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Agenda item 36:
Question of Palestine

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Geir O. Pedersen
Permanent Representative

Mr. President,

Recent developments on the ground give cause for great concern. The murderous actions that we have witnessed the last few weeks are gruesome, appalling and unacceptable. We react with particular disgust and condemnation to the murder of four worshippers in a Jerusalem synagogue on November 18.

The temptation to call for vengeance and further hate must be restrained, and the cycle of violence must stop.

Jerusalem - A city that is holy to three great religions of peace must not be the center of strife and violence. To achieve this, we believe that the sensitive status quo of the holy sites must be fully respected and should not be challenged. We commend those who call for moderation, such as Israel’s Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef who has admonished his

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fellow followers of the Mosaic faith to cease the provocative visits to Haram al-Sharif/The Temple Mount.

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The recent violence in Jerusalem together with the Gaza war this summer are merely the symptoms of the overarching problem. The problem is the failure hitherto of the parties to reach a lasting two-state solution in which Israelis as well as Palestinians can live side by side in peace, security, dignity and mutual recognition.

Credible negotiations toward this goal must be urgently revitalized. Norway believes that the parties will not return to the table by their own devices. Both are entangled in dynamics, both internal and between themselves, which increase the gaps between them and weaken the hands of those who want to negotiate. Therefore, the international community should come to their assistance.

Norway also urges the parties to refrain from unilateral acts that pre-empt the negotiations and from all forms of incitement that undermine moderate leaders. This includes further building of settlements in violation of international law. Without the resumption of a credible political process, what has been achieved in terms of building the foundations for the two-state solution may be soon torn apart.

Mr. President,

While hoping for negotiations to address the fundamental issues of the conflict, there are substantial humanitarian challenges that urgently require immediate action.
The Cairo-conference on Palestine and reconstruction of Gaza on October 12 was a success. Norway is pleased by the overall focus of the conference. We underline the insistence that the humanitarian needs in Gaza after the military confrontations this summer must be addressed with a perspective on the whole of Palestine. The donors are engaged in building a Palestinian state in support for a negotiated end to the conflict. The massive destructions in Gaza call for urgent reconstruction as a humanitarian imperative.

Therefore, Norway was pleased with the pledges made. With respect to the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, it is now vital that the 5.4 billion US dollars pledged – including 2.5 billion US dollars allocated to Gaza – translate rapidly into real contributions on the ground. We therefore urge all the donors to deliver on their pledges in a transparent way. Contributions should preferably be channeled through the Palestinian Authority.

The Cairo-conference was not important for its pledges only, but for its unified political message: There will not be any fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in Gaza unless the blockade is lifted, and unless the Palestinian Authority executes full authority of the entire Palestinian Territory. Brave leadership is required on both sides to end the unsustainable situation in Gaza. Both parties should urgently make progress towards a durable ceasefire.

First, a sustainable reconstruction of Gaza will largely depend on an overall framework of support to Palestine under the leadership of one legitimate recipient government for Palestine. We therefore urge all parties involved to support a process that results in the PA regaining all its government functions and effective control of Gaza, including the crossing points. Norway calls on all Palestinian factions to end internal divisions and to cooperate with the Palestinian Consensus Government, uniting behind a common Palestinian vision under the leadership of president Abbas.
Second, a transformed Gaza will simply not be possible unless the border-crossing points are opening. We therefore urge a change of Israeli policy to open the borders allowing Gaza to trade normally on a permanent basis, while addressing the security needs of civilian populations. Both parties must cooperate with and fully implement the temporary materials monitoring and verification mechanism of large-scale reconstruction materials, negotiated by the UN. Not only import, a shift allowing exports from Gaza, is needed too.

Third, it is crucial that the PA is in charge of the reconstruction efforts of Gaza, but to do so, requires an increased coordination of donors and a system to monitor progress from Cairo. The only comprehensive mechanism to follow up both the pledges and the political messages from Cairo that exists are the AHLC-structures. The latter is the only forum where both parties are participating as members, and provides an efficient system to report and monitor independently on progress made by the donors and the parties. To utilize these structures Norway is re-activating the local aid-coordination regime in Ramallah and Jerusalem. The next AHLC-meeting, scheduled March 2015 in Brussels, will be the first high-level stocktaking of the Cairo-conference.

Mr. President,

A number of recent actions on the part of Israel in the West Bank including East Jerusalem are deeply troubling. The international community is unanimous in its condemnation of the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, in particular in Givat Hamatos, Ramat Shlomo, Har Homa and Ramot, recent settlement activities in East Jerusalem, continued demolitions and forcible transfer as well as plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank.
These actions are in violation of international law and counterproductive to the viability of the two-state solution. We urge Israel to reconsider and reverse these actions.

Mr. President,

Norway has a history of commitment to the situation in the Middle East, and the fate of the Israeli and the Palestinian people. We support renewed diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to bring peace, security, and dignity to Israelis and Palestinians. We will continue to do so through our leadership of the AHLC and other means conducive to the overarching goal of a lasting two-state solution.

Thank you, Mr. President.