

Speech: “Today I reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible”

Thank you Mr President, both for giving me the floor and for scheduling this important meeting.

Nikolay, thank you for your briefing. In particular for your unequivocal support for the two-state solution and for your warnings against unilateral measures that jeopardise the prospect of a sustainable peace for Israelis and Palestinians. From the outset, I would like to make clear that the United Kingdom’s position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined through a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. In line with relevant Security Council Resolutions, including 242, 478 and 2334, we regard East Jerusalem as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We therefore disagree with the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem and unilaterally to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel before a final status agreement. These decisions are unhelpful to the prospects for peace in the region, an aim that I know all of us in this Council remain committed to. The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

Mr President,

We share President Trump’s desire to bring an end to this conflict. We welcome his commitment to a two-state solution negotiated between the parties. We note his clear acknowledgement of the importance of the final status of Jerusalem, including the sovereign boundaries within the city, which must be subject to negotiations between the parties.

We remain committed to an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that is based on 1967 borders with agreed and equal land swaps, reflecting both parties’ national and religious interests; and with Jerusalem as the shared capital of an Israeli and Palestinian state. This outcome must be determined through a final status agreement, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees, that is demographically compatible with the principle of two states for two peoples.

Mr President,

We recognise that Jerusalem holds huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians. We reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the Holy Sites, in particular the Temple Mount/Haram al

Sharif and we welcome President Trump's call on the parties to maintain that status quo. Access and religious rights of both peoples must be respected. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the Holy Sites, and remain fully supportive of their efforts to maintain calm.

We are deeply concerned by continued developments on the ground that undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. As the Quartet has made clear, settlement construction and expansion, particularly in East Jerusalem is a significant barrier to achieving that solution. Terrorism and incitement to violence constitute another crucial barrier. We will continue to press the parties to refrain from actions which make a viable peace more difficult to achieve. A just and lasting resolution to end the occupation and deliver peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. Recent developments demonstrate the urgency of progress towards peace.

Today I reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible. These should be supported by the international community and should result in a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

We welcome the UN Secretary-General's intent to do everything in his power to support the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to meaningful negotiations and to realize this vision of a lasting peace for both peoples.

We strongly encourage the US Administration to bring forward detailed proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. The UK will also do everything we can to support progress and achieve the vision of a lasting peace.

To have the best chances of success, the peace process must be conducted in an atmosphere free from violence. We call on all parties to maintain calm, and work together in a spirit of commitment to this common enterprise.

On Jerusalem specifically, peace efforts need to take account of the people, not just the land and the Holy Sites. There are more than 320,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The vast majority are permanent residents whose permits can be revoked at any point. If they move away from the city, Israel often does not allow them back. If they marry, they face obstacle in bringing their spouses. If they apply for Israeli citizenship, and most do not, a high proportion of applications are rejected. Their status must not be forgotten in any peace effort.

Mr President,

If all parties can truly take bold steps in the spirit of compromise, I have no doubt that an agreement can finally be reached. This is the only way to ensure the long-term security that Israelis deserve, and the statehood and end to the occupation that Palestinians are calling out for. This is what both peoples ought to have. It has been denied to them for too long.