



WHO Director-General's closing remarks at the Special Session of the Executive Board on the health situation in the occupied Palestinian territory – 10 December 2023

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Your Excellency Dr Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, Chair of the Executive Board,

Your Excellency Dr Sabin Nsanzimana, Vice Chair of the Executive Board,

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

I thank Member States for the resolution you have adopted.

You have achieved something that so far, Member States have not achieved in other fora: the first consensus resolution on the conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since it began two months ago.

I know it was not easy, but it was worth it.

I thank all of you for the spirit in which you have worked, and I commend you once again for being willing to collaborate and compromise.

You have shown that in our fractured and divided world, it is still possible to find common ground on even the most difficult issues.

Of course, the adoption of this resolution is only a starting point. It does not resolve the crisis. But it is a platform on which to build.

I understand Israel's need to protect its people from further and future attacks, and to live in peace and security.

And I likewise understand the need of the Palestinian people to live in peace and freedom.

We must continue to believe that both are possible, and are not mutually exclusive.

I give you my commitment that I and my colleagues will implement the resolution to the best of our ability.

But I reiterate that in the current context, sustained humanitarian assistance at the scale needed is simply not possible.

Without a ceasefire, there is no peace. And without peace, there is no health.

I urge all Member States, especially those with the most influence, to work with urgency to bring an end to this conflict as soon as possible.

I reiterate my call for the release of the remaining Israeli hostages who are being held in Gaza.

I once again call for health care to be protected proactively, and not attacked.

And I continue to call for all parties to facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid and humanitarian workers.

Excellencies,

One day – hopefully sooner rather than later – the guns will fall silent and the bombs will stop falling from the sky.

But the scars – physical and psychological – will remain, for Palestinians, as they will for Israelis following the October 7 attacks.

WHO and our partners, inside and outside the UN family, remain committed to promoting, providing and protecting the health of the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

We will continue to support Gaza's incredible health workers to treat the sick and wounded.

We will continue to work with our partners to deliver aid where and when we can.

And we will continue to remind the world that there is no health without peace, and no peace without health.

As always, the medicine that the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory need the most is not one we can deliver in a truck, or administer in a syringe.

It is the most precious medicine, and often the most rare: hope.

Thank you.