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**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**  
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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Today we meet at a moment of renewed hope, while progress on the ground is fragile and deep uncertainty persists. We must seize the opportunity before us to chart a better future for Palestinians, Israelis and the wider region.

Since coming into effect last month, the ceasefire has largely held in Gaza. However, recent air strikes by Israel on populated areas have caused numerous casualties and significant destruction. Palestinian militants in Gaza have also continued sporadic attacks on Israeli soldiers causing fatalities.

This violence is jeopardizing the fragile ceasefire and I urge all parties to exercise restraint and fulfill their commitments under the agreement.

I recognize the commitments met thus far by the parties and the exceptional efforts of the mediators – Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye, and the United States – in sustaining the deal.

The Security Council has also taken an important step in the consolidation of the ceasefire with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2803 (2025).

While still facing unbearable living conditions and seemingly insurmountable destruction, the people in Gaza have experienced at least the first glimmers of respite from the near constant bombardment of the last two years.

Families in Israel have been reunited with their loved ones, who were held hostage by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups under intolerable conditions in Gaza. Other families have had the remains of their loved ones returned and begun the long process of mourning.

But the bodies of three hostages have yet to be returned, with families waiting in agony for that day to come. The bodies of the deceased hostages must be returned immediately.

Last week, I met with families of missing persons from Gaza. With tears in their eyes, they showed me pictures of their loved ones, who are presumed to be in detention or still buried under the rubble.

All efforts must be made to identify missing Palestinians. These families also deserve closure.

Mr. President,

With the ceasefire largely holding, the United Nations has redoubled efforts to mobilize and scale up humanitarian assistance – seizing the moment to reach the population wherever they are.

We must not risk a reversal. The coordinated international effort needs to be expanded, both in the immediate term to consolidate the ceasefire, and over the longer term to realize a more secure and just future for all.

Mr. President,

While the past weeks have offered a measure of relief, and we acknowledge the increased volume of aid delivery into Gaza, we must also confront the grim reality of the situation on the ground.

Two years of fighting has left almost 80 percent of Gaza's 250,000 buildings damaged or destroyed. Over 1.7 million people remain displaced, many in overcrowded shelters without adequate access to water, food, or medical care.

Last week I travelled to Gaza where I met with displaced communities and humanitarian personnel, who are working tirelessly on the ground to deliver assistance.

The picture remains bleak. While the availability and price of basic food commodities has improved, key protein sources, such as chicken, meat, and eggs, remain out of reach for many families.

The UN and its partners are still facing major challenges in providing shelter materials such as tents and blankets. As we enter the winter months, these delays must be urgently resolved.

There is a critical need to transition from emergency humanitarian assistance towards enabling communities to rebuild their lives and restore essential services.

Hospitals continue to struggle without electricity and reliable water, severely limiting their ability to care for patients. The water and sanitation situation remains alarming. Sheikh Radwan pond has effectively become an open sewage tank, requiring immediate attention to prevent a public health catastrophe.

Key materials must be permitted to enter immediately to repair vital water and sanitation facilities. The rerouting of humanitarian and commercial movements through the Philadelphi Corridor and Al-Rasheed coastal road has complicated logistics, further delaying the distribution of much-needed aid.

Despite these hurdles and setbacks, the UN and its partners are working to scale up the response. An immunization campaign to reach 44,000 children has been launched, and hundreds of water wells have reopened. Over 24,000 metric tons of aid have been collected. Yet 190,000 metric tons of food, medicine and shelter are pre-positioned in the region and awaiting entry.

I call on Israel to expand crossing capacity and expedite the clearance of supplies, including UN supplies. The opening of Jordan Corridor and Rafah crossing are vital to further scale up the response. The renewal of NGO registration is also essential and remains unresolved.

The UN remains engaged with the Civil-Military Coordination Centre, including its 22 member states partners, to coordinate the delivery of assistance and uphold humanitarian principles. These efforts have yielded benefits for Gaza's population, including increased food supplies and higher levels of approvals for shelter and non-food items, particularly for government-to-government aid. I also welcome today's news of the restoration of fiber optic internet service provision in Gaza, a positive result of these efforts.

Mr. President,

The damage in Gaza – physically, economically and socially – is catastrophic. We cannot address only immediate physical needs. Psycho-social needs, social cohesion and justice issues must be addressed. There must be a restoration of dignity and hope.

These efforts must be anchored in a clear political horizon for resolving the conflict, ending the unlawful occupation, and realizing the two-State solution.

The task ahead is monumental and will require a well-coordinated, phased, international effort. We must help create the conditions in which people can begin to rebuild their lives with dignity. There is no time to lose.

The European Union, United Nations and World Bank are working to update the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA), which in March estimated reconstructions costs at some 53 billion US dollars.

The UN's immediate early recovery approach in Gaza has been aligned with the Palestinian Authority's recovery and reconstruction planning and can contribute to realizing the objectives set forth in Security Council resolution 2803 (2025).

I welcome the European Union's convening of the Palestine Donor Group in Brussels last week. It demonstrated a strong commitment to durable recovery and reconstruction in Gaza, to strengthening linkages between the West Bank and Gaza, and to the full resumption of the Palestinian Authority's responsibilities in Gaza.

Preparations are also ongoing for the Cairo Conference for Gaza's Reconstruction, which offers a chance to align recovery priorities with a broader vision for Gaza's reconstruction. I welcome Egypt's continued leadership in this effort.

Mr. President,

Turning now to the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem — settlement expansion, the proliferation of outposts, violence, including settler violence, displacement, and evictions continue to escalate at alarming levels.

Israeli military operations, particularly in the northern West Bank have resulted in deaths, destruction and continued displacement of thousands particularly from refugee camps. Israeli operations have also continued deep in Area A.

Settler violence has reached emergency levels. In October, during the olive-harvest season, the UN recorded the highest number of settler attacks on Palestinians since UN monitoring began — an average of eight per day. The olive harvest is an economic and cultural lifeline. These attacks have injured farmers, destroyed olive trees, and decimated livelihoods. In many cases, Israeli forces failed to prevent or were complicit in such acts. In other instances, Israeli settlers have violently confronted Israeli forces.

Arson attacks and the desecration of holy places by settlers have further heightened tensions and illustrate the spiraling violence. It must stop. I note the condemnation of these attacks by the Government of Israel. And concrete action is needed. Impunity for these crimes must end and Palestinian communities must be protected.

Palestinian attacks, including acts of terror, such as the recent ramming and stabbing attack south of Jerusalem, must also cease and be condemned.

All perpetrators of violence must be held accountable.

I appeal to political and community leaders to cease the incitement and incendiary language that only fuels further extremism.

Mr. President,

A robust Palestinian economy and financial sector is a critical enabler for sustainable recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza.

However, the Palestinian Authority and its economy continue to face immense challenges. Unilateral measures that undermine the PA should cease, and efforts to support and strengthen the PA should be intensified, including in implementing its reform agenda.

The Palestinian financial sector, while demonstrating remarkable resilience, is under tremendous pressure and must be protected. Immediate measures to allow for the repatriation of excess shekel banknotes and renewal of the correspondent banking agreements are urgently required to avoid exacerbating the crisis.

Mr. President,

Turning to developments in Lebanon, I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for the parties to uphold their obligations to maintain the cessation of hostilities and the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701.

I also echo the Secretary-General's call for an immediate cessation of all violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

Mr. President,

The decisions made now will determine whether the ceasefire endures or unravels. The first phase of the ceasefire must be fully implemented, and I urge the parties to urgently reach an agreement on the modalities to implement the next phases. The challenges remain immense, but the cost of failure is unimaginable. We have the tools to lay the foundations for success, but the work ahead demands an unwavering commitment from us all.

UN resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2803 (2025), and President Trump's 20-point plan provide that pathway forward.

The United Nations remains committed to seizing this critical opportunity to move from crisis management to conflict resolution. All our efforts must be guided by the imperative of establishing a genuine political process that will resolve the Israeli - Palestinian conflict once and for all.

The New York declaration and initiatives such as the Global Alliance for the Two-State Solution play a vital role. They mobilize political will, investment, and solidarity around a shared political vision.

The United Nations will continue to stand with both Palestinians and Israelis. We will continue to support all efforts to end the unlawful occupation and achieve a negotiated two-State solution, based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, living side by side in peace and security.

Thank you.