

The speech of His Excellency Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, at the opening session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level, Ordinary Session 158

Cairo

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Her Excellency Najla El Mangoush, Chairman of the 158th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level,

Your Highnesses and Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world is on the edge of a dangerous precipice, which we all see in terms of the succession of crises and their accelerating pace. There is not one country that does not find itself today in the midst of these crises, and in one way or another, every country is forced to deal with their consequences.

Our Arab world is not far from these crises and their dangers, and our Arab countries are not immune from the severe repercussions that arose mainly from the war in Ukraine, and before that the coronavirus crisis and the resulting economic slowdown and turmoil in markets and supply chains on a global level.

These crises have revealed, among other things, the interconnectedness of problems. Energy, food security and climate change, for example, are all interrelated and inseparable issues, and they are linked to global security, and to the relations between influential powers, whether they are in conflict or agreement.

We, in the Arab region, look at the changes and developments taking place in the international arena from the main perspective of Arab interests, and how to preserve, strengthen and defend them. From this standpoint, and according to that vision, our collective positions on the war in Ukraine were formed. I consider that our collective action towards this serious international crisis, including the visit made by the ministerial group to the two parties to the crisis, as well as the reception of representatives from the highest level for both parties here at the General Secretariat of the League to listen to their views, I consider this move an important indication of the depth of Arab coordination towards one of the most serious challenges at the

international level, and an indication of the urgent need to continue such coordination in the next stage.

Our Arab countries are undoubtedly suffering as a result of this crisis. Perhaps the decline in food security is the most serious impact that the region is exposed to. Food security, as is well known, is tightly linked to poverty rates that have escalated on a global level and, unfortunately, in the Arab region as well.

Securing food sources is an integral part of Arab national security in its comprehensive sense. As the ministers know, this issue was raised on the Arab action agenda recently at the initiative of Kuwait last January and it received the support of all countries. I was keen to assign the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development, being the specialised technical arm concerned with the food security file, to prepare a comprehensive study on the subject. The study was not to start from scratch. Rather, it built on existing mechanisms, studies, and programmes that have previously been discussed and worked on within the framework of Arab action. Today, you are presented with a resolution in this regard that seeks to crystallise a strategy for Arab food security.

I am certain that this important file will occupy a prominent position on the agenda of joint Arab action in the coming years. It is not only related to the current crisis. Rather, it mainly focuses on addressing the Arab food gap with a future vision that takes into account aspects of national security, water security, economic opportunities, climate change and other issues related to food production directly or indirectly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global crises should not overshadow the raging crises in the region, which are still far from a political solution. Syria continues to suffer from increasing stagnation against the backdrop of escalating international polarisation, the fragility of the security situation and a serious deterioration in the economic and social conditions.

In Yemen, although the truce provides a real opportunity to work towards a comprehensive political solution, the gap between the positions of the parties is still wide, and external interference makes the situation more complex and

contributes to prolonging this conflict, for which the Yemeni people are paying the price.

In Libya, we are observing a further departure from settlement and compromise, and more division between the parties in a way that threatens to ignite the conflict.

In all these crises, the political solution remains the only possible option to achieve stability, end the immense suffering of the people, and stop the bloodshed and losses incurred by countries over the past years.

The Arab public opinion is following up on what is happening in Iraq, this important country, with great concern. During the past few days, sedition was about to cause more conflict and violence.

We thank God that the language of reason prevailed before it was too late. However, we all monitor the dangers of the continuation of the political crisis. All political forces in Iraq are calling for resorting to political dialogue as the only way to resolve differences, and to avoid violence or the threat of it, and to keep the problems of Iraq inside Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered a lot, and all their sects look forward to political stability and economic security, and they seek to distance their country from regional polarisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Freezing the political track to resolve the Palestinian issue is a crime against the future; the future of all peoples in this region who aspire to security and prosperity. The Palestinian people also have the right to be part of this future. Their children are suffering from increasingly ferocious colonialism and racism while Israel pursues oppression and occupation with the knowledge of the international community. We are observing the rejection and denunciation of land occupation in other parts of the world, as if there were different standards for Palestine and other regions. In my opinion, this can only be defined as heinous double standards.

A just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, by ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state on the borders of 4 June 1967, remains the most important key to the long-term stability of this region. Ignoring this issue will not make it disappear. It is a living Arab issue that has enjoyed an Arab, even international, consensus for decades,

and it will remain a main issue for the League of Arab States until the adoption of a solution in accordance with international legitimacy and international law.

Finally, the Arab world, despite the crises it is suffering from and the challenges it faces, is still able to respond to the challenges as a solid regional bloc. We look forward with confidence to the next summit in Algeria in November, God willing. We pray to God that it will be an important milestone in the history of joint Arab action, and that it will be a reason for harmony and unity and an authentic expression of public opinion in our country that desires to see its leaders reunited with a united word. For this noble goal, it is imperative that we address any disagreement and contain any problem, bearing in mind the higher Arab interest at all times and being keen on the bond that unites us.

Thank you, may God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.