I would like to thank the Council and the German Presidency for giving me this opportunity to brief you today.

As of today, there has been no further Israeli annexation on the West Bank. That does not translate into this being a moment for self-congratulation; keep the champagne on ice. Refraining from de jure annexation must of course carry no reward; avoidance of criminality is normative not prize-worthy.

De jure annexation would exacerbate and accelerate existing negative trends, but whether it happens or not, it is a symptom of a deeper crisis – the permanent denial of freedom, rights and equality to Palestinians. The annexation focus also ignores and neglects the two-million Palestinians in Gaza living under permanent conditions of inhumane closure.

The collective challenge is not just how to prevent annexation, but how to address occupation and these deeper entrenched structural problems.

The peace process, as currently framed and pursued, offers a place of refuge from hard choices, a comfort zone where the law of diminishing returns has a lock hold. It has brought us to the brink of annexation and the precipice of PA financial collapse.

It is not a question of trying harder, of resuming negotiations. More of the same guarantees further deterioration, it is a failure of learning, politics, and imagination.

We must look not to quick fixes but to creating the conditions, the building-blocks, for future progress that can deliver equality, dignity and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

This is not a conflict of two equal parties pursuing equally destructive unilateral actions. Focusing primarily on the Israeli side reflects the relationships of power; of an occupying party whose actions pre-eminently determine outcomes on the ground.

I would therefore humbly propose the following items for the consideration of this body:

1. **Accountability**
   If the unlawful and peace-negating policies of Israel continue to be met with impunity, then there should be no expectation of positive change. It is that simple. Israel pursues policies in violation of international law and UN resolutions because it can; no tangible cost or consequence is attached. Rhetorical condemnation unmatched by real accountability and sanction invites derision. While it should be costly, the occupation has for Israel become cost-free.

2. **Rights**
   Human rights and international legality should be our guiding star and no longer be subordinated to maintaining a peace process that has so palpably failed to deliver. That means, for instance, backing Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders, backing serious investigations into grave human rights violations, including at the ICC, and prioritizing a permanent ceasefire to protect civilians, in particular in Gaza and Southern Israel. To place issues of human rights and international law front and center is not to hark back to the stale
and boring, it is to insist on the timeless and necessary. That includes the right to be free from antisemitism and islamophobia.

3. **Two states**
   The two-state outcome is not an infinitely elastic concept. There is no state minus; that is called continued occupation. A plan that empties the yet-to-be-established State of Palestine of all attributes of sovereign statehood cannot offer a path to peace. Preemptively normalizing regional relations with Israel while occupation continues is to indulge maximalism.

4. **Beyond partition**
   Given the gap between what is necessary for a genuine two-state outcome that could emerge by mutual consent and what is the reality on the ground as dictated by Israel, it might be necessary for members of this body, to consider, alongside expressing a preference for two states, acknowledging a readiness to engage with other ideas so long as any alternatives respect one irrevocable standard, namely full enfranchisement, equal and democratic rights for all of those within the political and physical space in question.

   In 1947, it was the UN which determined in favor of partition – there were majority and minority positions [and even one abstention]. I would draw your attention to the prospect of the partition question needing to be revisited in the not-too-distant future.

5. **Values**
   We should also look to nurture shared values of equality and humanity in navigating a way forward. For instance, to understand and mutually engage with the experience and dispossession of Palestinian refugees, and with the Jewish impulse for a shelter of last resort. At this time where historic issues of racial justice have belatedly come to the fore and as we mourn American civil rights leader John Lewis, it is important to remember the many Palestinian and Israeli voices who have and continue to stand-up for justice and equality. As a recent example, I would urge you to look at an essay by American-Jewish intellectual Peter Beinart – ‘A Jewish case for equality in Israel-Palestine’ – and to consider the mobilizing and liberating power now, today, of a narrative of equality over separation, of dignity over real-estate - whatever the eventual political dispensation.

   As some of the options mentioned above are examined, Israelis should be more not less engaged. There should be wide-ranging discussions with different sectors of Israeli society – including those supportive of the existing trajectory and those dissenting from it. Similarly, to engage varied Palestinian constituencies, both inside and outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as with Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israel.

   Finally, and as is evident from this briefing – the Palestine-Israel situation is going through a quite profound transition, as indeed is our global geopolitical system.

   The call of Secretary General Guterres to avert a great fracture and maintain a universal system should be strongly supported, alongside the SG’s recognition that the Covid pandemic has underscored the need for a strengthened and renewed multilateralism, and his call to re-examine long-standing assumptions and reconsider approaches that have led us astray.

   It would send a strong signal were this body to explore, together with the SG, a mechanism to assess and evaluate its record and effectiveness on Israel-Palestine and to examine convening a commission or other appropriate vehicle to appraise anew approaches to resolving this long-standing conflict with its attendant debilitating effects.

   Thank you.