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Thank you so much, Bastian. I want to thank His Highness King Hamad, Crown Prince Salman, the hospitality of the Bahraini people and IISS, Sir John, for bringing us together at this important and extremely difficult moment.

When I stood on this stage one year ago, I discussed the pillars of President Joe Biden's policies in this region, the pillars being Partnerships, Diplomacy and De-escalation, Deterrence, Integration and Values. These five principles have guided our approach to this region, from ending the war in Yemen, to confronting Iranian aggression, to setting the foundation ultimately for a more integrated, stable, peaceful and prosperous region.

They have also, frankly, guided our approach to the current crisis in Gaza, one that threatens to upend this more hopeful vision. In fact, it was partially the intent of Hamas and others on 7 October to upend a future of stability, integration and peace, and they will not succeed.

Since the earliest hours of 7 October, the United States has been focused on supporting our partners in this region and containing the conflict to Gaza – to Hamas, the terrorist group that started this by slaughtering more than 1,000 people, from over 30 countries, including 35 Americans, the worst violence against Jews since the Holocaust, and taking hostage more than 200 innocent people, including toddlers, even babies, and their mothers.

President Biden has made a dozen calls or so to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, spoken regularly to regional leaders, almost every day – I was on a call last night with him and the Emir of Qatar – to European and G7 counterparts and others, again on a near daily basis. He visited Israel about a week after the crisis, the first wartime visit by a president to Israel in history. And all of us have been working tirelessly with counterparts, including those on this stage, to facilitate humanitarian assistance to those in need, secure the release of hostages – and it is important what the Crown Prince said last night, and I will repeat it in my remarks – which will lead to a sustained multi-day humanitarian pause and to begin setting conditions for the longer term.

Longer term, there is no returning to 6 October. That is true for Israel and it is true for Palestinians. No country can live with the threats of terror like what we saw from Hamas unleashed on 7 October on their border. At the same time, Palestinians deserve, need and require safety and self-determination.

As President Biden has said repeatedly, there is no durable way out of this crisis long term except one that results, ultimately, in an Israel that is fully secure, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. That might seem impossible now, but it's not. In fact, in the days before 7 October, we were engaged in intensive discussions with Saudi Arabia and Israel about the prospect for normalisation between those two countries, with the Palestinians both a partner and at the centre of the developing package deal – a transformative deal for the region, for the world and for the Palestinians in the West Bank. This was not an end run around that issue, quite the opposite. There would be no deal, as our Saudi friends have said, without that Palestinian component. And in this case what was true before 7 October is even truer now. That central issue must be addressed, and as Hamas is degraded, we are determined to help address it.

So, allow me to speak to what we are doing right now – including literally at this very hour – and then look ahead beyond the crisis to where we aim to lead.

Our immediate focus is on regional security, securing the release of hostages, including through humanitarian pauses, containing the conflict, and surging humanitarian assistance. Let me first focus on regional security, including Israel's security.

The US supports its friends, particularly when threatened or attacked. In this case, our support when it comes to Israel's security is not just focused on threats from Hamas. It is not just Hamas. It is also by necessity focused on other threats, including Hizbullah, other terrorist groups backed by Iran, and from Iran itself.

While supporting Israel and its defence, we have also been clear that Israel must comply with international humanitarian law and work to separate Hamas from the Palestinian population, even as Hamas embeds itself within the population – and I want to stress the difficulty of this challenge. In his public remarks in Tel Aviv, President Biden reflected on his own experiences making wartime decisions. He said, 'there are never clear choices'. There are always costs. Leaders must be deliberate, ask hard questions, defining objectives and making ongoing honest assessments about whether the path you are on will achieve them, continuously and ongoing.

We will not tell another country how to grieve or how to protect itself, but as friends and partners, we will do our best and offer our best advice and counsel, an ongoing rigorous enquiry on how to achieve shared objectives for peace and security. This approach has guided our engagement with the Israelis on a daily basis in direct conversations about its objectives, whether they are being achieved and at what cost. We keep those discussions private, including where we agree and particularly where we disagree.

But we have to keep in mind – and we do – that Hamas started this war. Hamas is living underground, in tunnels underneath civilian infrastructure and underneath civilians. It has pledged since 7 October to repeat 7 October again and again. It is holding children hostage now going on five weeks. And in the words of its own leaders, it has no regard for the people of Gaza, the innocent lives now caught up in this war. If Hamas wanted to protect the people of Gaza, it could release the hostages and surrender the leaders and those responsible for 7 October.

Let me turn to that briefly, to the hostages. I thought that it was very important what His Royal Highness said last night. The US continues to work on efforts to reunite hostages held by Hamas with their families, where they belong. It is a top priority for the President, who has spoken with families of US citizens who are still being held. He spoke to the issue three nights ago with Prime Minister Netanyahu and, as I mentioned, just last night with the Emir of Qatar. I will not discuss the details of these discussions here, but they have been intensive and ongoing. The track we have pursued led to the release of two Americans, a mother and daughter, which was a pilot for what we hope will be a much larger release.

Now, such a release of a large number of hostages would result in a significant pause in fighting and a massive surge of humanitarian relief, hundreds and hundreds of trucks, on a sustained basis entering Gaza from Egypt – and I have to say, Hamas from the earliest days has said, 'if you want the hostages returned, we need fuel and more humanitarian supplies'. That is the bargain they set. But this is the pathway to a pause in the fighting and the release of hostages. It is also reasonable: to pause the fighting, release the hostages, the women, the children, the toddlers, the babies, all of them. The onus here is on Hamas. This is the path. Simply calling for a ceasefire is not a path to peace.

Imagine if someone took your family members and then told you, to get them back, you had to give them X, Y and Z, whatever it might be, and you were being advised, 'just give them X, Y and Z anyway', without any promise that your family members would be released. That would be problematic, and that is where we have been. And yet we have been working to get humanitarian aid into Gaza increasingly, but the surge in humanitarian relief, the surge in fuel, the pause in fighting, will come when hostages are released.

Speaking of humanitarian relief, we are working to significantly increase assistance into Gaza. Everybody working on this feels the pain and the emotion that Ayman laid out – everyone, every

day. It is horrific. It is intolerable, as the Crown Prince said yesterday. And we are leading efforts to increase the flow of life-saving, sustained humanitarian assistance.

At the beginning of the crisis, of course, there were no border crossings into Gaza, and it was through our engagements that humanitarian aid began to transit through Rafah from Egypt. President Biden's visit to Israel opened the door for assistance; his direct conversations with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi finalised the deal to finally get trucks moving from Egypt into Gaza. David Satterfield, our humanitarian coordinator on the ground – I just saw him the other day in Israel – is working every day to surge as much support as possible. There are now approximately 100 trucks a day entering Gaza loaded with assistance, but it is not enough. Nobody says it is enough, and we aim to double that amount as soon as possible and then see it grow exponentially from there. But I want to just stress: if the hostages are released, you will see a significant, significant change.

We have also committed \$100 million for these efforts. We have a \$14 billion supplemental package before Congress, which is indeed focused on defence needs for Israel against the myriad of threats it faces, but also a significant portion for humanitarian assistance for Palestinians and the people of Gaza. This has been matched by \$100m from the Gulf Cooperation Council and \$100m from the European Union, which is welcome. The US is the largest supporter of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), support which the Biden administration restored two years ago after it was cut entirely by the last administration; and UNRWA remains the only reliable distribution network in Gaza. There is no alternative, and this vital support from us will continue and we call on others who expressed concern about this situation to do the same.

Let me talk about containing the conflict to Gaza and to Hamas. The President has said clearly and repeatedly: 'To any country, any organisation, anyone thinking of taking advantage of this situation: don't.' We are now five weeks into this conflict, and the fears of the expanding conflict from the earliest days so far have not materialised. At this conference last year you heard myself and other American speakers speak about integrated air-defence networks; those networks are being established. The concept of dynamic force deployment – which a year ago was a concept, an international defence strategy – ensuring that the US can respond here in this region on a moment's notice even without standing fixed forces in the hundreds of thousands, as we used to have.

Recent weeks have proved the case. Integrated air-defence networks, developed over years of painstaking work through US Central Command (CENTCOM) and our partners throughout this region, have destroyed dozens of missiles and uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAVs), including missiles launched from Yemen destroyed on the edge of outer space. The Ford Carrier Strike Group – led by the largest aircraft carrier in the world, with an embarked air wing, accompanied by cruisers and destroyers – is now in the Gulf, with another Carrier Strike Group, the Eisenhower, anchored in the eastern Mediterranean. We have moved additional air-defence assets to supplement the defences we already had.

The intent here is not to escalate the situation, but precisely the opposite: to deter and to prevent, while also being fully prepared for whatever may come, particularly to defend our personnel and interests. And prepared we are.

Let me turn, finally, to a look ahead, to what can come after the crisis – and I do not necessarily agree that until the fighting stops entirely, we really cannot focus on these fundamental questions. It is important, I think, to ask how we can work together now to ensure, against the desired and stated wishes of Hamas, that this can never, ever happen again. This will require significant security reassurances for Israel – that is fundamental – and it will require a new and reinvigorated process for a long-term and durable peace, and we frame our diplomacy with that in mind.

I hearken back again to the Crown Prince's remarks last night, because he referenced very importantly Secretary Antony Blinken's comments in Tokyo at the G7, where he set forth principles that guide our approach. They have become known as the Tokyo Principles; that was not the intent, but I think that is a good way to phrase them. In the near term, the US insists and will work to ensure the following with respect to Gaza.

Firstly, there must be no forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.

Secondly, there must be no reoccupation of Gaza.

Thirdly, there must be no reduction of the territory of Gaza. This is Palestinian land, and it must remain Palestinian land.

Fourthly, Gaza must not be used as a platform for terrorism or other violent acts. That means no threats to Israel from Gaza.

Finally, there must be no besiegement of Gaza. The innocent people of Gaza must be separated from Hamas. They are not responsible for its crimes.

For the medium and longer term, even in the midst of this crisis, we must plan now and prepare now. Not tomorrow, or when the fighting stops, but right now. So our five no's – no forced displacement, no reoccupation, no reduction in territory, no threats to Israel, no besiegement – are followed by five affirmative and forward-looking principles:

Firstly, the Palestinian people and their voices and aspirations must be at the centre of post-crisis governance in Gaza.

Secondly, the West Bank and Gaza must return to unified governance, ultimately under a revitalised Palestinian Authority, and be incorporated into a future Palestinian state, an impediment which has been in place since 2006. We need to overcome that, and I think we can.

Thirdly, Israel must be secure. Terrorist groups and threats to Israel cannot be permitted to emanate and metastasise from the West Bank or from Gaza. I do agree with Ayman: there is a significant role here for Israel when it comes to the West Bank, something we have been speaking very directly to and very publicly to.

Fourthly, resources must be provided, and we must prepare now to support the post-crisis phase in Gaza to include interim security resources as necessary within the paradigm that we have laid out. It is not simply about cleaning up after the war; it is about setting the foundation for the path that we just laid out, ultimately a path to two states.

Fifth, a reconstruction mechanism must be established to ensure the needs of Gazans are met on a long-term and sustainable basis. We have done this before as a global community and we can do it again.

If we seek to forge a path out of this crisis towards Israelis and Palestinians ultimately living side by side in two states, with equal measures of security, freedom, opportunity and dignity, these principles are essential. And even where we might disagree on the immediate term, we can help guide all of us as we seek to forge the way out of this crisis and towards a better future, a Middle East at peace, increasingly integrated, stable, prosperous and secure.

I will just conclude with an observation. I think it is fair to say, when you come to this conference every year, that those in this room who attend every year – IISS, my colleagues on this panel – I think it is fair to say that you are the builders. You seek a different way to build new connections, a better future for all of us and particularly for this most important region. Hamas, ISIS, the Iranian-backed

militias launching missiles and drones – every other year or so, that is a main focus, one of them – they are the destroyers. They offer nothing for the people they claim to represent.

But President Biden is a builder. He is a builder at home, with historic investments in our own growth and infrastructure, and abroad, with our friends, partners and allies. Over the last year alone in this region, the US has built coalitions to increase shared prosperity. The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) announced at the G20 in New Delhi; the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA) with Bahrain; historic agreements here in the Gulf in the areas of advanced technology, artificial intelligence, space exploration, climate, clean energy and global investments in ports, essential minerals and resources that will define the future.

That remains our affirmative agenda: building a new Middle East, integrated within the region and from the region outwards to the world. But out of this crisis, importantly, we are determined to build; to build lasting security for Israel and a durable, real peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is not only possible, but it is essential, and I think this crisis is a galvanising event that can actually get us there. The US are fully prepared, as Ayman said, to do our part.

We look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Dr Bastian Giegerich, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS

Thank you very much for your statement. May I now ask the EU's High Representative for Foreign Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, to take the floor. While he is making his way to the podium, just a reminder to insert your badge if you are seeking the floor. We started the session a little bit late because of previous commitments from some of the speakers, so we will take a little bit of the time of the coffee break to answer questions.