



**STATEMENT
OF
H. E. MR. AHMED ABOUL GHEIT
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF ARAB
STATES
BEFORE
THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON
“ENHANCING COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP
BETWEEN THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND
REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECURITY COUNCIL
AND
THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES”
NEW YORK, 13 JUNE 2019**



Your Excellency Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait

Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Distinguished Heads of Delegations and Ambassadors

It gives me great pleasure to extend my sincere congratulations to the State of Kuwait on its assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, and to express our deep appreciation for the role it exercises as the Arab member of the Council. I especially praise its commendable initiative to convene this meeting in order to elevate the level of partnership between the League of Arab States and the Security Council within the general framework governed by Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, and for his firm commitment to strengthen the cooperation and institutional coordination between our two organizations in a manner that enhances the complementarity of our activities in the arena of maintaining international peace and security in the Arab region.

I speak to you today coming from a region rife with conflicts and deep crises, some of which are excessively difficult to resolve ... conflicts and crises that had a severely negative impact on generations of our peoples who fell victim to the vicious cycles of anger and frustration. Most of these conflicts and crises are on your agenda, yet regrettably and for different circumstances, the Security Council could not, in some cases, adopt a clear position towards them, or could not effectuate those positions it had already reached.

The complex situation in Syria has entered its ninth year without the emergence of a genuine horizon for the political solution which the international community has long called for since the eruption of the crisis in 2011; in Yemen it is the Yemeni people who remain the victim of a humanitarian crisis that primarily results from the insistence of an outlaw faction to seize control of the capital of the country and constitute a clear threat to Yemen's neighbors and to maritime navigation in its surrounding waters; Libya has fallen anew into military hostilities that have come to threaten its societal fabric and chances of completing its political transition to preserve its unity; and as for Somalia, we continue to work with other partners in solidifying its pillars of security and stability and consolidating its peace along with that of the entire Horn of Africa which is a region of direct geographic proximity and importance to the Arab world.

Having said all that and more, I cannot neglect or ignore the centrality of the Palestinian question in the minds and conscience of the Arab peoples and leadership. The continuation of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian



territories was, and will remain, the main source that destabilizes and fuels radicalization in the Middle East and beyond. Our region will never have security nor will it know genuine stability without ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, the establishment of the independent Palestinian State, and the attainment of a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab Israeli conflict.

There are a host of additional factors that have contributed to exacerbating all these conflicts and instigating turmoil elsewhere in the region, foremost of which are the unprecedented regional and international interferences in the internal affairs of Arab countries; the propagation of militias and armed groups that are fighting against national armies and challenging the authority of the state and threatening its sovereignty and territorial integrity; and the growing threat posed by terrorist groups which are afforded support, funding and media platforms that allow them to commit their crimes and disseminate their message based on murder and hatred.

*Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

While the LAS looks forward to enhancing the effectiveness of its partnership mechanisms with the UN, and with the Security Council in particular, to resolve these conflicts and crises and address all these challenges, it has also become determined to exercise a more robust role to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in our Arab region, defend the Arab national security of its Member States, and deter the dangers that threaten them, all in accordance with the Charter and international law. The emergency Arab Summit that was held in Mecca two weeks ago is perhaps the most recent and best testimony to this, as the Arab leaders gathered in an extraordinary session and condemned the terrorist acts that targeted the oil installations inside Saudi Arabia and the commercial vessels in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, and further reiterated their full solidarity with both countries in the face of Iranian interferences and practices and the crimes perpetrated by the Houthi militias supported by the regime in Teheran.

I find it important, in this regard, to stress that the maintenance of the security of the Arab region is an integral prerequisite for the preservation of the international security system, and that threats and acts that undermine Arab security will entail serious consequences that will not stop at the borders of our Arab region. International solidarity is therefore essential in order to send an unequivocal and unambiguous message to our neighbors that subversive activities are no longer acceptable, and that concealing themselves behind regional proxies or the grey-zone operations that are non-attributable to their original perpetrators is a tactic that is rejected by us all.



Mr. President,

My first and foremost message to you today, as a representative of the oldest regional organization that was granted observer status to the General Assembly in 1950, is based on our desire to establish a broad and solid platform to elevate the level of consultations between LAS and the Security Council, and to consider ways and means to translate this coordination into further support that advances the joint and complementary activities between our two organizations, similar to those arrangements in place with other regional organizations, in a manner that enhances efforts to maintain international peace and security in the Arab region and their credibility, and conforms with the provisions of international law, the objectives of our two organizations, and the principles and goals of their Charters.

Allow me for this purpose to present a number of observations and proposals:

First:

Any fruitful cooperation between LAS and the Council should be underpinned on the basis of establishing a permanent and institutional arrangement for the exchange of information – transparently as well as frankly – between the two sides, in order for the Council to be apprised of the view and assessments of the regional organization concerned, and become able to articulate the appropriate position and adopt the proper measure that conforms with this vision and these assessments when addressing any matter in the region. This request is not in fact entirely new, it merely requires the commitment to put it into effect, as it already constitutes an established principle in the relations between the Council and other regional and sub-regional organizations.

Second:

There is also a parallel need to advance the level of coordination and interaction with LAS on the part of the UN's special representatives and envoys to Arab conflicts and areas of crises, in a manner that truly results in a unified and common appreciation of the causes that lead to the eruption or continuation of these conflicts, and that then translates to coordinated and complementary action by both organizations to resolve them. I would here like to praise, in particular, the commitment shown by the UN envoy to Libya Mr. Ghassan Salamé and his cooperation with LAS, especially during this critical stage that Libya is passing through after the eruption of hostilities around the capital Tripoli and the regression of the political process that he used to oversee and which the League fully supported. We also highly appreciate the approach of the Commissioner General of UNRWA in regularly coordinating and interacting with LAS, especially in order to address the severe financial crisis that has afflicted the Agency's budget and endangered its operations in the service of the Palestinian refugees. These forms of cooperation provide a



positive example that we hope will be followed to maximize the coordination between LAS and UN envoys and senior officials concerned with the issues of the Arab region.

Third:

There already exists a longstanding history of institutional cooperation between the UN and LAS in various aspects of common interest to both organizations. We have established an organizational framework for this relationship almost 30 years ago when the two sides signed the *Agreement on Cooperation* in 1989, and proceeded afterwards to modernize the text of this Agreement by signing an additional *Protocol* to update its articles in 2016. This Agreement, and the mechanisms emanating from it, along with the preparations currently underway by the UN to open a permanent *Liaison Office* to LAS in Cairo, provide a comprehensive framework to advance the cooperation between the UN system and LAS. We trust that this framework can be employed to further develop the cooperation we aspire to with the Security Council, not only for resolving armed conflicts, but also in addressing all threats to international peace and security in the Arab region in its broader perspective, whether they relate to disarmament and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East; combating terrorism; the protection of civilians in armed conflicts; or to humanitarian crises and the flow of refugees and IDPs and irregular migration.

Fourth:

The cooperation that we aspire to achieve with the Security Council and UN agencies should expand to encompass all stages of early warning, mediation, good offices, preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building and sustainability. There are multiple examples of joint endeavors that we have undertaken together in these fields, perhaps the most notable of which was the appointment of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and LAS to Syria in 2012, and the establishment of the *Libya Quartet* which enjoins the UN, LAS, the European Union and the African Union. I believe that we must draw the lessons learned from these and other experiences, and strive to replicate their positive results in other situations, whether existing or emerging, that require joint action to prevent the eruption of their conflicts, or avoid their deterioration, all the way towards their resolution and securing them from the dangers of their reoccurrence. We also welcome, in this regard, the institutional support provided to us by the UN to strengthen the internal capabilities of LAS in maintaining international peace and security in the Arab region, which we hope to further develop to the point of establishing and deploying peace missions in the field to Arab crisis areas in the near future.

Fifth:



The League of Arab States, despite the severity of the challenges facing our region, remains, as a regional organization and collective of its member states, an active partner in the multilateral system and a major contributor to efforts to maintain international peace and security, not only in the Arab region but also in the region of geographic proximity to the Arab world and other crisis areas. There are Arab countries like Egypt, Jordan and Morocco that are among the top troop and police contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. Arab countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar are among the largest donors in the provision of humanitarian assistance to address the humanitarian crises in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, and in supporting the budget and activities of UNRWA. There are Arab countries that have also exercised a significant diplomatic role in sponsoring the historic reconciliations in the Horn of Africa, and that further provided financial and logistical assistance to the countries of the Sahel to enhance their capabilities to combat *Boko Haram* and other terrorist organizations active on their territories. And there are distinguished Arab institutions, such as *Al Azhar*, that are partners with the UN Alliance of Civilizations and supporters of the global dialogue between religions and peoples which promotes the culture of peace, moderation and tolerance in our Arab region and elsewhere. I believe that these contributions, and many others, all feed into the process of strengthening the cooperative relations between the UN and LAS, and exhibit the benefits of the cooperation and complementarity that can and must be achieved between us.

Sixth:

I find it incumbent upon me to once again warn against the dangers of maintaining the status quo of the Palestinian situation on the peace and stability of the entire Middle East region, especially with the continuation of Israel's oppressive practices against the Palestinian people, and its feverish attempts at expansion and annexation of Arab lands, to the point of even doubting the Palestinian right itself and the justness of its cause. It attempts instead to legitimize the occupation of the territory and then proceed to illegally annex it, through the recognition of occupied Jerusalem as capital of Israel, and casting doubt over the just cause of Palestinian refugees which this organization has been sponsoring for 70 years. While I trust that you are all fully aware of the consistent positions espoused by LAS over the decades on this issue, I also trust that the Council appreciates the seriousness of the issues I refer to. The attempt to resolve the Palestinian question outside the framework of international law, and ignore the established final-status issues that are based on the two-state solution, or create an alternative economic or development track that perpetuates the occupation, all constitute a devastating blow to the international legal architecture, the credibility of the Security Council, and the basic principles upon which the UN was founded. In this regard I call upon the Council to fully assume its responsibilities, without



selectivity or double standards, to afford international protection to the Palestinian people, and to enforce its previous resolutions and compel Israel to fully comply with their implementation.

*Mr. President,
Ladies & Gentlemen,*

Allow me in conclusion to clearly state that we are fully aware of the internal political dynamics surrounding the Security Council's approach, or lack thereof, to many of the complex crises afflicting the Arab region. I am confident that you all also appreciate the complications and tensions that sometimes permeate our own Arab system and curtail its ability to collectively respond to the security challenges it faces.

Yet these considerations should not be an excuse for inaction or lead to any abdication of your commitment to uphold the foundational principles of international law. I remain equally convinced that advancing the cooperative partnership between the UN and LAS is an indispensable means to enable both the Security Council and our regional organization to assume their inherent responsibilities and better discharge their duties towards the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security in our region.

This partnership alone is not sufficient to resolve the multiple emergency situations that atrophy the Arab region, yet it is an important prerequisite that embodies our collective political will to address these crises and act in a complementary manner that truly reflects the letter and spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. It also affords the Council the added legitimacy and credibility it often requires to elaborate the most appropriate course of action and secure the requisite support for its decisions vis-à-vis our region.

Thank you Mr. President.