



## Security Council adoption of a draft resolution on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 15 November 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier  
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

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Thank you, President.

The humanitarian crisis which continues to unfold in Gaza ever since the horrific terror attacks of 7 October is deeply troubling. On that day, children were killed and taken hostage. Since then, over 4,600 children are reported to have been killed in Gaza. Around 1,500 are considered as missing. Many are likely trapped underneath the rubble. The lives of new-born and premature babies at the Al-Shifa hospital are in grave and imminent danger.

Countless civilians are now suffering the scourge of hostilities and all the devastating consequences that armed conflict brings with it. Over one million people are displaced. More than half of them are children.

Last week, the Secretary-General stated, and I quote: *'Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children'*, end quote. This stark warning must not go unheeded.

On this occasion, we also pay tribute to all UN staff on the ground for their heroic efforts, and remember those who have paid the ultimate price.



President

The draft resolution we have in front of us today seeks to offer hope in this dark hour. It aims to ensure a respite from the current nightmare in Gaza and give hope to the families of all victims. It focusses, in particular, on the plight of children trapped in the war-torn enclave and of those being held hostage.

Over the past week we have held extensive consultations with Council members, interested parties, countries in the region, and humanitarian organisations. We did this in an effort to achieve a balanced and operational text that can address one part of the current crisis: the immediate needs of the affected children. We thank them all for engaging with us in an open and constructive manner. Our guiding light throughout the process was to make sure that the text remains focussed and humanitarian in scope.

This draft resolution provides for the establishment of urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip for a sufficient number of days. Such measures would enable the full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access.

It would facilitate the continuous, sufficient, and unhindered provision of essential goods and services important to the well-being of civilians, especially children.



It would enable urgent rescue and recovery efforts, including for missing children in damaged and destroyed buildings, and the medical evacuation of sick or injured children and their care givers.

This text also underlines and reiterates the special vulnerable status of children. It calls for the safe and unconditional release of hostages, especially children, that are being held by Hamas and other groups. This too is a clear humanitarian imperative which cannot be ignored. We stressed that international humanitarian law provides general protection of children as persons taking no part in hostilities. They enjoy special protection as persons who are particularly vulnerable, and recalled that the taking of hostages is prohibited under international law.

President

Our votes today translate into real human lives. The lives of thousands of children, civilians, and heroic humanitarian workers. Today, the Security Council has the opportunity to reaffirm its responsibility and commitment to the safeguarding of civilian lives. We need to do this as a matter of urgency.

Malta remains steadfastly committed to the protection of civilians, in particular children. They are suffering disproportionately in this conflict. We cannot close a blind eye to their suffering.



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In this spirit, I urge all Council members to support this draft resolution and to vote in favour of this text.

I thank you.