Statement

by

H.E. Dr. Amal Mudallali
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at the
Security Council

“Maintenance of international peace and security: Comprehensive review of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa”

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Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY 10017
Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on a productive presidency this month.

In your concept paper, you correctly invited us to take into account, the historical context of conflicts. I fully agree with you, and with Shakespeare’s Tempest “What’s past is a prologue”. I will explain!

One hundred years ago, in 1918, and around this time, the Arabs put all their hopes, in the Allied Forces, who were occupying one Arab city after another, from Jerusalem to Damascus, Aleppo to Beirut, while dismembering and carving up the Ottoman empire. The Arabs’ hopes were for independence, freedom and unity. As we know now, Promises were not kept, hopes were dashed, and the Arabs felt betrayed, and their land was divided, and distributed, like an abandoned cake.

Today and after a hundred years, we are looking history in the mirror, and finding that the wounds of the last 100 years never healed, they just were added to the new wounds of a people that seem to be destined to relive that history, and cope with the seeds of conflicts, that were planted a century ago.

Mr. President, look at the Security Council schedule every month of the year. The Middle East, its people, their hopes and pains are in your note books every month. Look at the news from the region! Occupation in Palestine, millions of Syrians, Yemenis, Iraqis, Libyans are refugees or displaced, in their own countries, or scattered around the world.

The Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict remain, for the Arabs, the most important but protracted problem, that has defied any solution. After years of negotiations, tens of United Nations’ resolutions, and dozens of agreements and initiatives, countless concessions on the Palestinian side, there is no horizon for peace.

Confidence among the parties is at its lowest point ever, and the very basis of a political solution: end of occupation, international legitimacy, an independent state of Palestine based on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as its capital, they are all being eroded or completely abandoned. The Palestinians seem to have lost hope, but they are still insisting on their legitimate political and historic rights in Palestine, and stressing that these rights are the prerequisite for any peace in the region.

Mr. President,

Lebanon is committed to the Arab peace initiative, and to East Jerusalem, as the capital of the State of Palestine, because Lebanon knows that only through comprehensive and just settlement the region can know real peace.

On the other issues in the region, Lebanon is committed to preserving its stability and there is a consensus in the country on the importance of distancing Lebanon from the conflicts of Arab states, and the Lebanese government is upholding this dissociation as a cardinal tenet of its policy.

The situation in South Lebanon is still governed by a relative stability and quiet, thanks to the presence and vigilance of the Lebanese armed forces. But the quiet and Lebanese sovereignty are violated on daily basis by land, air and sea, by Israel. I repeat what we have been saying here, and in the numerous letters we sent to the Secretary-General and to this esteemed Council, that these Israeli violations are not conducive to peace. On the contrary they are inviting conflict.
Time and again Lebanon reaffirmed its commitment to resolution 1701, the need for a permanent ceasefire, as well as its attachment to prevention, and to mediation, to avoid any miscalculation, or escalation that could lead to conflict. That is why Lebanon called on the Secretary-General and the United Nations’ good offices, and reiterates its strong belief that the Tripartite mechanism is the appropriate forum to discuss and solve any issue and de-escalate any tension along the blue line in the South.

Lebanon was also at the forefront of combatting terrorism, and it is one of the few countries in the region that defeated Da’esh through the determined will of its armed forces, and the help of its friends. But Lebanon also knows that defeating terrorism cannot happen only on the battlefield. It has to be done through providing young people with education, job opportunities, and hope.

Mr. President,

It is high time that the big powers see our region with different eyes from those of the last hundred years. The Middle East should not be seen mainly as an arena for competition over spheres of influence. It is time to view the people of the region as people with hopes and aspirations for a better and different future.

To do so, this esteemed Council can take lessons from the past and address the problems of today differently. If the political will of this Council, is coupled with collective leadership, armed with a new vision, then there is hope for the Middle East.

This Security Council represents the will of the International Community, and the whole array of tools that are at the UN’s disposal should be effectuated. It can implement its resolutions that end occupation, end oppression and fulfill the role that it was entrusted with upon its founding.

The United Nations can use its international authority to bring a new season for the Middle East, a season of peace, reconciliation, healing, progress and development. This region has a tremendous potential, if given the chance, not only as a battlefield, but also as a source of ideas, creativity and the place where peace can be born to circle the world.

Mr. President,

I thank you.