**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL** : **REMARKS TO THE EXTRAORDINARY ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST/GAZA**

**Cairo, 4 March 2025**

**[as delivered]**

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Excellencies, all protocols observed.

President El-Sisi, thank you for convening leaders from across the Arab world to unite at this Extraordinary Arab Summit dedicated to Palestine.

Since the horrific attacks by Hamas in Israel on October 7, the ensuing Israeli military operations have unleashed an unprecedented level of death and destruction in Gaza, generating an immense trauma.

Palestinians in Gaza have suffered beyond measure.

And the risk of even greater devastation looms.

This Summit is an important signal that the world has a collective responsibility to support efforts to end this war, relieve profound human suffering and secure lasting peace.

In the last few weeks, we have witnessed a meaningful improvement with the ceasefire and the hostage deal.

Since the start of the implementation of the first phase of the ceasefire, Palestinian civilians in Gaza have experienced reprieve. Hostages were released and humanitarian aid dramatically increased.

I urge the parties to uphold their commitments and implement them in full, and Member States to use all the leverage they have to support this, especially as we start the Holy Month of Ramadan.

We must avoid at all costs the resumption of hostilities that would plunge the millions back into an abyss of suffering and further destabilize the region. And simultaneously, the territorial integrity of Lebanon and Syria must be respected.

Serious negotiations for the ceasefire in all its facets must be resumed without delay.

All hostages must be released — immediately, unconditionally and in a dignified manner.

The release of Palestinian detainees must be carried out per the terms of the deal and also in a dignified way.

The parties must ensure humane treatment for all those held under their power.

And all obstacles to the effective delivery of lifesaving aid must be removed.

Humanitarian aid is not negotiable. It must flow without impediment. The response needs to be adequately funded, and civilians — including humanitarians — must be protected.

The United Nations has proven, together with our partners, namely the Egyptian Red Crescent, with access, the UN-coordinated response can deliver aid that people need.

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses,

Excellencies,

Ending the immediate crisis is not enough.

We need a clear political framework that lays the foundation for Gaza’s recovery, reconstruction and lasting stability.

That framework must be based on principles and respect for international law.

Israel’s legitimate security concerns must be addressed, but that should not be through long-term Israeli military presence in Gaza.

And I want to once again salute the dedication of UN staff and all other humanitarian workers — particularly, Palestinian colleagues — who have suffered so much and are working under near-impossible conditions.

I appeal for the urgent and full support of UNRWA’s work, including financial support.

Excellencies,

Finally, as we widen the lens beyond Gaza, we see an alarming situation unfolding in the West Bank.

Israeli security forces have launched large-scale operations, including airstrikes and also the deployment of tanks for the first time in over two decades.

Over 40,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced in the last month — the largest displacement in the West Bank in decades.

Meanwhile, demolitions, evictions and settlement expansions continue, with settler violence is on the rise.

All of this is further weakening the Palestinian Authority at a time when its role is more crucial than ever.

I call for urgent de-escalation.

Unilateral actions, including settlement expansion and threats of annexation, must stop.

The attacks and mounting violence must end.

Israel, as the occupying power, must comply with all its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

And the Palestinian Authority must be supported to govern effectively, and to do so in compliance with its own obligations under international law.

Excellencies,

The true foundation of recovery in Gaza will be more than concrete and steel.

It will be dignity, self-determination and security.

This means staying true to the bedrock of international law.

It means rejecting any form of ethnic cleansing.

And it means forging a political solution.

There is no sustainable future for Gaza that is not part of a viable Palestinian State.

There can be no recovery without an end to the occupation.

No justice without accountability for violations of international law.

And no sustainable reconstruction without a clear and principled political horizon.

The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves, to chart their own future, and to live on their land in freedom and security.

There must be irreversible steps now toward the realization of the two-State solution — before it’s too late.

The only path to lasting peace is one where two states — Israel and Palestine — live side-by-side in peace and security, in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.

The United Nations stands with you in this essential effort.

Thank you.