



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

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The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

United Nations Security Council
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Mr. President,

Thanks to our briefers: USG DiCarlo (DPPA) and ASG Mueller (OCHA).

And I join my colleagues in acknowledging the important commemoration of the Holocaust this year. Never again must such atrocities be endured by humanity.

Mr. President, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to stand with the State of Palestine as it strives for a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We reaffirm the internationally agreed two-State solution.

Moreover, the current and expanding Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory constitute a flagrant violation of international law – a fact that no amount of legalistic creativity can change. And these settlements remain a substantial obstacle to peace in the Middle East. We therefore call for all settlement activities to stop, without preconditions.

Mr. President,

It is our duty to protect our universally-accepted body of international law on this issue. To do otherwise would allow a jaundiced view of international law to weaken the existential pillars on which all States rely, especially the small and militarily weak.

The international community has not given up on the two-state solution. And we ought to collectively and robustly resist any attempt to change the situation on the ground so as to make this internationally-agreed goal more and more elusive. We each have the option to remain silent or to stand on principle.

Mr. President,

We remain invested in the peace, security and development of Palestine, Israel and all their neighbors. The continued conflict hinders Palestine in its quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In its 2018 Voluntary National Review, the Government of Palestine cited the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a key deterrent to *“foster[ing] an internal enabling environment”* to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Turning to Gaza, the humanitarian situation there remains one of great concern. Israel's blockade of Gaza breeds poverty and denies residents of Gaza their rights. In this connection, we call, again, for the lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Mr. President,

We reiterate our strong support for United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and its mandate. UNRWA continues to play a vital role in supporting the basic needs of millions of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank. Conversely, we remain concerned about the ongoing financial shortfall for this Agency and encourage Members States of the United Nations to step up their financial support in order to close the current funding gaps. In this vein, we note that UNRWA also needs access in order to do its work and fulfill its mandate.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains concerned about any attempts to deviate from the settled parameters governing the delicate quest for peace between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. The Security Council has made clear "that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to

Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations”. We reiterate that the Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves and reach their potential in a sovereign and contiguous State¹.

Finally, those who commit crimes against humanity and war crimes should be held accountable, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore welcomes the recent landmark recommendation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open an investigation into these matters. Indeed, Mr. President, we owe it to the young people in both the State of Palestine and the State of Israel to resolve this conflict. Their despair is heartbreaking. Thank you.

¹ Statement by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – Recognition of the State of Palestine, 29 August 2011