

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Majid Takht Ravanchi
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
On “Maintenance of international peace and security: Implications of Covid-19”
Before the United Nations Security Council
New York, 2 July 2020

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Mr. President,

Serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate entail security implications in conflict situations. One example is the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the conflict situations in our region — from Yemen to Palestine to Syria.

In those countries, the pandemic has worsened the socioeconomic situation, negatively impacted de-escalation efforts and peace negotiations and, by adding a new layer to existing problems, has further complicated the overall situation.

In Yemen, where the nation is already experiencing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, the death toll from the virus could exceed the combined toll of war, disease and hunger over the last five years, as stated by United Nations officials present in that country.

At the same time, due to the inaction of the Security Council in confronting the foreign aggression against this country, the aggressors are emboldened and even take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to escalate air strikes and tighten the siege of ports and airports that channel humanitarian assistance to the people in need. Such unlawful measures have no other designation than war crimes and must be prevented.

In Palestine, the Israeli regime has continued its blockade, which has lasted more than a decade, against the Gaza Strip — even during the coronavirus outbreak — leading to further deterioration of the already fragile humanitarian situation there.

In Syria, where the situation in many parts of the country was improving as a result of the terrorist defeat and the restoration of the Government’s control over its territory, the COVID-19 outbreak has slowed down, relatively, the return of displaced persons and reconstruction efforts. The humanitarian situation there has worsened, however, as a result of a permanent Council member’s irresponsible policy of imposing unlawful unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people.

As a country that is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the coronavirus and as a victim of one of the most inhumane sanctions of the United States, the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully aware how such sanctions drastically hinder national responses of targeted countries

from effectively preventing the spread of the virus.

In practice, such unlawful sanctions hamper the import of humanitarian goods, particularly medical equipment and medicine, mainly affecting the patients — the most vulnerable component of every society. That alone indicates how immoral, inhumane and illegitimate such sanctions are, particularly when the entire world is facing a highly contagious virus targeting the whole human family and the only way to push it back is solidarity in action and well-coordinated international cooperation.

Moreover, it shows that the application of unilateral sanctions, in the context of the current unprecedented global health crisis involving all nations, is against the common interests of humankind.

Despite strong international calls for their immediate removal, including by the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and some other international dignitaries, as well as many former and current statesmen and stateswomen, parliamentarians, religious leaders, academics, non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions, the application of those illegal sanctions continues.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that measures such as the inhumane siege of Yemen and the Gaza Strip, as well as the imposition of unlawful unilateral sanctions such as the one recently imposed on Syria, could contribute not only to the spread of deadly diseases but also to the deterioration of conflicts.

While the impact of serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate in conflict situations needs to be addressed, the immoral and inhumane nature of unilateral sanctions and their impact in extending pandemics and worsening conflicts must not be overlooked.

I thank you, Mr. President.