

Ms Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank Mr Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process, for his very comprehensive briefing, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine and the Permanent Representative of Israel for their respective statements.

Luxembourg fully endorses the statement to be made by the European Union.

I will begin with the peace process in the Middle East, before moving on to Syria.

The overall picture is grim. Recent developments in the Middle East have given rise to great uncertainty. That is evident in the continuing increase in the number of settlements, in violation of international law; the repeated withholding of the transfer of Palestinian tax revenues; and the proliferation of provocative statements made by extremists from all sides.

Luxembourg is very concerned about the decisions taken by the Israeli authorities following the granting to Palestine by the General Assembly, on 29 November last, of the status of non-member Observer State. Like its partners in the European Union, Luxembourg is deeply troubled by Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and particularly by the projects in the E-1 area. We are firmly opposed to this. Implementing those projects would seriously undermine the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the conflict by jeopardizing the chances for a viable, contiguous Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States.

Against that backdrop, tensions have increased alarmingly in the West Bank. The extremists on both sides mutually feed off their reciprocal and provocative acts.

What can be said about the situation, except that such radicalization is a godsend for those seeking to prevent the dying peace process from reviving? What can be said about the statements that refuse to grant Israel the right to security, or even the right to exist? These statements seek to prevent peace — as if after almost 65 years of conflict, against all odds, there could be any kind of hope of resolving the conflict by avoiding genuine dialogue?

Mr President,

How do we re-launch the peace process?

The basis for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East has been laid out many times. We are all familiar with the terms of that equation.

The time has come to take bold and concrete measures to achieve peace. The negotiations between the parties must finally be resumed. Only negotiations will make it possible to deal with the root causes of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Whatever Government is formed after yesterday's elections in Israel, we hope that Israelis and

Palestinians will act promptly and agree on the modalities for the immediate resumption of direct talks. On the basis of such an agreement, and in the context of a credible framework that is structured around clear parameters that lays out the basis for negotiations and that is itself based on a precise timetable, the negotiators could then agree on new and significant efforts to achieve peace. For such a resumption of negotiations to occur, appropriate international support will be necessary, as will decisive commitment from all key participants, including the United States.

In the Council, and as a member of the European Union, Luxembourg will do all it can to provide both parties with all the support they need to identify and accept a compromise that, when all is said and done, will necessarily be painful but necessary. The countries of the region have a crucial role to play in that respect.

We believe that an important part of the equation leading to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will also involve reconciliation between the Palestinians, under the leadership of President Abbas. In that context, we welcome the mediation efforts undertaken by Egypt.

Allow me to add a few words on the subject of the unprecedented financial crisis that the Palestinian Authority is experiencing currently. Luxembourg appeals to Israel to promptly unblock, in keeping with the Paris Protocol, the transfer of fiscal revenues that it receives on behalf the Palestinian Authority. On a bilateral basis, Luxembourg contributes €500,000 annually to the Palestinian Authority. That contribution is in addition to the significant contributions of the European Union, to which Luxembourg, as a member of the European Union, also contributes. The European Union announced just last week the disbursement of €60 million to help the Palestinian Authority pay wages and pensions during the first quarter of 2013. We call on other donors, in particular the countries of the region, to show their solidarity. Otherwise, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and the process of establishing State infrastructure will be seriously jeopardized.

All the necessary support must also be given to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its activities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. According to UNRWA reports, the 525,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria are among the minorities most affected by the current conflict in Syria, with 80 per cent of them dependent upon UNRWA for access to basic social services.

I now turn to the situation in Syria.

During the Council's consultations on 18 January 2013, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos, described the tragic situation in Syria, where human rights are trampled and humanitarian distress has reached unbelievable levels.

The figures speak for themselves. After almost two years of conflict, over 60,000 people have died in the fighting. Over 4 million people are directly affected by the crisis and need humanitarian aid, while the continued hostilities and the current winter conditions compound the situation further.

Now more than ever, humanitarian access must be ensured. We hope that Ms. Amos' visit to Syria will enable progress to be made in this respect, including with regard to essential assistance from

neighbouring countries. The international community, for its part, must do all it can to alleviate the suffering of the affected populations and to provide support to the neighbouring countries of Syria — Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq — which are generously and selflessly hosting the displaced Syrian population. The extent of the crisis is such that substantial financial resources will be necessary to meet the needs identified in the United Nations humanitarian aid plan for Syria and the region. The donor conference to be held on 30 January in Kuwait City must mobilize those resources. Luxembourg has, to date, made humanitarian contributions of €2 million to assist persons impacted by the Syrian crisis and is planning on announcing a substantial additional contribution on 30 January.

It is, however, as much a political emergency as a humanitarian one. In the end, the humanitarian challenges will only be resolved through a negotiated political outcome to the crisis. Syria must undertake a political transition process that meets the aspirations of all Syrians. That is the only way to restore peace in Syria and protect the security of the region. Otherwise, the list of atrocities will, alas, continue to grow.

We reiterate our full support to Mr. Brahimi's efforts to achieve a political outcome to the conflict as soon as possible. We must give him all the necessary support to allow him to make progress along that path. We owe that to the people of Syria, who are the victims, above all, of the intransigence of the authorities who are clinging to power. Luxembourg stands shoulder to shoulder with the Syrian people in their courageous fight for freedom, dignity and democracy.

As Ms. Pillay emphasized last week and as already stated by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, human rights violations are increasingly prevalent in Syria. An increasing number of such actions could be qualified as war crimes or crimes against humanity. Those crimes cannot go unpunished. Those responsible for the atrocities committed in Syria must be held accountable for their acts, without distinction of any kind. This accountability applies first and foremost to the national authorities.

The international justice system has a complementary role to play in intervening where there is a refusal or inability to act at the national level. Syria clearly has not responded to the appeals of the international community in that regard. Luxembourg believes that, in the absence of a credible, fair and independent system of accountability, the International Criminal Court (ICC) must be seized of the situation. Luxembourg therefore supports the Swiss initiative to send a letter to the President of the Security Council calling on the Council to refer to the ICC the situation that has prevailed in Syria since March 2011, without exception and without distinction as regards the alleged perpetrators of those crimes (S/2013/19, annex). That request has been supported by 58 States from every region of the world. We will remain committed to ensuring that that appeal for accountability does not go unheard.