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STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON

“THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN
QUESTION”

New York

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Mr. President,

Thank you for organizing this open debate on the Middle East. The Security Council's consideration of this urgent matter is a testimony of its determination to seek tangible and durable peace and security in the region.

Uganda welcomes the briefing by Mr. Lynn Pascoe; Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs which we believe presents an opportunity to UN members to gauge overall progress and help focus on the way forward. We note from the briefing by Mr. Pascoe, that there has been some encouraging progress recorded since the last briefing in January 2009.

On the overall Middle East question including Palestine, we welcome the appointment of various Middle East Special envoys by the various states and organizations. We are encouraged that most of the respective envoys have already toured the region. We also note that United States, EU delegations, other countries and top UN officials have been to the region to assess what needs to be done.

My delegation welcomes the outcome of the International Aid conference for Gaza reconstruction held in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh where \$4.5 billion was pledged. We call on all who pledged to meet their pledges. We however, note that any implementation of recovery, rebuilding and reconstruction plans of Gaza demands Palestinian unity. We call on Hamas and Fattah to play a constructive role in national dialogue and reconciliation.

To this end, we commend the role of Egypt and other regional players in their ongoing efforts to help achieve the intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

Furthermore we welcome the cease –fire talks between Israel and Hamas being mediated by Egypt. We are pleased to note that there has been relative calm.

All these are positive signs towards the search for a durable peace by the International community.

Mr. President

While we welcome those positive signs and progress so far achieved, we note with concern that there are many challenges that require urgent attention.

We note from the briefing that during the violence a lot of lives were lost and property destroyed and that the war has caused enormous suffering that is still being experienced even today. We deplore the emotional toll brought by this conflict on Palestinian and Israeli children, women and civilians in particular.

We also note that the overall levels of humanitarian assistance allowed into Gaza remain below what is urgently required. We note with disappointment that the situation at the crossings is still far from what is expected. For example there are still lengthy clearance procedures on international staff from non-governmental organizations and aid workers. As a result most households in the Gaza Strip have suffered from limited access to basics such as food, water, electricity, sanitation and sources of income. Towards this end, a lasting ceasefire is urgently needed to keep Gaza crossings open, which will allow the Palestinian economy to recover and the people to live in peace.

Mr. President,

Mechanisms can be put in place to ensure no smuggling of arms into Gaza. These are the very elements of resolution 1860 (2009) that all parties should fully implement.

On Lebanon, we note that generally the security situation in south Lebanon has been relatively calm in recent months. We welcome the progress made in the relations between Lebanon and its neighbors. We welcome the proposed June 7, 2009 Parliamentary elections in Lebanon and call on all parties to ensure calm and stability during this period

We, nevertheless wish to express our concerns over the fact that the cease fire is not fully implemented as occasional exchange of fire continues

between Israel and Lebanon in contravention of resolution 1701. In this connection we call upon Israel and Lebanon to exercise restraint.

My delegation would like to thank most sincerely all international relief agencies and NGOs who despite the very difficult circumstances prevailing, risked their lives and continued to provide relief assistance to the people caught in this conflict.

Finally Uganda will continue to support all efforts aimed at reducing tension and finding a comprehensive peace in the Middle East consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions including 1860. We are also convinced that intra-Palestinian reconciliation is a vital ingredient in the Middle East peace process.

Thank you