

Statement by

**H.E. Ms Tanja Fajon**

**Deputy Prime Minister and**

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at the

**UNSC Briefing on implementation of resolution 2334**

 **The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question**

New York, 19 September 2024

Excellencies,

In March, I hosted in our capital representatives of two organizations: Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun. Together they lead the Mothers’ Call. They are Palestinian and Israeli mothers, determined to stop the cycle of violence and change the reality of the conflict between the two nations, for the benefit of their children and for generations to come. I was inspired by what they described as “resistance in hope”.

We are at the precipice. Almost a year into the war, the devastation and immense suffering of civilians continues relentlessly. Hostages have not returned home. Civilians in Gaza continue to endure unprecedented levels of violence and destruction. The potential to engulf the region in a wider conflict remains at all-time highs. The latest escalation in Lebanon is another sign of it. Despite that I, just as the mothers I spoke with, continue to embrace hope. Hope that peace returns to Gaza and the West Bank.

Colleagues,

**Firstly, we need compliance with international law.** Since day one of this conflict, we have called for the compliance with international law. Instead, serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law persist, challenging the very notion of the international law framework which we collectively established to safeguard all people, and to protect the most vulnerable in particular. On top of that, resolutions of the Security Council and provisional orders of the International Court of Justice are being blatantly disregarded. Such violations weaken the credibility of our institutions and erode global trust.

In the shadow of the appalling situation in Gaza, settlement policy and expansion has accelerated at unprecedented levels, settler violence is on the rise and the situation in the West Bank is boiling. The status quo of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is being repeatedly violated. Negative trends must be met with positive and concrete steps. I therefore warmly welcome the adoption of the GA resolution following the ICJ Advisory Opinion, providing tangible steps towards a blueprint for peace. It is now time for the Council to follow suit.

**Secondly, we need respect.** More respect for the prevailing sentiment of the wider UN membership which demands a ceasefire, and a just and lasting peace. We need more respect for the UN System, including UNRWA, and more compliance with its Charter. This is the best prospect for alleviating the unimaginable suffering. We need a more respectful and action-orientated dialogue in this Chamber —one that prioritizes peace over partisanship.

We also need respect and dialogue between people in the region. This starts first and foremost with leadership for peace on both sides. Leadership cannot be based on incitement, hatred, provocation or terrorism. It equally cannot endorse such actions and it must be respectful of other opinions, especially of civil society.

**Thirdly, we need courage.** Courage to uphold our commitments to the two-state solution, which remains the only path to durable peace. I say this as a Foreign Minister of a country who has taken a clear stance for peace in this conflict. We have decided to be active in this Council and to deliver on what we promised during our campaign: building trust and securing the future. We therefore took the decision to vote for membership of the State of Palestine in the UN. We also recognized the State of Palestine. I urge others to take similar steps. Universal recognition of Palestine and its admission as a full UN member is an essential element in our shared agenda for peace. The future of peace in the region will slip away without tangible steps. It is the job of this Council as a whole and of its individual members to act as guarantors for peace, with courage.

Clearly, we also need courageous leaders in the region. Leaders willing to set aside their individual interests. Leaders who dare to dream of a different region, turning a new page in this decades long conflict. Leaders who dare to envision a different future, one where normalization of relations is possible and militarization gives way to cooperation.

**Lastly, we need diplomacy.** We need diplomacy to succeed in delivering a ceasefire. There must be hard work of diplomacy bilaterally but also hard work of diplomacy multilaterally. Past peace processes have not yielded the results we want to see. We therefore believe an inclusive, meaningful and time-bound peace process coupled with reconstruction should take place. We want to see the UN playing a central role in that. And a Palestinian government strong enough to shoulder its responsibilities. I welcome the day after plan presented by the Palestinian Prime Minister.

But diplomacy must be more than words—it requires concerted action. We call for the swift convening of an international peace conference, as agreed in Madrid, to advance the two-state solution.

Colleagues,

I imagine a mother in Gaza beaming with joy as her child can study again. I imagine a mother in Tel Aviv not needing to teach her child how to use a shelter. I imagine a mother in Jenin not worrying whether her child will be detained. This is the future I dream of—a future where peace is not just a possibility but a reality. The first step towards this reality is an immediate ceasefire.

This Council is the most powerful body for peace and security in the world. I always defended that the strongest and most sustainable tool in diplomacy is dialogue. However, dialogue cannot entail only words, it must include listening and understanding. But in this Chamber, dialogue must lead to meaningful action. If not, this Council must also turn a new page in the tools that it is ready to use. Thank you.