

Hiba Qasas Statement

UN Security Council Arria-formula Meeting on Peacebuilding

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Excellencies, Mr. President, distinguished members of the Security Council, colleagues.

I thank you Mr. President for convening this timely Arria formula meeting on advancing peacebuilding and for your invitation to the Principles for Peace Foundation to share our Principles and Practical Tools for Sustaining Peace.

I also thank the German Ambassador and chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. In fact, the Principles for Peace were first brought to the attention of the UNSC in 2023 by our partners at the German Government as potential frame of reference for peace building within the framework of the open debate on future proofing trust for sustainable peace.

We are living through an era of recurring, protracted conflicts and institutional misalignment. Military escalation is displacing diplomacy in too many theatres. Multilateral institutions are strained by legitimacy crises and public mistrust, and volatility is outpacing mandates and responses.

For decision makers, the challenge is not only political it is operational. Conflict dynamics are nonlinear. The calculus shifts at dizzying speed. Actors fragment, incentives mutate, public sentiment hardens, and spoilers adapt faster than institutions. Leaders are asked to decide with incomplete information, limited political cover, and an unforgiving margin for error.

In this context, the cost of inaction is not only human suffering it is irrelevance. That is why recalibrating and course correcting is both imperative and within reach. The current peacemaking architecture is too often a patchwork. What is needed is a redesign: adaptive, legitimacy-centred systems built to cope with complexity and designed for implementation rather than process.

Excellencies,

We have an extraordinary but rapidly narrowing window. Without decisive action, we risk locking in a system unfit for this era. But I want to be equally clear about something else.

It is too easy to speak as if diplomacy has died, or as if the Council is permanently paralysed. That is not accurate, and it is not helpful. Even amid cascading crises, we have seen serious diplomatic effort across multiple files: outside and within this council.

From the sustained engagement in the Middle East on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Gaza; President Trump's 20-point plan ending the bloodshed and opening a political pathway with regional partners after immense suffering; the New York Declaration, endorsed by 142 countries under Saudi and French leadership in the General Assembly, and a Security Council action endorsing an implementation pathway for Gaza.

We have also seen renewed movement on Syria; and ceasefires and de-escalation efforts elsewhere where, diplomacy, regional actors, and strong leadership have prevented further deterioration.

This proves a crucial point: when leadership and strategic convergence emerge, the system can move. And when it moves, success depends not on having a framework but on the quality of implementation.

That brings me to my central proposition today. The defining challenge of peacemaking is no longer how to reach a ceasefire or sign an agreement. It is how to implement, how to turn transactions into durable peace, how to turn pauses in violence into pathways out of violence, and political settlements into legitimate, lived realities that unlock stability, security, dignity and prosperity for those affected by conflict.

At the heart of implementation lie three principles for peace : legitimacy, accountable security, and dignity. Without them, even well-designed frameworks relapse as the centre of gravity shifts back to coercion, fear, and fragmented authority.

We know what failure looks like. Around 20,000 people are killed in armed conflict each month. Over 117 million are displaced. At Principles for Peace, our evidence base shows that around a third of peace agreements are not implemented, and implementation fails in predictable ways:

Ceasefires stop the shooting but not the conflict. Agreements build institutions on paper but not legitimacy in society. Timetables without benchmarks invite vacuums and fragmentation. Benchmarks without political cover paralyse decision-making.

So the questions for this Council and for every mediator and practitioner are clear:

- How do we help those in the hot seat navigate trade-offs early enough to matter?
- How do we avoid timetables without benchmarks, and benchmarks without political cover?
- How do we align incentives and build coalitions of the willing where collective action is essential?

Here is the hard truth. In today's multipolar environment, no single actor can impose a settlement without partners, and no actor can assume their values alone will carry the day.

The Security Council reflects that reality. Any approach that requires unanimity on ideology will fail. But an approach that helps diverse actors converge on enlightened self-interest and practical standards for durable peace can succeed. That is principled pragmatism.

This is why the Principles for Peace exist. They emerged from a multi-year global consultation and evidence effort across more than 60 countries. They form a globally developed framework to improve the legitimacy and durability of peace processes a common framework for action and benchmark for progress among actors who may not share a worldview but can share a commitment to what reduces relapse and builds sustainable peace.

Legitimacy today is not a luxury it is a security variable. We have seen this before. Where trust collapses, spoilers recruit. Where institutions are captured, armed actors become social providers. Where people see no political horizon, violence becomes an economy.

The task is not to choose between stability and legitimacy, but to build legitimate stability—stability that is accountable and therefore durable.

Gaza is the ultimate test. It represents both a historic opportunity and a monumental implementation challenge.

The core logic of President Trump's plan is clear: a ceasefire linked to an implementation pathway, transitional arrangements, and a political horizon. The New York Declaration and regional leadership maintained that focus, and the Security Council's endorsement of the Comprehensive Plan created something rare on this file: a reference point, a common frame, an authorising environment, and a cautious opening to resolve a protracted conflict and unlock regional stability.

The challenge now is implementation. Meeting immense humanitarian and reconstruction needs while building legitimacy and public support to make progress stick and protect the political horizon.

In practice, three priorities are essential:

1. **Stabilisation and disarmament** must be politically led, not treated as a narrow security fix. The opportunity will close if detached from politics, public consent, and meaningful regional guarantees.
2. **Transitional governance** must be legitimate, time-bound, and tied to a credible political horizon with Palestinian engagement and ownership, credible reform, and verifiable risk reduction for Israel, in order to end the cycle of insecurity, occupation and annexation, and trauma for both peoples.
3. **Reconstruction** must be transparent and deliver tangible dividends, including economic integration that creates stakeholders with more to gain from cooperation than disruption.

For this to succeed, Implementation must also be verifiable: a third-party mechanism from day one, with regional and international involvement, baselines and regular verification.

These challenges and considerations are not unique to Gaza. From **Sudan, Colombia, and South Sudan to the DRC and Afghanistan**, we have seen the same patterns.

The question for this Council is whether it can help shift the peace architecture from episodic diplomacy to sustained accompaniment supported by coalitions of the willing aligned enough to hold implementation under pressure.

This is also where the **Principles for Peace** - our approach, methodology, tools, and dialogue infrastructures - can serve as a practical capability for member states and the wider peace and security ecosystem. We support decision makers in three ways:

First, by offering common standards and a shared frame of reference in the Principles for Peace. They create a baseline for “what good looks like,” even among actors who disagree on ideology, helping negotiators name tradeoffs, set clear benchmarks, and track progress.

Second, through analytics and stress testing for implementation. The **Peace Navigator** is an AI-powered public good available today on our website. It draws on 21 years of data from 56 countries and over 57,000 sources, allowing decision makers to have direct access to evidence and analysis at their fingertips. We complement this with **simulations and peace gaming**, to stress test strategies.

Third, through political dialogue infrastructure and coalitions of enlightened self-interest. This is our convening and coalition-building engine room—not a one-off conference but sustained, high-trust engagement and political dialogue that connects those who can move decisions, resources, and narratives, ensuring commitments on paper are matched by incentives and deliverables that reduce spoiler space.

In the Middle East, we apply this logic through **Uniting for a Shared Future**, the largest coalition of Israeli and Palestinian leaders from business, security, politics, and public opinion, formed after October 7.

Built around enlightened self-interest and principles of mutual recognition of the right of both peoples to self-determination, safety, security, and dignity, it serves as a pragmatic constituency for a political solution within a regional framework.

It works along the political, economic and public opinion track. It also provides a capability that can act as a sounding board, advisor and operational supporter for implementing the Security Council framework, President Trump's plan, and the New York Declaration.

We also sustain discreet regional dialogues aligning political, security, and economic strategies, and have seen uptake of the Principles and methodology in other contexts—from **Somalia's national reconciliation framework to Bangsamoro peace consolidation in the Philippines**. So this new approach has been road-tested and does work and now is here for your uptake.

In this context, I want to recognise the sustained support of our partners whose engagement has made our work possible: the Governments of Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Belgium, and Ireland, alongside. As a Swiss foundation headquartered in Geneva, we are also grateful for the support of the Swiss Government and the Geneva cantonal authorities, philanthropic partners, including the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation which has enabled us to catalyse Switzerland's tradition and Geneva's peace ecosystem for peacebuilding.

Excellencies,

The future will not be shaped by elegant communiqués and the measure of this Council will not be what it endorses, but what it can help make stick under pressure.

Unless we build the conditions that make settlements last, we will keep cycling through the same wars with new names.

Frameworks are plentiful.

What is scarce is disciplined implementation.

That is where the Principles for Peace can help.

Thank you.

Hiba Qasas

*Founding Executive Director
of Principles for Peace*

