Middle East on razor edge

Two-state solution under threat from continued violence and ever-expanding settlements on Palestinian land

Analysis
MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE

SOUTH Africa participated in the recent conference in Paris aimed at reviving the Middle East peace process, which collapsed in 2014 with the outbreak of what has become known as the Fifty-Day Gaza War.

The Middle East peace process remains one of our foreign policy priorities.

Over the past two years, we have appointed two special envoys: former minister Zola Skweyiya and former deputy minister Aziz Pahad, who were tasked with visiting a number of countries in the Middle East region and interacting with leaders and opinion makers, soliciting views on how to revive the peace process.

South Africa fully supports the French initiative following the worrying silence and lack of dialogue since 2014.

This initiative is like a first raindrop after a long drought and we hope it will nourish the peace process.

In the past, South Africa has been involved in dialogue between different groups of Palestinians and Israelis, including the Quartet, the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the International Quartet in the Middle East region.

The central role of the UN is to support and encourage the peace process.

We believe that a dialogue is still possible. In fact, a dialogue is the only way. The two-state solution, with all its shortcomings, is still the only way.

The continuation of the war is part of the French initiative on the Middle East peace process. It is expected that another, broader international conference will be held later this year that will bring in more countries, including Israel and Palestine.

The conference is expected to rekindle a negotiations process between Israel and Palestine.

The recent Paris conference was successful in bringing countries together, but the real challenge is to build trust and create the conditions for a sustainable peace process.

KEY POINTS

- South Africa participated in the recent conference in Paris aimed at reviving the Middle East peace process, which collapsed in 2014 with the outbreak of what has become known as the Fifty-Day Gaza War.
- The Middle East peace process remains one of our foreign policy priorities.
- Over the past two years, we have appointed two special envoys: former minister Zola Skweyiya and former deputy minister Aziz Pahad, who were tasked with visiting a number of countries in the Middle East region and interacting with leaders and opinion makers, soliciting views on how to revive the peace process.
- South Africa fully supports the French initiative following the worrying silence and lack of dialogue since 2014.

The challenge is to build trust and create the conditions for a sustainable peace process.

Our country is committed to making every contribution we can to ensure that this initiative becomes a success.

Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.