to complete, as soon as possible, the process of the parallel deployment of the Lebanese army and the withdrawal of the Israeli army. The extension of the authority of the Lebanese Government into the south is indeed a historic decision which is to be welcomed and supported.

Now, the international community must strive to ensure the achievement of several objectives: the unconditional freeing of the Israeli prisoners; the settlement of the sensitive issue of the Lebanese detainees in Israel; the immediate return of displaced persons to their homes and access by civilian populations to humanitarian aid; the lifting of the blockade against Lebanon; the respect by all of the

embargo on illegal arms; and the reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) which must be diversified and made more robust so that it can safely accomplish its missions.

France is making every effort through its contacts with all the parties concerned to achieve, on the basis of resolution 1701 (2006), a long-term solution to the crisis in order to enhance the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as well as the security of Israel.

With regard to the Palestinian territories, France continues to be extremely concerned by the continuously worsening security situation and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. While the international community's attention has been focused since mid-July on the Lebanese crisis, France considers that the international community should renew its involvement in the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continues to be a major source of instability and frustration in the region.

Of course, action by the international community cannot be a substitute for determined measures by the parties themselves, and those parties must respect their obligations. The Palestinian Authority must immediately take every necessary measure to put an end to the firing of rockets and other acts of violence against Israel and its citizens and to work for the freeing of the kidnapped Israeli soldier. The Palestinian Authority must also struggle, more than ever and with the greatest determination, against terrorism. We expect that the Hamas-led Government should finally respect the three principles established by the Quartet: to renounce violence, to recognize Israel and to accept prior agreements. We reaffirm our support for President Abbas and for all his efforts to strengthen the Palestinian national consensus on the basis of the objectives that he has been defending since his election to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority.

Israel, for its part, must end its disproportionate military operations against Palestinian towns and refugee camps. Those operations have, over the past few weeks, taken a very heavy toll in human terms, particularly among civilians, and in terms of considerable damage inflicted on basic infrastructure and vital equipment, as well as on the institutions of the Palestinian Authority.

In general terms, it is important that Israel refrain from any measures that might undermine the Palestinian Authority as an institution and as a future negotiating partner. The recent arrests of the President and the Secretary General of the parliament, as well as of the Deputy Prime Minister, are, in this respect, counterproductive. We once again call upon Israel to free the members of the Government and the Legislative Council and other Palestinian political leaders whom it has imprisoned.

At this critical juncture for the Middle East, it is essential that the international community work in a determined way to relaunch the peace process. That will require the updating the road map, in cooperation with the regional parties concerned. The goal must be to ensure that there is a negotiated political solution leading to the creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel.

In this respect, France continues to be extremely concerned about the continuing settlement process and the building of the separation barrier within occupied Palestinian territory. Both of those actions compromise the geographic, economic and political viability of the future State of Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to recall something that should be obvious to all: there is no military solution to the conflicts in the Middle East. The deadly conflicts that we have recently witnessed in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip can lead only to further destruction, greater hatred and increased radicalism. Only dialogue and negotiation can enable the people of that region to realize their legitimate aspirations for peace, prosperity and security.

Diplomatic efforts are now under way by the Secretary-General and a certain number of countries that are in a position to facilitate the achievement of a lasting solution to those two crises, which is essential for the future of the region. France will continue to work tirelessly for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement that is based on Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

**The President:** I would like to note that Ambassador Duclos is making his last appearance in the Security Council in his capacity as Deputy Permanent Representative of France. I understand that he is leaving for another important posting. On behalf

of the Council, I would like to express our gratitude to him for his cooperation and for his positive contribution to the work of the Council. I am confident that he will use the knowledge and experience acquired in the course of his work here in discharging his new responsibilities. We wish him well.

**Mr. Kitaoka (Japan):** I would like to join colleagues in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

In the past month, we have again witnessed widespread, deeply troubling changes in the Middle East. It is urgently necessary to create conditions for a cessation of violence that will be sustainable and to lay the foundations for a permanent solution to the problems there.

With regard to the situation in Lebanon and Israel, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 1701 (2006), has effected a cessation of hostilities and created the political framework for a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the problems. In general, the parties concerned have honoured the terms of the resolution in that regard. There have also been some encouraging steps towards the expansion of the authority of the Lebanese Government over all of its territory in this first week after the resolution was adopted. These include the withdrawal of the Israeli army from some of the positions inside Lebanese territory and the start of the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces. However, the situation remains extremely fragile, as was demonstrated by the Israeli military operation in eastern Lebanon on Saturday, 19 August.

Japan continues to call upon both parties to exercise maximum restraint and to do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and that it becomes a durable ceasefire. We support the proposals and observations made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/670) to that end. We attach particular importance to three of them.

First, in order to ensure the early deployment of the reinforced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Japan strongly hopes that Member States in a position to do so will immediately make contributions. Secondly, with respect to the humanitarian and reconstruction activities that are needed to stabilize the situation, we greatly appreciate the commitment and dedication that the relevant United Nations and other organizations have shown in difficult circumstances.

Japan, for its part, is giving consideration to providing assistance to Lebanon so as to contribute to the best of its ability to promoting stability there and in the region as a whole.

Thirdly, on the subject of the political process, Japan strongly urges the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to arrive at an agreement, as stipulated in the resolution. We also request the Secretariat to draw on its collective wisdom to present a realistic implementation plan in the next report of the Secretary-General, which is scheduled to be released in September. We expect that the United Nations delegation, comprising Mr. Nambiar and Mr. Roed-Larsen, among others, will play an important role in this regard.

Japan is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of conditions in Palestine — the central issue in the Middle East — in particular since the abduction of Israeli soldiers about two months ago. Japan calls on Israel to exercise the utmost restraint and to seek to avoid casualties among innocent civilians and damage to civilian infrastructure.

We also urge that a number of steps be taken as a matter of the highest priority. First, Israeli soldiers held in Gaza and Lebanon should be returned unharmed. Secondly, terrorist attacks against Israel must cease. Thirdly, Israel should end its military operations and its forces should withdraw from Gaza at an early date. Fourthly, the detained Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians should be released.

Japan has strong hopes for the early resolution of these matters, which are of the highest priority, following the resumption of cooperation with regard to security and cultural engagement, both among Palestinians and with Israel. To that end, it is more necessary than ever that the Palestinian Authority Cabinet, led by Hamas, engage in the peace process through peaceful means based on existing international agreements and obligations.

Furthermore, it is of vital importance that leaders in the region and the international community continue actively to engage in diplomatic efforts. Japan, for its part, has conveyed to both parties on several occasions its firm belief that there is no alternative but to work together towards coexistence and mutual prosperity. We have, therefore, called for Israel to exercise the maximum restraint and for President Abbas to provide

the necessary leadership so that these goals can be achieved.

Japan is also very concerned at the heavy toll in innocent civilian lives in Palestine and Israel and at the extreme deterioration of the humanitarian situation of Palestinians. We believe it is essential that the international community, including Israel, continue to provide humanitarian assistance. I should like to note that Prime Minister Koizumi, during his visit to the region in July, expressed his support for President Abbas and announced his decision to extend a total of \$25 million to help the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to participate actively in the discussions in the Security Council, while also pursuing its own diplomatic efforts, in cooperation with all concerned countries in the region, with a view to defusing the crisis and restoring calm and stability to the region.

**Mr. Vassilakis** (Greece): Like other speakers, I wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, for his thorough briefing today.

As Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, I shall be brief.

Over approximately the past two months, we all became witnesses to an incredible tragedy in the Middle East — one with severe repercussions not only for Lebanon, but for the entire region. With the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council took a bold and ambitious step not only to ensure that there would be a full cessation of hostilities between the warring parties, but also, at the same time, to provide a sound framework for the achievement of a political solution. That solution would form the basis for a lasting ceasefire and, eventually, for a lasting solution to the problems underlying the current conflict in Lebanon.

In that context and owing to the complexities of the several issues at hand, it is understandable that negotiations within the Council took longer than many of us would have preferred. This crisis, however, forced all members of the Council, and the international community as a whole, to revisit and re-examine in detail the dynamics at play in this troubled region.

During the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), a number of representatives, including Greece's Foreign Minister, stressed the need to reinvigorate and relaunch in earnest the Middle East peace process, in particular with regard to the question of Palestine. As we say in Greece, we cannot hide behind our fingers, that is to say, we cannot continuously ignore and avoid the realities and the truth. The Palestinian question lies at the heart of developments in the region. We must all do our share.

The international community must not lose sight of the plight of the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspiration for statehood. Without a just and viable solution to the Palestinian question, peace in the Middle East will remain as elusive as ever. The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is dire and a cause for grave concern. We fully share the Secretary-General's concerns over the continued killing and injuring of hundreds of civilians, including children, in Gaza by Israeli forces. Likewise, the arbitrary arrest of many senior Palestinians is a cause of particular concern, since it further undermines Palestinian institutions, which must be preserved if a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to be achieved.

The long-term effects of the crisis in Lebanon on the wider region will depend to a large degree on how all the players in the region and the international community react to it and decide how to deal with it, as well as how to handle the entire problem of the Middle East in all its forms, and how to promote long-term solutions. Indeed, the current crisis can be turned into an opportunity — an opportunity for all involved to realize that causes cannot be promoted or achieved through violence and, at the same time, that security cannot be guaranteed by military means alone.

The principles that should form the basis for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region are well known. These include all relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace; and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In another bold and ambitious step, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 1515 (2003), endorsed the Quartet's performance-based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and called on the parties to fulfil their

obligations under the Road Map with a view to achieving the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. We reiterate that call here today. At the same time, we call on the international community, in particular the Quartet, to remain actively committed and dedicated to assisting the parties in achieving that shared vision. Moreover, we encourage the countries of the region to promote ways to facilitate the resumption of dialogue among all sides and to constructively engage with international partners to that end.

Greece will remain committed to the goal of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace for the Middle East. We must re-energize the peace process as soon as possible. If we want peace to prevail, we must look to the future without recriminations or arbitrary actions, which only take us backwards without hope.

**Mrs. Taj** (United Republic of Tanzania): We join in thanking the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Gambari, for his briefing on the situation in Palestine. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670).

We welcome the fact that Lebanon has moved troops across the Litani river to the south and that Israel has begun the gradual withdrawal of its forces. We believe that the rapid deployment of a strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will assist in hastening the Israeli withdrawal. We further welcome the announcement by the Lebanese Defence Minister discouraging the firing of rockets at Israel. We join the Secretary-General in warning against such actions and in urging both parties to display responsibility in implementing resolution 1701 (2006), including the utmost respect for the arms embargo.

We note that Hizbollah has supported the resolution and has brought hostilities to an end. Notwithstanding the unfortunate incidents over the weekend, we hope that the ceasefire agreement can be translated into peace on the ground. It is thus imperative to ensure that the ceasefire continues to hold and that its implementation is verified. We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a high-level mission to talk to the parties involved so as to secure full implementation of the resolution. We look forward to a report from that team after the completion of their mission.

We are encouraged by the positive response made by countries willing to contribute to a reinforced UNIFIL by providing both troops and equipment to make it more robust and give it a multilateral character. Indeed, we expect its rapid deployment in southern Lebanon, following clarification of the remaining sensitive issues pertaining to the concept of operations, the rules of engagement and the specific mandate of the new force. Tanzania will continue to render its full support to all efforts towards a lasting ceasefire.

In the humanitarian area, we commend the swift action taken to ensure that assistance reaches those in dire need as soon as possible. To enhance humanitarian operations and as a matter of urgency, the air and sea blockade over Lebanon must be lifted, so as to make available urgently needed items, in particular fuel. We appeal to all those helping returnees to increase their efforts, so as to prevent further human suffering. We have noted with satisfaction that their safety is being taken into account, in particular as regards the handling of unexploded ordnance and land mines.

With regard to the question of Palestine, we are very concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation there and the continued suffering of the Palestinian people, as described by the Under-Secretary-General. Constructive measures must be deployed to resolve the unrest in Gaza. A number of United Nations resolutions and other agreements provide a basis for a just and viable solution to the Middle East conflict, including the question of Palestine. As a long-term strategy, those resolutions should be revisited and implemented, which should include the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territory. The resumption of negotiations based on the Quartet's Road Map is key to a lasting solution.

In the short and immediate term, Hamas and Hizbollah should free the captured Israeli soldiers. For its part, Israel must settle the problem of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in its jails. Israel needs partners, rather than adversaries, to resolve the Middle East conflict. However slow and rocky the road may be, in the end diplomacy is a wiser and cheaper choice than war. The one-month confrontation between Israel and Hizbollah, which has resulted in enormous destruction and loss of life, has proven that point beyond any doubt.

**Mr. Pereyra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the

valuable briefing given by Under-Secretary-General Gambari. Peru is pleased that resolution 1701 (2006), which the Security Council adopted 10 days ago, has been accepted by the Governments of Israel and Lebanon. We trust that the cessation of hostilities will serve as the beginning of the end of the violence that has caused so much death and destruction.

Violations of the cessation of hostilities, such as those described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/670) and the ones committed by Israeli forces on the night of Friday, 18 August, point to the extreme fragility of the situation and to the danger of further crisis. In that connection, we once again reiterate our call on the parties to fully comply with the cessation of hostilities.

Strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is a fundamental element of implementing resolution 1701 (2006). That should take place as quickly as possible, in order that UNIFIL can deploy and fully carry out the mandate entrusted to it and work jointly with the Lebanese army. In that regard, my delegation would like to highlight the work done by the Secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to promote the strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and to do so quickly as possible. We hope that the deployment of forces will take place in accordance with the three phases that have been envisaged.

Without disparaging those efforts, the current situation has once again made it possible to realize how important it is for the United Nations to have reserve forces at its disposal. Peru has repeatedly voiced its support for endowing the Organization with the necessary capacity to respond through forces with a pre-established mandate that have been voluntarily and unconditionally made available to the United Nations by States that agree with the need for them. In other words, the Organization should be able to rely on adequately prepared units that can be deployed immediately.

It is also important that the Governments of Lebanon and Israel consider, as soon as possible, the principles and elements for a definitive solution included in resolution 1701 (2006). In that connection, we are pleased to note that the Secretary-General's envoys Vijay Nambiar and Terje Roed-Larsen are in the region and have initiated contacts at the highest level. We look forward to their impressions upon their



return, as well as to the proposals to be made by the Secretary-General to implement the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), especially as regards disarming Hizbollah and irregular forces that do not recognize the authority of the Lebanese Government and as regards the demarcation of Lebanon's international borders, including the Sheba'a farmlands.

The humanitarian situation continues to require great attention. We would like to underscore the efforts made by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies and organizations, which are continuing to do everything they can to bring aid to needy people as soon as possible. The strategy they have adopted towards their work and the basic priorities on which they are focusing in these circumstances merit our gratitude and should be resolutely supported.

In that regard, we would like to recall what has been said by Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Margareta Wahlström, namely, that overcoming the humanitarian crisis not only depends upon assistance, but in particular upon the resumption of the economic and productive activities interrupted in Lebanon. That aspect should always be taken into account in the rebuilding effort.

In conclusion, with regard to the situation in Palestine, Peru once again deplores all acts of violence and kidnapping and the loss of human lives. We also deplore the critical situation in which the population of Palestine has to live. In that regard, it must be recalled that the Government of the Palestinian Authority has yet to meet the requirements put forward by the Quartet. A negotiated solution for the peaceful coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living within secure and internationally recognized borders will remain elusive if one of the parties does not recognize the other's right to exist.

**Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing.

Before I begin, we would like to align ourselves with the statement that will be delivered shortly on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Finland.

Slovakia has followed with great concern the recent developments in the escalation of hostilities

between Israel and Hizbollah, which has led to great suffering for innocent people in both Lebanon and Israel. We have underlined on several occasions that the crisis can be solved only through political and diplomatic means. We therefore welcome the cessation of hostilities and violence and the return to political and diplomatic means to resolve the crisis, although the recent violent incidents of last week have shown that the situation is still very fragile. In that regard, we would like to underline that any violations of resolution 1701 (2006) will aggravate the volatile atmosphere. We therefore call upon all parties to fully respect the resolution, exercise maximum restraint and avoid any actions that could lead to misinterpretation.

It is also important that all parties concerned act in good faith, in the spirit of resolution 1701 (2006), thus allowing the international community to assist with the rapid deployment and reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in order to achieve a long-term resolution of the crisis. We share the concern of the Secretary-General that an escalation of the recent crisis and violence could have dire consequences not only for the countries involved but also for regional and global security.

We have repeatedly condemned terrorist actions and provocations by Hizbollah, which have led to the current crisis. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our firm belief that there can be no military solution to the Middle East conflict; the only way to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement is through peaceful negotiations and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions and of the principles defined by the Quartet in the road map.

While we recognize the right of Israel to self-defence against terrorism and its perpetrators, we would like to underscore that it is important to exercise that right with utmost caution and restraint and to do everything possible to avoid the loss of innocent lives, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and increased suffering by the civilian population. In that regard, we are particularly concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Lebanon and the exodus of Lebanese people, caused by Israel's military action.

We highly appreciate the work of UNIFIL, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations agencies, which strive, often under very difficult and dangerous circumstances, to help

alleviate the human suffering of the increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees.

We support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. We believe that these can best be achieved through the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006). We are convinced that it is now crucial to develop a plan for the full implementation of those two resolutions, and especially for helping the Government of Lebanon to assume full control over the whole territory of the country and to disarm all militias, which in our opinion is key to achieving a lasting and sustainable solution and is an important precondition for the stabilization and continuation of democratic processes in Lebanon. It is also very important to take appropriate measures against the illegal movement of arms and people across the borders of Lebanon and against hostile attacks against the territory of neighbouring States.

The international community should assist the Lebanese Government to achieve those goals. In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to take all steps to expeditiously enhance the strength and mandate of UNIFIL so that it can cope effectively with the tasks envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006).

Last but not least, as is also reflected in resolution 1701 (2006), we should not forget about the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including through the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and, mindful of the sensitivity of the issue of prisoners, by encouraging efforts aimed at urgently settling the issue of the Lebanese citizens detained in Israel.

We would like to underscore that the restoration of calm in Lebanon is also an important step towards revitalizing the peace process in the Middle East region as a whole. In that regard, we are concerned at the deteriorating situation between Israel and the Palestinians and at the increasing number of civilian casualties on both sides as a result of hostilities and terrorist actions. We think that the Palestinian Government led by Hamas has missed an important opportunity to advance the peace process through its continued refusal to accept three principles defined by the Quartet as a precondition for becoming a reliable partner in the peace talks. We hope that President Abbas will be successful in his efforts to create appropriate support among the Palestinian people for

the objectives of the road map. We think that the international community should provide him with its full support in that endeavour, including by addressing urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population through the Temporary International Mechanism administered by the European Union.

In that context, we urge Israel to resume the transfer of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. Israel should also release the Palestinian officials and should refrain from a disproportionate and excessive use of force. At the same time, we recognize the right to fight terrorism and organized crime.

Finally, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, and negotiations leading to implementation of the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Slovakia, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, will continue to do its utmost to contribute constructively to a diplomatic solution to the ongoing tragic conflict in the region of the Middle East.

**Mr. Al-Nasser** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the great efforts he is making to contain the very grave situation in the Middle East, in the context of the fragile ceasefire in Lebanon provided by resolution 1701 (2006) on the one hand, and of the continuous escalation of military operations in Palestine and their serious repercussions for international peace and security on the other. I wish also to thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his important briefing on the events that have been unfolding in the region.

The other day, we reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670) and warned against the danger of sliding once more into war less than nine days after the ceasefire went into effect. Recent Israeli breaches of the ceasefire, which began with the military land operation last Saturday, and the continuous Israeli air force sorties over Lebanese territory are putting the will and credibility of the international community to the test. Such operations have been occurring intermittently since last Saturday.

These developments overshadow the encouraging signs that followed the beginning of compliance with

the cessation of hostilities. It saddens us that these violations are taking place as the international community is making a concerted effort to ensure a lasting cessation of hostilities, to provide humanitarian assistance to the targeted population and to returnees, and to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by this asymmetrical war. In that regard, we cannot fail to state that the ongoing air and sea blockade imposed by Israel against Lebanon impedes efforts by humanitarian agencies to deliver supplies to those who are sorely in need of them. In that light, we call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibility by obliging Israel to immediately lift the blockade imposed against Lebanon. We also call for reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) by increasing its numbers and equipment to enable it to play the role assigned to it, because this is a vital element in the process of implementing resolution 1701 (2006).

While we applaud Lebanon's commitment to begin the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by deploying its armed forces in the south, we are gravely concerned at Israel's deliberate violation of the provisions of the resolution. This obstructs the international community's efforts to establish regional peace and security and to rebuild Lebanon. In spite of that, we still believe in the Security Council's ability to preserve the delicate relative calm and to play an effective and essential role. We will work with all peace-loving States to continue to address this issue, in pursuit of security and stability in Lebanon and throughout the region.

As we seek a permanent solution to the situation in Lebanon, we must not lose sight of the events taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories — the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East — including the escalation of military operations and the detention and kidnapping campaigns, whose targets have included members of the Government and of the legislature who were elected by the Palestinian people. This is a blatant violation of international law, agreements between the two sides and other instruments and norms, and it shows disregard for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

It has repeatedly been made clear that the only way to put an end to violence in the Middle East region is through finding a permanent, comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine. The failure to deal objectively and effectively with this crisis and its root

causes has led to a great many disturbances and tension in the region, which manifested themselves in the events in Lebanon and those that we are witnessing today in Gaza.

Believing in peace as the sole option, the Arab States intend to resubmit the question of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Security Council next September. It is our hope that this will lead to finding a permanent, comprehensive solution on all tracks, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, which affirm that the only solution that can end the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence is that of ending Israel's occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967.

**Mr. Gayama** (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I am grateful to you for giving the Council once again an opportunity to examine the situation in the Middle East, 11 days after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006).

A review of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) for the period 11 to 17 August 2006 (S/2006/670) shows genuine cause for hope, overshadowed, unfortunately, by recent developments in the field — notably, serious violations of the cessation of hostilities that was decided on 14 August.

While thanking Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his report on the prevailing situation in the field, we cannot fail to consider the magnitude of the tasks that remain to be undertaken, not only by the actors but also by the international community.

As everyone knows, the delicate balance achieved in resolution 1701 (2006) is fragile. The implementation of this important document requires the full cooperation of all parties if the elements are to be applied in order to establish a new type of relationship between Israel and its neighbours, one based on mutual respect, integrity and the sovereignty of each.

We condemn any violation of the cessation of hostilities, from any quarter, because the logic of force is not only contrary to the principles of international law, but also, more to the point, it has revealed its limitations. Whether we consider military activities attributed to Hizbollah — which have reached a critical point likely to drag the Lebanese State into the maelstrom of an undeclared war with the Israeli State

and as an indirect consequence set the entire region on fire through a build up of alliances that could follow — or whether we consider the Israeli tendency to mistake effects for causes in a war already rooted in Palestinian territory, the solution cannot be found in the logic of confrontation and exclusion.

The cycle of violence has reached a critical threshold with, on the one hand, the sophistication of the arms used by the militias — which not only reduces the chances of the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) but also makes Israeli territory far more vulnerable than before — and, on the other hand, the risky strategy of targeted assassinations and the kidnapping of high officials in the Palestinian Government, with the recent cases of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Legislative Council. Paradoxically, that reminds us of the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, an operation that we condemned at the time while asking that the victims be released.

In our view, the systematic weakening of the Palestinian Authority does not in any way serve the objectives of the peace and stability of the region. More than ever, the prerogatives of the Palestinian Authority need to be restored so that it can play the role we expect in the process of implementing the road map, particularly taking into account the principle of land for peace, with the resolute support of the Quartet, the cooperation of regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, and the full engagement of the United Nations.

Certainly the surprise attack on 19 August by an Israeli commando against Hizbollah positions in the Bekaa valley — apparently to prevent the resupply of weapons — shows, if it was necessary, both the precariousness of the situation and how urgent it is to deploy a strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It also points to the need to assist the Lebanese army in order to facilitate its deployment in the south and in all sectors from which Israeli forces have withdrawn or are in the process of withdrawing. The successful deployment of the Lebanese army is one of the keys to stabilization of the situation at the Israeli-Lebanese border, one of the most sensitive theatres of operation of the Middle East. Thus, we cannot but encourage the effective deployment, in keeping with the commitments undertaken by all parties.

What is more, the fragility of the situation and the risk of things getting out of control, with incalculable consequences, necessitate the rapid deployment of a strengthened UNIFIL. It must have a clearly defined mandate so that troop-contributing countries will be able to make the necessary arrangements in full knowledge of the facts.

In a context of generalized precariousness, such as that we deplore today, the efforts carried out by the humanitarian workers to assist the wounded populations and to restore the destroyed Lebanese infrastructure deserve our recognition and our support. This is an occasion to express thanks for all forms of aid already granted or pledged by the partners of Lebanon.

As regards Africa, we have always expressed our active sympathy for many Lebanese families, who have always been welcome and have found hospitality on our continent, allowing many to recover, socially and economically, from the traumas they endured.

The fragile situation leads us to echo the Secretary-General's appeal for all parties scrupulously to respect the cessation of hostilities and for a durable ceasefire to finally be negotiated and established. We also appeal to countries having an influence on the actors in the conflict to energetically exercise that influence in order to consolidate the process under way and promote a lasting peace between Israel, its Arab neighbours and all the peoples in the region.

The limits of force have been sufficiently demonstrated so that henceforth the parties can show more interest in the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and in initiating on a definitive settlement of the Middle East crisis on the basis of the relevant proposals already made. The ultimate objective would be the consolidation of the national institutions of the Palestinian people living in harmony with the Israeli people.

The Security Council should grasp this opportunity to accelerate the march of history in that part of the world. That is how it can credibly endorse the true aspirations of all for durable peace and security.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ghana.

At the outset, let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing.

We cannot but share the sentiments of other members of the Council that the current uneasy calm prevailing in the Middle East could suddenly worsen, with negative consequences, unless all the parties refrain from provocative acts which could be deemed as unjustified and which could lead to retaliatory measures. We therefore wish to commend the Secretariat for the expeditious manner in which it has gone about implementing resolution 1701 (2006).

It is in this light that we express serious concern about the raid by Israeli commandos on the village of Boudai in the Bekaa valley last Saturday. Irrespective of the reasons given for that action, we view it as a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), which called, *inter alia*, for a full cessation of hostilities. All parties' acceptance of and commitment to that demand by the Council is imperative if we are to make any headway and witness a positive change in the current precarious and fragile situation in Lebanon. We therefore demand nothing less from all parties than their scrupulous adherence to all the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), including the arms embargo.

A factor critical to the sustenance of peace in the volatile area of southern Lebanon is the deployment of Lebanese troops in conformity with paragraph 2 of resolution 1701 (2006). To that end, we welcome the prompt decision of the Lebanese Government which has led to the positioning of its troops in the area. That action taken by the Lebanese Government must be fully supported by the international community without much delay.

It is imperative that an international force with a robust mandate be sent to southern Lebanon as soon as possible. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) should act expeditiously to remove any lingering doubts and anxieties about the concept of operations and the rules of engagement lest the ceasefire unravel.

It is our fervent wish that, following the resolution of pertinent issues relating to the enlargement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), potential troop-contributing countries will see their way clear to redeem their pledges and, as a matter of urgency, dispatch their troops to Lebanon. It must be our objective to meet the request for 3,500 troops by 2 September 2006. The attainment of that goal would demonstrate the Council's resolve, as well as that of the international

community, to implement resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety. It would also bolster the confidence of the Lebanese Government as it strives to bring succour and hope to the traumatized people of southern Lebanon. In recognition of Ghana's role as one of the four troop-contributing countries to UNIFIL, my Government has already indicated Ghana's readiness to increase its current troop strength from 650 to 850.

I would be remiss if I did not express appreciation for the contribution of the gallant UNIFIL personnel who exhibited courage and professionalism during the critical period of armed hostilities. We also pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the course of their duty to humanity.

It is encouraging that, despite the fragile security situation in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa valley, many of the internally displaced persons who sought sanctuary elsewhere have begun returning to their original places of abode. However, it is disheartening to stress that most of the returnees have come back to witness desolation and hopelessness, having lost their houses and personal property. Given these dire conditions, the response of the humanitarian agencies to alleviate their predicament has been encouraging, but it has not measured up to the required needs, since the flash appeal has achieved only about 52 per cent of its target. We hope that the international community will be more generous when the revised flash appeal, which will give an up-to-date assessment of the humanitarian needs, is launched next week.

Meanwhile, we wish to encourage the United Nations to continue its leadership role in this sphere and to coordinate effectively with other agencies in the field to ensure maximum delivery to the affected people. That goal cannot be achieved if the current sea and air blockade is not lifted and if the deplorable conditions of the roads and bridges are not vastly improved.

We also look forward to the conference to be held in Sweden later this month in the hope that it will lead to the provision of assistance for the long-term recovery and rehabilitation of southern Lebanon.

While we have of late been preoccupied with the Lebanese crisis because of the intensity of the conflict and its devastating consequences, we should not let the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories fall off the radar screen. That situation too has the potential of degenerating into another all-out war with its attendant

effects on regional peace and security. It has been generally acknowledged that the Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East problem. Admittedly, it is not easy to resolve a conflict which is not only a clash over territory, but also a clash of rights and memory, a struggle between nationalist mythologies. The Middle East cannot be allowed to continue to be a cemetery of missed opportunities.

That the Palestinian question remains unresolved more than half a century after the original United Nations partition resolution is an indictment of the international community. The Security Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should live up to its role and use its creative energies for a comprehensive and fair solution to this conflict. Otherwise, peace and security will continue to be elusive in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption by the brotherly country of Ghana of the presidency of the Security Council this month. We are certain that, under your able leadership, the Council will spare no effort in addressing the many critical issues that are before it at this time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the delegation and the Permanent Representative of France for their wise and capable leadership of the Council last month, during which the Council repeatedly convened and held consultations to address the dangerous crisis prevailing in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the situation in Lebanon.

Today, with a fragile ceasefire in place and with United Nations Member States assembling a force under the supervision of the Security Council for the purpose of bringing security and stability to southern Lebanon, we are witnessing the Council — despite a month's delay — carrying out its Charter responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by taking these immediate, necessary and concrete measures.

I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing.

In this regard, I would be remiss if I did not express the continuing hopes and appeals of the Palestinian people and their leadership that one day soon the Council will also act in a concerted and concrete manner to uphold its responsibilities towards the question of Palestine by taking the measures necessary to bring an end to the grievous violations and breaches of international law, including international humanitarian law, that continue to be committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Council has the requisite authority to act, and it is its fundamental duty to act appropriately to address those crises and issues that pose a threat to international peace and security and to exert every effort in that regard for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The situation of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, should be no exception. Indeed, there is no doubt that the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which has been the question of Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been the source of almost every threat to peace and security in the Middle East for decades now; the loss and suffering continue to mount to this day. We thus reiterate our firm belief that the Council will ultimately play its rightful role and uphold its resolutions vis-à-vis the question of Palestine, leading towards the ultimate resolution of this prolonged and tragic conflict and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

In this regard, I wish to highlight the fact that the Arab Foreign Ministers, in their last three meetings, in Cairo, Beirut and Cairo, respectively, determined, in the light of the recent negative developments and the grave deterioration in the region, to work seriously towards bringing the issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, back to the Security Council. Members will recall that during the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Lebanon (S/PV.5511), the Foreign Minister of Qatar officially announced that the Arab countries would request a high-level meeting of the Security Council in September to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a view to moving in a practical way towards the implementation of the Council's relevant resolutions designed to resolve this

conflict through the achievement of a final, just and comprehensive peace settlement.

At this time, the Arab countries, via the League of Arab States, are in the midst of carrying out the necessary consultations and groundwork aimed at bolstering the potential for the success of this intended exercise, and we are hopeful that there will be wide support on the part of the international community in this important endeavour.

The decision to return to the Security Council — despite the Council's repeated inability to take the necessary actions to address the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its failure to uphold its numerous resolutions in this regard — has been taken on the basis of a belief in the responsibilities and the rightful role of the Council in international relations with regard to peace and security and the upholding of international law.

Moreover, it is clear that the peace process in which we have been engaged for 15 years now, beginning with the Madrid Conference in 1991, has not fulfilled its stated goals, as it has been repeatedly hampered by delays, stalemates, gross violations, cycles of violence and major crises. Most regrettably, this peace process, on its various tracks, has not brought an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory or of the Syrian Golan or of parts of southern Lebanon. Our part of the world continues to suffer violence, loss and despair as a result of this continuing military occupation and a never-ending series of violations of international law, including military aggression and attacks.

For Palestine, instead of the dramatic improvement anticipated in the situation on the ground and in the lives of the Palestinian people, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has steadily and gravely deteriorated during those years in all aspects — political, security, economic, social, and humanitarian. Israel, the occupying Power, has continued — even during the most productive years of the peace process — its fervent, unlawful campaign of settler colonialism in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in particular in East Jerusalem, confiscating more and more Palestinian land, building and expanding more settlements, and more than doubling the number of its settlers in the territory.

In addition, Israel has now nearly completed the construction of a wall it has been building on confiscated land in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, that is severing the territory into several isolated and walled enclaves and cantons, destroying numerous communities in their entirety, destroying the livelihood of thousands of Palestinians and displacing thousands more, and further entrenching Israel's illegal settlements. The wall, along with the settlements and Israel's hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks, is destroying the contiguity and territorial integrity of the Palestinian territory, isolating occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the territory, devastating the Palestinian economy, destroying the very fabric of Palestinian society and taking us further away from the possibility of actually achieving the two-State solution.

In addition, the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation continues to suffer declining economic and social conditions as a result of Israel's ongoing military campaign of aggression, as glaringly witnessed in recent months, with its lethal and violent assaults against the besieged population in the Gaza Strip. That military campaign has involved, inter alia, the occupying Power's deliberate use of excessive force, resulting in the killing or injury of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children; the terrorizing of the population; the continuation of extrajudicial killings; the vast and wanton destruction of vital infrastructure, properties and institutions of the Palestinian Authority; the detention and imprisonment of hundreds of Palestinian civilians — now totalling more than 9,000 prisoners in Israeli jails; and the collective punishment of the entire population.

All of this, in addition to the financial crisis imposed on the Palestinian Authority in recent months following the January 2006 elections, has caused a dramatic decline in economic and social conditions and has resulted in a grave humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory that continues to this day.

Since I addressed the Council on 21 July, Palestine has sent eight letters to the President of the Security Council detailing some of the grave breaches committed by the aforementioned occupying Power. Those letters also listed the names of the Palestinians killed since the last time we met here in the Council. The numbers are shocking. More than 105 people have been killed, including 22 children, and over 600 have been injured, many critically. In one single day during

that period, the Israeli occupying forces killed more than 20 Palestinians, including two infants, a 4-year-old baby girl and a 9-year-old girl, and injured more than 80 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

On another front, more than 3,400 Palestinians are now internally displaced and have sought shelter in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) installations, as a result of the ongoing Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip. This is due mainly to the fact that hundreds of families living in neighbourhoods in Gaza were forced to flee their homes in terror after receiving threatening telephone calls from the Israeli occupying forces telling them they had only a short time to abandon their homes. There is no doubt that this new tactic of psychological warfare has caused panic and fear to spread among the Palestinian civilian population, which already suffers from severe psychological trauma as a result of Israel's brutal occupation.

To highlight just one tragic incident, a 3-day-old infant girl, Shahd Al-Eid, fell from her mother's arms as the latter was fleeing, seeking refuge from a "pre-warned" Israeli missile attack. The infant was later pronounced dead as a result of internal bleeding and bruises.

Indeed, it is a situation that continues to deteriorate as a result of the occupying Power's unlawful policies and practices, as we are witnessing in its daily raids and deadly attacks in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza; the continued arrest and detention of Palestinians, including numerous elected officials of the Palestinian Authority; the continued closures and the imposition of severe restrictions on freedom of movement; and the continued destruction of property.

In that regard, it is important to note that the elements of the recently vetoed draft resolution concerning the situation in Gaza continue to be relevant, for there has been no cessation of hostilities, no withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces to their original positions outside Gaza, no release of detained elected officials, and no repair of the vital infrastructure destroyed by the occupying Power — all necessary elements for paving the way for a resumption of negotiations.

Overall, the prevailing situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a

result of Israel's illegal practices and measures, has compounded not only the suffering and misery of the Palestinian people but also their frustration, desperation and anger, intensifying appeals by the Palestinian people and by the Arab world as a whole that real and immediate action to be taken to address this ongoing injustice, which has continued for far too long. Thus the decision by the Arab countries, at this very critical juncture in the Middle East, to return to the Security Council seeking redress is based on the consensus Arab position that the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the question of Palestine, should revert to the Security Council and that the Council should exercise its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and assist the parties to reach a just and comprehensive solution.

In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. We therefore reaffirm once again our strong hope that very soon the Council will meet at a high level to undertake serious and concrete actions towards the long-desired achievement of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole and, thus, the achievement of peace, security, coexistence and prosperity for all the peoples of the Middle East region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Gillerman (Israel):** I have listened very carefully to my Palestinian colleague. Strangely, some key words were ominously missing from his statement. There was no mention of Hamas, terror, Qassam rockets or the abduction of Corporal Gilad Shalit. I truly believe that, when discussing the question of Palestine, the members of the Council deserve better.

While we are greatly concerned about the situation in Palestine, we feel it would be wrong to divert attention from what the Council has so intensely been engaged in over the past month, namely, the situation in Lebanon and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). This is our foremost responsibility and we must commit all our efforts to making it happen. However, as a lot has been said in the Council about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, I



would like to inform the Council that we, too, are very conscious of the humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. I received word only this morning that 3,772 truckloads of food, medical equipment and other supplies have already entered Gaza in the past two months; 664 empty trucks have left Gaza with the intent of returning full with new supplies. All this has been done in close cooperation with the United Nations and with the international community's representatives dealing with these humanitarian issues.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing. The reason we are here today, however, goes back many years — far beyond this report. Six years ago, Israel withdrew all its presence from southern Lebanon, fulfilling its obligations to the international community as outlined in resolution 425 (1978). Six years ago was the time for action, when everything we have discussed today and in the past month could have been avoided.

There were other opportunities along the way. Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) also outlined the plan for a new reality in Lebanon, which was clear in its call for Lebanon to exercise its control over all its territory and govern just as would be expected of any other responsible State. The unconditional implementation of those resolutions could have prevented the events of the past month. But the willingness to implement the resolutions was wanting. As a result, Lebanon found itself hijacked by evil and occupied by terror.

All the while, Israel found itself in an intolerable situation. Just over its northern border with Lebanon a state within a State continued to grow, unchecked by the Lebanese Government. And so Hizbollah grew monstrously, spreading its claws throughout Lebanon and amassing large caches of weapons, thanks to the backing of neighbouring Syria and Iran, its evil sponsors.

On 12 July 2006, Hizbollah blatantly violated the Blue Line and crossed into Israel. In the process, it killed eight Israeli soldiers and abducted two others. Israel, like any other State, has the right and duty to defend its citizens from Hizbollah's attacks — and it did so. Over the past month, the peoples of Israel and Lebanon have had to pay a heavy price.

Resolution 1701 (2006) is an opportunity — perhaps the last opportunity — to rectify the mistakes of the past and usher in a new reality. Resolution 1701

(2006) is our best chance for reversing the corrosive decay of Lebanon and all that came with it — Hizbollah, a state within a State, and its masters, Syria and Iran, whose President denies the Holocaust while preparing the next one and openly calls for the destruction of Israel and for wiping it off the map, while acquiring the capabilities to do so.

We trust in resolution 1701 (2006) to create a new Lebanon free of such terrorizing occupiers. But there are obstacles to implementing the resolution, and those issues raise serious concerns. We must join forces in order to overcome them.

Allow me, Mr. President, to highlight some important points from resolution 1701 (2006). The first is the crucial issue of the abducted soldiers — Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. We are facing here a grave humanitarian issue. Each day that passes without their release is crucial. Israel views the immediate and unconditional release of those soldiers as the primary backdrop to the creation of a new reality on the ground. Each one of you, by raising your hand, has pledged to work for their release. We urge you to fulfil that responsibility.

The second point is the strength and composition of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). A clear and unequivocal mandate needs to be outlined for UNIFIL — one that its donor countries can achieve. With a clear and effective mandate, countries contributing to the robust UNIFIL force can commit wholeheartedly and without hesitation.

UNIFIL must have not just the manpower but also the willpower to help the Lebanese Government reach this new reality. At the moment, UNIFIL's strength is uncertain. A weak UNIFIL does not fulfil the interests of Lebanon or the region, and it writes Hizbollah a blank cheque to continue to do as it pleases.

UNIFIL's manpower should reach 15,000 troops, so that its presence can be felt in the areas deployed. It must be a robust force, comprising quality, professional and well-trained troops. UNIFIL must also be geographically distributed. At the 15,000-troop mark, it should be able to spread itself across southern Lebanon, in parallel with the Lebanese army. Beginning south of the Litani River, UNIFIL must be seen and felt.

The Lebanese army's deployment in the south is a welcome contribution. Since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), we have witnessed encouraging meetings between Lebanese commanders and the Israel Defense Forces. But we have also seen Hizbollah terrorists disappearing into the shadows, with no definitive action taken to prevent their re-emergence.

That brings me to the third concern. The rearming of Hizbollah is a blatant violation of the ceasefire. The embargo is the cardinal instrument of resolution 1701 (2006). There is no doubt that Syria and Iran wish to rearm Hizbollah and prevent the emergence of a new Lebanon. Giving them the opportunity to rearm Hizbollah will have catastrophic ramifications for the region and the world. If we cannot enforce an embargo, we send a message to the terrorists and their State backers that we will permit them to continue their ways of terror.

In order to prevent that, mechanisms are needed to supervise the Syrian-Lebanese border and to monitor the Lebanese seaports and airports. UNIFIL needs to be there, but a policy that addresses how States can enforce the embargo also needs to be articulated. In the absence of enforcement powers, Hizbollah, Iran and Syria will laughingly continue to ignore the embargo, as they are at this very moment.

An embargo does not mean merely preventing arms from crossing the border; it also means putting an end to Syria and Iran's manipulation of Lebanon and its people. During the recent fighting, Israel captured a 22-year-old Hizbollah terrorist by the name of Hussein Ali Suleiman, who admitted to having undergone extensive training in Iran, along with many other Hizbollah terrorists. Other Hizbollah terrorists in Israeli custody have disclosed that Iranian Revolutionary Guards visited their fortified positions along the Israeli border.

If Lebanon asks the Security Council for help, the Council must be willing and able to step forward and give Lebanon a hand. The task of creating a new reality in Lebanon is too important to be the sole work of one State. And, as history has shown us, neglecting to implement the resolutions adopted by the Council comes at all too high a price.

The Middle East is a region caught between rifts of extremism, where radicals engage in fierce battles that have no rules of play. Israel finds itself lodged between those currents, trying to navigate a peaceful

solution to the turmoil and allow civilization to grow and prosper as it should.

While our attention has largely been focused on the north, on Lebanon, Israel has also been attacked from the south — by Hamas, operating in Gaza. Regrettably, the forces of extremism have taken hold there as well, and Gaza today is a haven for terrorists and their unsanctioned activities. Indeed, if unchecked, it may be a preview to the next Lebanon.

Hamas has also abducted an Israeli soldier. It has been two months since Gilad Shalit was kidnapped by terrorists who crossed from Gaza into Israel. Along with his abduction, terrorism has continued, including the launching of Qassam rockets at southern Israeli communities. These rocket attacks impose an intolerable situation upon Israel and place its citizens in constant danger.

But there is a way to a new Palestinian reality as well. It begins with the immediate and unconditional release of Gilad Shalit. It begins with a halt to the Qassam rockets and terror attacks. It begins with an end to all forms of terror and with the uprooting of terrorists who wilfully endanger the region.

Israel has been blanketed from north to south by these forces of extremism, by Hamas, Hizbollah, Syria and Iran — the quartet of terror — whose evil knows no bounds. This quartet of terror must be defeated. It is a threat not just to Israel, but to the entire world and to civilization as we know it. The implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) is a first step towards defeating that threat.

The outcome of the next few weeks and the months ahead is ours collectively to decide. The Security Council, representing the international community, possesses that power. Where will we go from here? Will we succeed in implementing these resolutions? Will we succeed in implementing them quickly? Will we work together as partners to enforce an embargo and put an end to the poisonous Syrian and Iranian influence in the region?

These are the questions with which we are being tested. Resolution 1701 (2006) is, indeed, a test: a test for Lebanon, a test for the Security Council, a test for the international community. If we do not pass this test, we will have lost our chance — perhaps our last chance — to free Lebanon from the forces of terror and bring about a new reality.

We can pass this test, but it cannot be done by any one of us alone. We must partner together and become a unified force and a unified voice on terrorism, on extremism and on the forces that threaten the way we live. We must grasp this opportunity.

Resolution 1701 (2006) can be our success story. It can be the story we tell to our children and grandchildren when we recount this region's complex history. It can be the story we take pride in as the defining moment when we rose to the occasion and did not let the terrorists seize power over us. Resolution 1701 (2006) is that story. But it remains the duty of the international community and of the Security Council to ensure that it comes true.

**The President:** I now call on the representative of Norway.

**Mr. Brevik** (Norway): Norway welcomes and strongly supports resolution 1701 (2006). We strongly encourage the parties to do their utmost to maintain the cessation of hostilities and transform it into a lasting ceasefire. We support the Secretary-General in his view that the recent Israeli military operation in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon is in violation of the cessation of hostilities, and we urge all parties to refrain from further actions that undermine resolution 1701 (2006).

Our main priority must be to achieve a long-term solution based on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Norway fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to find ways to implement the resolution. The international community must follow up with political support and with economic and humanitarian contributions.

Norway welcomes the positive steps taken on the ground, including the deployment of the Lebanese army to the south and the parties' coordination with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces.

While the parties bear the main responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the resolution, we call on all States in the region to contribute constructively towards that goal. The rapid deployment of a reinforced UNIFIL is vital to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The Norwegian Government is considering a contribution to the Force, provided that the conditions necessary to ensure success — in particular satisfactory rules of engagement — are in place.

The humanitarian needs are enormous and are a cause of great concern to Norway. It is imperative that the Lebanese Government and the international donor community identify the humanitarian needs in Lebanon. As a contribution to that effort, Sweden, Spain and Norway have issued invitations to a conference on relief and early recovery to be held in Stockholm on 31 August. Let me add that Norway has already allocated \$22 million for humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people, with an additional \$1.6 million to remove oil spills on the coast of Lebanon, and stands ready to contribute to long-term reconstruction efforts in Lebanon.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The Israeli regime of closures is preventing vital goods from entering Gaza and is hurting the entire Palestinian population. Norway strongly urges all parties to return to the peace process on the basis of the Road Map.

**The President:** I now call on the representative of Lebanon.

**Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank your predecessor, the representative of France. Through you, I also wish to express our great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to address the Lebanese crisis. In addition, I should like to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing today.

I am addressing the Security Council more than 10 days after its adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), a resolution that the Council sought with a view to achieving a cessation of hostilities, not a ceasefire; a resolution that did not respond to all the requirements of the Lebanese Government, but nonetheless addressed Lebanese issues and concerns with great seriousness; a resolution that emphasized Israeli withdrawal and international commitment to Lebanese sovereignty, support for Lebanon and respect for its national decisions.

We therefore accepted the resolution, in the hope that it would deter the Israeli war machine and bring an end to its aggression, which has lasted for 33 consecutive days. In that time, Israel has wreaked havoc, killed, displaced and destroyed. In 33 days, Israel has set Lebanon back 30 years, in fulfilment of a promise made by Israel's Minister for Defence. The

aggression has also had an enormous cost in terms of the thousands of persons killed and injured, the imposition of a land, sea and air blockade, the displacement of around 1 million people and the destruction of hundreds of bridges, vital institutions and infrastructure amounting to a loss of between \$4 billion and \$9 billion.

Despite all of that, the Government of Lebanon has shaken off the dust of war and agreed to the resolution, which called for a cessation of hostilities, to which it has been committed since 14 August 2006. Our Government has continued to take a series of fundamental measures and decisions, including the Cabinet's 16 August decision to deploy the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, with a mandate to maintain security in the area, defend our country's territory and secure the property of our citizens, while reaffirming full respect for the Blue Line and the implementation of all laws regarding any weapons outside the authority of the Lebanese State, in cooperation and coordination with international forces, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006).

My country, gravely wounded but determined to rise again to restore its sovereignty and security and the safety of its citizens, has committed itself, despite being the victim, to that international resolution and taken courageous and unprecedented measures to act upon that commitment. However, what has Israel, the executioner, done? How has it responded to those efforts? Today, more than 10 days after the cessation of hostilities was declared, we are once again here in the Council to inform its members that Israel is continuing its aggression and its daily violations of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 425 (1978). There were 82 violations of our airspace between 14 and 20 August. Moreover, Israel has maintained its presence in many border areas within Lebanese territory. It has set up checkpoints and has fired bursts of gun and sniper fire against civilians, to say nothing of the explosion of cluster bombs and landmines, which kill civilians, including women and children, and members of the Lebanese army. Such ordnance has been used and planted by Israel since the beginning of its aggression on 12 July — all on the pretext of self-defence and combating terrorism. I should therefore like to stress the following points.

Regardless of the justifications it puts forth, Israel's acts are offensive acts. Regardless of the pretexts offered, Israel's acts are acts of aggression. Regardless of the reasons and justifications, what Israel

is doing contravenes international law. Were that not enough, on 19 August, Israel added to its violations with a land operation deep in Lebanon, close to the city of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon, thereby subjecting this fragile calm to great instability and committing an act of aggression against the sovereignty of the Lebanese State. This has prompted the Secretary-General to express his deep concern for the fragile calm that has been achieved, and about the danger that it might entail in terms of undermining the authority of the Lebanese Government.

In pursuing their efforts to block the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), Israeli officials have informed us of conditions and have vetoed the participation of a number of countries that have declared their readiness to contribute to an enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Israel has also very clearly procrastinated in committing itself to the three phases of withdrawal from Lebanon, namely, by increasing the number of phases to 16. Its Minister for Defence has also threatened us many times with a return to war.

All of that has led us to reiterate over and again that Lebanon, which believes in the principles of the United Nations and looks to the Organization as the basic framework for extricating itself from the current crisis, appeals to the Security Council to work diligently to bring about the following: the establishment and strengthening of a permanent ceasefire through a UNIFIL strengthened with additional international troops, and the immediate and unconditional lifting of the air, sea and land blockade imposed by Israel. The root causes of the crisis should be addressed, including by ending the occupation of the Sheba'a farms, securing the release of all Lebanese prisoners in Israeli prisons and convincing Israel to turn over maps of the landmines it has planted on our territory. Finally, we appeal to the international community to continue its vital humanitarian assistance to the many Lebanese in need and to contribute effectively to the reconstruction of Lebanon, a country rich in its capabilities, unique in its diversity and distinguished by its democracy.

Wounded Lebanon today would like to salute the heroic struggle and steadfastness of the Palestinian people. We openly condemn the continuous acts of aggression committed by Israel against that people, including its kidnapping of Palestinian officials, its hindrance of everyday life, its settlements on

Palestinian territory and its construction of the barrier wall.

With all due respect, what is required today is Israel's full commitment to the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and all other relevant international resolutions, so as to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

**Mr. Rosengren** (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/670) on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The European Union fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to find ways to implement that resolution.

It is now 11 days since the adoption of the resolution and eight days since the cessation of hostilities went into effect. The region has started the process of recovering from the violence of the past weeks. A number of encouraging steps have been taken. We welcome the quick decision of the Government of Lebanon to send Lebanese army forces to the south of the country, and its rapid implementation, as well as the beginning of the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The EU commends the constructive way the parties have been coordinating with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the withdrawal of the IDF and the deployment of the Lebanese army. The incidents that have occurred, especially in recent days, demonstrate that the situation is very fragile. Therefore, we strongly encourage all parties to do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is maintained and to transform it into a durable ceasefire.

The international community will have to play an important role in contributing to the stabilization of the situation on the ground. We know that we need to move swiftly to deploy the international force in southern Lebanon in order to support the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The new UNIFIL will be a challenging operation. It will have to be different from the old UNIFIL to undertake its tasks successfully. Many EU countries are willing to participate in this common effort to help bring about peace in the region. Some have already made their decision to send troops, while others are considering it.

It is also important that all States in the region play a constructive role in order, first, to contribute to a reduction of tensions and then to be able to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

The European Union welcomes the fact that the cessation of hostilities has greatly improved the frequency and quantity of humanitarian assistance. But much remains to be done, and the Secretary-General's report sets out the key priority areas for the humanitarian community during this immediate post-ceasefire phase. It is important that the air and sea blockade be lifted as soon as possible to allow unimpeded access to Lebanon for humanitarian operations. There has been a mass return of displaced people. In addition to the need for aid to meet basic needs of the people, such as water supply and temporary shelter, support is urgently needed in the disposal of unexploded ordnance and the cleaning up of oil spills.

The EU presidency Minister for Development, Paula Lehtomäki, and EU Commissioner Louis Michel were in the region last week in order to assess the situation from an EU point of view. The EU will continue to contribute to the humanitarian relief work. EU aid already committed amounts to €74 million. It is also clear that when full-scale reconstruction work starts the EU will play a role, in close cooperation with the Government of Lebanon and with other international partners. The relief and early recovery conference that will be hosted by Sweden on 31 August will provide an important forum in which to continue to discuss these pressing issues.

In addition to Lebanon, the situation in the Palestinian territories also remains a cause of great concern for the EU. The humanitarian situation has been deteriorating for a long time; civilian

infrastructure has been destroyed and civilian lives have been lost. These developments continue to pose the risk of further deterioration of the situation in the region. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority need to act to address this situation. The abducted Israeli soldier must be released quickly and unconditionally.

The parties need to return to the peace process on the basis of the road map. An unequivocal commitment by all parties to a viable, independent Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel and its other neighbours, is a key to stability and security in the whole region.

The EU is committed to promoting a comprehensive peace plan for the Middle East in close cooperation with partners and the countries in the region. There is no military solution to any of the problems facing the people of the region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Danesh-Yazdi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the Council presidency for this month and by thanking you for convening this debate on an issue that is truly threatening international peace and security.

The war machine of the Israeli regime has continued to destroy the lives and livelihoods of the innocent Palestinian and other peoples in the region. Not only has that machine of horror and terror continued to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine, but it has also inflicted enormous suffering and pain on the whole civilian population of Lebanon for 34 continuous days and nights. The whole world witnessed the horror as that regime was joined by its ally — that is, the United States — in their desire to wreak havoc throughout a whole country, despite the tragic human toll.

In an unspeakable and brutal bombing campaign, the Israeli regime, as the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2006/670) indicates, killed about 1,200 Lebanese and injured thousands more, the majority of whom were women and children. Indiscriminate and blanket air strikes, aimed at collectively punishing the Lebanese people, destroyed an estimated 15,000 apartments and 140 bridges, according to the same report.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs also stated in her report to the

Security Council on 18 August that enormous damage had been inflicted on the road and bridge networks, other essential infrastructure and residential housing, with some areas in the south having seen 60 per cent of their residential housing destroyed. She further referred to reports by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), indicating widespread contamination by unexploded artillery, airborne missiles and cluster munitions, including in residential areas and public buildings, causing injury and death among returnees and hindering the provision of humanitarian relief.

Indeed, the recent all-out war against Lebanon was a clear indication of a pre-existing and ill-intended plan by the Israeli regime, which had already secured the support of its ally — that is, the United States. In the past several weeks, more evidence has emerged supporting that assertion. *The Wall Street Journal* revealed in its issue of 19-20 August that “at least since 2004, the Israeli military had plans in place for possibly attacking” Lebanon. It goes on, adding that the Israeli decision “transformed a border shoot-out into a war and virtually guaranteed it would become a crisis”.

Nonetheless, once again the Israeli onslaught proved that it is impossible to intimidate the people in the region into submission or to quash their desire to live free from occupation and terror.

In fact, although the latest aggression was successful in laying waste to buildings and civilian infrastructures and in killing civilians, it obviously — as the whole world witnessed — brought about results that were opposite to those that the aggressors had sought. It strengthened the resolve of the people to resist aggression, occupation, intimidation and terror.

The cessation of hostilities, although belatedly called for, is a relief for the Lebanese civilians and the whole international community, which witnessed the horror of Israeli State terrorism hovering over a defenceless country for 34 days. Here, I should put on record my Government's sense of profound frustration over the inaction and the handicap imposed on the Security Council for many weeks, preventing it from fulfilling its primary responsibility — inaction that allowed an entire population to suffer such terrible pain and loss and that proved very costly to the Council's credibility and integrity.

We are also alarmed at the actions and behaviour of the Israeli regime, which is bent on undermining the ceasefire and possibly paving the way for another round of war against Lebanon. This sense of concern cannot be overlooked, especially given the fact that the United Nations has confirmed several instances of violations of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) by the Israeli regime in the past few days. On 19 August, the Secretary-General, referring to an Israeli terrorist commando raid, expressed his deep concern at a violation by the Israeli side of the cessation of hostilities. The stated reason for that failed terrorist raid is preposterous, as it immediately became clear that the invaders were on a mission to abduct. Earlier, the Secretary-General had noted, in his latest report (S/2006/670), dated 18 August, several instances of violation of the cessation of hostilities by the Israeli regime and also, in paragraph 13 of the report, "one to four Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace daily", as observed by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

In addition to attempting to keep the cessation of hostilities fragile, the Israeli regime is refraining from carrying out measures that would strengthen it. Also, despite the enormous humanitarian need in Lebanon and the massive access problems faced by aid workers, the continuing sea and air blockade against the country has yet to be lifted.

Moreover, there is no sign of any move on the part of the Israeli regime to address fundamental underlying political problems, including the release of Lebanese prisoners from the Israeli dungeons where they have been held for many years; the return of the Sheba'a Farms to Lebanon; and the provision of minefield maps showing the mines laid during the 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon.

At the same time, and as reported to the Council today by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Israeli regime continues its acts of aggression and State terrorism in the Palestinian territory as well. A few hours after its failed terrorist commando attack on the Bekaa valley, the Zionist forces, in another incursion into the Gaza Strip, abducted the Secretary General of the Palestinian parliament, bringing to more than 50 the number of officials from the Palestinian Government thus far abducted and detained by the Israeli regime. That incident occurred the day after Israeli troops abducted

the Palestinian deputy Prime Minister and the deputy Speaker of the parliament.

The massive abduction of Palestinian officials is a new tactic and policy in the framework of the continued criminal acts against the Palestinians, specifically aimed at eradicating or weakening the Palestinian Government, which took office as a result of a free and fair election. It is ironic that those who claim to be seeking to promote democracy in the region look approvingly upon this ongoing repression and criminal act.

The abduction of Palestinian officials is manifestly an act of State terrorism committed, unabatedly, along with numerous other crimes by the Israeli regime in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Palestinian economy has already been strangulated since January by an unjust and illegal embargo, and the Palestinians remain under siege even after the occupiers claim to have withdrawn from Gaza. Furthermore, the expansionist Israeli regime continues to build the illegal separation wall, flouting the will of the international community as expressed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In our view, putting an end to the impunity with which the Israeli regime has been allowed to carry out its crimes is the only way to bring about a viable and stable peace in the region and to stop it from perpetrating State terrorism. The Security Council has an enormous responsibility under the United Nations Charter to take the necessary steps in that direction. We hope that all the members of the Council will live up to their responsibilities in properly addressing the underlying causes of the crisis in the region.

Before concluding, allow me to place on record the fact that my delegation categorically rejects the absurd allegations made against my country, reiterated once again in the Council today by the representative of the Israeli regime and its supporters. This has indeed become a tired pattern of behaviour by that aggressive regime and its supporters, aimed at distracting the international community's attention from the Israeli regime's crimes, aptly described by Lebanese and Palestinian officials as crimes against humanity.

Those allegations are part of a psychological war supported by a massive propaganda machine and designed to create a smokescreen to hide Israel's

egregious crimes and State terrorism. A case in point is the latest failed terrorist commando raid by the Israeli regime in Lebanon. While its goal was in fact abduction, it was deceitfully portrayed as an effort to foil the transfer of arms to that country.

However, such allegations cannot and will not divert the attention of the international community from the root causes of all tensions in the Middle East; that is, occupation, State terrorism and the aggression perpetrated by the Israeli regime against the countries in the region. Indeed, those few who have tacitly or explicitly supported the crimes of the Israeli regime against the Palestinian and Lebanese people are clearly accomplices in those crimes and should be held accountable for that complicity.

**The President:** The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

**Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil):** Mr. President, I would like to start by thanking you for having convened this meeting on the Middle East at such a critical juncture for peace in the entire region. Let me also acknowledge the relentless efforts undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his colleagues in the Secretariat with a view to promoting peaceful solutions to the crisis in the region. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari, for presenting us with an informative update on the situation in the Middle East.

The present crisis in the Middle East poses a renewed challenge to the Security Council as regards the effectiveness of its reaction, its methods of work and its transparency. Once again, the spiralling and unchecked use of force in the Middle East requires the urgent attention of the Security Council. Brazil welcomes the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon and calls upon all parties to abide by the obligations established in resolution 1701 (2006). The parties should refrain from any action that jeopardizes the fledgling truce. They must do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and is further transformed into a durable ceasefire.

Brazil regrets that the prolonged inaction of the Council, faced with a flagrant threat to international peace and security, allowed the conflict to drag on for 34 long days. We also deplore the fact that combat operations in Lebanon were characterized by the rapidly increasing use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force, causing the death of many

hundreds of innocent civilians, the unprecedented displacement of a large proportion of the population and severe damage to essential housing and infrastructure, in open violation of international humanitarian law.

The incident in Qana is deeply disturbing. The observation contained in the Secretary-General's letter that the incident reflects "a pattern of violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, committed during the course of the current hostilities" (S/2006/626, p. 5) is alarming and warrants further investigation into this matter. Our Government welcomes the setting up by the Human Rights Council of a fact-finding commission to investigate the human rights violations committed during the fighting.

At least seven Brazilian nationals, including three children, perished as a consequence of Israeli military incursions in southern Lebanon. The Brazilian Government launched an unprecedented operation to evacuate approximately 3,000 of our own nationals.

Since the very beginning of the conflict, President Lula da Silva has appealed for a ceasefire and underlined the hope for a negotiated process that could end the hostilities and help bring peace and understanding. President Lula interacted with the Secretary-General and with many other international leaders in order to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Minister for External Relations Celso Amorim visited Beirut on 15 August to consult with the Government, reiterate our commitment to supporting the Lebanese people and deliver a sizeable contribution in medical supplies to provide emergency treatment for thousands of people.

Brazil strongly supports the resolution 1701 (2006) framework for providing the assistance the Government of Lebanon will require to extend its sovereignty and authority throughout its territory, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and the Taif Agreements, including the calls for the dismantling and disarmament of all militias in the country. We appeal to the countries in a position to help reinforce the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to do so promptly.

Furthermore, we call for the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and the creation of conditions for achieving a durable solution for the crisis. Particular attention must be paid to the sensitive issue



of the large number of Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel.

Brazil calls upon the international community to continue to lend its support for prompt humanitarian action and for the rebuilding of Lebanon. We all expect that the donors conference to be held on 31 August in Stockholm will accelerate the humanitarian efforts to meet the immediate needs of the civilian population and to gradually phase in a response, coordinated by the Government of Lebanon, that is geared towards recovery and reconstruction.

Brazil does not condone the use of violence to obtain what can be achieved only through negotiation. Non-negotiated solutions do not bring about peace. As a country that firmly believes in dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts, we stress the need for the resumption of a political process involving all interested parties. Brazil is also convinced that stability ultimately rests on the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects.

The Lebanese crisis has made the current paralysis of the Middle East peace process even more visible. It has also highlighted the urgent need to address the underlying causes of the conflict.

As a main goal, the world community should strengthen efforts to create conditions for the resumption of the peace process in the region on all tracks. Within this framework, one of the urgent tasks is the normalization of the situation in the Palestinian territories and the resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. In this connection, the Palestinian political leaders now detained in Israel should be promptly liberated.

Brazil welcomes the decision by the League of Arab States to request a high-level meeting of the Security Council in September, open to the participation of all interested delegations, to address the situation in the Middle East. Brazil stresses the need to put in motion a political process for the development of a strategy with a pertinent timeline to implement the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as stated in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). Such strategy should also take into account the Quartet road map, the principle of land for peace derived from the Madrid

Conference and the Beirut Arab League Summit decisions.

The international community should seize this opportunity to review the deadlocked Middle East peace process and put an end, once for all, to conflicts that have caused too much suffering and despair over many decades.

**The President:** I shall now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. McNee (Canada):** My Government is pleased to see that after 34 days of violent conflict, there is now a ceasefire in Lebanon. As we saw this weekend, however, this ceasefire is fragile. Nonetheless, we are confident that the Governments of both Israel and Lebanon are committed to a true cessation of hostilities. The two Governments understand that both the Israeli and Lebanese people need security and stability above all.

The Government of Canada has already responded positively to the urgent appeal to support Lebanon. On 16 August, Canada announced the creation of a \$25 million Lebanon relief fund to respond to humanitarian, early recovery, stabilization and reconstruction needs, in order to help people rebuild their lives. This new fund will build on Canada's previous allocation of \$5.5 million to address immediate humanitarian needs. Canada has also actively supported humanitarian agencies to reach civilians in need, including the transport by sea of humanitarian personnel and over 140 tons of relief items.

Canada stands behind the Lebanese Government. Reconstruction efforts must ultimately be led by the State — not Hizbollah.

All Member States share an obligation to ensure that resolution 1701 (2006) is respected, including agreements with both Governments on its implementation, and that a full arms embargo is enforced. We all also share a collective responsibility to see that obligations under international humanitarian law are respected by all.

The fundamental challenge ahead is to ensure that Hizbollah does not rearm and does not present an even greater threat to Israel in the future. This body unanimously agreed on a resolution that articulates the necessary elements for a lasting peace. At the centre of that is the disarmament of all armed groups in

Lebanon, including Hizbollah, so that there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State.

This is not the first time the Security Council has dealt with this issue, but it is Canada's hope that, with the unanimous passage of resolution 1701 (2006), it will be the last.

Canada welcomes the Lebanese Government's ordering the deployment of 15,000 soldiers to south Lebanon and its announcement that it will not tolerate other armed groups in its territory. When the Lebanese army, backed by the United Nations, becomes the sole visible armed force in south Lebanon, the positive impact on the region will be great.

Canada is disappointed that Iran and Syria, arms suppliers and financial backers of Hizbollah, have not yet accepted the terms of the resolution. They should not be allowed to spoil the peace.

The Lebanese Government must be strengthened so that it can fulfil its rightful role as the provider for and protector of its people. It is equally important for the Lebanese people to have confidence that their Government is capable of delivering on the key responsibilities of a sovereign State. Countries in the region should support the efforts of this nascent democracy to flourish without having to compete against resources being sent to terrorist organizations. The international community needs to continue providing humanitarian and reconstruction relief.

*(spoke in French)*

Lebanon has been at the forefront of international attention, but Canada would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that real and lasting peace in the Middle East is inextricably linked to the search for a viable solution — that is, two States, Israel and Palestine.

Canada supports President Abbas and is following with interest his efforts to establish a national unity Government. If Hamas is serious about helping the Palestinian people, it must immediately and unconditionally release the kidnapped Israeli soldier, and it must commit to the Quartet principles of recognition of Israel, acceptance of international agreements and the renunciation of violence.

In conclusion, Canada is firmly committed to the provision of humanitarian assistance, stabilization,

reconstruction and capacity-building in Lebanon, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza. We stand ready to continue to work constructively with other Member States and to try to address some of the key problems with a view to achieving peace and security in the region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

**Mr. Abdelsalam (Sudan)** *(spoke in Arabic)*: I am speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States. I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We thank you for having convened this important meeting. We would also like to commend your predecessor, the representative of France, for his efforts last month. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his comprehensive briefing.

Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing to defy the will of the international community. The most recent manifestation of that defiance was its attempt last week to insert soldiers deep within Lebanon, in clear violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Furthermore, Israel is arrogantly and recklessly continuing its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories. The number of victims is growing daily, as is the degree of material damage.

In an unprecedented and provocative challenge to law, legitimacy and legal norms, Israeli forces have abducted and detained dozens of democratically elected Palestinian officials, most recently the Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who have now joined ministers and other representatives of the Palestinian people.

Israel's unprecedented violation of the principles of international humanitarian law including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, its murder of unarmed civilians, its targeting of women and children, its deliberate destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and erosion of Palestinian Authority institutions, its demolition of houses and its displacement of persons, all give the people of the world, who are observing those actions in shock and sadness, the impression that the Council is completely unable to perform its role of preserving international peace and security. That erodes confidence in the United Nations and can have dire

consequences for all the parties concerned and for the entire region.

The continued flagrant and unjustified aggression constitutes a violation of all relevant international resolutions and international law. That will have a negative effect on international peace and security and lead to an escalation of tensions. Thus, it is incumbent on the Council to act to achieve a lasting and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict — a settlement based on resolutions of international legitimacy and the principles of the peace process, under the full supervision of the Council — by adopting effective and specific mechanisms for the prompt resumption of negotiations, a timetable for their completion and guarantees for the implementation of their outcome.

Effecting a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the terms of reference of the peace process and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1379 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the principle of land for peace and the withdrawal by Israel from all the land it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, is the ideal way for the Council to pursue the settlement of this dispute and return stability to the region.

Such a settlement will never be achieved unless the Council takes decisive and practical measures to put an end to Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territories, releases all prisoners and detainees and starts direct negotiations based on resolutions of international legitimacy, foremost among them the resolutions of the Council.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Algeria would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, for his briefing on the most recent developments in the tormented region of the Middle East.

The entire world looked on impotent as tragedy struck Lebanon. It expressed its indignation at the indiscriminate bombings and attacks that killed hundreds of civilians. It expressed its horror at the massacre in Qana and asked whether the true motives of the Israeli army's systematic destruction of vital basic infrastructure were not to make life impossible

for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. The world was rightly distressed by the large-scale violations of basic human rights and of international humanitarian law perpetrated by the aggressor, which did not hesitate to use destructive weapons, some of which are prohibited.

Neither could the world understand why it took so long for the Security Council to put an end to the tragedy, the destruction and the massacre of civilians. The rumblings that we are hearing suggest that, unfortunately, this is not yet over. It is certainly urgent that, in order to avert the risk of further violence, everything be done so that the necessary measures can be taken, including through the strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, within the framework of resolution 1701 (2006), in order to put an end to Israeli aggression and to restore peace to Lebanon.

If the situation in Lebanon is a real tragedy and a scandal in the eyes of the international community, what can be said of the situation preventing in Palestine? What can be said of the suffering that the Palestinian people has been experiencing for more than 60 years? What can be said of the secret killings and the massive violations of human rights that the Israeli army is daily carrying out in the occupied Palestinian territories? What can be said about the deplorable living conditions of an entire people deprived of its fundamental rights?

My delegation firmly condemns these repeated — and unpunished — violations of human rights. It expresses its grave concern at the occupying Power's continued kidnappings of elected members of democratic institutions, most recently the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and it demands the immediate, unconditional release of all those who have been kidnapped in defiance of international law and in the face of the protests of the international community.

The force, violence and terror being used against the Palestinian people will not resolve this conflict. They will not address security concerns and will not put an end to the determination of the Palestinian people to build a State of its own and to live in dignity, peace and security. These condemnable acts will only further exacerbate tension and provoke more violence.

It is time for these troubles to come to an end. It is time for the international community to intervene,

first and foremost to protect the Palestinian population from the ferocious occupation, from oppression and from the terror being imposed upon it, and then to bring about peace. Such peace was offered by the Arab Summit in 2000, but that offer was never taken up. It is time for the relevant resolutions of the Security Council to be respected, and for an end to bombings and war in the Middle East region, a region that has for so long sought renewed peace and prosperity.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Hussain (Pakistan):** I must first of all apologize for the absence of Ambassador Akram, who is unable to deliver this statement owing to other engagements.

Mr. President, the Pakistan delegation highly appreciates your skilful leadership of the Security Council during this month and welcomes the opportunity to participate in a discussion on the Middle East situation. We listened carefully to the briefing provided by Under-Secretary-General Gambari.

Whatever one's political perspective, it is clear that the Middle East is a region in flames and on the edge of chaos. Last month, the world witnessed 30 days of cruel and unjust war which gave rise to a series of violations of the basic principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The first of these was the use of disproportionate force. No military provocation by irregular forces can justify a full-scale attack and the destruction of a country whose national forces or authorities had no role in that provocation. We do not condone rocket attacks by Hizbollah which resulted in the loss of innocent civilian lives in Israel. At the same time, there can be no justification for bombardments whose victims were overwhelmingly innocent Lebanese civilians, including children and women. There can be no justification for the wanton destruction of the cities and infrastructure of a vulnerable country that was in the process of reconstructing itself from earlier conflicts and invasions into a peaceful, prosperous and democratic polity.

Secondly, the war witnessed gross and consistent violations of international humanitarian law — in Qana, in Tyre and in Beirut.

Thirdly, it witnessed what clearly appeared to be deliberate attacks against United Nations peacekeepers,

in which four were killed. We trust that this will be fully investigated.

The fourth and most serious matter was the failure by the Security Council to discharge its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The world watched helplessly for 30 days as the bombs and rockets continued to rain down and kill innocent people.

The laboriously negotiated resolution 1701 (2006) was a better outcome than earlier proposals presented to the Council. It envisaged Israeli withdrawal, upheld Lebanon's sovereignty over all its territory and called for reconstruction. Yet, it was not the Security Council's finest hour. After 30 days of war, the Council's resolution could only call for a cessation of hostilities that was unequal and incomplete. The peace that has returned is fragile. It has been violated by one party, taking advantage of the ambiguity in resolution 1701 (2006). Similar ambiguity also plagues the plan to reinforce and redeploy the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). One thing is certain: the United Nations should not be expected to accomplish what could not be imposed by the resort to war. It is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, and of its armed forces, to establish its sovereignty over its own territory.

The international community must contribute actively to providing urgently needed humanitarian help to the Lebanese people, including food, shelter and fuel supplies. The naval blockade, combined with the destruction of Lebanon's land communications system, is a major impediment to humanitarian relief. The blockade should be lifted immediately. Lebanon's reconstruction too must be quickly accomplished, with the generous support of the international community. Pakistan will make its due contribution to Lebanon's reconstruction and revival.

It is also clear that this 30-day war has changed the strategic and political landscape in the Middle East. Perhaps the most far-reaching provision of resolution 1701 (2006) is found in its penultimate paragraph, which calls for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

It is absolutely clear, now more than ever, that none of the conflicts in the Middle East can be resolved by recourse to the use of force. Disproportionate military power cannot ensure the durability of a peace that is imposed against the will,

aspirations and rights of a people. Even if put down once, they will rise and rise again in the legitimate quest for justice.

Clearly, the root cause of the Israeli-Lebanon conflict, the root cause of the Palestinian resistance and the root cause of suicide bombings and rocket attacks is Israel's 38-year occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories. The visible and often brutal suppression of the Palestinian people is also a principal root cause of the rise of extremism across the Arab and Muslim world and of the resort to terrorism. That political reality, however unpalatable, can no longer be ignored.

The structure of a durable peace in the Holy Land is already well known: the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. To realize that vision, the Security Council must secure the non-selective implementation of its own resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the provisions of the Arab peace initiative and the Quartet's road map.

The most urgent task is to halt the violence in Gaza and the West Bank: both Israeli attacks and Palestinian rockets. The captured Israeli soldiers should be released, but Israel must also release the hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese it holds, including the Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians. We hope the Palestinians will be able to unify their Government and security forces. We call on Israel to halt and reverse its settlement activity on the West Bank, to stop the erection of the separation wall and to end the economic and humanitarian blockade of the Palestinians. We urge the resumption of peace talks, without prejudice to the positions of either side. Those talks should lead to early agreement to resume implementation of the agreed peace plan and the road map.

A parallel peace process should be revived between Syria and Israel and should lead to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and to a peace agreement.

No one can fail to note that today the problems affecting the Middle East extend beyond the area of the old Palestine Mandate. The peaceful resolution of the sectarian violence and the insurgency in Iraq requires cooperation on the part of all Iraqis, Iraq's neighbours and the international community.

It is Pakistan's hope that the peaceful resolution of the disputes in the Middle East will not be further hampered by arbitrary deadlines or precipitate action on other problems in the area. That could throw further fuel on the fire in this already inflamed region.

**The President:** I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We listened very attentively to the briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on the longest-running conflict on the United Nations agenda: the Israeli-Arab conflict, which is as old as this international Organization. We also listened carefully to the statements made by our colleagues, the representatives of States members and non-members of the Security Council, who were unanimous in emphasizing the central importance of establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East region on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. They were also unanimous in stating that the Palestinian question is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict, not one of its details, as the Israeli representative tried in vain to suggest.

We are gravely concerned that the issue of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories continues to be on the United Nations agenda month after month and year after year without the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy aimed at putting an end to that blood-drenched occupation, which has continued for decades. That makes the United Nations, including the Security Council, responsible and accountable in the eyes of the peoples of peace-loving States, who find it difficult to understand the total lack of recourse to the effective mechanisms of the Charter and the inability to fully implement the will of the international community as represented in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), adopted 39 and 33 years ago, respectively. In fact, those resolutions have not been implemented on the ground because of a super-Power's blind support for the continued Israeli occupation and aggression. As all members are aware, that support is expressed in the United States delegation's use of the right of veto 43 times in the Security Council to protect Israel in its refusal to shoulder its responsibility to implement resolutions of international legitimacy.

In the unanimous view of the international community, Israel's continued occupation of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian territories is the real reason for the instability, lack of peace and escalating tensions in our region. The suffering of our peoples caused by the continued Israeli occupation and by a super-Power's support for that occupation — including providing it with the most sophisticated means of military murder — has become intolerable.

World public opinion has become aware of the magnitude of the Israeli State terrorism that for decades has targeted the Lebanese and the Palestinians. World public opinion has also become aware of a strenuous efforts made by a super-Power's politicians to obstruct the adoption of a draft resolution that would have achieved a ceasefire early in the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, and of the fact that, prior to that, the Permanent Mission of that State exercised the right of veto against a draft resolution condemning the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli-Arab conflict, which is an issue that threatens international peace and security, goes to the heart of the responsibilities of the Security Council. Israel's aggression against the peoples of the region and its occupation of our territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon cannot be concealed by the Israeli representative's efforts to transform that aggression and occupation into a 1950s Hollywood epic. Within the past two months, the Human Rights Council in Geneva, by an overwhelming majority, adopted two resolutions condemning the human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in Palestine and Lebanon. The Human Rights Council adopted those resolutions in the first two special sessions it has held since its inception.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670), which comprises 65 paragraphs in 13 pages, mentions my country only twice, and then in positive contexts: first, when the Secretary-General states that 107,000 Lebanese displaced persons who sought refuge in Syria because of the recent Israeli aggression have returned to Lebanon; and secondly, when he refers to the assistance provided by Syrian authorities to Lebanese refugees in Syria. However, the Secretary-General's report mentions Israel by name dozens of times and indicates that it has violated resolution 1701 (2006), which the Security Council adopted only a few days ago. Indeed, the Secretary-

General points out that Israel violated resolution 1701 (2006) several times only hours after its adoption.

The fact that the United Nations has adopted more than 1,000 resolutions condemning Israel by name and calling on it to put an end to its occupation of Arab territories in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon; to halt the building of its illegal settlements on Arab territories; to put an end to the continued Judaization of Arab Jerusalem, the burial of nuclear wastes in the occupied Syrian Golan and its continued disregard for the July 2004 advisory opinion of International Court of Justice and for General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 regarding the building of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory: all of that shows that Israel and its politicians are demons of international terrorism and hotbeds of falsehood and hypocrisy.

In that regard, it will suffice to state that, as everyone knows, the terrorism committed in 1996 by Israel in the first Qana massacre claimed the lives of 104 Lebanese civilians who had taken refuge in the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). That act of Israeli terrorism permanently disabled 25 Lebanese children. However, Israeli terrorism did not end there. In the second Qana massacre, earlier this month, Israeli terrorism was responsible for the deaths of those 25 handicapped children. Is that terrorism not demonic?

Those who provide the requisite support for Israeli terrorism — including absolute support for colonial settlement, occupation, aggression, the construction of the wall, the abduction of the members of a Palestinian Government elected through Western democratic standards and the arrest of the Speaker of the Palestinian parliament to try him before an occupying authority without legitimacy — bear the brunt of responsibility for the escalation and tension in our region. Our people, along with peace-loving people throughout the world, will not permit the transformation of our suffering and pain resulting from Israel's occupation, aggression and terrorism to become Hollywood spectacle from time to time. Although our option to choose peace is a strategic one, if it does not produce results, resistance will be the alternate option, as President Bashar al-Assad recently announced.

The peoples of our countries are not responsible for the failure of the policies of certain States that

consider themselves “super” in our region. We are surprised at the insistence of the capitals of those States on antagonizing our peoples and our peace-loving and open cultures. Fascism, Nazism, apartheid, Zionism and colonialism are neither Arab nor Islamic products. We as Arabs and as Muslims have participated in the writing of the most beautiful pages of human civilization. We have even invented some of the most important means for developing this civilization, in the service of all of humankind. Therefore, in our history we have never known the blind hatred exercised by some against our peoples and cultures. We regret that, for such hatred only serves to deepen conflict between peoples, rather than to promote dialogue and cooperation.

Israel’s building and deploying of eight nuclear reactors — which produce plutonium for the manufacture of nuclear weapons — in an area no larger than 20,000 square kilometres is a terrorist act that the Council must address decisively and promptly. Certain major Powers have been breaching their international non-proliferation obligations for decades by providing Israel with nuclear reactors, heavy water, scientists and nuclear technology. Those Powers should ask themselves about their reckless and irresponsible policies, and oblige Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and place its nuclear facilities under international supervision, with a view to putting an end to Israel’s policy of nuclear terrorism in the region.

At their recent conference in Cairo, Arab foreign ministers emphasized the central role of the United Nations in finding a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the terms of reference of the peace process and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace. The Arab foreign ministers also decided to call upon the Security Council to meet at the ministerial level in September 2006 to consider a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict by the Security Council. They did so based on their belief in the need for the Council to assume the responsibilities entrusted

to it vis-à-vis the protection and maintenance of international peace and security.

The Arab-Israeli conflict did not begin two months ago with the capture of an Israeli soldier in Gaza and two other soldiers in south Lebanon. It began decades ago and is, alas, as old as this international Organization. It is futile for the representative of Israel, or others, to obfuscate that point. The Arab-Israeli conflict began before Hamas assumed power through democratic elections in Palestine. The Arab-Israeli conflict began before the emergence of Hizbollah in Lebanon as a force resisting Israeli occupation, which has continued on Lebanese territory for 25 years despite the fact that the Council adopted resolution 425 (1978) in 1978.

Why has Israel failed for decades to accept the Arab hand extended to it in peace? What we know in that regard is that every time the Arabs have extended a hand in peace to Israel, the Israeli response has been negative, violent and terroristic. As we know, in the wake of the first Arab peace initiative, in Fez, in 1982, the Israeli response was to send Sharon to attack Lebanon and occupy Beirut. When the Arabs once again extended their hand in peace, in 1996, the result was that Israel once again attacked Lebanon and occupied parts of it. When at the Beirut summit in 2002 Arabs again launched a peace initiative, Israel’s response, which came while Arab leaders were still in Beirut, was to carry out the Jenin and Nablus massacres.

Those have been Israel’s responses to Arab peace initiatives. That is why we call upon the Council to address the Arab-Israeli conflict decisively and seriously at its upcoming meeting in September, when Arab ministers will be here to discuss the issue with the members of the Council to find a solution in accordance with binding international resolutions.

**The President:** There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 2.10 p.m.*