Statement by Minister of State Hoyer at the open debate on the Middle East in the UN Security Council

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- Translation of advance text -

I would like to thank United Nations Special Coordinator Robert H. Serry for his briefing.

Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the European Union. We are at a crucial moment in the Middle East. People across the region are rising up for freedom, democracy and a better life. At the same time, we face a continuing stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Within the volatile regional context, it is more urgent than ever to reach lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. For the people in the region, progress in the peace process would send a strong signal of stability and be testimony to the merits of politics and diplomacy.

We all share the same vision: We want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security.

It is time to make decisive progress. Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas must assume their responsibility and take bold steps towards the resumption of direct and substantive talks.

We remain convinced that clear parameters are a pre-requisite for successful negotiations. President Obama set out a balanced approach in his speech on May 19. For its part, the European Union has articulated what it considers to be the key parameters. Germany, France and the UK stated their view on this matter in a joint explanation of vote in this Council.

We continue to believe that an international endorsement of parameters is needed in order to create a basis for genuine negotiations.

The Quartet continues to play a central role in this process and has been in permanent contact with the parties. Germany strongly supports the efforts by the

EU

HR Baroness Ashton in the Quartet for a credible and balanced perspective to relaunch and facilitate the peace process. We call on the Quartet to continue and intensify its efforts to set out a fair and balanced framework for negotiations in order to trigger progress prior to the September deadline it has itself endorsed.

Palestinian leaders have announced that they may turn to the United Nations in their quest for statehood. At the same time, Palestinians have made it very clear that a resumption of negotiations is their preferred option.

Palestinians expect from their leaders headway in establishing a Palestinian state. Germany acknowledges the remarkable progress by the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of the future state of Palestine. In their reports, the World Bank, the

IMF

and the United Nations have clearly stated that the Palestinian Authority has crossed the threshold towards a functioning state in key sectors. Now, the political process needs to catch up urgently with the substantial progress made on the ground. At the same time, we must do everything to preserve the achievements on the way to Palestinian statehood.

Let me be very clear on this: Germany supports the establishment of a Palestinian state. As a matter of course, such a state will become a member of the United Nations. Progress in this direction is a matter of urgency. Palestinians and Israelis have been waiting for too long to see the conflict end.

But there is no viable or acceptable alternative to negotiations. Only negotiations will end the occupation and can provide a solution to the core issues. Any action that is not conducive to a comprehensive solution and that could undermine trust between the parties should therefore be avoided.

We are deeply concerned that failure to provide a credible political horizon for real progress towards a two-state-solution could lead to serious consequences.

Germany remains deeply concerned about continued settlement construction in the Palestinian Territories and in East Jerusalem, new construction plans and recent land confiscation in the West Bank, the first since 2008. In this Council, Germany, together with France and Britain, has made its position on settlements very clear: they are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and constitute a threat to a two-state solution. All settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, should therefore cease immediately. All members of the Council are in agreement that continued settlement activity constitutes a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. It is most unfortunate that settlement construction has continued despite so many appeals.

Gaza remains a serious concern. We strongly condemn the recent resumption of rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli territory after the ceasefire following the Cairo agreement. This type of action is utterly unacceptable. Germany recognizes Israel's right to protect its citizens against attacks. At the same time, we look to Israel to exercise this right judiciously in order to forestall further escalation.

We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, who has been held hostage for more than five years now.

Let me turn to one of the challenges that lie ahead: There is a need to sustain the positive developments initiated by the Palestinian Authority. The current financial situation is critical, it is not clear if salaries can be paid anymore. We call on all donors to honor their existing commitments. It may also become necessary to mobilise an additional international donor effort, and we would welcome any such initiative.

We need to help create and maintain the conditions for self-sustained economic growth, including in Gaza. The appropriate way ahead is the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) calling for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for goods and people to and from Gaza, and for the prevention of the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition.

At the same time, we expect any Palestinian government to commit itself unequivocally to the principle of non-violence, to a two-state solution and to a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, accepting previous agreements and obligations, including Israel's legitimate right to exist. By the same token, we expect those bearing government responsibility in Israel to unequivocally accept the two-state solution and to do its utmost to set the course for it.

People in the Middle East have suffered too long from conflict and confrontation. Our shared goal is a just and lasting peace that ends the conflict and resolves all claims. In our time, many attempts to reach this goal have been frustrated. We understand the growing impatience. But we should be clear about what will bring us closer to peace, and what may result in further frustrations.

On Syria: We are deeply shocked by the current events in Syria. Despite promises of reforms and dialogue with the opposition military actions, killings, arrests and repression continue. We are concerned about single acts of violence between followers of different creeds. We urge the Syrian Government to stop playing the sectarian card.

The Syrian regime immediately must stop violence and all repression against the

Syrian people. Only if violence stops, there is a chance for initiating a sustainable

political process. Transition towards a new Syria must be based on full political participation of all its citizens and commitment to the protection and promotion of

human rights.

It is not for outsiders to decide the future of Syria. This is an issue of the sovereignty of the people. The people of Syria are speaking loudly and clearly, just as the peoples of Egypt and Tunisia expressed their views. The legitimate demands of the Syrian people must be addressed.

The Security Council cannot stand by. It is our firm belief that a strong signal by the Security Council condemning the ongoing violence and repression of the Syrian people is of utmost importance. The Security Council has to assume its responsibility.

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