Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

“Those who challenge or obstruct peace must be heard by all. There should be no place for them to hide.”

2016-04-18

Thank you Mr President,

Let me join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his statement. For all the excitement around the hearings on the next Secretary-General last week, we’re pleased to have the current Secretary-General still with us working very closely for many months to come.

Looking back on last week’s hearings, it was heartening to hear all nine declared candidates commit themselves to achieving a two-state solution. This underscores just how united opinion is on this issue.

And yet violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories continues. The risk of a sudden deterioration is all too possible. The fundamental causes of the violence - incitement and the effects of the occupation – remain. The United Kingdom will continue to condemn strongly all acts of violence and all acts of terrorism. Both sides must do all they can to calm the situation. This is particularly important over Passover – since the recent past has shown how quickly clashes at Jerusalem’s holy sites can escalate and spread.

There is a way out. We all need to drive forward improvements on the ground and re-establish hope; hope that a two-state solution is still achievable. Without this, continued conflict and suffering is inevitable.

First and foremost, progress has to come from the parties themselves. We have heard on many occasions that they remain committed to the two-state solution, but too often this commitment has not been met with action.

Israel must reverse its damaging settlements policy and cease demolitions of Palestinian property. The sharp increase in demolitions this year continues to cause terrible suffering. Together with the continued expansion of illegal settlements and annexation of land, the physical viability of the two-state solution is being undermined, as the Secretary General reminded us today. If the Israeli Government really is committed to a two-state solution, it must reverse its policy.

The Palestinians must also take the necessary steps to reunite the West Bank and Gaza. The continued split between the two territories seriously damages the chances of peace. Reports

of large-scale diversions of reconstruction material to Hamas are worrying and today's report on the tunnel built from Gaza into Israel is extremely concerning. We hope that the suspension of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism will soon be resolved to enable safe entry of much-needed construction material.

Both parties need to drive forward improvements in conditions on the ground and take steps, in line with past agreements, to bring the two-state solution closer. We will continue to support this process and look forward to contributing to further progress at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in Brussels. Continued development of the Palestinian economy and institutions is vitally important.

Though a return to meaningful negotiations appears difficult at present, the international community, including this Council must do what they can to preserve the viability of the two-state solution and get the parties back to a position where political progress is possible. The United Kingdom, as ever, stands ready to support this effort.

To this end, we look forward to the Quartet's report and welcome further details of the French initiative. Carefully coordinated international efforts over coming months can help to build consensus on the key threats to the two-state solution, and encourage action to address these threats, and re-establish a genuine political horizon.

Mr President, let me now turn briefly to Syria,

We welcomed the briefing by the UN Special Envoy last week and his resumption of proximity negotiations with the Syrian Government and opposition's High Negotiations Committee in Geneva. We hope that these can build the basis for face-to-face negotiations, following the framework of the Geneva Communiqué and resolution 2254.

However, we remain concerned about the reports of ongoing violations of the Cessation of Hostilities. Regime offensives seem intent on encircling Aleppo. Their obstruction of humanitarian aid, especially to Darayya and other areas of rural Damascus, is worsening the suffering. And the failure to agree mechanisms for the release of arbitrarily detained persons is only prolonging horror for so many individuals, as some of us heard in a powerful event last Thursday.

When this Council adopted resolution 2268, we demanded that the parties fulfil their commitments to the Cessation of Hostilities, including through the acceleration of humanitarian delivery and through confidence building measures. Such steps were meant to advance a political process. A failure to deliver on these points only undermines this process and erodes confidence amongst the Syrian population.

So let me conclude, Mr President, by calling on those with influence over the parties, especially over the Syrian Government . We need to leave the regime in no doubt that they

must live up to their commitments, show restraint and honestly engage with this political process. Until we see progress on these points it is right that this Council receives regular updates from the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy in a public forum. Those who challenge or obstruct peace must be heard by all. There should be no place for them to hide.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/those-who-challenge-or-obstruct-peace-must-be-heard-by-all-there-should-be-no-place-for-them-to-hide