

Arab League Warns Against New Zionist Settlement Plans

WEST BANK (Xinhua) – Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit has warned against the implementation of plans by the Zionist regime to build thousands of settlements in the occupied West Bank.

He stressed that such plans undermine a solution by grabbing the lands of the future Palestinian state, according to a statement published on the website of the Arab League.

Aboul-Gheit called on the U.S. administration to take a firm position against the plans in defense of a solution that Washington is promoting, adding that the settlements undermine such efforts.

“It is not possible to talk about reaching a settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, or about peace in the region, while the Palestinian territories are being gnawed away every day,” he pointed out.

The statement said the right-wing



New settler units under construction in the illegal settlement of Har Homa on January 26, 2017

Zionist cabinet is seeking a U.S. green light to proceed with its plans.

Aboul-Gheit noted that the regime led by Benjamin Netanyahu refuses to be a partner in a peaceful political process leading to a comprehensive settlement, adding that this cabinet is working to satisfy and appease the most extreme

wings in the domestic political arena as well as the settlement groups and extremists.

The expansion of settlements in the West Bank, among the thorniest issues between the occupying regime and the Palestinians, has continued despite repeated international calls for construction to

stop, even from the occupying regime’s allies, including the United States.

Analysts believe that Israel’s major plans across the occupied territories are essentially aimed at cutting off Palestinian communities from one another and ensuring a Jewish demographic majority.

More than 600,000 Zionists live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and East Al-Quds.

All settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East Al-Quds as its capital.

The last round of Zionist-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel’s continued illegal settlement expansion.

Egypt Approves Budget Amid Privatization Drive, Economic Crisis

CAIRO (Al Jazeera) – Egypt will be allocating 127.7 billion Egyptian pounds (\$4.14bn) for its food subsidy program for the upcoming fiscal year beginning on July 1, up from 90 billion Egyptian pounds (\$2.92bn) a year prior, as the most populous Arab nation grapples with an economic crisis.

About a third of Egypt’s 105 million people live in poverty, according to government figures, and many Egyptians depend on the government to keep basic goods affordable through state subsidies and other similar schemes.

The country’s parliament approved its three-trillion-pound budget (\$97.41bn) for 2023-2024 on Monday, according to a docu-

ment seen by Reuters news agency.

Egypt has budgeted for a total expenditure of 2.991 trillion pounds (\$94.49bn) and revenues of 2.142 trillion pounds (\$69.55bn) for the year ahead.

The government has also budgeted for an oil price of \$80 per barrel of Brent crude.

The budget estimates real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.1 percent and an average inflation rate of 16 percent.

Egypt’s finance ministry estimates it will need 8.25 million tons of wheat for the subsidy program. It is one of the world’s biggest wheat importers and its economy has taken a hit since the start of the Ukraine war last year, as Ukraine

is one of the world’s largest wheat exporters.

Concurrently, talks are under way for the sale of a large power plant in Beni Suef, south of Cairo, a possible \$2bn deal with Actis LLP and Edra Power Holdings Sdn Bhd that could be a significant boost to the country’s economy, Bloomberg reported.

Since the Ukraine war, Egypt’s currency has depreciated by nearly half, and foreign investors have pulled more than \$20bn out of Egyptian treasury markets.

Last April, Egypt announced a plan to attract investments amounting to \$10bn in the next four years, privatizations it also needs to meet a number of foreign debt obliga-

tions in the next few months.

In February, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly disclosed a list of more than 30 state-owned companies to sell to investors within the year.

On Tuesday, the country signed a \$460m financing agreement for Cairo’s metro lines with South Korea.

Last month, the Egyptian finance ministry announced the selling of a 9.5 percent stake in state-controlled Telecom Egypt for 3.75 billion Egyptian pounds (\$122.4m) in the move to push forward the government’s privatization program.

Amid the continuing crisis, Egypt has been relying on imports of basic foods and fuels.

WFP to Reduce Food Aid in Sanctions-Hit Syria Due to Funding Shortage

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has announced it has to cut food aid to Syria, hit by U.S. sanctions, by about half because of a lack of funding.

“An unprecedented funding crisis in Syria is forcing a cut in assistance to 2.5 million of the 5.5 million people who rely on the agency for their basic food needs,” said the WFP.

“After exhausting all other options, WFP took the decision to stretch the extremely limited re-

sources by prioritizing 3 million Syrians who are unable to make it from one week to the next without food assistance rather than continue assistance to 5.5 million people and run out of food completely by October.”

The agency’s representative and Country Director in Syria, Kenn Crossley, described this as a bleak scenario. “Instead of scaling up or even keeping pace with increasing needs, we’re facing the bleak scenario of taking assistance away from people, right when they need

it the most.”

The WFP announcement came one day before the European Union is hosting the seventh Brussels Conference on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”.

A day earlier, Russian Ambassador to Syria Alexander Efimov said on Monday that the U.S. sanctions on Syria are posing a major obstacle in the country’s reconstruction.

In remarks to the local online al-Watan newspaper, Efimov hailed the recent restoration of relations between Syria and other Arab

countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states, but said the economic cooperation is stranded by the persistent U.S. sanctions.

“These sanctions still constitute a major obstacle to the full participation of the countries of the region in the reconstruction of Syria,” he said, calling on the West to lift all “illegal measures of financial pressure and extortion.”

The ambassador said he hoped other countries in the Middle East help stop the “inhuman policy” as soon as possible.

Erdogan Says Accedes to Simsek’s Monetary Policy

ANKARA (Middle East Eye) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that he has acceded to Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek’s thinking on monetary policy and expects steps to be taken with the Central Bank to calm inflation, despite maintaining his personal opinion on lower interest rates.

“Of course, some friends should not fall into the error of ‘is the president going to make a serious change in interest policy’. I am the same,” he told a group of journalists that accompanied him to Azerbaijan.

“But on the point of our treasury and finance minister’s current thinking, we of course easily yielded to him to take the steps here quickly and together with the Central Bank. We said ‘good luck’, and in this way, we also declared our determination to reduce inflation to single digits.”

Since 2021, Erdogan has run an unorthodox monetary policy that depended on low interest rates and strong credit growth, resulting in runaway inflation and depletion of Turkey’s foreign reserves.

However, after securing a third presidential term last month, Erdogan appointed Simsek, a darling of the markets with strong economic credentials, as finance minister. He also appointed Hafize Gaye Erkan as the country’s first-ever female governor of the Central Bank.

“We will of course strive to strengthen our finance sector. We continue and will continue to seek resources in the financial sector,” Erdogan said.

“But the whole point is now let’s make the financial management stronger, and by making the financial management stronger, let’s lower inflation once again.”

Erdogan also said that he chose Erkan after Simsek had advised him to do so, and he also conveyed his wishes to her and Simsek on his expectations for the future.

Sources on Tuesday told Middle East Eye that Simsek convinced Erdogan to raise interest rates after a two-and-a-half-hour-long meeting.

MEE also reported that he was assisted by Erdogan’s son-in-law Selcuk Bayraktar and his older brother Haluk, who jointly run the renowned drone-making firm Baykar and tried to persuade the president that he was wrong on low interest rates and he needed Simsek.

Sources told MEE earlier this month that Simsek proposed to Erdogan an 18-month time frame where he would gradually increase benchmark interest rates from 8.5 percent to as high as 25 percent.

Yellen...

(Continued From Page One)

to the role of the dollar that over time it could undermine the hegemony of the dollar,” Yellen said on CNN.

“Of course, it does create a desire on the part of China, of Russia, of Iran to find an alternative,” she told the network’s Fareed Zakaria in an interview.

Yellen nevertheless signaled Washington’s addiction to sanctions, saying they are an “extremely important tool,” all the more so when used by the United States and its allies as “a coalition of partners acting together to impose these sanctions.”

Signs of de-dollarization are unfolding in the global economy, strategists at the biggest U.S. bank JPMorgan said last Monday.

The strains of steep U.S. interest rate rises and sanctions that have frozen Russia out of the global banking system have seen a fresh push by the “BRICS” nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, to challenge the dollar’s hegemony.

JPMorgan strategists Meera Chandan and Octavia Popescu said that while the greenback remains at the top of the pack, a closer look shows a more bifurcated picture.

Their assessment on the dollar is the most high profile by any large U.S. bank so far, although heavyweight money managers such as Goldman Sachs Asset Management have aired similar views.

In the FX reserves held by central banks around the world, for example, its share has declined to a record low of 58%.

Although that is still by far the largest share of any global currency, it drops further when accounting for gold, which now comprises 15% of reserves versus 11% five years ago.

“Some signs of de-dollarization are emerging,” JPMorgan’s analysts said, adding the trend was likely to persist even as the dollar maintains its “large footprint”.

Efforts by BRICS countries and other major commodity exporters to loosen the dollar’s stranglehold on global commerce have ramped up since the start of the war in Ukraine, which saw the U.S. freeze a large chunk of Russia’s foreign reserves.

Since then Saudi Arabia and China have begun talks to settle Chinese oil sales with the yuan, Brazil and China have announced the phase-in of a yuan clearing arrangement for some trade between the two countries while China and Russia are also now doing a significant portion of their trade in yuan.

China’s yuan now accounts for a record while the euro’s slice has shrunk 8 percentage points over the last decade of ultra low interest rates to 31%.

China...

(Continued From Page One)

On Wednesday, Xi reiterated his call for a state of Palestine to become a “full member” of the United Nations.

“China supports Palestine in becoming a full member State of the United Nations,” Xi said during a meeting with Abbas in Beijing, according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

“The fundamental way out of the Palestinian issue lies in the establishment of an independent Palestinian State,” he said.

Envoy...

(Continued From Page 2)

“Iran firmly opposes the idea of linking climate change to international peace and security and strongly rejects any attempts to politicize technical matters such as climate change.

“Climate change is essentially an issue related to sustainable development rather than a matter of international peace and security,” the Iranian ambassador to the UN said.

Iravani stressed that the issue needs to be addressed and pursued within the appropriate organs of the United Nations, in accordance with their respective mandates.

He stated that developed countries should fulfill their obligations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and provide sufficient support, including financial assistance and technology transfer, to developing countries and help them effectively implement their commitments.

Developing countries, within their capabilities and national circumstances, should receive assistance from the international community to overcome obstacles hindering the implementation of their commitments, the Iranian envoy noted.

Iravani stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite pressing challenges, is determined to honor its commitments, and is organizing with UN support the “International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms” to be held between September 9 and 10 in Tehran.

“The conference aims to bring together all affected countries and interested partners to discuss the means and ways to address the key challenges posed by sand and dust storms, and to find the best solutions and mechanisms possible for mitigating global risks and impacts,” he said.