Statement of the United Kingdom on the UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Gaza

July 3, 2015

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Mr. President,

The UK supports the statement made by the European Union.

The UK is deeply concerned by the terrible human cost to both sides of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as underlined by the findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry report on the 2014 conflict in Gaza.

The report underscores the critical importance of achieving a negotiated two state solution that ends the conflict once and for all.

We strongly condemn the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza. Such actions, as well as any use of civilians as human shields, use of UN premises and schools for military purposes, and the firing of rockets from civilian areas, are serious violations of international humanitarian law.

We welcome the condemnation of these attacks expressed in this council but regret that this condemnation has not been universal.

The United Kingdom is clear- Israel has the right to defend itself against indiscriminate attacks.

But it is also a principle of international humanitarian law that the use of force in self-defense must be proportionate. International humanitarian law requires belligerents to distinguish between military and civilian targets.

We have urged both sides to this conflict to act in a manner that is proportionate and to take all measures to prevent the loss of civilian life and to comply with international humanitarian law. We note that the UN Commission of Inquiry report highlights substantial information pointing to serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by both parties.

It is the UK’s firm belief that the allegations in the Commission of Inquiry report must be firmly investigated by Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the authorities in Gaza.

We therefore welcome the fact that Israel is conducting its own internal investigations into specific instances. Where there is evidence of wrongdoing, those responsible must be held accountable.

Mr. President, the UK would have preferred to see a text that gave more weight to Israel’s legitimate right to self-defense and the threat she faces from militant groups operating from inside Gaza, including Hamas.

However, despite these concerns, the UK supports Resolution L.35 and we will be voting in favor.