Statement

by

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to the United Nations

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

Thank you for convening this open debate. I want to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her statement, and also thank the briefers.

Mr. President,

The book of books tells us “To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven”. There is a time of war, and a time of peace”.

I am sure you all notice that the time for peace is not upon us yet, and there is no sign that it is coming soon, if one is to look at the region from Palestine to Syria, Yemen, Libya and beyond.

The question of Palestine is still a source of concern for the region and the world. On this question the parties gridlocked on every issue that could lead to peace. The situation on the ground is deteriorating, and instead of talk of a two state solution, of land swaps, that characterized the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and was enshrined in agreements and resolutions, we hear talk of annexation of the West Bank or parts of it, and possible collapse of the whole peace paradigm, and its basis.

The road to negotiations is blocked, and the main negotiating partner, the Palestinians, is under tremendous political and economic pressure borne out of a new political reality being imposed on them, and a debilitating financial situation coupled by a fragile security one. The Palestinian Prime Minister says “there is nothing left to negotiate about”, and asks a legitimate question: “Where, are we going to have the Palestinian State?”

The Palestinian Prime Minister calls the withholding of the Palestinian tax revenues by the Israelis, a “financial war” to push the Palestinians to surrender. The fear by the international community is that this is bringing the Palestinian authority to near financial collapse, and threatening its stability.

This is coupled by a total breakdown in communications among the parties. No contacts between the main parties that are supposed to negotiate peace and discuss the much promised peace plan.

The basis of a peaceful settlement is under tremendous pressure and a source of concern especially the status of Jerusalem, and the United Nations resolutions that constituted for over 70 years the international legality that any equitable, just and comprehensive solution has to rest on. From resolutions 242 to 338, 478, and ending with 2334 of 2016.

On the ground things are not better. Gaza is still bleeding. The targeting of civilians continues, and despite the international outrage there is no indication this will come to an end. The Israeli decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) is another threat to stability.

Mr. President,

What is missing today is not UN resolutions or peace plans or road maps for peace. All of this has been done time and again. What is needed is the political will to choose life and to take the road of peace.
It is life, Mr. President, that is being discarded every day in this conflict, and it is life that needs peace more than anything else in the region.

That is why, the Arab world made its strategic choice for peace in their Arab Peace Initiative and they still believe that a comprehensive, just and equitable solution is the only way forward.

But this peace cannot come through annexation, or recognition of illegal annexation of occupied land. Lebanon is seriously concerned about the implications of recognizing the sovereignty of Israel over the occupied Golan Heights. It considers this a flagrant violation of UN resolution 497 of 1967. Lebanon is also concerned about the continued Israeli occupation Lebanese territories seized by force in 1967.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to report to this esteemed Council that over the last three months, important political and institutional developments happened domestically in Lebanon. A new National Unity Government was formed, headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, setting a very ambitious and proactive reform agenda.

The Government has shown a robust dedication in addressing urgent priorities, especially in terms of the economic and the fiscal situation, structural reform and combatting corruption. It intends to preserve this momentum, with a view to catching up on the time lost in the formation process, and meeting the many commitments that Lebanon has made under the Paris CEDRE Conference.

However, persistent challenges remain. The continued Israeli occupation of Lebanese territories, and daily violations of Lebanon’s sovereignty and Security Council resolution 1701 are keeping the situation on the southern border fragile.

In the past three months alone, Israel violated Lebanese sovereignty 431 times: 112 times by land, 149 times by sea, and 170 times by airspace! This has to be noted, condemned and stopped.

Lebanon remains committed to the full implementation of resolution 1701, and to work towards a permanent ceasefire on its southern border. It is also committed to continue its constructive engagement for settling border issues, within the framework of the Tripartite Mechanism and the good offices of the UN and international partners. It also hopes that it can one day soon move to a permanent ceasefire.

This esteemed Council can contribute greatly to making this a reality by taking all the necessary measures at its disposal to compel Israel to shoulder its share of the responsibility in this regard.

Finally, I wish to draw the Council’s attention to the severe challenges faced by UNRWA today. While Lebanon welcomes the generous contributions of friendly states to address the financial deficit of the agency, keeping UNRWA alive requires finding a sustainable solution to its financial crisis. As a host country, Lebanon remains committed to supporting UNRWA, and calls on all states to renew their commitments and to help it uphold its responsibility towards the Palestinian People.

Thank you.