Statement

by

H.E. Dr. Amal Mudallali

Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations

at the open debate
of the Security Council

“The situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question”

New York, Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Kindly check against delivery
Mr. President,

Thank you and allow me first to congratulate Sweden on a very active presidency this month.

I wish to thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

Mr. President,

One of the brightest minds once said that “peace can only be achieved by understanding”. Regrettably, last week’s adoption of the new Basic Law in Israel struck the ultimate blow, driving us further away from understanding, by enshrining in law a policy of discrimination by the Israeli authorities against the Arabs, especially the Palestinians.

The law drew widespread condemnations in the Arab and Muslim Worlds, from the Palestinians, to the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as Israelis and Arab-Israeli law-makers.

The new law is seen as foreclosing the future of the peace process, the two state solution, and land for peace, and rendering them dead on at least three of the final status issues: Jerusalem, the Settlements, and Self-determination.

Hence this law is in contravention of the dozens of United Nations resolutions that address the Palestine question, and form the basis for any final and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

If international law and international legality are tossed aside, what is the future of peace in the Middle East?

Mr. President,

My fear is we will be eternally condemned to the same cycle of violence and perpetual wars. Look at Gaza! After so many wars and military operations by the Israelis, and thousands of casualties, we might be facing another new conflict today. Gaza continues to suffocate and to live under unimaginable difficult humanitarian conditions. The situation for its residents is beyond desperation, and the cuts in UNRWA’s funding will not help ease their plight. For more than seven decades, UNRWA’s vital work, not only in Gaza, but also Jordan, Syria and my own country, has helped millions of Palestine Refugees, keeping them from burying their last ounces of hope six feet under. It acts as a stabilizer in our region.

The UNRWA pledging conference held last month in New York, and the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held in Rome on March 15, were successful in expressing support to the Agency. We now need to build on this momentum to meet the deficit of an Agency that no one can afford to let die.

Mr. President,

In Lebanon, a country that embraces diversity, we are in the process of forming a new government after the completion of successful parliamentary elections in May.
These elections were held according to a new electoral law, with the participation of the diaspora for the first time, and several international observers commended the Lebanese authorities for the transparency in which these elections were conducted.

A new Lebanese Government is in the making. Naturally, among its key priorities will be to start implementing

the recommendations of the Paris CEDRE Conference, and enact the relevant structural reforms, in order to help boost our economy. Another ongoing challenge will be to address the issue of displaced Syrians to arrange for their safe return. However, addressing the issue of the Syrian displacement in Lebanon must not wait until the materialization of a political solution in Syria.

Mr. President,

Few weeks from now, the mandate of UNIFIL will be up for renewal. We count on Council members in acknowledging the efforts of UNIFIL through smooth renewal of UNIFIL’s mandate.

My country firmly believes that UNIFIL remains instrumental in preserving peace and security in South Lebanon thus contributing to the stability of the country. The latest Secretary-General’s report on the subject testifies to that role.

It is instrumental, Mr. President, despite - and because of - the continuous Israeli daily violations of Lebanon’s sovereignty. Daily Israeli violation, especially airspace violations continue unabated, and the last SG report pointed to 456 air violations during the reporting period.

We call on the Security Council to use its authority to insist that Israel respects and implements resolution 1701 through withdrawing from the occupied Lebanese territory, and ending its constant violations to our sovereignty.

More progress also needs to be made to solve the remaining border disputes, including the maritime one. In this regard, allow me to recall once again, the initiative of my government to seek the SG’s good offices to this end.

We continue to view the tripartite mechanism as a useful tool in reducing the tension, solving disputes and reaching the aspired permanent ceasefire in the South.

In conclusion, I wish to welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of the new UNIFIL Commander, Major General Stefano Del Col, to whom we express our full confidence and wish him the best of luck in his new mission.

We also pay tribute to the excellent work carried out by the outgoing UNIFIL Commander, Major General Michael Beary.

I thank you Mr. President.