



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**SPECIAL SESSION ON THE**  
**HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE**  
**OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY,**  
**INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM**

**GENEVA, 10 DECEMBER 2023**

**RESOLUTION AND DECISION**  
**ANNEX**

**SUMMARY RECORDS**

**GENEVA**  
**2023**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in WHO documentation include the following:

ASEAN	– Association of Southeast Asian Nations	UNAIDS	– Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
FAO	– Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	UNCTAD	– United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
IAEA	– International Atomic Energy Agency	UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme
IARC	– International Agency for Research on Cancer	UNEP	– United Nations Environment Programme
ICAO	– International Civil Aviation Organization	UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IFAD	– International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNFPA	– United Nations Population Fund
ILO	– International Labour Organization (Office)	UNHCR	– Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IMF	– International Monetary Fund	UNICEF	– United Nations Children’s Fund
IMO	– International Maritime Organization	UNIDO	– United Nations Industrial Development Organization
INCB	– International Narcotics Control Board	UNODC	– United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
IOM	– International Organization for Migration	UNRWA	– United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
ITU	– International Telecommunication Union	WFP	– World Food Programme
OECD	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	WIPO	– World Intellectual Property Organization
OIE	– World Organisation for Animal Health	WMO	– World Meteorological Organization
PAHO	– Pan American Health Organization	WTO	– World Trade Organization

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The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this volume do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Where the designation “country or area” appears in the headings of tables, it covers countries, territories, cities or areas.

## **PREFACE**

A special session on the the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem was held using a hybrid format at WHO headquarters, Geneva, on 10 December 2023. The present volume contains the decision, resolution and relevant annex, as well as the summary records of the Board's discussions.

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## **AGENDA<sup>1</sup>**

1. Opening of the session<sup>2</sup>
  2. Adoption of the agenda and method of work
  3. Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem
  4. Closure of the session
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<sup>1</sup> As adopted by the Board at its first meeting (10 December 2023) of its seventh special session.

<sup>2</sup> During the opening of the special session of the Executive Board, members of the Board were also invited to consider the adoption of special procedures.





## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

EBSS/7/1	Provisional agenda <sup>1</sup>
EBSS/7/1 (annotated)	Provisional agenda (annotated)
EBSS/7/2	Opening of the session Special procedures
<b>Diverse documents</b>	
EBSS/7/DIV./1	List of documents
EBSS/7/DIV./2	List of decisions and resolutions

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<sup>1</sup> See page vii.



**PART I**  
**RESOLUTION AND DECISION**



## RESOLUTION

### **EBSS7.R1      Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem**

The Executive Board,

Noting the role of WHO within its mandate as the directing and coordinating authority on international health matters;

Expressing grave concern at the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and its vast consequences for the civilian population, and in the light of the gravity of the current escalating situation, and the magnitude of the intense damage on the public health sector, that has, to this date, killed and injured thousands of civilians, the majority of them children, women and elderly, including humanitarian and health workers, in addition to thousands of victims who remain under the rubble;

Emphasizing that all civilians, including health and humanitarian aid workers, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and deploring in this regard the heavy civilian casualties and widespread destruction;

Expressing further concern at the large-scale destruction of health facilities including hospitals and ambulances, and at the catastrophic humanitarian conditions that have been inflicted on the public health system in the Gaza Strip;

Recognizing that attacks on medical and health personnel result in long-lasting impacts, including the loss of life and human suffering, weaken the ability of health systems to deliver essential life-saving services and produce setbacks for health development;

Expressing also deep concern at the killing of more than one hundred UN staff including WHO staff;

Commending WHO, its Director-General and its staff and health cluster partners in the field for remaining and delivering, and for their tireless efforts to address the situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip, early on, despite severe dangers to their lives, and expressing appreciation to all humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners that are delivering life-saving aid to alleviate the impact of the conflict on civilians;

Bearing in mind the appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire by invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter;<sup>1</sup>

Recalling the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, as applicable, as well as relevant customary international law concerned with the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 6 December 2023 from the United Nations Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations (UN document S/2023/962).

and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and the obligation of all parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances;<sup>1</sup>

Recalling further the specific obligations under international humanitarian law to respect and protect, in situations of armed conflict, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, and hospitals and other medical facilities, which must not be attacked, and to ensure that the wounded and sick receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required;<sup>2</sup>

Expressing concern at the inadequate humanitarian access to, and its grave impact on, the Palestinian civilian population, and underlining the urgent need for necessary humanitarian measures, including humanitarian pauses, to ensure full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the Gaza Strip;

Expressing concern also at the dire situation of hospitals and other medical facilities and ambulances, and the obstruction of the provision of the fuel necessary for their operation, endangering the lives of the sick and wounded, and preventing the conduct of medical operations and procedures, and the operation of medical equipment including incubators for premature newborn babies and surgical and resuscitation equipment for persons suffering from severe medical conditions;

Expressing further concern at the fact that the civilian population has been exposed to conflict and insecurity, leading to significant mental health and psychosocial needs, underlining the importance of urgently providing mental health and psychosocial support, as well as trauma-related services, to the affected persons particularly children;

Underlining the disproportionate effect on children, women, elderly, disabled persons and the chronically ill, and recognizing the need to address their specific health needs, including the special health needs of persons with disabilities, bearing in mind the challenges they face in accessing medical services, which are compounded in the current situation, as a result of the destruction of civilian infrastructure and residential buildings, and the resulting additional restrictions to human mobility;

Expressing concern at the public health management implications of the existence of thousands of corpses of victims in the Gaza Strip buried under the rubble, which are exacerbated by the lack of access to water, electricity, and equipment needed to bury the bodies of the dead;

Expressing further concern that intense overcrowding in shelters coupled with disrupted health, water and sanitation systems and lack of fuel pose increasing risks of the spread of infectious diseases, including waterborne, airborne, vector and vaccine-preventable diseases;

Recognizing the interconnectedness between health and other sectors, such as water and sanitation and nutrition, and the need for a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, and stressing that ongoing challenges in the Gaza Strip, including restrictions on the movement of goods can impact food availability contributing to malnutrition, while the limited availability of clean water, increases the risk of outbreaks and epidemics, and stressing that access to clean water and sanitation facilities is crucial for maintaining public health,

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel in armed conflict; resolution WHA65.20 (2012) on WHO's response, and role as the health cluster lead, in meeting the growing demands of health in humanitarian emergencies.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2286.

1. CALLS FOR the immediate, sustained and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including the access of medical personnel, the entry of humanitarian equipment, transport and supplies in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the Gaza Strip, and the granting of exit permits for patients in need of medical treatment outside the Gaza Strip, and stresses the need for the unhindered and safe passage of ambulances at checkpoints, especially in times of conflict [based on Human Rights Council resolution 52/3 (2023) on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice];
2. CALLS UPON all parties to fulfil their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law to ensure, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, the supply and replenishment of medicine and medical equipment to the civilian population, and reaffirms that all parties to armed conflict must comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international humanitarian law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and medical personnel;<sup>1</sup>
3. DEMANDS that all parties fully comply with their obligations, in particular their obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the obligations applicable to them under the Additional Protocols, to ensure the respect and protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities [based on paragraph 2 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2286];
4. FURTHER DEMANDS a sustained, orderly, unimpeded, safe and unobstructed passage for medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items, to all people in need, consistent with international humanitarian law,<sup>2</sup> calls for the passage for ambulances and medical evacuations of critically injured and sick patients as well as respect and protection of the wounded, sick and injured, and ensuring the safety, security and safe movement of all Palestinian patients to receive medical needs and treatments, and calls for the human treatment of all persons deprived of their liberty and their access to medical treatment in compliance with international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;
5. REQUESTS the Director-General:
  - (a) to report, based on field monitoring and assessment conducted by the WHO emergency teams, on the public health implications of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, including with respect to acts of violence against the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and submit recommendations in this regard to the 154th session of the Executive Board and to the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, and to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly;
  - (b) to coordinate with donors, prior to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, to secure the funding for the immediate health needs as well as the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the health system in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and calls on Member States, donors and international humanitarian and development actors to provide humanitarian

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<sup>1</sup> Article 55 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949); United Nations Security Council resolution 2286.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2286.

assistance to the Palestinian people, and to ensure the allocation of human and financial resources in order to urgently achieve these objectives;

(c) to assess, in full cooperation with relevant UN agencies, the extent and nature of psychiatric morbidity, and other forms of mental health and psychosocial support needs and challenges of all affected persons;

(d) to strengthen and to continue providing the necessary technical and material health assistance in order to meet the health needs of the Palestinian people, especially the most vulnerable;

(e) to continue strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies such as UNRWA and relevant partners in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, to enhance humanitarian health response capacities by delivering emergency aid and protection in an inclusive and sustained manner before, during and after the military operations and the humanitarian crisis;

6. CALLS UPON the international community to secure appropriate funding to support the immediate and future needs of the WHO health programmes in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and for rebuilding the Palestinian health system, in full cooperation with WHO and relevant UN agencies such as UNRWA and partners.

(Second meeting, 10 December 2023)

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## **DECISION**

### **EBSS7(1) Special procedures to regulate the conduct of hybrid sessions of the Executive Board**

The Executive Board, having considered the report by the Director-General,<sup>1</sup>

Decided:

- (1) to adopt the special procedures to regulate the conduct of hybrid sessions of the Executive Board set out in the Annex to the present decision;
- (2) that the aforementioned special procedures shall apply to the seventh special session of the Executive Board, to be held on 10 December 2023, which will be a hybrid session.

## **ANNEX**

### **SPECIAL PROCEDURES TO REGULATE THE CONDUCT OF HYBRID SESSIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

#### **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

1. The Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board shall continue to apply in full, except to the extent that they are inconsistent with these special procedures, in which case the Executive Board's decision to adopt these special procedures shall operate as a decision to suspend the relevant Rules of Procedure to the extent necessary, in accordance with Rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.<sup>2</sup>

#### **ATTENDANCE AND QUORUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

2. Members of the Executive Board (and up to two additional delegates of the Executive Board member's delegation), Member States not represented on the Board and Associate Members (up to two delegates per delegation), and Observers (one delegate per delegation) will, where possible, be physically present in Geneva for the purposes of the session.

3. Attendance by members of the Executive Board, Member States not represented on the Board, Associate Members and Observers who, for any reason, cannot be physically present in Geneva for the purposes of the session, as well as invited representatives of the United Nations and other participating intergovernmental organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO shall be provided for through secured access to videoconference or other electronic means allowing representatives to hear other participants and to address the session remotely.

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<sup>1</sup> Document EBSS/7/2.

<sup>2</sup> This will affect notably the relevant provisions of the following Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board as they appear in the 49th edition of Basic documents: Rule 51 (show of hands vote) and Rules 56–61 (secret ballot and elections).

4. Virtual attendance of members of the Executive Board shall be taken into account when calculating the presence of a quorum.

### **ADDRESSING THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

5. Except as otherwise decided by the Board, individual statements by members of the Board will be limited to three minutes; individual statements by Member States not represented on the Board and Associate Members will be limited to two minutes; and individual statements by Observers, invited representatives of the United Nations and other participating intergovernmental organizations, and non-State actors in official relations will be limited to one minute. Regional and group statements will be limited to four minutes.

### **DECISION-MAKING**

6. All decisions of the Executive Board taken in hybrid meetings should, as far as possible, be taken by consensus. Given the hybrid nature of the session, no decision shall be taken by secret ballot or show-of-hands vote, unless a member of the delegation of each member of the Board is physically present in Geneva at the meeting at which the vote is taken, in which case the secret ballot or show-of-hands vote will take place in person in Geneva.

7. In the event of a vote, it is understood that delegates physically present in Geneva for the purposes of the session are deemed to be duly authorized to speak and vote on behalf of their respective delegations.

8. In the event of a roll-call vote, and in line with normal practice, should any delegate, whether physically present or virtually connected, fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll-call, that delegate shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll-call. Should the delegate fail to cast a vote on the second roll-call, the delegation concerned shall be recorded as absent.

(First meeting, 10 December 2023)

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## **ANNEX**



## ANNEX

### FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

<b>Resolution EBSS7.R1:</b> Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem	
<b>A. Link to the approved Programme budget 2024–2025</b>	
<b>1. Output(s) in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 under which this resolution would be implemented:</b>	<p>2.3.1. Potential health emergencies rapidly detected, and risks assessed and communicated</p> <p>2.3.3. Essential health services and systems maintained and strengthened in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable settings</p>
<b>2. Short justification for considering the resolution, if there is no link to the results as indicated in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>3. Any additional Secretariat work during the biennium 2024–2025 that cannot be accommodated within the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 ceiling:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>4. Estimated time frame (in years or months) to implement the resolution:</b>	Six months (December 2023–May 2024).
<b>B. Resource implications for the Secretariat for implementation of the resolution</b>	
<b>1. Total budgeted resource levels required to implement the resolution, in US\$ millions:</b>	US\$ 332.00 million (US\$ 220.00 million for emergency response and US\$ 112.00 million for recovery efforts), with continuous emergency response operations in December 2023.
<b>2.a. Estimated resource levels required that can be accommodated within the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 ceiling, in US\$ millions:</b>	Zero. This resolution would be implemented through the emergency operations and appeals budget segment.
<b>2.b. Estimated resource levels required in addition to those already budgeted for in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025, in US\$ millions:</b>	US\$ 332.00 million, with continuous emergency response in December 2023.
<b>3. Estimated resource levels required to be budgeted for in the proposed programme budget for 2026–2027, in US\$ millions:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>4. Estimated resource levels required to be budgeted for in the proposed programme budgets of future bienniums, in US\$ millions:</b>	Not applicable.

- 5. Level of resources already available to fund the implementation of the resolution in the current biennium, in US\$ millions**
- **Resources available to fund the resolution in the current biennium:**  
US\$ 25.00 million.
  - **Remaining financing gap in the current biennium:**  
US\$ 307.00 million.
  - **Estimated resources, which are currently being mobilized, if any, that would help to close the financing gap in the current biennium:**  
Pledges are in the pipeline; fundraising is continuing.

**Table. Breakdown of estimated resource requirements (in US\$ millions)**

Biennium	Costs	Region						Headquarters	Total
		Africa	The Americas	South-East Asia	Europe	Eastern Mediterranean	Western Pacific		
<b>B.2.a.</b> 2024–2025 resources already planned	Staff	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>B.2.b.</b> 2024–2025 additional resources	Staff	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	1.00	5.00
	Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	321.00	0.00	6.00	327.00
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	325.00	0.00	7.00	332.00
<b>B.3.</b> 2026–2027 resources to be planned	Staff	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>B.4. Future bienniums resources to be planned</b>	Staff	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

## **FIRST MEETING**

**Sunday, 10 December 2023, at 10:00**

**Chair:** Dr H.M. Al Kuwari (Qatar)

### **1. OPENING OF THE SESSION:** Item 1 of the provisional agenda (document EBSS/7/2)

#### **Opening of the session**

The CHAIR declared open the special session of the Executive Board, which the Board had agreed would take place using a hybrid format.

#### **Organization of work**

The CHAIR invited the Board to consider the special procedures to regulate the conduct of the hybrid sessions of the Executive Board, contained in document EBSS/7/2. In the absence of any objections, she took it that the Board wished to adopt the draft decision.

#### **The decision was adopted.<sup>1</sup>**

She proposed that, following the introductory remarks by the Director-General and the technical update provided by the Secretariat, the representatives of Israel and Palestine should be invited to speak first and that they should be permitted to raise points of order, exercise the right of reply, sponsor any draft decisions or resolutions, and make statements of position.

#### **It was so agreed.**

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND METHOD OF WORK:** Item 2 of the provisional agenda (documents EBSS/7/1 and EBSS/7/1 (annotated))

The CHAIR said that the Director-General had convened the special session in accordance with Rule 6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, in order to discuss the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem.

#### **The agenda was adopted.<sup>2</sup>**

The representative of DENMARK, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, recalled that, as agreed in an exchange of letters in 2000 between WHO and the European Commission on the consolidation and intensification of cooperation, and without prejudice to any future general agreement between WHO and the European Union, the European Union attended sessions of the Board as an observer. He requested that, as at previous sessions, representatives of the

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<sup>1</sup> Decision EBSS7(1).

<sup>2</sup> See page vii.

European Union should be invited to participate, without vote, in the meetings of the seventh special session of the Board and its committees, subcommittees, drafting groups or other subdivisions that addressed matters falling within the competence of the European Union.

The CHAIR took it that the Board wished to accede to the request.

**It was so agreed.**

**3. HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM:** Item 3 of the agenda

The CHAIR drew attention to a draft resolution on health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, proposed by Afghanistan, Morocco, Qatar and Yemen,<sup>1</sup> which read:

The Executive Board,

Noting the role of WHO within its mandate as directing and coordinating authority on international health matters;

Expressing grave concern at the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and its vast consequences for the civilian population, and in light of the gravity of the current escalating situation, and the magnitude of the intense damage on the public health sector, that has, to this date, killed and injured thousands of civilians, the majority of them children, women and elderly, including humanitarian and health workers, in addition to thousands of victims who remain under the rubble;

Emphasizing that all civilians, including health and humanitarian aid workers, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and deploring in this regard the heavy civilian casualties and widespread destruction;

Expressing further concern at the large-scale destruction of health facilities including hospitals and ambulances, and at the catastrophic humanitarian conditions that have been inflicted to the public health system in the Gaza Strip;

Recognizing that attacks on medical and health personnel result in long-lasting impacts, including the loss of life and human suffering, weaken the ability of health systems to deliver essential life-saving services and produce setbacks for health development;

Expressing also deep concern at the killing of more than one hundred UN staff including WHO staff;

Commending WHO, its Director-General and its staff and health cluster partners in the field for remaining and delivering, and for their tireless efforts to address the situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip, early on, despite severe dangers to their lives, and expressing appreciation to all

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<sup>1</sup> The following 26 Member States and one Observer requested to be added to the list of sponsors for the resolution: Angola, Bahrain, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Ireland, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Palestine, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).



humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners that are delivering life-saving aid to alleviate the impact of the conflict on civilians;

Bearing in mind the appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire by invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter; [UN Secretary-General, Letter dated Dec. 6, 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/2023/962 (Dec. 6, 2023)];

Recalling the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, as applicable, as well as relevant customary international law concerned with the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and the obligation of all parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances [SC Res 2286, WHA 65.20];

Recalling further the specific obligations under international humanitarian law to respect and protect, in situations of armed conflict, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, and hospitals and other medical facilities, which must not be attacked, and to ensure that the wounded and sick receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required [SC Res 2286];

Expressing concern at the inadequate humanitarian access to, and its grave impact on, the Palestinian civilian population, and underlining the urgent need for necessary humanitarian measures, including humanitarian pauses, to ensure full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the Gaza Strip;

Expressing concern also at the dire situation of hospitals and other medical facilities and ambulances, and the obstruction of the provision of the fuel necessary for their operation, endangering the lives of the sick and wounded, and preventing the conduct of medical operations and procedures, and the operation of medical equipment including incubators for premature newborn babies and surgical and resuscitation equipment for persons suffering from severe medical conditions;

Expressing further concern at the fact that the civilian population has been exposed to conflict and insecurity, leading to significant mental health and psychosocial needs, underlining the importance of urgently providing mental health and psychosocial support, as well as trauma related services to the affected persons particularly children;

Underlining the disproportionate effect on children, women, elderly, disabled persons and the chronically ill, and recognizing the need to address their specific health needs, including the special health needs of persons with disabilities, bearing in mind the challenges they face in accessing medical services, which are compounded in the current situation, as a result of the destruction of civilian infrastructure and residential buildings, and the resulting additional restrictions to human mobility;

Expressing concern at the public health management implications of the existence of thousands of corpses of victims in the Gaza Strip buried under the rubble, which are exacerbated by the lack of access to water, electricity, and equipment needed to bury the bodies of the dead;

Expressing further concern that intense overcrowding in shelters coupled with disrupted health, water and sanitation systems and lack of fuel pose increasing risks of the spread of infectious diseases, including waterborne, airborne, vector and vaccine-preventable diseases;

Recognizing the interconnectedness between health and other sectors, such as water and sanitation and nutrition, and the need for a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, and stressing that ongoing challenges in the Gaza Strip, including restrictions on the movement of goods can impact food availability contributing to malnutrition, while the limited availability of clean water, increases the risk of outbreaks and epidemics, and stressing that access to clean water and sanitation facilities is crucial for maintaining public health,

1. CALLS FOR the immediate, sustained and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including the access of medical personnel, the entry of humanitarian equipment, transport and supplies in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the Gaza Strip, and the granting of exit permits for patients in need of medical treatment outside the Gaza Strip, and stresses the need for the unhindered and safe passage of ambulances at checkpoints, especially in times of conflict [based on A/HRC/Res/52/3];
2. CALLS UPON all parties to fulfil their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law to ensure, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, the supply and replenishment of medicine and medical equipment to the civilian population, and reaffirms that all parties to armed conflict must comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international humanitarian law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and medical personnel [GC IV, article 55; SC Res 2286];
3. DEMANDS that all parties fully comply with its obligations, in particular its obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the obligations applicable to it under the Additional Protocols, to ensure the respect and protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities [based on OP 2, SC Res 2286];
4. DEMANDS further a sustained, orderly, unimpeded, safe and unobstructed passage for medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items, to all people in need, consistent with international humanitarian law [SC Res 2286], calls for the passage for ambulances and medical evacuations of critically injured and sick patients as well as respect and protection of the wounded, sick and injured, and ensuring the safety, security and safe movement of all Palestinian patients to receive medical needs and treatments, and calls for the human treatment of all persons deprived of their liberty and their access to medical treatment in compliance with international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;
5. REQUESTS the Director-General:
  - (a) to report, based on field monitoring and assessment conducted by the WHO emergency teams, on the public health implications of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, including with respect to acts of violence against the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and submit recommendations in this regard to the 154th session of the Executive Board and to the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, and to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly;
  - (b) to coordinate with donors, prior to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, to secure the funding for the immediate health needs as well as the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the health system in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and calls on Member States, donors and international humanitarian and development actors to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and to ensure the allocation of human and financial resources in order to urgently achieve these objectives;

- (c) to assess, in full cooperation with relevant UN agencies, the extent and nature of psychiatric morbidity, and other forms of mental health and psychosocial support needs and challenges of all affected persons;
- (d) to strengthen and to continue providing the necessary technical and material health assistance in order to meet the health needs of the Palestinian people, especially the most vulnerable;
- (e) to continue strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies such as the UNRWA and relevant partners in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, to enhance humanitarian health response capacities by delivering emergency aid and protection in an inclusive and sustained manner before, during and after the military operations and the humanitarian crisis;

6. CALLS upon the international community to secure appropriate funding to support the immediate and future needs of the WHO health programmes in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and for rebuilding the Palestinian health system, in full cooperation with the WHO and relevant UN agencies such as the UNRWA and partners.

The financial and administrative implications of the draft resolution for the Secretariat were:

<b>Resolution:</b> Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory	
<b>A. Link to the approved Programme budget 2024–2025</b>	
<b>1. Output(s) in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 under which this draft resolution would be implemented if adopted:</b>	2.3.1. Potential health emergencies rapidly detected, and risks assessed and communicated 2.3.3. Essential health services and systems maintained and strengthened in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable settings
<b>2. Short justification for considering the draft resolution, if there is no link to the results as indicated in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>3. Any additional Secretariat work during the biennium 2024–2025 that cannot be accommodated within the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 ceiling:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>4. Estimated time frame (in years or months) to implement the resolution:</b>	Six months (December 2023–May 2024).
<b>B. Resource implications for the Secretariat for implementation of the resolution</b>	
<b>1. Total budgeted resource levels required to implement the resolution, in US\$ millions:</b>	US\$ 332 million (US\$ 220 million for emergency response and US\$ 112 million for recovery efforts), with continuous emergency response operations in December 2023.
<b>2.a. Estimated resource levels required that can be accommodated within the approved Programme budget 2024–2025 ceiling, in US\$ millions:</b>	Zero. This resolution would be implemented through the emergency operations and appeals budget segment.
<b>2.b. Estimated resource levels required in addition to those already budgeted for in the approved Programme budget 2024–2025, in US\$ millions:</b>	US\$ 332 million, with continuous emergency response in December 2023.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Estimated resource levels required to be budgeted for in the proposed programme budget for 2026–2027, in US\$ millions:</b> Not applicable.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Estimated resource levels required to be budgeted for in the proposed programme budgets of future bienniums, in US\$ millions:</b> Not applicable.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Level of resources already available to fund the implementation of the resolution in the current biennium, in US\$ millions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Resources available to fund the resolution in the current biennium:</b> US\$ 25 million.</li> <li>– <b>Remaining financing gap in the current biennium:</b> US\$ 307 million.</li> <li>– <b>Estimated resources, which are currently being mobilized, if any, that would help to close the financing gap in the current biennium:</b> Pledges are in the pipeline; fundraising is continuing.</li> </ul>

**Table. Breakdown of estimated resource requirements (in US\$ millions)**

Biennium	Costs	Region						Headquarters	Total
		Africa	The Americas	South-East Asia	Europe	Eastern Mediterranean	Western Pacific		
<b>B.2.a.</b> <b>2024–2025</b> resources already planned	Staff	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>B.2.b.</b> <b>2024–2025</b> additional resources	Staff	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	1.00	5.00
	Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	321.00	0.00	6.00	327.00
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	325.00	0.00	7.00	332.00
<b>B.3.</b> <b>2026–2027</b> resources to be planned	Staff	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>B.4. Future bienniums</b> resources to be planned	Staff	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

She encouraged the Board to seek consensus, in order to better protect the health of all citizens affected in the region.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL deplored the unjustifiable fatal attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7 October 2023, the related reported gender-based violence and the subsequent mistreatment of hostages. He repeated his call for the remaining hostages to be released. He recognized the anger, grief and fear of the Israeli people following the attacks and of the Palestinian people who had long suffered. The impact of the conflict on health had been catastrophic, with high numbers of fatalities, injured and displaced persons. Overcrowding and a lack of adequate food, water, shelter and sanitation created ideal conditions for the spread of disease. Worrying signals of epidemic diseases had been reported.

Health needs had increased dramatically, and the health system in the Gaza Strip was collapsing; the situation would continue to worsen throughout the winter. Two thirds of primary health care centres were not functional, while only about a third of hospitals continued to be partially functional. Those hospitals were operating at three times their bed capacity and were running out of supplies; yet thousands of patients still required health care, acute psychiatric care or mental health support. Health workers at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, where conditions had already been difficult before the current escalation of violence, were directly in the firing line. Since 7 October 2023, WHO had verified more than 449 attacks on health care in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and 60 attacks on health care in Israel. More than 100 colleagues from entities of the United Nations system had lost their lives, including Dima Abdullatif Mohammed Alhaj, a WHO staff member who had been killed along with a number of family members. Humanitarian agencies were struggling to cope. WHO was working on the ground, alongside partners, to support health workers, replenish health facilities and provide humanitarian services.

He listed the tasks that would be required of him if the Executive Board adopted the draft resolution under discussion but noted that such tasks would be impossible under the current circumstances. For that reason, he echoed the United Nations Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian ceasefire under Article 99 of the United Nations Charter and expressed deep regret that the United Nations Security Council had been unable to adopt a resolution to that effect on 8 December 2023. He welcomed the commitment of the members of the Executive Board to reach consensus on the draft resolution. Only through dialogue, mutual understanding and finding common ground would it be possible to resolve the crisis. There could be no health without peace, and no peace without health.

The EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (WHO Health Emergencies Programme) said that his team was presenting a technical update in honour of all those who had lost their lives in the recent escalation of the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory, including 133 UNRWA personnel and WHO staff member Dima Abdullatif Mohammed Alhaj.

Despite the current situation on the ground, there was cause for hope. He highlighted the WHO-led mission to evacuate 28 premature newborns from the Gaza Strip to Egypt in November 2023. All the babies were thriving, and he thanked the Government of Egypt for hosting them. He paid tribute to the humanitarian actors working on the ground from across the United Nations system and from non-State actors, especially WHO's health cluster partners. He echoed the concerns expressed by the Director-General that it would be almost impossible to continue to deliver assistance in the current conditions and urged actors involved to create space to save lives.

The TECHNICAL OFFICER (WHO Health Emergencies Programme) said that the Secretariat had been monitoring the public health situation in the Gaza Strip, Israel, the West Bank and Lebanon for the previous 60 days. As at 8 December 2023, WHO had recorded more than 1200 fatalities in Israel, more than 17 000 in the Gaza Strip, more than 250 in the West Bank and 94 in Lebanon. Furthermore, it had recorded more than 5000 injuries in Israel, almost 50 000 in the Gaza Strip, more than 3000 in the West Bank and almost 400 in Lebanon. As at 6 December 2023, 134 United Nations personnel had been killed, including the aforementioned WHO staff member.

Most of the fatalities in Israel were a result of the attacks of 7 October 2023, and more than 2000 patients were being treated in hospital for injuries incurred during those attacks. In the Gaza Strip, the continuing rise in fatalities was placing a burden on the already weakened health system. The largest proportions of fatalities recorded were among children and women; The Save the Children Fund had reported that the number of children killed in the three weeks following 7 October 2023 had surpassed the number killed on an annual basis in conflict zones since 2019. In the first month of the conflict, 66% of fatalities had been recorded north of the Wadi Gaza line. It was estimated that more than 100 000 people could no longer be reached in the north of the Gaza Strip.

More than 1.9 million people had been displaced, with 1.2 million people being hosted in 159 UNRWA shelters. Overcrowding in shelters, a lack of basic services and the onset of winter had resulted in an increase in infectious diseases and other health risks. WHO had recorded and verified

some 510 attacks on health care between 7 October and 6 December 2023, resulting in injuries to patients and health workers, denial of health care and destruction of hospitals and ambulances. She noted that the WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care did not have a mandate to investigate the attribution of any such attacks. Before 7 October 2023, there had been 36 hospitals and 72 primary health care units in the Gaza Strip. Only one third of the hospitals continued to be partially functional, two of which were north of the Wadi Gaza line, although reports had been received that patients and health workers remained in some northern hospitals that were not accessible. South of the line, only three of the 12 partially functional hospitals line had surgical capacity. The lack of fuel, supplies, food and clean water had an impact on functionality. It was estimated that 94 000 litres of fuel were needed per day to cover critical hospital functions. In the Gaza Strip, about 60% of hospital beds had been lost, 114 dialysis units were no longer functioning and more than 1100 patients were being treated in hospitals with very low or no power owing to a lack of fuel or as a direct result of the conflict. Only one third of primary health care facilities remained open, operating with about 60% of their original workforce, further limiting access to urgently needed health care.

Serious public health risks, especially to pregnant women, newborns and those injured in the conflict, were being exacerbated by inadequate access to health care and poor living conditions. Although figures were not available on the number of people who would need mental health care in the Gaza Strip and Israel, WHO estimated that the number would be at least one person in five. The risk of infectious disease, especially from respiratory and diarrhoeal pathogens, was increasing as a result of a lack of water and poor hygiene, overcrowding and the absence of health care. Surveillance carried out by the Ministry of Health and UNRWA had indicated the presence of jaundice, bloody diarrhoea and meningitis. Efforts were under way to strengthen the capacity to detect, verify and respond to epidemics.

WHO's detailed health response plan for the occupied Palestinian territory focused on supporting the health system, enhancing public health intelligence and disease prevention and control, and contributing high-value supplies and logistics. Multiple high-risk missions had been carried out to assess hospital conditions across the Gaza Strip, deliver crucial supplies, support the evacuation of patients from the north and coordinate the deployment of emergency medical teams. About US\$ 20 million worth of medical supplies had been procured, were in transit or had been distributed in the Gaza Strip by WHO or its partners, and an online tracking system had been established to facilitate coordination and prevent duplication. Despite an increase in the number of trucks able to use the Rafah border crossing to enter the Gaza Strip, access through additional crossings was required if sufficient resources and supplies were to be distributed; she therefore expressed the hope that the Kerem Shalom crossing would be opened quickly. However, the safe passage of medical evacuations and unimpeded access for health cluster partners and emergency medical teams were paramount to ensure the provision of humanitarian and health assistance. In terms of finances, the United Nations flash appeal had sought to mobilize US\$ 1.23 billion, and although WHO had received only 29% of its appeal it had released US\$ 14.6 million from the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies. Nevertheless, additional financial resources were urgently required.

She reiterated that the health system in the Gaza Strip was collapsing, increasing risks to public health. Safe conditions were vital to ensure the provision of health care and resources. The protection of health and aid workers and sustained humanitarian assistance were not possible in the current context.

The Observer of PALESTINE said that the unrelenting, brutal war had resulted in humanitarian catastrophe in defiance of international law. It was imperative to understand the gravity of the situation and take immediate action to alleviate the crisis. The Israeli forces had targeted every aspect of life in the Gaza Strip – even in supposedly safe corridors – resulting in population displacement, lack of access to fuel, food and water, and the destruction of infrastructure. Most of the more than 17 000 people killed had been women and children; many tens of thousands more had been wounded or were yet to be found under the rubble. She called on the international community and the entities of the United Nations system to take immediate action to halt the brutal war. Providing aid without addressing the root cause of the situation would only prolong the suffering of the people in the Gaza Strip.

The health situation in the Gaza Strip was catastrophic: lack of fuel and medical supplies meant that only 17 hospitals and 20 primary health care services were still partially functioning. Despite facing severe hardship, including a lack of essential medicines, anaesthesia and beds, health workers in the Gaza Strip remained committed to saving lives. Nearly 85% of the population of the Gaza Strip had been forcibly displaced, with the majority registered in UNRWA facilities and the rest staying in public buildings, with families or outdoors in the vicinity of shelters at full capacity. Shelters were suffering from severe overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions, with limited access to toilets and clean water, and the accumulation of waste. As a result, the incidence of communicable diseases, including respiratory infections, diarrhoea, skin diseases and chickenpox, had increased. Existing health needs, such as those resulting from noncommunicable diseases, pregnancy and disability, could no longer be adequately met. The impact of the war on the population, especially on children, was profound. In addition, aggression continued in the West Bank, where at least 274 Palestinians had been killed since 7 October 2023.

In the light of the current situation, she called for the immediate end to the war; unconditional access to humanitarian aid, including allowing entry of medical supplies and personnel into the Gaza Strip; the cessation of attacks on essential services; the launch of a United Nations investigation in relation to the conflict; and an end to impunity for Israeli occupying forces. It was time for action under a shared commitment to justice and the protection of human rights and international law. She commended the Director-General for convening the special session and thanked all those working on the ground and at the international level for their support.

The representative of ISRAEL<sup>1</sup> said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed 75 years previously, had been borne out of the systematic extermination of Jews in the Holocaust. It was evident that the Jewish people were still under attack. The current special session of the Board was the only one to have been convened in response to a specific conflict, suggesting that, as always, different rules applied to Israel.

The draft resolution did not reflect the reality of the current situation. On 7 October 2023, Hamas terrorists had violated the existing ceasefire and systematically tortured, mutilated and murdered women, men and children, including in direct attacks on Israeli medical personnel and ambulances. More than 240 people had been taken hostage and subjected to inhumane treatment; 137 of those remained in captivity, including young children. Since that same date, more than 11 500 rockets had been fired indiscriminately at Israeli cities, targeting public infrastructure and residential buildings.

In response to those attacks, Israel had declared war on the terrorist organization Hamas. While she recognized the suffering of the people in the Gaza Strip, she emphasized that the operation had never been directed towards the Palestinian people and that her Government was taking all feasible measures to minimize harm to civilians. Hamas was responsible for the suffering, as it operated from within and adjacent to hospitals, schools and United Nations facilities, demonstrating its willingness to martyr the whole population of the Gaza Strip. Her Government had repeatedly highlighted those abusive practices, and yet Hamas remained unpunished. Clear evidence had been presented of hospitals being used to store weapons and ammunition, conceal terrorist infrastructure and hold hostages. Despite the fact that the international community, including WHO, had turned a blind eye to Hamas' diversion of aid and disregard for the welfare of the Palestinian people, her Government had continued to facilitate the flow of supplies for the Palestinian population and to establish field and floating hospitals.

It was right that the health and welfare of the Palestinian population should be addressed. However, she said that WHO's work in the Gaza Strip did not require the convening of a special session of the Executive Board in order to continue. The outcome of the session was, in fact, more likely to encourage Hamas. Irrespective of that outcome and the draft resolution, her Government would continue to work to defeat Hamas and protect its people, including by ensuring the return of the remaining hostages.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The representative of YEMEN, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, commended the work being done on the ground in the Gaza Strip by humanitarian agencies and local health workers to alleviate the impact of the conflict on civilians. The countries supported the activation of Article 99 of the United Nations Charter. They requested that the necessary resources be made available for the Secretariat to provide an effective and accountable humanitarian and emergency health response, under the leadership of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, and in line with the relevant governing bodies resolutions. He called for an assessment of the impact of the conflict on the health sector in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including east Jerusalem.

He expressed deep concern regarding the catastrophic humanitarian situation, the number of people who had been killed or injured, and the displacement of Palestinians. Overcrowded shelters, poor sanitation and a lack of access to water and fuel increased the risk of infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics, while restrictions on the movement of goods contributed to malnutrition.

He condemned the attacks documented by WHO's Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care, demanded an immediate cessation of such attacks, and called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and a credible peace process. The international community should require all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law and respect the right to health of all persons in any conflict; protect civilians and humanitarian workers; and ensure the immediate, safe, sustainable and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to people in the Gaza Strip.

The representative of DENMARK, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, said that the candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova aligned themselves with his statement. He expressed deep concern regarding the humanitarian and health crisis in the Gaza Strip and called for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2712 (2023). He reiterated the need for humanitarian pauses and corridors to allow for the provision of vital aid and deplored the loss of civilian life. He condemned Hamas' terrorist attacks across Israel and its use of hospitals and civilians as human shields, while acknowledging the right of Israel to self-defence. The reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas should be thoroughly and swiftly investigated. While the release of some hostages from the Gaza Strip was welcome, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement should be granted access to all remaining hostages held by Hamas; they must be released immediately and without any preconditions. The protection of civilians and other principles of international humanitarian law should be complied with at all times.

The impact of the conflict on hospitals and medical staff was severe. Hospitals, medical staff and humanitarian workers, access to medical supplies, civilians in hospitals and the evacuation of civilians must be protected. The near collapse of the health system in the Gaza Strip was of great concern and disproportionately affected women and children. Humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip would only increase with the arrival of winter, and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid must be ensured.

The European Union and its Member States would continue to work with international partners, including WHO, to facilitate sustainable access to food, water, medical care, fuel and shelter, ensuring that it reached only civilians in need. The European Union had increased the amount of aid provided to populations in the Gaza Strip to more than €100 million in 2023, and Member States had also increased their assistance. The European Union was ready to contribute to reviving a political process on the basis of the two-State solution and welcomed diplomatic initiatives in that regard.



The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that the members of the Executive Board should avoid making provocative political statements and focus on addressing health care needs. Every civilian life lost was regrettable, and people were suffering in both the Gaza Strip and Israel. Her Government remained committed to alleviating that suffering and delivering aid to those in need. Civilians must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Although a more balanced draft resolution would have been preferable, she would not be proposing any amendments to the text, which her Government agreed should be adopted by consensus. Voting in WHO's governing bodies meetings should be avoided whenever possible.

She commended international efforts to facilitate the release of hostages held by Hamas and other terrorist organizations and the humanitarian pause that had allowed aid to reach civilians in the Gaza Strip. Her Government supported the right of Israel to self-defence. It was therefore disappointing that the draft resolution did not include references to the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, the sexual violence perpetrated or the hostages that had been taken.

Medical personnel, patients and civilians in hospitals, as well as medical infrastructure, should be protected. She commended the provision of vital medical supplies by WHO, and highlighted the need for adequate fuel supplies for hospitals and safe evacuation routes. Hospitals should not be militarized or used to shelter terrorists.

The representative of PARAGUAY said that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip was deeply regrettable. Palestinian civilians of all ages had been displaced and hospitals had been destroyed. In addition, thousands of Israeli civilians were suffering as a result of the terrorist attacks by Hamas, a fact that was not reflected in the draft resolution. The release of the hostages that remained in captivity would be a demonstration by Hamas of a desire for a solution.

If WHO was to continue to be effective on the ground and help to bring support, aid and peace to people in the Gaza Strip, it was time for concerted action. He urged the Board to seek consensus on the draft resolution, because the situation in the Gaza Strip could not be resolved with only majority positions. To that end, he accepted the fact that the draft resolution did not contain key references to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the health system or to establishing international safe corridors. It was time for the Board to focus on the health and human rights of all people and to reach an agreement on WHO's future actions.

The representative of CANADA said that the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a reminder of the collective responsibility to protect the rights of all people, particularly in the light of the horrific loss of civilian life in the conflict in the Gaza Strip. She urged all parties to comply with international humanitarian law. She called for an end to the violence, and for further humanitarian pauses to facilitate the flow of essential supplies and humanitarian assistance. She expressed concern about the impact of the conflict on civilians, health and aid workers, and health facilities. That the health system was near collapse was of particularly grave concern, as was the potential spread of infectious diseases in overcrowded shelters. Medical establishments and personnel should not be the object of any attack, and she condemned the use of human beings as shields and the deaths of aid workers.

She recognized the devastating impact of Hamas' attacks on the Israeli people, including those hostages remaining in captivity. She condemned those terrorist attacks, and called for the immediate release of all hostages and for access to them by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples had a right to live in peace and security, with dignity and without fear. She urged all parties to seek sustainable peace.

The representative of CHINA reiterated that all people had a right to the highest standard of health. The current situation in the Gaza Strip, including the closure of many hospitals, fell short of that ideal. He urged a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and an end to all violence. Renewed fighting was of great concern, and relevant parties should exercise restraint. Efforts to resolve the health crisis should be supported. He supported the work of WHO to ensure the safety of medical staff and health facilities

and called for the urgent provision of essential medicines and medical equipment and for safe corridors to ensure access to treatment and evacuations. In the long term, the need was to rebuild the medical infrastructure and capacity in the Gaza Strip as well as to implement a two-State solution. The Palestinian people had a right to statehood. Supporting the draft resolution, he called for parties to relaunch peace talks. His Government would continue to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to people in the Gaza Strip as required.

The representative of BRAZIL expressed grave concern regarding the humanitarian catastrophe, including the loss of life and the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women and children, and the imminent collapse of the health system in the Gaza Strip. The attacks on health facilities and personnel were regrettable and violated international law. Lamenting the deaths of United Nations staff members, he recognized the remarkable work being done by WHO and other organizations on the ground to facilitate the delivery of health care and supplies and to evacuate patients. The resumption of hostilities had worsened an already unsustainable situation; the international community could no longer remain inactive.

He called on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and ensure the protection of civilians and timely, unhindered, sustainable and predictable access to health care, health supplies and humanitarian aid. Moreover, he called for the safe and unconditional release of all hostages taken from Israel, and asked the Secretariat to strengthen its work in the Gaza Strip and provide an assessment of the current health situation and needs. The international community should support the rebuilding of the health system in the Gaza Strip. He supported the draft resolution.

The representative of SWITZERLAND, expressing deep concern about the loss of civilian lives, recognized the right of Israel to self-defence and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages. In the light of the concerning humanitarian and health situation in the Gaza Strip, she reminded all parties to the conflict of the need to respect international humanitarian law, guarantee the delivery of health care and the safety of health workers, and ensure the protection of and supply of humanitarian aid to the civilian population. The health system in the Gaza Strip was near collapse; health facilities had been destroyed or were unable to obtain the supplies necessary to function, and health personnel were at serious risk. Many patients, including children, pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses, were not receiving the health care they needed. Overcrowding of facilities and insanitary conditions increased the risk of infection and disease.

The Executive Board should send a clear message of unity to ensure WHO's ongoing provision of assistance to civilian populations on the ground. She expressed support for the draft resolution, which called for, inter alia, humanitarian measures to guarantee the timely and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid and essential services and goods, and the evacuation of injured persons, and for the Secretariat to assess the impact of the humanitarian crisis on public health and the resulting mental health and psychosocial needs.

The representative of the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC said that all actors should work together to put an end to the Israeli acts of aggression, particularly against medical infrastructure, and the catastrophic situation experienced by the Palestinian people. He called for an immediate ceasefire and for the large-scale, sustainable provision of humanitarian and medical aid. The suffering of Palestinian civilians must be brought to an end. He expressed the hope that the outcome of the current special session would lead to an effective response to Palestinian needs and the future establishment of a Palestinian State.

The representative of PERU welcomed the committed work of WHO and other humanitarian actors on the ground despite the difficult circumstances. His Government condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, whose access to medical care should be ensured. All parties should work together to achieve a humanitarian ceasefire and comply with international humanitarian law. Ongoing violence against civilians and acts of terrorism were unacceptable, especially attacks on hospitals and other civilian infrastructure.

He noted the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, the near collapse of the health system and the increased risks to public health. A lasting humanitarian truce and subsequent ceasefire would ensure access to aid and essential services. He firmly supported the draft resolution, which he urged the Board to adopt by consensus.

The representative of FRANCE said that it was regrettable that, on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Palestinian and Israeli people were experiencing such a tragic situation. Commending the work being done on the ground, he said that his Government would continue to support WHO politically and financially and had recently made an additional contribution of €3 million to WHO's response activities. Condemning the attacks by Hamas and other terrorist organizations, which had included sexual crimes, attacks against children and hostage-taking, he called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Israel had the right to defend itself but must do so in strict compliance with international humanitarian law – civilians and essential infrastructure must be protected. The situation was grave, with continuing bombardments, risks of epidemics and famine, and the lack of access to medical care in an ever-shrinking area. It was time for the international community to take urgent action. She recalled the Conference for the Civilian Population in Gaza (Paris, 9 November 2023) and the subsequent follow-up meeting (videoconference, 6 December 2023), which had resulted in pledges of more than €1 billion, including from his own Government, to support the urgent provision of humanitarian and medical aid. He echoed the need for an immediate and sustainable humanitarian pause, which should lead to a permanent ceasefire. The political process needed to be restored with a view to resolving the situation on the basis of the two-State solution. To that end, he urged the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The representative of BARBADOS said that his Government would always advocate peaceful, people-centred solutions to any situation. Noting the many stories of tragedy behind the statistics provided in the technical update, he urged the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution by consensus in order to support WHO in fulfilling its mandate. Protection of civilians and humanitarian workers and their health, including mental health, must be ensured, with mechanisms put in place to rebuild the health system in the Gaza Strip. He commemorated all lives lost, including those from the United Nations family.

The representative of the DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted with concern the extreme increase in civilian casualties, predominantly among women and children, since the escalation of Israeli military attacks in the Gaza Strip. The bombing by Israel of public health facilities, protected under international law, constituted a war crime. Yet Israel continued to receive military support, and the proposed humanitarian ceasefire had been rejected in favour of the right of Israel to self-defence; an intolerable double standard that had led to the loss of civilian life. His Government urged an immediate ceasefire and respect of the other demands contained in United Nations General Assembly resolution ES-10/22, adopted on 19 December 2023. All parties should comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular regarding the protection of civilians and civil infrastructure. He commended WHO and other agencies of the United Nations system for their tireless efforts to improve the situation on the ground. He supported the draft resolution.

The representative of MALAYSIA also called for collective efforts to bring an end to the situation in the Gaza Strip and condemned the continuing actions of Israel, which had resulted in an increasing number of Palestinian casualties. The continued targeting of health care and other vital facilities by Israel violated the Geneva Conventions of 1949. He called on Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and protect medical facilities. The international community should demand a halt to the war and support for the mandates of international organizations. He emphasized the need for safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid. His Government would continue to support the Palestinian people in their quest for freedom and self-determination.

The representative of BELARUS welcomed WHO's leading role in coordinating medical services and participating in evacuation missions with other entities of the United Nations system. She called for the establishment of safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid and for medical evacuations. She expressed her shock regarding the number of civilian victims of the conflict, most of whom were women and children. Attacks on civilians were unacceptable. She called on parties to resume negotiations towards a ceasefire and the two-State solution.

The representative of JAPAN expressed concern about the dwindling number of functioning health facilities, the rising number of casualties and the worsening humanitarian situation in the area. He expressed disappointment that fighting had resumed in the Gaza Strip and concern that the resumption of fighting would further aggravate the critical humanitarian situation. He also remained concerned about the difficult situation of those who had been kidnapped and detained by Hamas and other groups. He stressed the importance of all parties concerned restoring the agreed humanitarian pause and de-escalating the situation as soon as possible. Measures should also be taken to prevent civilian casualties in accordance with international law and, of particular importance, to ensure safe access for humanitarian workers. His Government had pledged US\$ 75 million in humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people and would continue to support diplomatic efforts to secure the immediate release of hostages and restore peace to the Gaza Strip and Israel.

The representative of MOROCCO recalled the legally binding nature of the Geneva Conventions, which should be respected even in the most extreme situations of conflict in order to preserve health and well-being. Four principle objectives had to be obtained: an urgent ceasefire and the release of all prisoners and hostages; ensuring that civilians and hospitals were no longer targeted; the unimpeded delivery of sufficient humanitarian aid and medical supplies to populations in the Gaza Strip; and an urgent political resolution of the situation on the basis of the two-State solution.

He commended the commitment of all WHO staff members, especially those on the ground, who continued to provide treatment and vital humanitarian aid in the occupied Palestinian territory despite the dangerous conditions. He expressed the hope that adoption of the draft resolution would mobilize sufficient financial resources to respond to the immediate and future needs in the occupied Palestinian territory and rebuild the Palestinian health system. He reiterated his Government's support for the Palestinian people and the work of the WHO to strengthen health systems in situations of conflict.

The representative of UKRAINE expressed his profound concern regarding the devastating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Recalling the suffering of his own people as a result of the ongoing Russian aggression, he said that the loss of life was regrettable. Vulnerable civilian populations were disproportionately affected by their exposure to violence and trauma, which would have a severe, multifaceted impact on their mental health. Civilians, health and humanitarian workers, and medical facilities should be protected at all times, and hospitals and civilians should never be used as humanitarian shields. Safe and unhindered access to populations and essential medicines and equipment should be ensured, as should compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The representative of QATAR emphasized the tragic loss of life and the destruction of infrastructure resulting from the ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip. Despite the catastrophic situation, no serious effort had been made to put an end to the attacks. Urgent action was required to prevent further health and humanitarian crises in the Gaza Strip and reduce the risk of infectious diseases. She condemned the targeting of medical infrastructure and ambulances, and the lack of civilian access to food and fuel. Hospitals were no longer places of safety and many were no longer functional. Attacks had spread throughout the Gaza Strip, such that living there was no longer viable for many citizens. Medical facilities must be protected, in compliance with international humanitarian law.

Her Government would continue to make every effort to support the Palestinian people, respond to the humanitarian and health crises, and facilitate the evacuation of injured persons and access to humanitarian and medical aid. It would further contribute to diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the hostilities, including the release of the remaining hostages. She called on the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution by consensus, in order to send a strong message to all parties that the current suffering of the Palestinian people was unacceptable.

The representative of SLOVENIA condemned Hamas' attack on 7 October 2023 and urged Hamas to immediately release all hostages. Attacks on civilians, especially children, were a clear violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. She expressed concern regarding the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the resulting lack of access to essential services and the destruction of critical infrastructure. More border crossings should be opened to allow for the timely delivery of aid. The health system was near collapse, there were critical gaps in health services, and the risk of the spread of infectious diseases was high. Moreover, critical gaps in women's access to health services, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, must be urgently addressed. She called for the protection of hospitals, medical supplies, health and humanitarian workers and patients; the delivery of medical supplies; and the evacuation of patients in critical condition. She urged all parties to stop attacks on health infrastructure and to seek a permanent ceasefire and a viable political solution through diplomacy. She supported the adoption of the draft resolution.

The representative of AFGHANISTAN praised the workers on the ground as champions of humanity and, recalling the conflict experienced in his own country, condemned all violence. The humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory was unprecedented and required urgent attention. Despite calls for a ceasefire, attacks on health personnel and facilities continued, in violation of the law of war. Hospitals had become targets of unlawful attacks by Israeli forces, endangering the lives of patients and health staff alike. The significant obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid to those most in need should be removed. The international community could no longer ignore the suffering of the people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and must call for an immediate ceasefire. He encouraged all parties to use health as a bridge to peace, including through the adoption of the draft resolution.

The representative of SENEGAL expressed grave concern regarding the situation described in the technical update, and the health and humanitarian consequences of the conflict. He called for the cessation of hostilities and for all parties to respect international humanitarian law, in order to protect civilians, medical personnel and health facilities. The right to health of all people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, should be respected. He urged parties to facilitate the immediate and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and medical personnel to all occupied areas. WHO should coordinate with donors to ensure that urgent health needs were met and that funding would be available for the rebuilding of the health system in the occupied Palestinian territory. He expressed support for WHO and other entities of the United Nations system on the ground in their work to ensure the right to health of the people of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The representative of MALDIVES expressed grave concern regarding the devastating humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory and condemned the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, which had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable populations. Attacks on health facilities and workers, coupled with the brutal siege, had pushed the health system to the brink of collapse and required an immediate response. Emphasizing that the health sector should never be a target of conflict, he called for an immediate ceasefire and urged parties to comply with international humanitarian law. Efforts should be strengthened to ensure the unhindered passage of essential humanitarian and medical aid to people in the Gaza Strip. More must be done to deliver an effective and sustainable political solution, which could only be based on the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. He emphasized the need for immediate action to respond to the health and humanitarian challenges.

The representative of SLOVAKIA said that the situation of civilians in the Gaza Strip was alarming. He condemned the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel and recognized the right of Israel to self-defence. However, all parties must comply with international humanitarian law, with particular regard to the protection of civilians, medical personnel and infrastructure. Furthermore, hospitals should not be misused for any military activities. He expressed support for a humanitarian ceasefire in order to redress the dire health conditions of the civilian population and facilitate the unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid. He called for the unconditional release of all hostages, and the assurance that they had access to appropriate health care.

The representative of DENMARK, speaking in his national capacity, expressed deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. He commended the process that had elaborated the draft resolution, which his Government supported. However, it was regrettable that the text had not taken into account the context of the conflict – namely, Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. He reiterated the call for the immediate release of all remaining hostages taken by Hamas and the importance of allowing access to the hostages by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The representative of YEMEN, speaking in his national capacity, condemned the ongoing Israeli occupation and aggression in the Gaza Strip and called for an end to the unlawful and inhumane attacks. He called for a ceasefire, for access to humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people, and for accountability. The health system in the Gaza Strip including East Jerusalem was collapsing owing to the lack of resources and capacity and the use of hospitals and other public buildings as shelters. The destruction of hospitals and the lack of access to aid, medicines and basic services had increased the risk of epidemics. International humanitarian law and international customary law had been violated, particularly in relation to attacks on humanitarian and relief agency buildings. He called on the international community to intervene and said that his Government would support the provision of medical aid and protection of infrastructure. It would also support diplomatic avenues towards the establishment of peace, through the creation of an independent Palestinian State.

The representative of TIMOR-LESTE recognized the catastrophic nature of the health emergency in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of Israeli military operations. The lack of medical supplies, food, water and fuel, and the increasing numbers of patients and displaced civilians had severely compromised the health system. The international community should act to support all victims of the conflict and ensure the right to health for all. She expressed profound concern regarding the escalation of violence and targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure and health workers in the Gaza Strip, in violation of the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols. Therefore, she supported the draft resolution, in particular the call for access to humanitarian and medical aid and the protection of civilians and civilian and medical infrastructure. She reiterated the call for lasting peace and the rebuilding of the Palestinian health system.

**The meeting rose at 12:30.**

## **SECOND MEETING**

**Sunday, 10 December 2023, at 14:35**

**Chair:** Dr S. Nsanzimana (Rwanda)

**later:** Dr H.M. Al Kuwari (Qatar)

### **1. HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM: Item 3 of the agenda (continued)**

The representative of PAKISTAN,<sup>1</sup> speaking on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and its Member States, expressed support for the draft resolution on health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and called on the Executive Board to adopt it by consensus. He condemned the actions that had pushed the health system in the Gaza Strip to breaking point; targeted attacks on health facilities, health workers and ambulances constituted crimes under international law. The scale of the unprecedented loss and suffering in the occupied Palestinian territory was alarming, and he echoed the United Nations Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian ceasefire. He emphasized the high risk of infectious disease and mental trauma. WHO's work in the occupied Palestinian territory remained essential and required adequate resourcing. He urged all donors and partners to support WHO and other entities in the United Nations system in scaling up their health emergency response and recovery efforts in the territory. The occupying power of Israel must immediately cease fire, comply with its obligations under international law and protect the right to health of people living under its occupation. The Secretariat should continue to monitor and assess the situation and provide an updated report to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly. He reaffirmed his commitment to Palestinians and their realization of an independent State of Palestine.

The representative of EGYPT,<sup>1</sup> describing the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as catastrophic, said that the failure of the United Nations Security Council to heed the call for a humanitarian ceasefire was deeply regrettable. The attacks on health infrastructure had deepened the crisis, depriving the Palestinian people of their right to health even in the long term. International humanitarian law must be fully respected, civilians protected and the safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel ensured. As the occupying power, Israel had the legal responsibility to guarantee access to humanitarian aid and ensure the protection of civilians, health workers and health facilities. The international community should provide immediate medical support to the Palestinians, and help to rebuild the collapsed health system in the Gaza Strip. His Government would continue to support the Palestinian people, including through the provision of medical support.

The representative of the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN,<sup>1</sup> expressing profound sorrow at the human tragedy unfolding in the occupied Palestine territory, called for immediate and decisive international intervention to stop the war crimes and genocidal actions. Commending the United Nations Secretary-General for invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, he strongly condemned the vetoing of United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire. All governments that had not acted according to their responsibilities under international law must be held accountable for their role in the current catastrophic situation. His Government stood ready to provide support to the health system in the Gaza Strip, protect people's well-being and promptly dispatch health and medical

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.



personnel to address urgent health care needs. In the light of the complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, the Secretariat should comprehensively analyse the situation and prepare an operational response plan in coordination with all health ministries and partners. His Government stood ready to share its own emergency plan with WHO.

The representative of the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES<sup>1</sup> said that all parties to conflicts must adhere to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Expressing grave concern at the significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the devastating consequences of the conflict on the civilian population, she stressed the urgent need for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip and underscored the obligation to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel and medical personnel and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. She joined the call to end the attacks on health care and medical facilities and the appeal for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to ensure respect for the right to health of all persons within the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem.

The representative of NIGER<sup>1</sup> said that the current situation was the direct consequence of the indiscriminate attacks by Israel against homes, health services, schools, refugee camps, humanitarian relief services and innocent civilians, including children, women, the elderly and even the sick, all of which constituted unprecedented violations of Palestinians' right to health and life. He urged the international community, particularly its so-called free and democratic members, to put a stop to the collective punishment taking place in the Gaza Strip. Only the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) would lead to a lasting and definitive solution to the conflict.

The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION<sup>1</sup> said that the rapidly deteriorating health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory constituted a humanitarian catastrophe and he expressed concern regarding the lack of access to essential services and supplies. He commended WHO and other humanitarian partners for their efforts to alleviate suffering. His Government continued to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people through the WHO Health Emergencies Programme. It was committed to achieving a just settlement to the conflict on the basis of international law, with the creation of an independent Palestinian State existing in peace and security with Israel. He called on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, and expressed regret that some members of the Executive Board had not heeded the call made by the representative of the United States of America to refrain from making politicized statements.

The representative of TÜRKİYE<sup>1</sup> said that the response of Israel to the attacks of 7 October 2023 had resulted in the collective punishment of the entire population of the Gaza Strip. There was no justification for targeting civilians, and attacks on patients, health workers, health facilities and ambulances were a clear violation of international law. The Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, which was the only cancer treatment hospital in Gaza, was no longer operational, putting thousands of patients at risk. A permanent ceasefire was needed to ensure lasting peace and an unimpeded, substantial and continuous flow of humanitarian aid, including fuel. His Government was providing humanitarian aid, including medicines, medical devices and medical consumables, to populations in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Egyptian authorities. It had also evacuated patients for treatment in his country and was preparing to establish a field hospital and provide intensive care ambulances to treat patients at the Rafah Crossing. Lasting peace in the Middle East would only be possible on the basis of the two-State solution.

The representative of BELGIUM<sup>1</sup> expressed support for the draft resolution and deep concern about the humanitarian and public health catastrophe in Gaza. His Government was providing medicines and other medical supplies to populations in the Gaza Strip and was ready to receive evacuated patients

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

in its hospitals for specialized treatment. It was also working with other European countries and relevant regional mechanisms to streamline the provision of medical support. The continued engagement of WHO and its partners was commendable, as was their prioritization of the right to health of those affected by the conflict. However, that would not be enough without an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. All parties to the conflict must prioritize the protection of civilians, medical facilities and medical personnel, and abide by international humanitarian law. Member States should respond positively to calls for funding in order to meet the immediate health needs in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The representative of INDIA,<sup>1</sup> condemning the loss of civilian lives and the attacks on health facilities, called for conditions to be guaranteed that would enable health and humanitarian workers to continue to operate. All efforts to de-escalate the conflict and ensure the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine were welcome. His Government firmly opposed terrorism in all its forms and called for compliance with international humanitarian law and a ceasefire. It also remained committed to providing humanitarian aid to the people of Palestine, having already delivered essential life-saving medicines and surgical items. He underlined his Government's consistent support for a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict and for the resumption of negotiations towards a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine.

The representative of INDONESIA<sup>1</sup> said that Israel's actions had ensured that nowhere and nobody in the Gaza Strip was safe. Hospitals had been targeted, including the Indonesian Hospital, and medical supplies had been moved away from populations in need, in violation of international law and human rights. It was essential to expedite health aid to the populations in the Gaza Strip whose right to health must be upheld by the occupying power. Her Government was helping to deliver humanitarian assistance to populations in the Gaza Strip and was planning to establish a floating hospital. All health workers and facilities should be protected, and international humanitarian law should be respected; there must be accountability and justice for any attack on medical personnel and infrastructure. Stronger support for WHO should be mobilized in order to sustain health programmes run by WHO and UNRWA on the ground. She suggested that the Secretariat should organize a donor conference to fund the rebuilding of the Palestinian health system. The renewed failure of the United Nations Security Council to adopt a resolution on a humanitarian ceasefire was deeply regrettable.

The representative of JORDAN,<sup>1</sup> attributing the current catastrophic situation to the failure of international agencies, said that deaths of civilians, the displacement of much of the population of the Gaza Strip, attacks on hospitals, many of which could no longer function, and the obstruction of aid constituted crimes against humanity. He said that the war was deplorable and illegal. His Government had established three field hospitals in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Warning of future instability and violence, he called for international action to stop the war, the protection of civilians, the delivery of aid and the adoption of the draft resolution.

The representative of LEBANON<sup>1</sup> expressed strong support for the draft resolution, particularly in the light of the direct impact of the conflict on her country where health personnel and paramedics had been injured and health facilities had been targeted. The resolution captured the essence of the humanitarian crisis, and she welcomed the emphasis on the protection of civilians and health workers under international humanitarian law. She fully endorsed the call for unhindered humanitarian access. Access to medical care in times of conflict was a right that must be protected, and the relentless efforts of WHO and other health partners in that regard were commendable. She urged the international community to call for an immediate ceasefire and adherence to international humanitarian law.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The representative of TUNISIA<sup>1</sup> said that the rights to life and health were the most fundamental. In the context of the current catastrophe, it was important to ensure that medical assistance was provided, especially to vulnerable groups. His Government was working to ensure that humanitarian assistance was delivered to populations in the Gaza Strip and to help to treat those who had been injured in the conflict. The violence needed to be stopped and a humanitarian ceasefire ensured. He expressed the hope that the outcome of the current special session of the Executive Board would be positive.

The representative of ALGERIA<sup>1</sup> said that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, was deeply concerning, particularly the use of illegal practices, such as forced displacement, the use of famine as a weapon and the seizure of territory. He condemned the continued occupation and its impact on Palestinian civilians. The rights to life and health must be respected; infrastructure, health workers and civilians should not be targeted; unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and vital services should be ensured; and vulnerable groups should be protected. Health professionals were required on the ground to ensure universal access to health care. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent State with east Jerusalem as its capital was an essential right that had been violated by the occupying power.

The representative of CUBA<sup>1</sup> condemned the genocide being committed in the Gaza Strip. The bombardment by Israel of the civilian population and health facilities constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity and must end. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to enter, and a permanent ceasefire must be established. The current situation was the result of 75 years of illegal occupation and the occupying power acted with impunity. In that regard, she said that the vetoing of the recent resolution by the United Nations Security Council was shameful. The international community could not allow more innocent lives to be lost and the entire health infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territory to be destroyed. Immediate action was needed. The principle of humanity, international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, and the constitutional principles of WHO must prevail, and the members of the Executive Board were urged to act accordingly.

The representative of the PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA<sup>1</sup> condemned the indiscriminate attacks that the occupying power was committing against the Palestinian civilian population. The bombing of hospitals and health centres and attacks on humanitarian and health workers were clear violations of international humanitarian law. The occupying power was unjustly punishing the Palestinian people. The lack of anaesthetics and medications was unjustifiable and the impact on the mental health of the Palestinian population would be heavy. The international community must act, particularly in the face of clear violations of international humanitarian law and human rights; the impunity, double standards and military support that had led to the terrible situation in the occupied Palestine territory must cease. She called on the members of the Executive Board to support the draft resolution and reiterated the calls for a sustainable ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities, guaranteed humanitarian assistance and the establishment of a political solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The representative of LIBYA<sup>1</sup> commended WHO's medical teams for their invaluable efforts to support the populations in the Gaza Strip, especially in the light of the ferocious attacks and unprecedented aggression they were experiencing. The targeting of hospitals, ambulances and medical supplies and the detaining of health workers constituted war crimes. She highlighted the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women and children and the large number of displaced persons. The acts of aggression by the Israeli occupying forces violated international humanitarian law and basic ethical rules. Her Government called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the opening of safe humanitarian corridors and support for the efforts of WHO and other humanitarian organizations in their provision of

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

urgent medical and humanitarian assistance. She called on members of the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution.

The representative of BANGLADESH<sup>1</sup> condemned the barbaric attacks by Israel on civilians and vital infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Attacks on overcrowded shelters, the dire situation in medical facilities and the blockades on fuel and other supplies were particularly alarming. Echoing the appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire, he expressed deep frustration at the failure of the United Nations Security Council to act decisively. There was an urgent need for the unimpeded passage of medical and humanitarian relief, supplies and equipment, including access by medical staff and ambulances. Furthermore, the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel should be guaranteed. The Director-General should continue to ensure that life-saving health services were provided in the Gaza Strip and coordinate with donors before the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in order to mobilize funds and resources. An immediate end to the illegal occupation through dialogue and diplomacy was a precondition for a lasting solution to the protracted situation in Palestine. Engagement towards a political settlement based on a two-State solution in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions should be resumed. His Government supported the draft resolution.

The representative of OMAN<sup>1</sup> condemned the targeting of civilians, medical teams and facilities, attacks on ambulances and the failure to guarantee safe passage for medical teams, as required under international law. The health sector in the Gaza Strip needed urgent support to meet the essential needs, including those of patients with chronic diseases and the injured. The invoking of Article 99 of the United Nations Charter by the United Nations Secretary-General was welcome; however, the use of the right of veto within the United Nations Security Council affronted international humanitarian norms and ethics, illustrating double standards. The international community should call on Israel to establish an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, to comply with its obligations under international law and to protect the right to health for those living under its occupation. WHO should redouble its efforts to save the lives of innocent people. He welcomed the draft resolution.

The representative of the KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS,<sup>1</sup> speaking in his national capacity, said that he would focus on the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, specifically the Gaza Strip, to ensure that WHO could fulfil its mandate without interference. He welcomed the efforts to elaborate a draft resolution that consensually reflected the many grave concerns shared by Member States. The situation in the Gaza Strip was catastrophic; people were in desperate need of health care and humanitarian assistance. His Government's call for more extended humanitarian pauses and a sustained humanitarian corridor remained unchanged; a special humanitarian envoy for Gaza had been appointed the previous week to that end. Full respect for international humanitarian law at all times and by all parties was essential. United Nations premises and medical facilities must remain safe from harm and hostilities; hospitals and mobile medical units must not be misused for military purposes; and medical staff must be protected and able to do their job safely and unhindered.

The representative of NAMIBIA<sup>1</sup> called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for coordinated international efforts to ensure the provision of sustained, full and unhindered essential and urgent humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. The escalation of violence and destruction was deeply concerning, as were the blockades of humanitarian aid, including essential medical supplies and equipment. Basic utilities had been weaponized, with cuts in them inflicting further suffering. Displaced civilians were being ordered to move to places unfit for human habitation. She emphasized that attacking hospitals and medical facilities was prohibited under international humanitarian law; the rights of Palestinians to vital services enshrined therein must be recognized and ensured. The recent invoking of

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

Article 99 of the United Nations Charter was a testament to the severity of the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The representative of SAUDIA ARABIA,<sup>1</sup> welcoming the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to invoke Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, expressed deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem. He reiterated the need for an immediate ceasefire; the immediate cessation of military operations, especially against civilians and medical facilities; and the establishment of humanitarian corridors. The international community must move swiftly to stop all military escalation; prevent the humanitarian disaster from worsening; preserve vital infrastructure; and provide the necessary relief and medicines to the populations in the Gaza Strip. His Government had provided more than US\$ 40 million in funding to humanitarian and specialized organizations working in the Gaza Strip, including US\$ 10 million for WHO. All parties should ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, with particular regard to protection of health infrastructure and access to health care.

The representative of NORWAY<sup>1</sup> expressed alarm at the immense civilian suffering and its long-term impact for Israelis and Palestinians. She said that, although Israel had a right to self-defence, such measures must be necessary and proportionate; all military operations must be in line with international humanitarian law. Her Government continued to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, to whom the International Committee of the Red Cross must be given access. Even though the call for extended humanitarian pauses in the Gaza Strip was welcome, an immediate and lasting ceasefire was urgently needed. All parties must comply with international humanitarian law and urgently ensure full, safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip. She called for the reopening of the Kerem Shalom border crossing to ensure that humanitarian assistance could be delivered at the required scale. The desperate lack of medicine and health care in the Gaza Strip was deeply concerning, and attacks on health facilities and workers were violations of international humanitarian law. Medical personnel, transport, equipment and facilities must be respected and protected. Israeli and Palestinian leaders were urged to resume political talks and set the path towards lasting and durable peace on the basis of a two-State solution.

The representative of GERMANY<sup>1</sup> deplored the unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, which had included systematic sexualized violence. The resulting violence and armed conflict had severely impacted the physical and mental health and well-being of all people in the region. Israel had the right to defend itself, but international humanitarian law must be adhered to by all parties at all times. Hamas must, unconditionally and immediately, release all hostages, stop its rocket attacks and refrain from using civilians as human shields and civilian infrastructure for military purposes. It was regrettable that those aspects were not reflected in the draft resolution. Expressing profound concern about the deepening humanitarian crisis and suffering in the Gaza Strip, she called for further humanitarian pauses to ensure safe and reliable provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, with unimpeded delivery of urgent medical supplies and safe evacuation of patients needing urgent care. She recognized the efforts by Israel to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid. She underlined her gratitude for the work of humanitarian workers, including from WHO, the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross and deplored the unprecedented loss of life of humanitarian personnel. As its largest donor, her Government would continue to support the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies, which had facilitated the swift provision of relief in the occupied Palestinian territory in the aftermath of the 7 October 2023 attack. Thus far in 2023, her Government had provided more than €179 million in assistance to the Palestinian people with additional assistance provided to UNRWA, making it the single largest donor to the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip. It was important to strive for a meaningful peace process that would allow both Israelis and Palestinians peace and security in two independent States.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The representative of IRELAND,<sup>1</sup> expressing deep shock at the situation unfolding in Israel and the Gaza Strip, reiterated his Government's unequivocal condemnation of the terror attack by Hamas. All hostages held by Hamas and other groups should be immediately and unconditionally released. The devastating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip was of deep concern, and the recent resumption of hostilities was disappointing. All parties must comply with international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of all civilians. He expressed support for the draft resolution, which should be adopted by consensus. The civilian population in all parts of the Gaza Strip required access to sustained and sufficient humanitarian and medical supplies. His Government had consistently called for a sustainable humanitarian ceasefire, which should be the goal of the United Nations Security Council and the international community.

The representative of PAKISTAN,<sup>1</sup> speaking in his national capacity, welcomed the draft resolution. His Government continued its unwavering support for, and solidarity with, the people of the occupied Palestinian territory; it had been among the first to send humanitarian assistance to them following the outbreak of the current violence. He condemned the targeting of civilian infrastructure, in particular health facilities, which represented violations of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the risk of infectious disease, and the underlying health risks for people with existing conditions, were increasing. His Government fully supported the call for an immediate ceasefire and for the consistent, reliable and safe passage of humanitarian assistance to those in need. The Secretariat should submit a comprehensive report on the health situation in the Gaza Strip to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly.

The representative of BRUNEI DARUSSALAM,<sup>1</sup> describing the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, as catastrophic, said that the crisis had taken a disproportionate toll on women, children and the elderly. The destruction, the blatant disregard for human rights and the interruption of supplies to medical facilities had hindered access to urgent medical treatment. She urged all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, protecting medical and humanitarian workers, ensuring the unimpeded supply of medicines and medical equipment, and facilitating the unhindered safety of Palestinians in need of medical care. She called on the international community to strengthen partnerships with all relevant actors in order to address the current shortfall in funding for medical aid and the rebuilding of the Palestinian health system.

The representative of the BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA,<sup>1</sup> expressing his Government's solidarity with the Palestinian people, condemned the war conducted by the occupying power. An immediate ceasefire was needed to ensure that those in need received the required humanitarian assistance. Joining the call for the protection of civilians and medical personnel in full compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law, he expressed support for the draft resolution. The international community must ensure that WHO had adequate funding to meet the immediate and future needs of its health programmes in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem. The current situation could not be resolved with more violence; only a political settlement, based on the two-State solution, could bring lasting peace.

The representative of SOUTH AFRICA<sup>1</sup> expressed deep concern at the large number of civilians, especially children, killed in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023. There had been an immeasurable number of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including a litany of ongoing attacks against civilians. Her Government condemned the hostage-taking, the displacement of the people of the Gaza Strip, the indiscriminate use of force and the continued destruction of infrastructure. The international community seemed to be doing nothing in the face of attacks on health facilities and personnel. The reported current and likely future increases in communicable diseases and mental health problems were also concerning. Health services, and access

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

to them, needed to be restored. Her Government believed that the occupying power may have committed the crime of genocide. The failure to end the occupation and find a lasting negotiated solution to the situation in the Middle East was an indictment of the entire international community, which needed to take action. Her Government supported the draft resolution.

The representative of NICARAGUA<sup>1</sup> expressed her Government's solidarity with the Palestinian people, who lacked the basic services and supplies needed to survive the devastating aggression of a terrorist and segregationist regime. Member States should continue to push firmly and forcefully for a definitive ceasefire in order to ensure that the required humanitarian aid reached the many Palestinians who were suffering as a result of the genocide being perpetrated. The Executive Board must contribute to finding a political solution to end the current health situation and promote negotiations between the two parties to the conflict.

The representative of MEXICO<sup>1</sup> reiterated the condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas in October 2023 and recognized the right of Israel to protect itself. However, such protection must be carried out in full compliance with international law, and the use of force must be governed by the principles of necessity and proportionality. His Government supported WHO's work to respond to the immediate needs of the civilian population and the health sector. He condemned the attacks against the civilian population, which could constitute war crimes. The effects of such actions on the health and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip were deeply worrying and unacceptable. His Government therefore supported the urgent call for an immediate ceasefire and for strict compliance with international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions.

The representative of the UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND<sup>1</sup> said that her Government recognized the right of Israel to defend itself, in line with international law, against the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas, which had reportedly included horrific sexual violence. Sharing the concerns raised about the impact of the conflict on patients, health facilities and medical personnel in the Gaza Strip, she called for further and longer humanitarian pauses in hostilities to deliver aid and medical care. Her Government, along with its international partners, would continue to focus on the protection of civilians, the provision of and access to humanitarian aid, and the release of hostages. Health workers and facilities must be respected and protected from military conflict and remain accessible to all in need. All parties should ensure that patients, health care and humanitarian workers were not put at risk.

The representative of COLOMBIA<sup>1</sup> stressed his Government's condemnation of the violence and suffering caused to the Palestinian civilian population. The escalation in violence and the continued violations of international humanitarian law were deplorable. It was important to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality and to protect items essential to the survival of the civilian population. His Government joined the calls for the passage of humanitarian aid to be guaranteed and for hospitals, ambulances and health personnel to be protected, and encouraged the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution by consensus. It also called for an immediate ceasefire and for the start of peace negotiations, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. He called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the release of hostages and political prisoners, respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of life.

The representative of GREECE,<sup>1</sup> expressing deep concern about the severe humanitarian and health crisis in the Gaza Strip, said that his Government had unequivocally condemned the attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and had called for the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining hostages. The civilian population must be protected and international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. His Government supported all efforts to ensure the safe, prompt and unhindered delivery of aid to all civilians in need. It had offered financial and in-kind humanitarian aid to the

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

Palestinian people and would continue to do so. He expressed support for WHO's efforts to address the most urgent health needs of the Palestinian population, including through the provision of life-saving medical assistance. Hospitals, other health facilities and medical professionals should be protected, and should be allowed to function adequately, as stipulated by the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law. His Government stood ready to take further action, including diplomatic efforts towards the only viable solution to the Middle East crisis: a two-State solution.

The representative of PORTUGAL<sup>1</sup> said that his Government was deeply concerned by the catastrophic health care conditions of the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip. It had announced a special allocation of €10 million for the provision of humanitarian assistance in collaboration with humanitarian organizations. Expressing support for the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal for a full humanitarian ceasefire and for parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, he applauded the relentless efforts to establish humanitarian corridors and facilitate the delivery of aid. Concern remained about the long-lasting physical and mental consequences of the attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, including those on the hostages, who must all be released. He expressed support for the draft resolution.

The representative of ICELAND<sup>1</sup> said that the situation in the Gaza Strip had reached catastrophic levels, and expressed especial concern about the high risk of waterborne diseases. It was imperative to prioritize and enhance humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip and substantially improve the transport and delivery of aid. All parties should adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, as called for in a resolution on the conflict approved the Parliament of Iceland on 9 November 2023. The resumption of hostilities had been disappointing; civilians again bore the brunt of the conflict. Reiterating the calls for a sustainable humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the immediate release of all remaining hostages, she expressed support for the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal for decisive action by the United Nations Security Council, whose failure to adopt a draft resolution calling for a ceasefire was regrettable. Since the start of the hostilities, her Government had made three emergency funding allocations totalling 225 million Icelandic krona in support of the United Nations emergency response. The two-State solution was the only basis for a long-term sustainable solution to the conflict.

The UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA,<sup>1</sup> recognizing that the right to health was fundamental, expressed great concern about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and called on all parties with influence over the conflicting parties to work towards a lasting ceasefire and a two-State solution. As all human beings were equal, no people belonging to one community, country or territory had superior rights over others. His Government supported the draft resolution and all other efforts towards improving the health and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and towards durable peace.

The representative of ANGOLA<sup>1</sup> expressed concern about the human and health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, and recalled all relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the Health Assembly on the matter. She welcomed all multilateral initiatives to reduce the suffering of victims of the conflict and preserve the dignity of the Israeli and Palestinian people, as well as the security of all innocent bystanders, including United Nations personnel. Her Government supported the draft resolution.

The representative of the PHILIPPINES<sup>1</sup> urged members of the Executive Board to adopt the draft resolution. The violations of international law that had led to the current health and humanitarian crisis were deeply regrettable. She urged all parties to facilitate the urgent delivery of medical supplies and access to medical assistance, and to strengthen the protection of health workers, patients and medical services in accordance with international law. She reiterated her Government's commitment to the

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.



two-State solution, and called on the international community to put in place solutions that would guarantee enduring peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

The representative of IRAQ<sup>1</sup> said that, faced with the health situation in the Gaza Strip, her Government, urged that action be taken to ensure the safe passage of medical supplies. It was important to abide by international and WHO standards, ensure the delivery of health services, particularly to the most vulnerable groups, protect health and medical personnel, and apply approved procedures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Her Government called for an immediate ceasefire and reiterated the calls set out in the draft resolution.

The representative of GHANA,<sup>1</sup> sharing the concerns about the devastating situation in the Gaza Strip, said that hospitals, health workers and health facilities must not be attacked and that the lives of all people mattered. A humanitarian ceasefire could no longer be delayed, and the right to health care was fundamental. He called on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law, implement an immediate ceasefire, and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian relief. He called for the adoption of the draft resolution.

The representative of BAHRAIN,<sup>1</sup> expressing deep concern about the difficult humanitarian conditions prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territory said that her Government was strongly committed to protecting all civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The inadequate access to humanitarian aid and the obstruction of medical operations and procedures were concerning, and she said that medical and humanitarian assistance, including mental health services and psychosocial support, must be provided urgently. She expressed support for the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia and for the draft resolution.

The Observer of the ORDER OF MALTA said that its humanitarian mission in the West Bank had been severely impaired by the conflict. The movement of ambulances, medical personnel and mobile medical clinics was being hindered, limiting people's access to much-needed medicines and equipment. Her organization's mobile medical clinic was no longer able to carry out daily rounds to isolated communities, which had been left without medical care. She urged all parties to forge a peaceful solution to the conflict, comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and respect the right to health for all. The draft resolution should be adopted by consensus.

The representative of UNRWA warned that his organization, which was the primary platform for humanitarian assistance for the populations in the Gaza Strip, was on the verge of collapse. Only eight of its 22 health centres were functional, and medical teams were extremely overstretched. The situation in shelters was horrendous, and access to drinking water and sanitary facilities was severely limited, leading to a significant rise in communicable diseases. He called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the enforcement of international law, including the protection of United Nations and other health personnel.

The representative of MEDICUS MUNDI INTERNATIONAL – NETWORK HEALTH FOR ALL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, expressed his organization's support for WHO in its efforts to care for and protect the civilian population and maintain health and other basic services. His organization fully supported WHO's appeals to military and political leaders.

The representative of MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES INTERNATIONAL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that her organization had been witnessing the systematic disrespect of its medical mission in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023. Her colleagues on the ground were struggling to provide medical care under attack. The provision of aid was currently near to impossible, with people

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

struggling to find food, water, shelter and security. She called for an immediate ceasefire, cessation of attacks on hospitals and civilians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and for unhindered humanitarian access to be ensured.

The representative of the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, supported the calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. She urged the reactivation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2286 (2016). She reiterated the world's obligation to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, the provision of unhindered access to humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians, medical personnel and humanitarian workers.

The representative of PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, urged Member States to work to establish an immediate ceasefire and stop the war; restore health sector infrastructure; provide equipment and assistance to extract the dead and injured from the rubble; allow field hospitals and humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip; facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes; and send international missions to assess and meet health needs. Palestinians had a right to live and work in safety.

The representative of the WORLD FEDERATION OF HEMOPHILIA, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that access to clotting factor concentrates was currently extremely limited or non-existent in the Gaza Strip, which presented a challenge for people with bleeding disorders. She urged all parties to facilitate the shipment of donated treatment products and other medical aid to those in need in the Gaza Strip and to ensure that hospitals and medical facilities were operational so that all those in need could receive medical assistance.

The representative of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE INC., speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that the siege and persistent bombardment in the Gaza Strip had cut off the flow of anaesthetics and essential analgesics in violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. Urgent action was required to ensure unimpeded access to food, water and essential medications, including those containing internationally controlled essential substances. She requested that "internationally controlled essential medicines" should be included in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

The representative of THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, highlighted the catastrophic consequences of the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas on children. She said that nowhere in the Gaza Strip was safe, and that children were particularly vulnerable and suffering unimaginable mental trauma. Humanitarian assistance had become the only lifeline for children and their families; a definitive ceasefire was the only way to save lives.

**Dr Al Kuwari took the Chair.**

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN said that the world's worst humanitarian emergencies were occurring in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where the people were also among the most vulnerable. The escalating hostilities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory had unleashed a profound humanitarian crisis, with hospital emergency departments resembling battlefields. Many wounded people had been unable to access hospitals. Infectious diseases were spreading rapidly, and many people were on the brink of starvation. The response by health and humanitarian workers had been heroic, with an unbearable number losing their lives during the conflict, including his WHO colleague, Dima Abdullatif Mohammed Alhaj.

The Region would not be able to withstand any further threats to its health security. In countries affected by the spill-over of hostilities, including Iraq, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, health systems were already struggling to keep up and were suffering from a lack of adequate health

infrastructure and resources. He expressed concern about escalating hostilities in the West Bank and southern Lebanon, which were leading to even more loss of life, injury, displacement and damage to health infrastructure. If not immediately halted, the current catastrophic situation had the potential to further destabilize public health and place countless more lives at risk. Only an immediate ceasefire could ultimately stop the suffering and prevent health security across the entire Region from further spiralling downwards.

The WHO REPRESENTATIVE (occupied Palestinian territory), describing the situation in the Gaza Strip as extremely grim and unprecedented, provided details of a WHO-led mission to the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City that had taken place the previous day and of the urgent needs facing medical facilities across the Gaza Strip. WHO would continue to deliver assistance to populations in the Gaza Strip in the long term, for which funding would be needed. It was also important to start making plans for the recovery phase.

The CHAIR took it that the Board wished to adopt the draft resolution.

**The resolution was adopted.<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Explanations of position**

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, speaking in explanation of position, said that her Government had, with its partners across the globe, been leading efforts to increase the flow of life-saving assistance to civilians in the Gaza Strip. Her Government was grateful to the members of the Executive Board for their efforts to reach a consensus on the resolution, which it agreed not to block, but about which it held significant reservations.

Her Government did not agree with, and disassociated itself from, the language used in the eighth preambular paragraph. Calls for a ceasefire were not only unrealistic but dangerous, as it would enable Hamas to regroup and repeat its actions of 7 October 2023, as it had recently threatened to do. Furthermore, her Government did not agree with, and disassociated itself from, the language used in operative paragraph 2. While her Government underscored the need to make medicines and medical equipment available to civilian populations, there was no general obligation under international humanitarian law or international human rights law to ensure the supply and replenishment of medicine and medical equipment. In addition, her Government did not recognize the term “occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem”; sovereignty issues needed to be negotiated between the two parties. The resolution and the focus of the Board’s current discussions applied solely to the current situation in the Gaza Strip, and no part of the resolution, including references to obligations under international humanitarian law, should be understood to alter the current state of conventional or customary international law or create rights or obligations under international law.

Regrettably the resolution contained notable weaknesses and lacked balance. It failed to mention the attack by Hamas, or the taking of hostages. It also failed to condemn the documented practice by Hamas of deliberately sheltering among civilians in order to deliberately increase the likelihood of civilian casualties when terrorist military targets were struck. She reiterated that humanitarian pauses should be accompanied by the unconditional release of all remaining hostages and that, in the interim, their humanitarian and medical needs must be met.

The representative of the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, speaking in explanation of position, said that the Gaza Strip had been destroyed, and that no Palestinian was exempt from potential genocide or forced displacement. International law no longer applied in the Gaza Strip, and he condemned those governments that blindly supported Israel. He expressed support for the work of WHO and other humanitarian partners in the occupied Palestinian territory, which was why his Government had joined the consensus on the resolution. However, the text should have been more explicit about the scale of the

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EBSS7.R1.

Israeli aggression and set out how to deal with its catastrophic consequences. His Government also had reservations about any reference that could equate the victim with the executioner: the situation was not a dispute between two parties but rather a savage aggression and expansionist occupation by Israel, which had been systematically committing serious crimes and violating human rights for decades.

The representative of CANADA, speaking in explanation of position, said that she appreciated the willingness and flexibility of all parties to reach a consensus on the resolution. In the light of its concerns about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and its impact on civilians, her Government had joined the consensus, which it saw, nevertheless, as a compromise. Additional language should have been included to acknowledge the role of Hamas in the conflict, its taking of hostages and its use of human shields. Her Government continued to call for the immediate release of all hostages and to demand their humane treatment in accordance with international law. Her Government remained committed to the goal of comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian State.

The representative of AUSTRALIA, speaking in explanation of position, expressed appreciation for the spirit of cooperation, which had enabled the Executive Board to adopt the resolution by consensus, recognizing the dire humanitarian situation, the extent of the suffering and the impact on health. Her Government regretted, however, that the resolution made no reference to the attack perpetrated on Israeli civilians by the terrorist group Hamas on 7 October 2023, which had acted as the catalyst for the current conflict. It also failed to mention that Hamas continued to detain hostages, all of whom should be immediately released without condition. She affirmed the right of Israel to defend itself but stressed that innocent civilians should not pay for the horrors perpetrated by Hamas; the manner of that defence mattered also for the ongoing security of Israel if the conflict were to spread across the region. All parties were urged to exercise restraint and respect international humanitarian law with protection of civilians and health workers and infrastructure. Practical steps must be taken as soon as possible to find an enduring solution to the conflict.

The representative of SLOVENIA, speaking in explanation of position, said that the adoption of the resolution by consensus demonstrated that health for all would remain a global value and that safeguarding health systems in all circumstances was a moral standard to be upheld by all. The next step was to implement the resolution, first by respecting what had been agreed upon and then by fully supporting the Secretariat in its endeavours to ensure urgent access to health care and to coordinate those activities on the ground. She asked the Secretariat to provide information on the gaps in implementation so that Member States could better provide support in scaling up its humanitarian and health efforts. It would also be necessary to plan for recovery.

The representative of FRANCE, speaking in explanation of position, welcomed the consensus that had been reached. As underscored in the resolution, all parties had the obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. Israel had the right to defend itself but must do so in strict compliance with international humanitarian law. Hamas must end its terrorist activities and other violations of international law, of which the Palestinians were also victims. The terrorist attacks and hostage-taking on 7 October 2023 should have been condemned in the resolution. All hostages must be immediately and unconditionally released and their safety, health and well-being guaranteed. Investigations should be initiated into the allegations of sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas, which should also have been mentioned in the resolution. The resolution was a call for action in support of WHO and its humanitarian partners, in the interests of the civilian population. His Government would step up its efforts to support its partners in that regard. He expressed the hope that the tragedy would give the international community, Israelis and Palestinians the strength to restore the political pathway towards the two-State solution.

The representative of AFGHANISTAN, speaking in explanation of position and outlining his own experience of living in a conflict situation, expressed appreciation for the efforts of the members of the Executive Board to put aside their political disagreements and forge a consensus in support of the resolution. In recent years, attacks on health facilities had occurred in his country, in the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine, as well as in the Gaza Strip. Attacks on health care should be included on the agenda of the 154th session of the Executive Board in January 2024 to allow for an extensive discussion and the potential adoption of a related resolution.

The representative of RWANDA, speaking in explanation of position, welcomed the flexibility demonstrated by members of the Executive Board. The resolution was a testimony to the tradition of consensus that should always be upheld by the Board. The Secretariat should continue to provide the Board with updates on its work in response to health emergencies and on its implementation of the resolution.

The representative of CHINA, speaking in explanation of position, welcomed the adoption of the resolution and the flexibility shown by members of the Executive Board in reaching consensus. The resolution represented a small yet encouraging step towards peace and would help WHO to achieve its goal of providing support to the Palestinian people. His Government would continue to coordinate with all parties to promote a comprehensive, fair and long-lasting solution to the Palestinian issue. He called on the international community, especially countries with influence, to promote a comprehensive, long-term ceasefire and protect the livelihoods and right to health and life of civilians.

The representative of SLOVAKIA, speaking in explanation of position and recalling WHO's definition of health, asked how WHO could be better prepared for future events requiring humanitarian assistance in an appropriate and timely manner. He called on the Secretariat to submit, no later than January 2024, proposals on how best to enhance coordination of its work in such emergency settings. The adopted resolution represented an important first step, but the language used could have been improved better to reflect all the needs on the ground.

The representative of PARAGUAY, speaking in explanation of position, expressed regret that the adopted resolution lacked balance: it failed to refer to the hostages still held by Hamas, the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the Israeli population, which was also a victim of the current situation. Nonetheless, his Government had joined the consensus, as the resolution represented a step in the right direction and was in the interests of the civilian population. It was hoped that the same flexibility would be shown in future on other aspects of the issue.

The representative of ISRAEL,<sup>1</sup> speaking in explanation of position, reiterated that there had been no effort to ensure that the resolution addressed the complex reality of the situation. A ceasefire could be established immediately if Hamas released the hostages and surrendered; the recent operational pause in hostilities had ended because Hamas had failed to comply with its obligations under the negotiated agreement. Focusing on Israel only encouraged Hamas to continue using the civilian population and medical installations as shields. Indeed, the resolution made no reference to Hamas or its systematic strategy of using medical facilities for its terrorist infrastructure and failed to address the hostages still held. Their families and the people and the Government of Israel could not accept a resolution that did not demand the immediate release of the hostages or their access to medical treatment and remained silent on the murder of some of the hostages while in captivity. The desire to reach a consensus at all costs, for instance ignoring the plight of the hostages, was simply unacceptable.

Her Government would continue to facilitate humanitarian aid to strengthen existing medical capacities and work with all partners to address the health needs of the Palestinian population. It would continue to fight terrorism, would defeat Hamas and would bring the hostages home.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

### **Rights of reply**

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in exercise of a right of reply and in response to comments accusing Israel of genocide and war crimes, said that Israel had not committed genocide and such accusations distorted the term beyond recognition. Moreover, Hamas, had stated its genocidal intentions against the people of Israel. Concerning the allegations of war crimes, his Government was clear on the inherent right of Israel to defend itself against Hamas, which was a terrorist organization, and on its obligation to abide by international law and protect civilian lives, whether Israeli or Palestinian. Hamas was using Palestinians as human shields in dense population centres and wanted to continue the suffering of the populations in the Gaza Strip.

The Observer of PALESTINE, in exercise of a right of reply, said that, although the resolution offered less than what was required, out of respect for WHO and its Executive Board, his Government had agreed to accept it. He said that it was saddening that some representatives had tried to justify the killing of vulnerable people and the destruction in the Gaza Strip because of the events of 7 October 2023; the comparison was not valid. He did not disagree with the condemnation of what occurred on 7 October 2023 but could not remain silent in the face of the killing of so many civilians. Moreover, some representatives had called on Israel to comply with international law, but Israel since its founding had not complied with that law. The lies and allegations made by Israel, including those concerning weapons found in hospitals, were unfounded.

The unjustified targeting of the health sector must stop, and the Director-General should investigate the allegations made in that regard. The right of people, including children, to health must be preserved, and the bloodshed, massacre and genocide must come to an end.

The representative of ISRAEL,<sup>1</sup> in exercise of a right of reply, said that it was ironic that the Iranian regime had declared its willingness to support the health system in the Gaza Strip while it continued to support Hamas, the terrorist organization responsible for all the current suffering in the Gaza Strip. The Iranian regime was also a supporter of Hezbollah, which had been launching attacks on Israel from Lebanon since 8 October 2023 without provocation or justification, posing a direct and imminent threat of regional escalation. If the Iranian regime was so concerned with the welfare of the Palestinian people, it should cease to support, train and fund Hamas, as that organization had declared its intention to carry out further massacres and its willingness to sacrifice all the people of the Gaza Strip.

It was also ironic that the representatives of Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic were so concerned about the health situation in Gaza. Had Pakistan addressed the health issues of the 1.7 million Afghan refugees it had expelled? Had the Syrian Arab Republic addressed the health issues of its own citizens, against whom it had used chemical weapons?

Responding to the erroneous claims of genocide, she said that her people knew what genocide looked like and had been reminded of that again on 7 October 2023. There could be no peace for Israelis and Palestinians as long as Hamas existed. Her Government would continue to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with international law.

The Observer of PALESTINE, in exercise of a right of reply, said that Israel, an occupying power, had no right to self-defence, as clearly stipulated in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 2004. Moreover, there could be no argument of self-defence against babies. In addition, allegations that Hamas was using human shields and had targeted hospitals were inaccurate. Hamas could not, for instance, have been responsible for the attack on Al-Shifa hospital, since it did not have the kind of missiles required for such an attack.

The right to health could not be decided by the occupying power, yet it had long used language indicating that it would “allow” aid to enter the Gaza Strip or patients to be moved. The current situation

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

had not begun on 7 October 2023 but instead was the result of years of occupation, blockade and suffering, of double standards and the violation of rules.

The representative of the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN,<sup>1</sup> in exercise of a right of reply, said that the statements made by a wide range of Member States and by non-State actors had served as an alarming reminder of the brutality of the Israeli regime, which could not evade accountability by making false accusations against his country. Israel's apartheid regime was undeniably responsible for the tragic loss of innocent lives and the ongoing atrocities against civilians in the Gaza Strip.

The representative of the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, in exercise of a right of reply, said that the main reason for convening the current special session of the Board had been Israel's continued occupation and its systematic crimes committed against the Palestinian people. It was time for the Israeli massacre of Palestinians and its attacks on his country, southern Lebanon and occupied Palestinian territory to end. The occupying power was attempting to escalate the situation in the region to cover up its crimes. Despite having committed horrific crimes and acts of genocide, Israel had failed to achieve the goals of its brutal aggression in the Gaza Strip.

The representative of PAKISTAN,<sup>1</sup> in exercise of a right of reply, said that refugees in Pakistan had unrestricted access to health facilities and denied that his Government had expelled 1.7 million Afghan refugees.

The representative of LEBANON,<sup>1</sup> in exercise of a right of reply, rejected the accusations made by the representative of the occupying power Israel concerning Hezbollah, which was a Lebanese political party and part of the Lebanese resistance. She condemned the constant aggression by Israel against her country's sovereignty.

## **2. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION:** Item 4 of the agenda

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL commended members of the Executive Board for adopting the resolution, thereby achieving the first consensus on the current conflict and a starting point on which further efforts could be built. It was essential to believe in the possibility of meeting both the need of Israel to protect its people from further attacks and to live in peace and security and the need of the Palestinian people to live in peace and freedom; those needs were not mutually exclusive.

He said that he was committed to ensuring the implementation of the resolution, to the extent possible. However, in the current context, sustained humanitarian assistance at the scale required was simply impossible. There could be no peace, and consequently no health, without a ceasefire. All Member States, especially those with the most influence, were urged to work urgently to bring an end to the conflict as soon as possible. He reiterated his calls for the release of the remaining Israeli hostages, for health care to be proactively protected and not attacked, and for all parties to facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid and humanitarian workers.

It was hoped that the fighting would soon stop, but the physical and psychological scars would be long-lasting for both Israelis and Palestinians. WHO and its partners remained committed to promoting, providing for and protecting the health of the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. It would continue to support the indefatigable health workers in the Gaza Strip, to work with partners to deliver aid where and when possible and to remind the world of the need for both health and peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The CHAIR said that the support for the resolution underscored the urgent need to safeguard the sanctity of health facilities, protect health workers and ensure that health care remained a universal right even in the most challenging circumstances. The resolution also reaffirmed Member States' support for the Secretariat in its attempt to preserve health services in conflict zones and provide the necessary humanitarian aid to civilian populations in such areas. She called on Member States to actively support the Secretariat in its efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of the global community and to work closely to implement the resolution. She declared the seventh special session of the Executive Board closed.

**The meeting rose at 17:40.**

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