



Intervention of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza,
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN

United Nations Security Council Open Debate on
**“The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian
question”**

New York, 23 July 2015

Mr President,

My Delegation congratulates you on New Zealand’s Presidency of the Security Council this month and commends you for convening this timely open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question.”

The Holy See continues to monitor closely the situation in the Middle East, which is deeply afflicted by various conflicts that continue to intensify. Unfortunately, the international community, which seems to have become accustomed to these conflicts, has not yet succeeded in working out an adequate response.

Particularly preoccupying is the situation in Syria, where the dramatic humanitarian situation affecting more than half of the population calls for renewed commitment by all in order to arrive at a political solution to the conflict. We should not continue to look helplessly from the sidelines while a great country is being destroyed. The situation in Syria requires putting aside many particular interests in order to prioritise those of Syria and of the Syrians themselves.

In Syria as well as in Iraq, we continue to be gravely concerned about the terrorist acts perpetrated by the so-called “Islamic State.” This is a challenge not only for the region but for the entire international community, which is called upon to cooperate with unity of purpose in order to thwart this terrorist plague, which is expanding its activities into different countries.

Having to take care of millions of refugees, Lebanon and Jordan also bear the brunt of the conflict in neighbouring Syria. They urgently need the solidarity of the whole international community.

The Holy See hopes that the Land of the Cedars will be able to resolve, as soon as possible, this period of institutional instability, arising largely from the vacancy for over a year now of the Presidency of the Republic.

While being aware of the sufferings of entire populations, I wish to point out the difficulties that Christians and other minority ethnic and religious groups are experiencing, forcing many of them to leave their homes. The diminution of the Christian presence is a grave loss for the entire region, where Christians have been present since the very beginnings of Christianity and where they wish to continue cooperating with their fellow citizens in building harmonious societies and working for the common good, as promoters of peace, reconciliation and development.

My delegation wishes to express appreciation for the agreement which has been reached between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the 5+1 group.

On June 26 this year, the Holy See and the State of Palestine signed the Comprehensive Agreement that follows the Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) of 15 February 2000. This Agreement is indicative of the progress made by the Palestinian Authority in recent years, above all in the level of international support it has acquired, as exemplified by UN Resolution 67/19, which, inter alia, recognizes Palestine as a non-member Observer State.

The Holy See hopes that this Agreement may in some way be a stimulus to the achievement of the two-State solution, bringing a definitive end to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict that continues to cause suffering on both Parties, and that the Agreement may offer, within the complex reality of the Middle East, a good example of dialogue and cooperation.

As Pope Francis said during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land last year: “The time has come for everyone to find the courage to be generous and creative in the service of the common good, the courage to forge a peace that rests on the acknowledgment by all of the right of two States to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.”¹

In this context, my delegation wishes to reiterate that the peace process can move forward only if it is directly negotiated between the Parties, with the support of the international community.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ Meeting with Palestinian Authorities, Bethlehem, 25 May 2014.