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Seventy-ninth year

9678th meeting

Tuesday, 2 July 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation)

Members:

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| Algeria | Mr. Bendjama |
| China | Mr. Fu Cong |
| Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| France | Mr. De Rivière |
| Guyana | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Japan | Mrs. Shino |
| Malta | Mr. Camilleri |
| Mozambique | Mr. Afonso |
| Republic of Korea | Mr. Hwang |
| Sierra Leone | Mr. Kanu |
| Slovenia | Mr. Žbogar |
| Switzerland | Mrs. Baeriswyl |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| United States of America | Ms. Sullivan |

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Joonkook Hwang, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, for his service as President of the Council for the month of June.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023), to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. Kaag.

Ms. Kaag: Nearly nine months have passed since the horrific terror attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. The scars of that day run deep, and the pain of the hostages and the torment for their families are constant reminders to the Israeli people and political life. During the same period, Palestinian civilians in Gaza have been plunged into an abyss of suffering. Their homes lie shattered, their lives upended. The war has not merely created the most profound of humanitarian crises, it has unleashed a maelstrom of human misery. The public health system, as members know, has collapsed, schools have been destroyed and the disrupted education system threatens future generations acutely. With summer temperatures soaring and severe shortages of basic services, such as waste management, sanitation facilities and water supplies, the spectre of outbreaks of infectious and communicable diseases looms large.

Following the Israeli offensive against Rafah since 6 May, more than 1 million people have been displaced once again, desperately seeking shelter and safety. In total, 1.9 million people are now displaced across Gaza. I am deeply concerned about reports of new evacuation

orders, issued in the area of Khan Younis, which have a deep impact on the civilian population. In Gaza, nowhere is safe. Behind every statistic is a human story of hope, dignity and aspirations. On my visits to Gaza, I am met with voices that echo a single, heart-wrenching question: will our suffering ever end?

It cannot be repeated often enough: we need an immediate, full and complete ceasefire in Gaza. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and unimpeded and continuous access to deliver aid at scale throughout the Gaza Strip, in line with resolution 2735 (2024). International humanitarian law and international human rights law must be respected by all. The protection of civilians remains the paramount priority. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East must be allowed to deliver on its mandated role.

Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.9617), I have continued to engage with key Governments and other regional stakeholders at the highest political levels. I met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and key Cabinet members again two weeks ago, further to resolution 2720 (2023). The resolution establishes a framework to expedite, streamline and accelerate the delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. As expected, that has been fraught with challenges. Yet deliverables include the establishment of additional supply routes and the streamlining and facilitation that have taken place, while the space for acceleration remains very much subject to political will, as well as the enabling environment and the conditions on the ground. There is no substitute for political will.

In addition, the resolution mandated the establishment of a mechanism for the monitoring and verification of humanitarian assistance. The mechanism is now capturing humanitarian aid shipments from Jordan, Cyprus, Israel and the West Bank into Gaza, ensuring greater volumes at certain times — I underline, at certain times — transparency and prioritization. Its establishment in a matter of months is the result of tremendous collaboration and support from the United Nations Office for Project Services. The activation of the mechanism for supplies from Egypt is expected by mid-July. Subject to visa approval, United Nations monitors are getting ready to deploy to the mechanism's newly established offices in Gaza. Options are being discussed on the feasibility and longer-term planning of the Cyprus maritime corridor with continued direct access to Gaza.

Finally, the mechanism will also serve as the main platform to facilitate the entry into Gaza of all critical humanitarian items, consolidating existing practices, further to the intent of the resolution. I encourage Member States to continue to preposition supplies and to allocate financing to humanitarian agencies. Additional contributions are urgently needed to address and meet the gap in the \$2.5 billion flash appeal. As foreseen by the resolution, in September, I will submit my last report to the Council, at which point I will also share my broader observations.

During my previous briefing, I reported that, on 5 April, the Israeli war cabinet made several commitments related to resolution 2720 (2023). My mission has been monitoring the implementation of those and other commitments, some of which are in place. They include: the direct entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza from the north via the Zikim and Erez crossings, as well as the use of the port of Ashdod; approval for the resumption of the electricity line into the desalination facility in Khan Younis — while the Nahal Oz water line was also opened, I note that there are reports this morning that indicate that the water line was unfortunately damaged again in hostilities last night; permission for select medical items to enter, for instance the United Nations Population Fund maternity wards and field hospitals in northern Gaza; further critical communication and protective equipment, which are vital for United Nations and broader humanitarian operations in Gaza have recently been approved and transferred to Gaza, while discussions on other essential items are still ongoing; and the continued use of Gate 96 to allow the entry of humanitarian supplies and fuel. We have seen an increase in the volume of commercial cargo entering Gaza, albeit irregularly, and we are in discussions to ensure that commercial supplies are in line with the immediate needs of the population, meeting humanitarian requirements.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has made further commitments to expedite the delivery of essential supplies for water, sanitation, waste management and medical and educational needs. Urgent action is needed. Following last week's evacuation of 21 Palestinian children with serious illnesses and their accompanying adults from Gaza to Egypt via the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem crossing, discussions are ongoing to establish a more regular and predictable system for medical evacuations for patients, facilitated by the World Health Organization. In view of the immense

need, I consider that to be a priority and ask for members' urgent attention and support.

In line with the resolution, a sustained flow of assistance to Gaza is needed to deliver the necessary quantity and quality of goods through all land and sea crossings, including the Rafah border crossing. That requires a continued focus. The ability of the United Nations and humanitarian partners to operate safely and securely within Gaza is equally important in view of the ever-growing risks. Since the start of the Israeli military operation in Rafah and the subsequent closure of the Rafah border crossing in early May, the volume of aid entering into or being distributed across Gaza has dropped significantly. Military activity and the lack of safe routes within Gaza continue to have a severe impact on humanitarian operations. Furthermore, a near-total breakdown of civil order has led to an environment of lawlessness and criminality.

That worrisome trend further hampers the ability of the United Nations to deliver on its mandate. Many members will be familiar with the images of supplies accumulated at the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem crossing. The United Nations has asked Israel to find solutions to enable the safe delivery of aid, including its distribution — aid that should be reaching Palestinian civilians across the Gaza Strip. Since 26 May, trucks from Egypt have been temporarily rerouted via Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem. To further the reopening of the Rafah border crossing, my mission has submitted proposals to the parties regarding the possible reopening of the Rafah border crossing based on the options provided.

Urgent action is still necessary regarding the following: the establishment of an effective, credible and predictable deconfliction and coordination system across Gaza — discussions on that matter are currently under way, as members know; continued access to all security and communications equipment, as well as the critical humanitarian items needed for the delivery or repair of basic services; route clearance from mines and unexploded ordnance and the approvals urgently needed to undertake those assignments; the prepositioned storage and movement of the daily volume of fuel needed; and the import of spare parts and relevant maintenance equipment.

Concerning the diversification of routes and sustainability of supplies, we need a further scaling up of the Jordan corridor; an expansion of the volume of aid

entering via the Zikim and Erez crossings respectively; the opening of additional crossings, especially to south Gaza; a consideration of the movement of aid from north to south Gaza; and last but not least, the urgent reopening of the Rafah border crossing, also with a view to the important planning for recovery and reconstruction.

While humanitarian assistance will be required for years to come, planning and preparing for the early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza is essential. We cannot ask Palestinian civilians to put their future on hold while they cling to their human dignity under the most inhumane circumstances. Establishing the framework and priorities for early recovery and reconstruction is both political and technical. While politics and conditions on the ground may dictate the pace and nature of those efforts, preparations should not wait. Let us also look at what can be done now to complement and support the humanitarian response. Palestinians in Gaza, young and old, should not be asked to wait.

The Palestinian Authority has a critical role to play in the Gaza Strip. It is integral to planning for the implementation of Gaza's recovery and reconstruction, and the international community must ensure its financial stability and support its reform, governance and other capacities needed to reassume its responsibilities in Gaza. I would also like to underline that the creation of a modern local economy across the Gaza Strip should be a priority. Palestinians cannot be expected to depend on humanitarian assistance alone. Commercial activity must grow, and the private sector must be revitalized. The mechanism established pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023) can be used to facilitate the scale-up, acceleration and expedition of all goods needed for Gaza for early recovery and reconstruction, which is beyond the current humanitarian focus.

Ambitious reconstruction planning also requires ambitious and generous financing. That means the international community must consider a range of financing options and instruments, from traditional development financing to the establishment of new trust funds and tried-and-tested innovative financing instruments, with a view to sustaining the necessary levels of investments and guaranteeing financing flows, including those from the private sector.

When we talk about recovery, reconstruction or financing, it can seem abstract, but if we view it through

a human lens, that of our fellow human beings, it means the following: dignified shelter while more permanent housing is being built and/or refurbished; the restoration of basic functioning health, sanitation and water systems; the urgent rehabilitation of schools or the establishment of other places of learning relevant to education; the creation of income-generating jobs; sustained and specialized mental health and psychosocial support services; support to local civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations, in particular those led by those inspiring young people or the strong women of Gaza I keep meeting on every visit; special attention and support is needed for the estimated 17,000 children orphaned by this war alone; and, to restore people's dignity and quality of life, we must urgently extend our hand to those with disabilities, including the vast number of young and old civilians who have suffered amputations and require constant support, including through the import of prostheses. Some of that work should start now despite conditions on the ground, and it deserves unwavering international support.

Resolution 2720 (2023) has achieved the intended and significant progress, but as I mentioned there is no substitute for political will, full respect for international humanitarian law — especially when it comes to the protection of civilians — and a safe and enabling environment to secure effective distribution. Although intentions and commitments may be convincing, the only credible measure of change and progress are the improvements in the lives and well-being of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. There is a long road to travel to realize that, and much more remains to be done, lest we fail the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. And of course, it remains our duty to advocate for lasting peace between Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, alongside a safe and secure Israel.

In conclusion, I would like to share a few lines from a Palestinian girl, in Gaza, shared with me on one of my field visits. It is not necessarily in my style to do so, but I would like to read them to the Council:

(spoke in Arabic)

My name is Fatima Al Masri. I am 8 years old. I am from Gaza. I love my country. I love my friends. I live in a camp. I would like to live in my house, like all other children.

(spoke in English)

We owe it to all children.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her valuable updates describing the human misery, as she said, that is having a negative impact even on future generations, as well as for her valuable observations and calls for urgent action.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains catastrophic, with no end in sight. As hostilities continue, Palestinians are experiencing repeated displacement, starvation and little to no access to essential goods and services. Every passing day of the conflict only brings more casualties, devastation, trauma and destruction. We must do all we can to meet the dire needs of those suffering in Gaza.

In that regard, Japan welcomes the full operationalization of the resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism dedicated to accelerating the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. While Israel's military operation continues, we are relieved to hear of the significant progress in the coordination and management of humanitarian assistance to Gaza. We highly value the extensive and tireless engagement of Ms. Kaag and her team with the parties and relevant stakeholders, including the Government of Israel. We also commend the close cooperation of the countries of the region, such as Cyprus, Egypt and Jordan, as well as the United States, to expand the scale of aid delivery by maximizing access routes, including the maritime and additional land corridors. At the same time, we listened carefully to the words of Ms. Kaag describing the many persisting challenges that she and her team are facing, such as insecurity, a lack of deconfliction mechanisms across Gaza and the continued closure of the Rafah crossing. Japan offers its full support to the endeavours of Ms. Kaag and the resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism and stands ready to work with fellow Security Council members to effectively implement the mandate of the mechanism and address the remaining obstacles to humanitarian assistance.

Given the vast scale and scope of the needs in Gaza, the work of the United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza, plays a crucial part

in alleviating the suffering of the people, and therefore requires further financial support and other resources. For its part, since October 2023, Japan has provided humanitarian aid worth more than \$120 million in sectors such as food, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and medical care through several international organizations and through Japanese non-governmental organizations. We have also made extensive in-kind contributions of blankets, jerry cans, plastic sheets and sleeping mats to UNRWA and other aid organizations. We will continue to provide necessary assistance and encourage others to provide further support as well. Ultimately, however, what is needed more than ever is the implementation of resolution 2735 (2024), which can pave the way for the release of hostages and an immediate ceasefire, leading to the safe and unimpeded distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. Japan strongly urges Hamas to work in good faith based on resolution 2735 (2024) without further delay.

Lastly, we would like to stress that international law must be respected by all parties at all times. In particular, civilians must be protected, and the safety of United Nations and other humanitarian workers and premises must be ensured. We must continue to play our part in saving the lives of the innocent and work towards bringing peace and stability to the region.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I congratulate Russia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. The Chinese delegation will fully support you and your colleagues, Mr. President, in your work. I also commend the Republic of Korea for completing its presidency of the Council last month.

I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag for her briefing. Ms. Kaag's briefing demonstrates once again the unprecedented deterioration of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza owing to extreme shortages of supplies for survival and dire health conditions. Millions of people are struggling with hunger, disease, pain and despair. The humanitarian disaster in Gaza is human-made. The tragic scenes on the ground are serious breaches of international law and international humanitarian law.

Before our eyes, Gaza has been under blockade for nine months, with the supply of water, electricity, food, medication and fuel having been cut off and more than 2 million people living in an open-air prison in a state

of precariousness and struggling to get by without food and other means of survival.

Before our eyes, the most important Rafah crossing has been forced to close for two months because of Israeli military operations, and thousands of trucks loaded with humanitarian supplies have to wait in long lines. The existing crossing points are far from being able to meet the demand for humanitarian aid. The huge investment in the floating dock by some countries and the many twists and turns in its use once again show that land transport routes are the key to expanding humanitarian access at scale and that their role is irreplaceable.

Before our eyes, the entry of humanitarian supplies into Gaza has been obstructed at every level, and a large number of people in need have been unjustifiably denied access to the most basic necessities, which they urgently need for survival. Humanitarian workers are not only denied effective cooperation, but they also face unreasonable difficulties and accusations.

Also before our eyes, the facilities of humanitarian agencies have become repeated targets, and the safety and security of humanitarian workers are not guaranteed. The facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been repeatedly attacked, and humanitarian agencies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, have been put at risk by the fighting. The conflict has resulted in the deaths of more than 200 humanitarian workers, which is shocking and unprecedented in history. Deconfliction mechanisms have been rendered ineffective, and humanitarian workers have even been prevented from carrying essential communication equipment, such as radios.

All of the that is just the tip of the iceberg of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. We reiterate that hunger cannot be weaponized, humanitarian issues cannot be politicized and the human-made exacerbation of the humanitarian disaster is unacceptable. China urges Israel to fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law, heed the overwhelming call of the international community, take concrete actions to ensure the rapid and safe entry of humanitarian supplies at scale into Gaza, ensure the safe and orderly distribution of humanitarian supplies throughout Gaza and cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations.

The Council adopted resolution 2720 (2023) with the intention of expanding, at scale, humanitarian access, but that has clearly not materialized. It is necessary to examine the reasons that the resolution has not been effectively implemented. We call on the countries concerned to work harder to push for political will from the parties concerned to effectively remove obstacles preventing the large-scale entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. We support Senior Coordinator Kaag in her continuing efforts and expect her to bring about tangible progress in accordance with the requirements of the Council resolutions, the expectations of the international community and the urgent needs of the people in Gaza.

The fundamental way to alleviate the humanitarian disaster and save innocent lives is through the immediate implementation of a lasting ceasefire and the early relaunch of the two-State solution. China calls on the international community to continue to make unremitting efforts to that end. We support the Council in taking further necessary action as soon as possible.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing. I once again pledge France's full support and call for the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024).

Ms. Kaag's briefing confirms the catastrophic nature of the situation in Gaza, with no glimmer of hope on the horizon. The number of civilian casualties continues to rise endlessly. The population needs aid to survive. Famine has set in, and 80 per cent of civilian infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, including 95 per cent of educational facilities. Thousands of children are dead, missing, trapped under rubble, detained or isolated. An entire generation of children is being deprived of education and will suffer long-term trauma.

It is therefore imperative to remove all obstacles to humanitarian access. Such aid must be able to use all crossing points. France calls on Israel to immediately reopen the Rafah crossing to Egypt. We once again call on Israel to take all necessary measures to ensure the provision of basic services and humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip. Israel must allow immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, as ordered by the International Court of Justice. That means issuing the necessary permits to all humanitarian programmes

and agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

I thank the Special Coordinator for implementing a mechanism for coordinating aid so that goods entering Gaza match the reality of needs and reach their beneficiaries. While the volume of aid must be increased, the goods must also be able to be transported throughout the Gaza Strip and distributed safely.

There are still many restrictions on what objects and foods can enter Gaza, particularly when it comes to infrastructure related to health, water, sanitation and waste treatment. It is essential that the United Nations and humanitarian actors have access to suitable equipment to carry out their operations and prevent the situation from worsening. With the heat, there is a heightened risk of the spread of disease, which would lead to more civilian casualties.

The protection of humanitarian workers must also be guaranteed in all circumstances. The Council renewed its commitment in that regard in May, with the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024). This is a moral and legal imperative that applies to everyone. France pays tribute to all the humanitarian personnel killed in Gaza.

The laws of war and the humanitarian principles of precaution and proportionality in the conduct of hostilities must be respected. We call on all actors to guarantee the effectiveness of deconfliction mechanisms. The coordinating role of the United Nations is essential in that respect.

France demands an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages. We once again condemn the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023. France is opposed to the current operation in Rafah. Pursuant to the order of the International Court of Justice, Israel must immediately cease its military offensive and any other action carried out in the Rafah governorate. France will continue to work towards a rapid end to the crisis, based on the two-State solution. The Israeli people must have security guarantees, and we must work to build a State for the Palestinians. A reformed Palestinian Authority will have a central role to play in that process, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, which are to be part of that Palestinian State. It is urgent to act towards that end.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I would like to thank the Republic of Korea for its presidency last month, and wish you, Mr. President, success during your

presidency this month. I also thank you for organizing this briefing and express appreciation to Ms. Kaag for the updates provided on her work, pursuant to the mandate outlined in resolution 2720 (2023). Her briefing allows us to once again contemplate the depth of suffering that the Palestinian people continue to experience and the enormous challenges associated with alleviating their suffering. Meanwhile, hope remains distant.

Guyana has taken note of the complex operating environment in which humanitarian workers are attempting to bring relief to the ailing Palestinian population, and that aid is not reaching Palestinians at scale. It is especially concerning that humanitarian workers appear to be systematically targeted, presumably as part of a larger strategy to annihilate as many Palestinians as possible through deprivation and other means.

The lack of aid at scale is attributable, inter alia, to the inadequate number of available access points into Gaza and the absence of functioning notification and deconfliction mechanisms for the safety of humanitarian workers operating in Gaza. Those factors are compounded by the lack of security guarantees for civilians accessing aid and by the near total breakdown of law and order, which is affecting service providers' ability to deliver. Ms. Kaag also confirmed that today. The result of this consistent onslaught of challenges is multidimensional.

I will highlight two of the most concerning aspects.

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report on Gaza conveyed that 96 per cent of the population is facing acute food insecurity at crisis levels or higher, with almost half a million people living in catastrophic conditions. Guyana has also taken note that at least 557,000 women in Gaza are facing severe food insecurity, with mothers and adult women in a more precarious situation since they often prioritize feeding others and report greater difficulty in accessing food, compared to men. It has been observed, at various points, that improved humanitarian access has contributed to modest improvements in food security indicators and improvements in the diets of children. That reinforces the critical link between sufficient access and improvements in the humanitarian situation.

The collapse of the health system, as pointed out by Ms. Kaag, is another appalling consequence of concern. According to the World Health Organization, evacuation orders, deteriorating security conditions and

population displacement are affecting the provision of health care. Fuel shortages and shortages of medicines and health supplies in Gaza Strip hospitals are hindering the delivery of life-saving medical care. Together with the unavailability of water, sanitation and hygiene services, these circumstances have led, inter alia, to a rise in infectious diseases and deaths due to simple injuries and chronic diseases.

Against that backdrop, Guyana reiterates three important calls.

First, there must be increased humanitarian access into Gaza. The number of crossings into Gaza is too limited, thus hindering the supply of humanitarian aid. In keeping with its international legal obligations, Israel must facilitate humanitarian aid. Guyana recalls the orders issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, 28 March and 24 May. We recall, in particular, that the Court stated in its May order that,

“unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, necessitates that [Israel] maintain open land crossing points, and in particular the Rafah crossing”.

While Guyana supports efforts to scale up humanitarian assistance by all means, we stress that there is no substitute for land crossings. Guyana therefore supports the work of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza to that end.

Secondly, Guyana calls on the parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel operating in Gaza. Humanitarian workers have been casualties of this war in unprecedented numbers. That is principally due to non-compliance with international humanitarian law, which dictates the proper functioning of deconfliction and notification mechanisms to facilitate the safe movement of humanitarian workers. Guyana recalls the recent adoption by the Council of resolution 2730 (2024) on the security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, and it calls on the parties to fully comply with the provisions of that resolution.

Thirdly, Guyana demands an immediate ceasefire and an end to this war, which has claimed the lives of nearly 40,000 thousand civilians in the Gaza Strip. After nearly nine months of unrelenting war, the devastation is catastrophic and grows worse every day. That must stop, and Palestinians must be able to rebuild their lives. That is a critical factor. Furthermore, the international

community must facilitate the rebuilding of Gaza. That is a critical factor in advancing the two-State solution. To that end, Guyana recognizes and supports the mandate of Ms. Kaag as outlined in resolution 2720 (2023). We stress the importance of cooperation from all parties for the successful implementation of that resolution. We also stress the critical role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in any reconstruction effort in Gaza, owing to its decades of experience providing services to Palestinians in the territory.

In conclusion, the Council must never grow accustomed or immune to the reports of pain and suffering of the Palestinian people, especially when news cycles move on to different issues and the eyes on the Council gaze elsewhere. Our hunger to act must never diminish. I therefore conclude by reiterating Guyana’s commitment to working with the Council to bring this war to a swift end so that civilians can experience relief and the reconstruction of Gaza can commence in earnest.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her report. For me, the key takeaways are the urgent need to safeguard human dignity and the very concrete recommendations, which address issues ranging from education for children to reconstruction.

Since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023) in December 2023, Ms. Kaag and her team have made every effort to speed up the delivery of aid to the civilian population. Nevertheless, we continue to face a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza that defies description. Nine months after the acts of terror of 7 October 2023, which Switzerland has firmly condemned, we remain deeply concerned about the conflict in the Middle East, in particular the appalling humanitarian situation in Gaza. We condemn the fact that the hostilities continue to claim many civilian victims, particularly among children and the 1.7 million displaced persons in the Gaza Strip.

The new Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report confirms that already very bleak picture. Approximately 96 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 15 per cent are at the highest — that is to say, catastrophic — level, and that proportion is likely to increase still further. The substantial risk of famine

will remain as long as the conflict continues and humanitarian access is hampered.

Switzerland calls on all parties to comply strictly with their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights law. International humanitarian law obliges parties to allow and facilitate humanitarian access to civilians in need and prohibits the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Civilians must have access to goods and services essential to their survival, such as drinking water, food and electricity.

In its orders, the International Court of Justice has confirmed the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to all of the Gaza Strip. However, the level of aid remains clearly and vastly insufficient in the face of the immensity of the need. As the Special Coordinator pointed out, safe, rapid and unhindered access through all crossing points remains a major challenge. It is urgent that that change. Sufficient assistance must reach those who need it. The parties to the conflict and other stakeholders must act.

We thank Jordan, Egypt and the United Nations for the conference on emergency humanitarian assistance for Gaza held in Amman earlier this month, which sent a strong political signal. At the conference and at Council meetings, Switzerland also reiterated its urgent call for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Switzerland also demands that the parties respect their obligations under international law with regard to the persons they are holding. All such persons must be able to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross and be treated humanely.

Switzerland calls for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council, in particular resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024). Furthermore, as reaffirmed in resolution 2730 (2024), which was introduced by Switzerland, all parties to the conflict have an obligation to respect and protect humanitarian, United Nations and associated personnel, as well as their premises and property.

We all know that increasing humanitarian aid cannot by itself provide a lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East. There must be a cessation of hostilities, and a political horizon must be urgently re-established. We therefore reiterate our firm support for the two-State solution. Indeed, the existence of two

democratic States — Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part — living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders is the only way to peace, security and dignity to the people of the region.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): Sierra Leone congratulates and expresses its full support to the Russian Federation on its assumption of the presidency for the month of July. We also commend and congratulate the Republic of Korea for their successful presidency in June. I thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for sharing her assessment of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and her efforts to implement resolution 2720 (2023).

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains a high priority, especially with regard to addressing the critical security and administrative challenges that threaten the full implementation of resolution 2720 (2023) and all other relevant resolutions of the Council on that issue.

In the past eight months, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have experienced a devastating war with catastrophic consequences, ranging from a massive death toll, injuries, multiple displacements, inadequate shelter and shortages of water, sanitation facilities, medications and other daily essential products to food insecurity and famine. That cannot be normalized, and we must refuse to normalize that human tragedy of epic proportions. The plight of women and children has been particularly devastating, as they still struggle to access the right quantity and quality of aid. As we heard in Ms. Kaag's briefing, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has recently reported that essential sexual and reproductive health services in Gaza are severely limited, as only a few hospitals remain partially operational following multiple attacks on health-care facilities. A similar absence of specialized health-care facilities for children remains a key concern.

For months, heightened tensions and insecurity have continued to hinder the operations of aid agencies and the unimpeded flow of humanitarian assistance throughout the Palestinian territory. The continuous escalation of the conflict has affected the ability of these agencies to work effectively and provide life-saving assistance to civilians, despite their best efforts. Furthermore, as reported by OCHA, more than 193 United Nations personnel have been killed during the conflict, along with other humanitarian workers.

In support of United Nations efforts to address the challenges of effective humanitarian support in the Gaza Strip, Sierra Leone would like to emphasize the following two points.

First, we reiterate our support for the office of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator and recognize her sustained efforts through meaningful engagement and consultations with relevant stakeholders to enhance the facilitation and improve the coordination, monitoring and verification of all relief consignments into Gaza. We welcome her recent visit to the north of Gaza and her discussions with Israeli authorities to advance that mandate. In that regard, we believe that ongoing discussions with the Israeli Government and wider engagement aimed at resolving the protracted conflict between Israel and Palestine should prioritize the issue of the unimpeded provision of, and access to, humanitarian aid and essential services, which are so desperately needed in the Gaza Strip and in the occupied Palestinian territories. We also therefore welcome the high-level conference entitled “A Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Aid for Gaza”, held in Jordan on 11 June.

Secondly, we reiterate our call for all parties to the conflict to adhere strictly to their obligations under international law, in particular under international humanitarian law, all relevant resolutions of the Council and the binding provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, aimed at protecting civilians, including humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure. An effective deconfliction mechanism is necessary to guarantee the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel and allow for the rapid facilitation of humanitarian relief.

We welcome the operationalization of the United Nations mechanism and improved access in the north through the western Erez crossing. However, we note the constraints that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other partners are encountering on the ground in storing, transporting and distributing aid to south and central Gaza. We call for access to be granted via all possible routes into the Gaza Strip and for such obstacles to be reduced together with delays and restrictions resulting from checkpoint and aid clearance procedures.

We are of the view that an immediate and sustained truce, leading to a cessation of hostilities, will

significantly improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. We echo the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, calling for the current opportunity created by the recent peace initiative be seized: “It is high time for a ceasefire along with the unconditional release of hostages”.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone calls for continued support for the mandate of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator, who is working collaboratively to improve the lives of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. We call for stronger collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies and consultants. Ultimately, adherence to the calls for an immediate ceasefire would go a long way to securing a deal that will finally end the current cycle of violence and suffering.

Mr. De la Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Given that this is the Council’s first meeting of the month, I join in the commendation of the Republic of Korea for the considerable work it accomplished in June and would also like to extend my best wishes to the Russian Federation for its presidency during July; it can count on the full support of Ecuador.

I begin this statement by thanking Ms. Sigrid Kaag, United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for the report she has just given us and by renewing my country’s support for her stewardship.

A little over two months ago (see S/PV.9617), on the occasion of the latest report on the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023), I recalled that, since the beginning of the war in Gaza in October 2023, my country had repeatedly underscored that the civilian population of Gaza must have access to humanitarian aid in sufficient quantities and in a continuous and predictable manner. Today, despite the efforts made by Senior Coordinator Kaag and her team and other stakeholders, it has not been possible to ensure the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian aid on a scale necessary to ensure the population of Gaza’s access to food, water, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications and medical services, which are essential to their survival. Humanitarian efforts continue to be affected by restrictions. Military operations in Rafah have affected the already insufficient entry of aid. Distribution remains a complicated and an extremely hazardous task. Meanwhile, living conditions are deteriorating and the risk of famine is not decreasing.

Ecuador values efforts to give effect to resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism and encourages the pursuance of that endeavour, notwithstanding the problems and challenges encountered. Those problems and challenges stem from a lack of political will. As Coordinator Kaag pointed out in April, a paradigm shift underpinned by political will is necessary. Without political will, it will not be possible to increase the quality and quantity of aid, to take measures to allow its safe and unhindered distribution within Gaza or to plan and prepare for early recovery and reconstruction. My country urges all parties to recall that resolution 2720 (2023) requires parties to the conflict to cooperate with Coordinator Kaag without delay or obstruction and to demonstrate their political will in that regard and all areas of the conflict.

In conclusion, I reiterate Ecuador's condemnation of the terrorist acts of Hamas that began on 7 October 2023 and all acts of violence against civilians, and I must reiterate my call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the immediate cessation of hostilities, in compliance with the resolutions of the Council.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to begin by warmly congratulating you, Mr. President, and your country, the Russian Federation, on your assumption of the important position of President of the Security Council for this month of July. We wish to assure you of our fullest cooperation. We also commend the Republic of Korea on a most successful presidency in June. We thank the Russian Federation presidency for convening this important briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We extend our profound gratitude to Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her insightful and very moving briefing on the situation in Gaza and on compliance with resolution 2720 of 22 December 2023 in particular.

By adopting resolution 2720 (2023), three months after the outbreak of the crisis in the Gaza Strip, the Council took an important step. We were moved by a determination to address effectively the catastrophic humanitarian situation that has befallen the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people. Through the resolution, important mechanisms were envisaged and established in order to allow for a humanitarian response to the crisis, with regard afforded to full respect for the human dignity of the Palestinian people.

Six months have elapsed since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023). From the report that we just heard, the stated goals of the resolution are far from being achieved as we meet today in the Council. On the contrary, we are witnessing deaths on a daily basis and on a large scale in Gaza. Hostages, on the other hand, have not yet been released and humanitarian assistance has not reached the millions of Gazans in need. We are deeply convinced that there are no plausible reasons for the current unjustified and unbearable suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza. We demand that the humanitarian catastrophe come immediately to a halt. As Council members, we are duty-bound to continue addressing the situation in Gaza as a matter of urgency.

Mozambique commends the efforts of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, as well as the tireless work conducted by her team to ensure the implementation of that important resolution. We strongly encourage engagement with the relevant parties and the international community as a whole in the implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) and even the spirit of resolution 2728 (2024). We hold the view that the Council must stand united in its support for the work of Ms. Sigrid Kaag, her team and other stakeholders, with a view to addressing the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The humanitarian efforts in Gaza require a solid ceasefire. In parallel, efforts must be made for the release of hostages, for full humanitarian access and assistance, for dialogue, for peace, for the reconstruction of Gaza and for the implementation of a two-State solution leading to a peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I would like to thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Kaag, for her briefing and her efforts.

Resolution 2720 (2023) sought to address the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. It is gravely alarming that, nine months into the conflict, the conditions in the Strip remain dire and continue to deteriorate. Since 7 October 2023, more than 37,000 people have been killed as a result of the Israeli military operation, with countless others wounded. Seventy-five per cent of the Gazan population has been internally displaced — the majority on more than one occasion. Nearly the entire population is facing high levels of food insecurity, with concerning reports detailing the use of starvation as a

method of warfare. Children continue to bear the brunt of the war. Israel's continued and expansive military operation into Rafah has further compounded existing risks for civilians and debilitated the humanitarian response, including through the seizure of the vital Rafah crossing, which remains inoperative.

The implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the full, immediate and effective implementation of the orders of the International Court of Justice remain essential. The obligation to ensure the unimpeded and safe delivery of humanitarian aid into and throughout Gaza, including through the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance on a large scale, remains paramount.

We are encouraged to note from Senior Coordinator Kaag's briefing that the mechanism established under resolution 2720 (2023) is now operational and contributing to improving coordinated efforts for aid delivery into Gaza. We maintain that land routes remain the most feasible and effective way to ensure that unprecedented levels of aid now enter the Strip.

It is troubling that fuel shortage issues persist, hindering aid operations and the functioning of critical civilian facilities such as water, health and sanitation, increasing the risks of communicable diseases in rising summer temperatures. Commercial goods must also be prioritized, as the people of Gaza cannot depend on aid alone. Furthermore, Malta is deeply concerned at reports of increased challenges for aid distribution within Gaza owing to rising insecurities, including lawlessness, criminality and looting. That deterioration on the ground places significant strain on the United Nations and its partners in continuing their respective relief efforts.

As demanded in resolution 2720 (2023) and in accordance with international humanitarian law, United Nations and humanitarian personnel must have robust assurances for their safety and security. Last week's killing of a Médecins sans frontières staffer is another tragic demonstration of the high price humanitarians and health workers continue to pay, with impunity.

All parties must fully respect and utilize the deconfliction mechanism. Independent investigations into all killings of United Nations and humanitarian staff must also be held. Furthermore, the work of the United Nations must not be politicized. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is an irreplaceable actor, without which there

can be no meaningful comprehensive aid operation in Gaza. It is operating under extremely difficult conditions, and it is crucial that the international community ensure that the Agency receives the required funding and support.

As we sit in another meeting on the situation in Gaza, we cannot risk normalizing this state of affairs. This persistent despair cannot become the inherent status quo for Palestinian civilians and the hostages who are still being held captive by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. On that note, we reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Malta reiterates its call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. We urge both Hamas and Israel to accept the terms of the proposal outlined in resolution 2735 (2024) and to put an end to further human suffering. That is the only way to allow for a significant surge of aid into and across Gaza. It would also allow the space for the massive recovery and reconstruction efforts that are necessary. Crucially, a ceasefire will bring us a step closer towards a vital political horizon. That is a fundamental requirement for the realization of the two-State solution and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Security Council presidency for July, and I wish you every success in your duties. I also thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her briefing.

After nine months of a brutal killing machine being launched against the defenceless population in Gaza, the humanitarian situation is catastrophic. World Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain stated,

"People in Gaza are starving to death right now. The speed at which this man-made hunger and malnutrition crisis has ripped through Gaza is terrifying. ... There is a very small window left to prevent an outright famine, and to do that we need immediate and full access to the north [of the Gaza Strip]. If we wait until famine has been declared, it is too late. Thousands more will be dead".

Last December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2720 (2023) to establish a mechanism aimed at facilitating and simplifying the procedures for delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza — a mechanism that was presented as a solution to the obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities. What, then, is

the situation today? A quick look at the latest United Nations statistics reveals an undisputed conclusion: resolution 2720 (2023) has proven ineffective. When that resolution was adopted, approximately 100 trucks entered Gaza daily. Before 7 October, there were 500. Today the same problems remain in spite of Ms. Kaag's efforts, and humanitarian actors continue to face numerous difficulties in gaining access to Gaza.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, extremely limited humanitarian access to, and within, the Gaza Strip continues to impede the safe and equitable delivery of life-saving multi-sector humanitarian assistance critical for famine prevention and response. That includes severe limitations to the supply of goods and spare parts, as well as basic services. In June, the rate of access did not exceed 73 trucks per day. That small number is the result of the Israeli occupier's deliberate policy of using starvation as a means of war. How can we justify the destruction and burning of the Rafah crossing, which is now out of service? How can we justify all the bureaucratic obstacles that the occupation administration imposes on humanitarian access? Images of more than 1,200 trucks lined up on the Egyptian side of the Palestinian border demonstrate the deterrent and complex administrative processes. The rate of truck entry increased to 170 trucks per day in April, proving that the smooth entry of aid is linked only to international pressure and, unfortunately, to the occupier's willingness. We have repeatedly stated that the food crisis in Gaza is human-made; it is not a result of the failure of the international community or of United Nations mechanisms. It is due to the occupier's policy of using starvation as a means in its dirty war against the Palestinians.

Today the distribution of humanitarian aid remains a major concern. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the backbone of humanitarian action in Gaza, is prevented from operating throughout the Gaza Strip. It is unacceptable that, even after the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and Ms. Colonna's report, UNRWA continues to be subject to attacks. We note that UNRWA was almost absent from the briefing that we heard today. Also, no provision related to its role in the distribution and reconstruction effort in Gaza was mentioned. In that regard, legitimate questions should be asked regarding the plans for that Agency, whose mandate is vital for the Palestinian people.

For us, UNRWA is irreplaceable, and the choice of non-governmental organizations to take on its tasks has proven ineffective. Furthermore, security issues related to distribution are to be expected. The Israeli occupying forces systematically attack Palestinian local police during aid deliveries. Today no one takes the risk of escorting aid convoys, because they will be targeted by the occupying Power. That is part of a deliberate policy aimed at destroying civil order and pushing Gazans out of their homeland.

While we debate the number of trucks entering Gaza and how to compel the Israeli occupier to respect its obligations under international humanitarian law, people in Gaza are starving to death. This is the worst situation ever documented. No one in Gaza is food secure — no one. The impact of blocking humanitarian aid from entering Gaza is seen in videos on social media that show people eating tree leaves, with some reports saying that leaves have become a commodity, not for livestock, but for people to feed on. The consequences of blocking aid are shown in the faces of all the people of Gaza — 2.2 million people — who are suffering from famine, as reported by the IPC.

In conclusion, we wonder if we in the Security Council will really be able to impose a solution that will put an end to the suffering of the Palestinians. The lives of Palestinians in Gaza are threatened by hunger and disease. Without urgent action, the world will witness a humanitarian tragedy that will go down in the dark annals of history.

Ms. Sullivan (United States of America): We thank Senior Coordinator Kaag for her briefing and for the continued work and dedication of her team to alleviating the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. The United Nations humanitarian response capabilities and leadership are essential.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification recently projected that 96 per cent of Gaza's population, more than 2 million people, will likely experience crisis, emergency or catastrophic levels of food insecurity between now and the end of September. With much of Gaza's population facing catastrophic levels of hunger, the situation is at risk of worsening rapidly, especially with sustained disruptions to aid flows. We have consistently conveyed to Israel's senior leadership the need to provide sustained and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to enter via all routes into Gaza. Expanding and accelerating humanitarian imports at

Ashdod and opening all existing land crossings into Gaza, including at Rafah, are vital steps.

Relatedly, we appreciate Coordinator Kaag's update on efforts to distribute aid within Gaza so that it will reach the most vulnerable, including mothers and children. In that regard, we welcome Israel's commitment to fulfil specific United Nations requests and continue constructive conversations with United Nations officials on how best to meet the further needs of United Nations agencies and facilitate their work.

In order for humanitarian organizations to be able to safely continue their life-saving work, the Israel Defense Forces must implement concrete commitments to protect humanitarians and improve the overall security environment inside Gaza. We reiterate that the lack of an effective deconfliction mechanism, nearly nine months into the conflict, is unacceptable and continues to put humanitarian actors at tremendous risk.

While we continue to press Israel to improve humanitarian access, we know that the best way to address the crisis is for Hamas to accept the ceasefire proposal endorsed by the Council in resolution 2735 (2024). Doing so would create conditions to support a massive surge of relief for Palestinians, take steps to restore essential services and start early recovery efforts in Gaza. If the operating conditions improve, the humanitarian community can then provide life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable, including the many unaccompanied and separated children, pregnant women, the elderly and the many, many families who are going hungry and dying from preventable infections and disease. A ceasefire would also allow for increased commercial activity in Gaza, getting needed supplies to people and markets. Unfortunately, Hamas has ignored the calls from the Council and across the international community, coming back with new demands outside of the framework outlined by resolution 2735 (2024).

We continue to work with Israel, Egypt and Qatar to try to bridge the gaps, and as we heard this week, Israel remains on board. We urge all Council members to continue to press Hamas to accept this deal without delay or conditions and to bring about the ceasefire with a release of hostages.

At the same time, the United States remains committed to providing humanitarian aid and sustaining humanitarian access. In June, we announced an additional \$404 million in life-saving humanitarian aid to support Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the West

Bank and the region by providing food, safe drinking water, health care and protection. We also stand ready to continue supporting Senior Coordinator Kaag's efforts and would urge others on the Council to do so as well.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to thank Senior Coordinator Kaag for her briefing today.

We are deeply disturbed by the findings of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report issued last week and mentioned a number of times already today. It emphasizes that nearly the entire population of Gaza — approximately 96 per cent — is facing acute food shortages. A high risk of famine persists across the Strip. In spite of four resolutions, in spite of the International Court of Justice's order, in spite of this mechanism and in spite of all briefings and commitments, the humanitarian situation is not getting better. The needs are on the rise and the humanitarian operational environment is collapsing. Diseases are spreading. Public order has crumbled. Criminal gangs are taking over. The social fabric is disintegrating.

We have no right to be surprised. Starvation and famine in Gaza are man-made, on this we agree with Algeria. It is a choice — a choice by Hamas, which is willingly sacrificing its people rather than agreeing to a ceasefire as defined in our resolution (resolution 2735 (2024)), and a choice by Israel not to fulfil its prime duty as the occupying Power. Israel is obliged to ensure access to food and medical supplies for the population on the territory it occupies, not just to allow the passage of aid. We fail to comprehend why Israel is not complying with the Geneva Conventions, the Council's resolutions or the International Court of Justice's order. We underline that using starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited under international law and may amount to a war crime.

We have heard from Israel that there are no restrictions on aid reaching Gaza. We find that hard to believe. Verified and trustworthy reports about hunger and the dire needs of Gaza's civilian population have been reaching us for months. If there are no restrictions on aid reaching Gaza, why do 50,000 children require treatment for acute malnutrition? We condemn the continuing attacks on humanitarian workers and United Nations humanitarian premises and convoys, including on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and others. Some

have halted their operations out of concern for the lives of their staff.

More than 270 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza. Others are facing a multitude of operational challenges and obstacles. We repeat our call for the implementation of all measures to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers. This includes a fully functioning deconfliction mechanism and the honouring of other commitments made, such as tactical pauses. We also repeat our call for the immediate release of all hostages and for the ICRC to be granted unrestricted access to them. Holding them in Hamas tunnels for the past nine months is simply inhumane.

We welcome the sustained efforts by Jordan, Egypt and other countries to de-escalate the crisis and for their convening of a humanitarian conference in Amman.

We highly appreciate the efforts of Ms. Kaag and her team. We value her high-level contacts and advocacy work to keep the world's attention on this humanitarian crisis. We believe that the start of the work of the mechanism can provide us, humanitarian organizations and donors with an overview and analysis of the aid reaching and being distributed in Gaza. Yet, the main goal of accelerating the safe delivery of aid to every corner of Gaza is not in sight. We are missing the main ingredient for the mechanism's success, which is a ceasefire.

An end to the bombing and a ceasefire will not magically solve the problems for civilians in Gaza. It will only be the beginning of the end of their suffering. It will neither automatically lead to sustained and unhindered humanitarian access nor reduce the risk of famine. It will neither automatically restore public order nor open doors to reconstruction. It will neither automatically enable a political process leading to the two-State solution nor ensure that a human tragedy of epic proportions, as the representative of Sierra Leone described it, never again happens.

We agree with France that it is urgent that the Security Council start reflecting on Gaza beyond a ceasefire, even if today that seems so far away.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): Let me take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all Council members for their kind support during the Republic of Korea's presidency last month. We congratulate the Russian Federation on assuming the July presidency and wish you, Mr. President, all the

best for this month. I thank Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her detailed and insightful briefing.

The Republic of Korea would like to express its sincere appreciation and support for Ms. Kaag and her team, as well as the relevant countries, for their efforts to advance the humanitarian mechanism established under resolution 2720 (2023). We welcome the improvements made to the process of humanitarian assistance, detailed by Ms. Kaag, including expediting the entry process for humanitarian cargo and activating some land and maritime corridors into Gaza. We hope that the mechanism can continue to contribute to the effective monitoring and tracking of humanitarian assistance and commercial goods.

However, we are deeply worried that, even with the launching of the mechanism in May, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is still deteriorating, particularly since Israel commenced military operations in Rafah in May. Some 1.1 million Palestinians are experiencing catastrophic food insecurity, and 67 per cent of Gaza's water and sanitation systems have been destroyed, while heat and dehydration surge. It is highly worrisome that, as the Secretary-General described last week, total lawlessness in Gaza is making the delivery of aid to those in need impossible. Tangible steps to end the tragedy must be implemented.

First, we stress that, under international law, it is the obligation of the occupying Power, Israel, not the United Nations or non-governmental organizations, to restore and ensure public order and safety in Gaza. When aid cannot be delivered to civilians, the number of trucks crossing the border into Gaza is meaningless and a mere statistic.

Secondly, humanitarian goods should be prioritized over commercial ones. Of course, humanitarian assistance alone cannot meet the needs of the 2.3 million civilians in Gaza. That is why we have called for the entry of commercial goods into Gaza, which commenced two months ago. However, permissions for commercial goods should not lead to a decrease in humanitarian cargo entering Gaza. Considering the economic collapse due to the ongoing hostilities, the rapid and safe delivery of essential humanitarian aid should be ensured and prioritized, especially for the most vulnerable people, who have limited access to commercial goods.

Thirdly, Israel should do more to protect humanitarian workers. Too many aid workers, including

193 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East staff members, have been killed. Improved notification and a more effective deconfliction mechanism should be implemented. Coordination meetings between the Israel Defense Forces and humanitarian agencies should function as an effective platform to share all relevant information and prevent any security incidents. Resolution 2730 (2024), on the protection of humanitarian personnel and civilians, should be faithfully implemented.

Fourthly, all land crossings, leading to every corner of the Gaza Strip, must be opened. That will not only increase the volume of aid into Gaza, but also shorten the distance between the entry and distribution points. Opening the Rafah crossing is vital, as it is not only a crucial humanitarian entry point but also the main entry and exit point for people in Gaza, especially those in need of medical treatment.

To ensure all of those requirements, an immediate ceasefire, along with the release of all hostages, is urgently needed. People all around the world are eagerly watching to see the agreement detailed in resolution 2735 (2024) be finalized. Therefore, diplomatic efforts should continue, and all parties, including, notably, Hamas, must accept the conditions of the deal, without further delay. Then, based on the ceasefire, reconstruction, which is another key mandate of the Senior Coordinator, needs to begin, and negotiations towards the vision of the two-State solution should follow.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): At the outset of the Russian presidency, let me put on record the United Kingdom's strong view that all Council members — particularly permanent members, and even more so the presidency of the Council — have a responsibility to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We deplore the fact that Russia is shamefully failing to do that in Ukraine.

I would like to start by joining others in thanking the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza for her important work to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including the focus on women and children. They are still suffering a devastating and deteriorating humanitarian crisis. Too many people have died.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of Hamas' 7 October 2023 attacks, and we call for the immediate release of all the remaining hostages and the return of

all those who have died in captivity. We are appalled by reports of sexual violence and abuse. The United Kingdom stands firm in its condemnation of those heinous acts. A negotiated pause in the fighting that leads to a sustainable ceasefire is the best way both to secure the release of the hostages and to enable the major and essential scaling up of humanitarian aid. There is now a deal on the table, endorsed by the Council, to achieve those goals. The onus is now on Hamas to accept it.

We also continue to call on Israel to fulfil its commitments to increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza and to meet its obligations to facilitate unhindered humanitarian access. The findings of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification famine risk assessment demonstrate that not enough aid is getting into Gaza and reaching those in need. We also call for the immediate reopening of the Rafah crossing, to scale up aid through all other crossing points.

The distribution of aid within Gaza also needs to improve. A guaranteed and functioning deconfliction mechanism is critical to that. We call on Israel to support the minimum operating requirements of the United Nations agencies by providing a timely approval of visas and allowing the entry of armoured vehicles and personal protective equipment.

Resolution 2720 (2023) provides for a mechanism that will show whether aid is reaching those who need it. I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag and her team for their work to establish that mechanism and urge her to continue her efforts to ensure it can deliver this in a comprehensive and timely way.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

(*spoke in English*)

Before I read my statement, I just wanted to say that we took note of the disclaimer made by the representative of the United Kingdom at the beginning of her statement. Also, we would like to note that it is not for the United Kingdom to teach and lecture Council members, including permanent ones, on upholding international law. The United Kingdom and other Western partners have long deviated from international law for the sake of the rules-based international order. The United Kingdom is the country that ignited and fuelled the conflict when it was about to be stopped in

April 2022, and it was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom who prevented the conclusion of a negotiated treaty between Russia and Ukraine that would have allowed the conflict to end at that time, which could have saved the lives of numerous unfortunate Ukrainians.

(spoke in Russian)

We would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her briefing on the situation in the enclave and her efforts to ensure humanitarian access to the territory, pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023).

Today's briefing makes it abundantly clear that the nearly nine-month military operation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the Gaza Strip, fully supported by Washington, renders useless all efforts to sustainably and adequately provide the necessary assistance to the people of Gaza. The situation on the ground is not only deteriorating, but also bringing Gazans to the brink of starvation. That is not a figure of speech, but a tragic reality.

In particular, the estimates of the World Food Programme clearly demonstrate that 96 per cent of Gazans — 2 million people — are in need of food aid. Almost half a million people are already suffering from famine, at the highest level of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification — phase 5.

The ongoing military operation and Israeli raids have claimed the lives of more than 38,000 people, mostly women and children, and injured more than 87,000. Tens of thousands are missing. Civilian infrastructure has been nearly destroyed, including hospitals, schools and residential buildings. The situation is most dire in Rafah, where more than 1.5 million refugees had gathered by the beginning of the Israeli operation that the members of the Security Council unequivocally opposed. Those people are now, yet again, being forced to flee to wherever they can. Nothing can justify such actions by the occupying Power.

Given the complete lack of security, it is extremely difficult to talk about the effectiveness of the work of humanitarian organizations. The deconfliction mechanism and humanitarian notification system promoted by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is not working. That is a fact. On 13 May, a member of the United Nations Department for Safety and Security was killed, and a second member was injured when a United Nations

vehicle was attacked. The Israeli side reported that an investigation was under way, yet we know nothing about the results of that investigation. Perhaps United Nations representatives could shed some light on the matter and provide some answers.

Since the start of the crisis, 274 humanitarian workers have died. Of them, 197 were United Nations personnel, and the majority — 193 — were staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition, it is reported that 500 health workers have been killed.

Despite Ms. Kaag's carefully chosen words to describe her engagement with the parties to the conflict and the special humanitarian mechanism for Gaza established under resolution 2720 (2023), the reality is that humanitarian access is not being ensured. The main channels for aid delivery are operating at limited capacity and open for only short periods of time, when allowed by the Israeli authorities. But even when they are open, their capacity does not adequately cover the needs of the civilian population. Mr. Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General, stated that even after the IDF announced tactical pauses in fighting along aid delivery routes, nothing changed on the ground.

We are also deeply concerned about the latest reports by the Gaza Ministry of Health stating that fuel provisions to run hospitals will run out within 48 hours. We must understand that the lives of very sick patients hang in the balance.

Ms. Kaag cannot be blamed for this. It was clear from the outset that safe and sustainable humanitarian access to those in need cannot be ensured during intense fighting. We have said that on many occasions and have repeatedly called for a ceasefire.

We would like to make it clear. We commend the efforts of humanitarian organizations and the heroism of humanitarian aid workers, who continue to risk their own lives as they continue to work and assist the Palestinians. We believe that any aid, even in small amounts, is crucial and can save lives or, at the very least, alleviate suffering. We must continue working with the Palestinian and Israeli sides to seek ways to deliver humanitarian aid.

Meanwhile, Ms. Kaag, her team, OCHA and humanitarian organizations, in general, must soberly assess the situation on the ground and appropriately set priorities for their humanitarian efforts. For instance,

it is high time to recognize that the maritime corridor between Cyprus and the Gaza Strip, along with the temporary pier built by the United States off the coast of the enclave have not lived up to expectations. Since the pier opened on 17 May, it has already been destroyed several times by inclement weather, and the amount of aid delivered through it is insignificant. It is unclear whether there are plans to rebuild the pier after its latest destruction. Its construction and operation cost hundreds of millions of dollars. In our view, instead of building the pier, Washington could have demanded that Israel ease its blockade on Gaza and allow the delivery of truly significant volumes of aid. We believe that continuing to rely on the maritime route and positioning it as the main artery for assisting the Palestinians is merely wishful thinking.

For our part, we will provide as much aid as we can to the Palestinians. Since the beginning of the crisis, more than 500 tons of humanitarian aid have been delivered by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation aircraft to the Egyptian border town of Arish, for subsequent shipment to the besieged Palestinian enclave through the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. The latest round of deliveries occurred on 19 June. In addition to Government agencies, numerous Russian non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as private individuals, have been actively involved in the collection of humanitarian aid

for Palestinians in need. Thanks to all of their efforts, hundreds of tons of medicines, warm clothes, tents, foodstuffs and other essentials have been collected throughout Russia to be sent to the conflict zone for subsequent distribution among the people of Gaza.

We are convinced that given the unrelenting escalation of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone, the Security Council must continue to exert pressure on Israel and its American ally in order to ensure an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire. That is the only way to establish the conditions for channelling the conflict into a political and diplomatic track. That requires, first and foremost, direct dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis on the entire range of final-status issues. This process should result in the implementation of the internationally recognized two-State solution providing for Israel and Palestinian, coexisting in peace and security within the 1967 borders.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.