

The Conservatives do not support the singling out of Israel, nor the politicisation of UN institutions by the Palestinians. Britain is a true friend and ally of Israel and I am proud of the role that Britain played in creating a homeland for the Jewish people. Israel is an example to the rest of the world for overcoming adversity and defying disadvantages. It is a thriving democracy and a beacon of tolerance and I am pleased that the UK is Israel's second largest trading partner.

UK Government policy has been clear, however, that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and make a two-state solution, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, harder to achieve and that is why the UK supported the UN Resolution 2334 on 23 December.

Government Ministers consistently urge the Israeli authorities to cease all settlement building and to remove illegal outposts, and the Israeli authorities are well aware of the UK's long standing position on illegal settlements.

Of course one is right to point out that settlements are far from the only problem in this conflict. To focus only on one issue is not the best way to negotiate peace. It is right therefore that the resolution 2334 also makes clear that the Palestinian Authority must maintain effective operations aimed to confront those engaged in terror and the dismantling of terrorist capabilities. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the threat of terrorism, with which they have had to cope for far too long.

It is my understanding that the Resolution was proposed and drafted by the Egyptian delegation. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK engaged with the text as it does with all Security Council texts.