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## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. NEVILLE GERTZE**

**AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**73<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**AT**

**THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

**ON**

**THE OPEN DEBATE IN CONNECTION WITH THE AGENDA ITEM “THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION”**

**NEW YORK  
23 JULY 2019**

**Mr. President,**

1. I congratulate you on the assumption of Peru to the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of July 2019 and thank you for organizing the debate on the important topic of the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.
2. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for her comprehensive and detailed briefing.
3. My delegation aligns itself with the Statement to be delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

**Mr. President,**

4. In his presentation to the Security Council last month, on behalf of the Secretary-General, of the 10<sup>th</sup> report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334, Mr. Mladenov once again underscored that no concrete steps have been taken to implement the historic resolution.
5. Notably, settlement activity has continued in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with Israeli authorities advancing, approving or tendering nearly 6,000 housing units – the largest settlement advancement in two years. I take this opportunity to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and represent an obstacle to peace. Furthermore, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities also continued throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We firmly condemn the demolition of dozens of Palestinians homes in the Palestinian village of Sur Baher yesterday.

**Mr. President,**

6. The security situation in Gaza remains particularly tense and as the past has shown, the situation could flare up at any moment. The humanitarian situation is also extremely worrying. According to UNICEF's Quarterly Humanitarian Situation Report on the State of Palestine (January – March 2019), over 50% of Palestinian families in Gaza are living below the poverty line. Namibia also remains deeply concerned by the serious movement and access constraints being placed on national staff from UN Agencies and international and non-

governmental organizations in Gaza. These individuals provide life-saving services to Palestinians in Gaza and their access should not be restricted.

7. Despite these negative trends, there are a few positive developments that should be highlighted. The continued provision by the State of Qatar of financial assistance for the humanitarian situation in Gaza has proven essential and has had a positive impact on efforts to de-escalate the situation in Gaza. Furthermore, the work of the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to create more sustainable solutions to the energy sector, an area which has been plagued by problems for many years, should be recognized and highlighted.

**Mr. President,**

8. I take this opportunity to commend the successful holding of the UNRWA Pledging Conference which took place on 25 June here in New York. I thank those countries that helped raise the US \$110 million, ensuring that UNRWA's life-saving services are not interrupted for the time being. I also take this opportunity to reaffirm Namibia's support to UNRWA and its mandate in providing essential services to Palestine refugees across the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.
9. The financial crisis that the Palestinian Authority is currently facing, as a result of Israel's decision to withhold part of the clearance revenues of the Palestinian Authority, is severely impacting the Palestinian economy. The continuation of this crisis threatens to destabilize an already volatile situation. We urge parties to implement and respect their bilateral agreements.

**Mr. President,**

10. The "Peace to Prosperity" workshop, held in Bahrain on 25 June, made clear that the international community remains steadfast in its belief that economic development cannot be achieved without negotiations leading to a two-State solution. The solution to this protracted conflict remains political. No amount of humanitarian and economic support will provide a solution to the conflict. We urge parties not to abandon the political process that would secure the foundation for economic development.
11. Because of similar experience, Namibia knows that for as long as the people are denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, tension, frustration, anger and even hatred will continue to mount. The

oppressed people, who are denied their right to self-determination and freedom will never be silenced. A boiling point will be reached sooner, rather than later that would have far reaching consequences for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and would certainly have devastating effects on the prospects for peace in that region.

12. The continued violation of UN resolutions by the occupying Power, the ongoing settlement expansions, unilateral actions to recognizing Jerusalem as capital of Israel, the annexation of the Golan, and withdrawal of funding for UNRWA are reasons of great concern as it gravely undermines the process of reaching a mutually acceptable, just and lasting solution. We must stand on the side of respect and upholding of international law

**I thank you.**