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BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

After two years of devastating war, and unimaginable human suffering, we now have an opportunity to conclude a dark chapter in the history of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict and set the course for a more just and peaceful future.

The 9 October agreement, based on United States President Donald Trump's 20-point plan, secured a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza.

It was the culmination of a remarkable diplomatic effort by the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye. I commend all the mediators for achieving this critical breakthrough.

Tragically, it has taken us too long to reach this moment. The unbearable trauma inflicted on Palestinians and Israelis will last generations. The situation throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory remains dire, and the destruction in Gaza is beyond description, while Palestinian civilians – children, women, and men – continue to suffer immeasurably from the effects of war and deprivation. As we speak, there are still remains of deceased hostages in Gaza, while their families wait in agony to give their loved ones a dignified burial.

The agreement represents hope for a better future, but the dynamics are extremely fragile.

A return to conflict must be avoided at all costs. The remaining deceased hostages must be released without any further delay. Humanitarian assistance must enter the Strip at scale to meet the enormous needs of the population wherever they are. All parties must abide by their commitments under the deal and agreements should be reached to implement the next phase.

Mr. President,

Since the ceasefire took effect, the UN and its partners have rapidly scaled-up humanitarian operations across Gaza. The magnitude of destruction and continued suffering of Palestinians we have witnessed in Gaza is staggering. Many families remain displaced and without access to the most basic services. The urgent needs are immense - in health, shelter, water, sanitation, food, and livelihoods.

The UN and its humanitarian partners are working now to implement our 60-day response plan. The plan sets out concrete measures to streamline customs procedures, expand access routes, facilitate the entry of critical items, restore essential services, and ensure the safe movement of humanitarian personnel. As part of the broader humanitarian reset, the plan is grounded in humanitarian principles, prioritizes those in greatest need, enhances accountability, drives greater efficiency, and safeguards the space for principled, life-saving action.

Already, as tracked by the UN 2720 Mechanism for Gaza, and with increased facilitation in the entry of humanitarian supplies by Israeli authorities, humanitarian partners have scaled up aid

delivery, with a 46 per cent increase in aid tracked by the UN entering the Strip in the first week of the ceasefire. Crucial assistance in the areas of food, hygiene, shelter, and health is being delivered in greater quantities, bringing much-needed relief to Gaza's population.

But this is not enough. Much more still needs to be done. To fully meet our targets and ensure an effective response requires more crossings and functional relief corridors, safe passage for aid workers and civilians, unrestricted entry of goods, sustained entry of fuel, and operational space for the UN and NGOs, including renewal of NGO registration – all in accordance with humanitarian principles. The UN is closely engaging in all relevant coordination mechanisms, and I welcome the efforts of Member States to facilitate a scaling up of assistance, including through the new Civil Military Coordination Center.

While the ceasefire is in effect, the ongoing violence in Gaza – continued but sporadic attacks and strikes by the IDF and Palestinian armed groups, as well as apparent killings of Palestinians by Hamas and other armed actors – also undermines humanitarian efforts and threatens stability in the Strip. Restoring order will be a critical step in facilitating relief efforts and supporting Gaza's recovery.

We must act quickly to build on the current ceasefire toward a comprehensive agreement or there is a serious risk that insecurity and violence will persist, and undermine recovery and reconstruction efforts.

To support the UN's response in Gaza a robust aid coordination mechanism and accelerated international support will be necessary.

Reconstruction will require a collective effort and should be Palestinian led. Working with the Palestinian Authority, international partners, civil society, and the private sector, the UN is prepared to mobilize and help coordinate these efforts in line with the ceasefire commitments and the New York Declaration, and building on the Arab Plan for Recovery and Reconstruction.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General has welcomed the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 22 October, which found, *inter alia*, that Israel is required to fulfil its obligations under international law with respect to facilitating relief to the population of Gaza, and to cooperate in good faith with the United Nations and its entities.

Mr. President,

While we are focused on supporting the ceasefire and scaling up our response in Gaza, we must not overlook the alarming situation in the West Bank.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians remain displaced from their homes in the northern West Bank in the wake of large-scale Israeli security forces operations and continued closures, particularly in and around the refugee camps. Palestinians must be allowed to return to their homes and local economies need to function.

With the annual olive harvest underway, Palestinians are yet again subject to deplorable acts of settler-violence while trying to access their lands.

The violence must stop and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian Authority's (PA) fiscal situation continue to face severe challenges. According to the PA, Israel continues to withhold some USD 3 billion of Palestinian tax clearance revenues, creating an unsustainable fiscal situation and impacting the PA's ability to meet financial obligations and pay public sector salaries in full.

Mr. President,

We are at a momentous, but precarious juncture. The United Nations is committed to seizing this opportunity, but the scope and scale of the challenges ahead will require the full support of this Council and the international community. Political will, financial resources and a genuine commitment to creating a better future for all is needed.

President Trump's 20-point plan and the declaration signed at the *Summit for Peace: Agreement to End the War in Gaza* in Sharm al Sheikh have finally managed to secure a viable path towards ending the war.

The forthcoming Cairo Reconstruction Conference, co-hosted by Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, and the United Nations, will be an important venue to advance recovery and reconstruction for Gaza.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the political horizon. We can build on the momentum created by President Trump's plan, and consolidated through tireless mediation efforts. The international community has affirmed in recent weeks its commitment to charting a course towards sustainably ending the broader Israeli - Palestinian conflict. The High-level International Conference for Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution meetings in the margins of the UN General Assembly provide a pathway.

The United Nations will continue to support all efforts to end the occupation and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in line with international law and UN resolutions, realizing a two-State solution – Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part – live side-by-side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders on the basis of pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.

Thank you.