

Madame President,

Let me first turn to the situation in Syria and Yemen before discussing the question of Palestine.

As regards Syria, we were very disappointed by the veto on the draft resolution presented to the Council earlier this month. We are concerned that the use of the veto in such cases, is not conducive to peace and security in the region. On the contrary, it can further undermine international efforts while the situation continues to deteriorate. We call upon the Council to re-visit the situation in Syria as soon as possible.

As regards Yemen, we welcome the adoption of the resolution by the Council last Friday. Iceland strongly supports the condemnation of human rights abuses and calls for the end of violence. We also welcome the Council's reference to Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. We urge the Government of Yemen to implement the resolution in full.

Madame President,

The Security Council has found itself at the center stage of the resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict by having been entrusted with the application of Palestine for membership in the United Nations.

The Council's deliberations on the application take place in an environment where peace negotiations, which have been ongoing for almost two decades, are at a standstill and without tangible results. In an environment where there is not a viable plan in sight which might get the parties back to the negotiating table and where the current situation is unsustainable, because an occupation is inherently unsustainable.

At the same time the Palestinian National Authority has, under the difficult circumstances of the occupation, successfully implemented its economic and development programme and has now demonstrated clearly, by improving infrastructure and through institution building, that Palestine can stand on its own feet. Their efforts and accomplishment have been applauded by the international community, including by the IMF and the World Bank.

Madame President,

In July, Iceland informed the Council of its intention to support the Palestinians should they decide to bring their case to the UN.

In his statement during the general debate in September the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the General Assembly of the determination of the Icelandic Government to fully recognize Palestine.

I am pleased to inform the Council that the Government of Iceland has now taken steps at the domestic level towards the recognition of Palestine by putting forward a proposal for a parliamentary resolution on the recognition of Palestine as an independent and sovereign state within the pre-1967 borders. The proposal is currently being discussed by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament.

As many other have said before us we see no contradiction between Palestine seeking membership of the United Nations and the Quartet-led peace process, which we fully support. Let me reiterate Iceland's position that it is of utmost importance that a negotiated agreement should be based on the two-state solution where both parties can live in peace with their neighbours.

Madame President,

Iceland urges the Members of the Council to contribute to the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people by recommending to the General Assembly that Palestine be accepted as the 194th Member State of the United Nations. To allow Palestine to follow in the foot steps of the numerous other Member States, who owe their freedom and independence from colonialism to this very organisation and the determination by many of its members to ensure that the principles on which the organisation is established override other interests.

Thank you, Madame President