



## DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

April 2011  
Volume XXXIV, Bulletin No. 4

### **Bulletin** on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System  
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:  
<http://unispal.un.org>*

## **I. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS CALLS FOR CESSATION OF SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY**

*On 5 April 2011, Richard Miron, Spokesman for Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, issued a statement calling for the cessation of settlement activity. The text of the statement is reproduced below:*

We reiterate that Israeli settlement activity anywhere in occupied territory, including in East Jerusalem, is illegal and contrary to the road map. We call on the Israeli Government to halt further planning

for new settlement units, which undermines efforts to bring about resumed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and prejudices final status discussions.

## **II. SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN GAZA AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL**

*On 7 April 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement condemning the violence in Gaza and southern Israel. The text of the statement is reproduced below:*

The Secretary-General is concerned at escalating violence in Gaza and southern Israel. He has condemned the recent rocket fire from Palestinian militants, which hit a school bus and injured two Israeli civilians. He calls for an immediate end to rocket fire.

The Secretary-General is also concerned at reports of civilian casualties from Israeli operations in Gaza and calls for maximum restraint. He urges respect for international humanitarian law and calls for de-escalation and calm to prevent any further bloodshed.

## **III. OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE DECLARES PRESENT PERIOD DECISIVE FOR PALESTINIAN STATE-BUILDING**

*The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) prepared a report for the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels on 13 April 2011, which declared the present period a decisive one for the State-building agenda (AHLC-Apr2011\_UNSCOrpt). The text of the overview is reproduced below:*

### **Overview**

The April 2011 Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) meeting is the fourth since the release in August 2009 of the *Programme of the Thirteenth Government* of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The plan was welcomed by the AHLC in September

2009 as an important platform for donor coordination, with the focus on developing a sustainable economy and building robust state institutions. The Quartet has supported this plan for building the institutions of a Palestinian State in two years. The April 2011 AHLC meeting is the last expected AHLC meeting before the September 2011

target date for completion of institutional readiness for statehood set by the PA and supported by the Quartet. This is therefore a decisive period for the State-building agenda, and the April meeting is an important moment for taking stock of the economic and institutional issues before the AHLC.

The report concludes that, in the limited territory under its control and within the constraints on the ground imposed by unresolved political issues, the PA has accelerated progress in improving its governmental functions. **In six areas<sup>1</sup> where the United Nations is most engaged, governmental functions are now sufficient for a functioning government of a State. This reaffirms the World Bank's assessment in September 2010, noted by the Quartet, that "if the PA maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future".** This is a significant achievement arising from the commitment of the PA and strong donor backing. In parallel, Israeli measures to facilitate movement and access have also supported economic activity.

When released, the *Palestinian National Plan* (PNP) 2011-2013, will lay the basis for additional improvements in PA institutions, and the United Nations looks forward to aligning its future programming accordingly. A donors' conference held at the appropriate time in 2011 will provide an opportunity to reinforce support for the PNP. In addition, it will also be critical to ensure that the PA's recurrent external financing needs in 2011 (estimated at just

under US\$1billion) are met in a timely and predictable manner.

Despite the progress achieved, the key constraints to the existence and successful functioning of the institutions of a potential State of Palestine arise primarily from the persistence of occupation and the unresolved issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This, together with the continuing Palestinian divide, deprives the PA of the ability to extend its institutional authority to areas outside its reach, and of key attributes of statehood which enable a government to deliver to its people. Accordingly, **the institutional achievements of the Palestinian State-building agenda are approaching their limits within the political and physical space currently available, precisely at the time that it is approaching its target date for completion.**

In particular, **while some progress has been achieved on the ground, including through a package of Israeli measures agreed by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Quartet Representative Blair on 4 February,<sup>2</sup> space for real progress regarding Area C and East Jerusalem remains very limited due to persistent measures of occupation, the lack of sufficient meaningful Israeli enablement steps on the ground on these issues, and the lack of progress in resolving final status issues in Israeli-Palestinian political negotiations. Nor is space available in Gaza due to the Palestinian divide. These areas remain outside of the control of the PA, but essential to building a Palestinian State.**

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<sup>1</sup> The six areas are: governance, rule of law and human rights; livelihoods and productive sectors; education and culture; health; social protection; and infrastructure and water.

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<sup>2</sup> Package of Measures Agreed by the Government of Israel and the Quartet Representative. 4 February 2011. See: <http://www.quartetrep.org/quartet/news-entry/package-of-measures-agreed-between-the-government-of-israel-and-thequartet/>.

In the **West Bank**, improvement of security, coupled with improvements in access for goods and people in a number of areas, was recorded since the AHLC last met, as were some Government of Israel (GoI) efforts to facilitate access to basic services. However, in **Area C and East Jerusalem** in particular, measures of occupation continue to challenge Palestinian movement and access, hinder basic service provision to Palestinians, and undermine the development of resources. Human rights concerns persist on many fronts related to the conditions of the Palestinians under occupation, while security incidents of several kinds continue to affect both Israelis and Palestinians. The current situation continues to constrict sustainable economic growth, development, equity in service delivery, and infrastructure development — and the confidence of citizens in the ability of their government to ensure their basic rights. This report therefore concludes that, **notwithstanding GoI steps to facilitate economic growth and some development, measures of occupation which stifle Palestinian life are not being fundamentally rolled back by more far reaching Israeli actions to match the progress of the State-building programme.**

It is vitally important that the State-building and political processes be brought into alignment by September 2011. This remains the PA target date for completion of institutional readiness for statehood supported by the Quartet, complementing the target set by the parties in September 2010 for seeking a negotiated framework agreement on permanent status within one year. In this context, it is of the utmost importance that the parties overcome the current impasse and return to negotiations to seek a framework agreement on permanent

status that resolves all core issues, ends the occupation that began in 1967, ends the conflict and realizes the two-State solution, and the UN will continue to engage within the framework of the Quartet to further this vital objective. On the ground, to advance the agenda of the AHLC, it is essential that the PA continues to implement its agenda and that these efforts are matched by more far-reaching Israeli measures to facilitate economic and institutional progress than those taken to date. The report therefore concludes that **the primary focus as we enter the final months of the *Programme of the Thirteenth Government* is to address the physical and political factors that constrain this *Programme* from realising its full potential. An additional concern remains the lack of PA presence in Gaza, resulting in a disconnect between Gazans and many PA institutions.** Since the last AHLC, socio-economic, human rights and security conditions remained of concern, given Israeli closure measures, misguided de facto governance and lack of Palestinian unity based on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commitments, Palestinian militant activity, smuggling of weapons and Israeli military operations. On a positive note, there was continued progress in the implementation of the Israeli Security Cabinet announcement of 20 June and the announcement of 8 December 2010, both important for recovery in Gaza. There were some signals of recovery and other positive developments during the reporting period, including real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 15 per cent, increased volume of non-food imports, increased average annual sales of Gaza businesses, and further approvals of UN and other international projects. A steady flow of new approvals for UN construction/reconstruction works in Gaza and a streamlining of coordination procedures with the GoI will be key. Greater liberalization of the import of construction

materials through the legitimate crossings into Gaza (including aggregate, iron bars and cement) is increasingly important for recovery. On Gaza, the UN continues to be guided by the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the fundamental goals laid out therein. The lifting of the closure remains a central objective. However, modest recovery efforts amidst a fragile and oft-breached calm, a continuing closure regime, and a persistent Palestinian divide fall short of what is required to lay the economic and institutional basis for statehood throughout the occupied Palestinian territory — in particular in Gaza. The progress that has been achieved by the PA must be more meaningfully connected to all areas of *de jure* PA responsibility and to all Palestinian citizens.

The United Nations has noted with much interest that President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad have strongly supported efforts to achieve progress towards unity. The United Nations will continue to look for real progress towards the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the Palestinian Authority and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization. This report's analysis and recommendations build on the April and September 2010 reports of the United Nations to the AHLC. While there has been some progress in the implementation of a number of the previous recommendations, both by the parties and AHLC members, many of the areas remain relevant to achieving further progress

#### **IV. WORLD BANK PRESENTS REPORT ON BUILDING THE PALESTINIAN STATE TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE**

*On 13 April 2011, the World Bank presented to the AHLC Meeting in Brussels a report entitled "Building the Palestinian State: sustaining growth, institutions, and service delivery". The executive summary of the report is reproduced below:*

##### **A. Executive Summary**

(a) Strong institutions and sustainable economic growth remain the underpinnings of the future Palestinian state.

(b) The World Bank has noted in previous reports to meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) that if the Palestinian Authority (PA) maintains its performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future<sup>1</sup>.

(c) Since the last AHLC meeting, the PA has continued to strengthen its institutions, delivering public services and promoting reforms that many existing states struggle with. The quality of its public financial management (PFM) has further improved. Education and health in the West Bank and Gaza (WB&G) are highly developed, comparing favorably to the performance of countries in the region as well as globally. For example, enrolment in secondary education is roughly 20 percentage points higher than the rate in the

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. September 22, 2009. A Palestinian State in Two Years: Institutions for Economic Revival, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, page 6, and World Bank.

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September 21, 2010. The Underpinnings of the Future Palestinian State: Sustainable Growth and Institutions, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, page 4.

average middle income country, and levels of malnutrition are 7 times lower. Significant reforms still lie ahead for the PA — but no more than those facing other middle income countries.

(d) Real economic growth in WB&G is estimated to have reached 9.3 percent in 2010, exceeding the PA's budget projection of 8 percent. Growth does not, however, appear *sustainable*. It reflects recovery from the very low base reached during the second intifada and is still mainly confined to the non-tradable sector and primarily donor-driven. Unemployment in WB&G has been amongst the highest in the world this past decade, and though it has declined slightly recently, it remains at 16.9 percent for the West Bank and 37.4 percent for Gaza.

(e) In 2009, a little over a fifth of the Palestinian population of WB&G lived in poverty — a 4 percentage point reduction compared to 2004. Social assistance played a crucial role in reducing poverty in Gaza in

particular, with a staggering 71 percent of the Gazan population benefiting from such assistance in 2009.

(f) Ultimately, sustainable economic growth in WB&G can only be underpinned by a vibrant private sector. The latter will not rebound significantly while Israeli restrictions on access to natural resources and markets remain in place, and as long as investors are deterred by the increased cost of business associated with the closure regime.

(g) There is much, however, that the PA can do at the current juncture in order to enable private sector growth when the Palestinian state is established. Adoption of a coherent trade strategy and institution of an appropriate border management and customs system are a priority. In addition, the Palestinian labor market will greatly benefit from closer ties between educational institutions and private enterprises.

## **V. INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND PRESENTS REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE ON THE MACROECONOMIC AND FISCAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA**

*On 13 April 2011, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) presented its seventh review of progress on the macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza to the AHLC Meeting in Brussels (IMF\_AHLCrep130411). The executive summary of the report is reproduced below:*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**The economic recovery continued in the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) in 2010, with real GDP growth estimated at 9 percent in 2010. However, the recovery cannot be sustained without a further easing of Gaza's blockade and of restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank.** Gaza's recovery represents

mostly a "catch up" from a very low base following the tightening of restrictions in 2006. Despite the surge in Gaza's output by 15 percent in 2010, driven by the easing of import controls, its level is lower today than in 2005 by about 20 per cent, and the unemployment rate remains high at about 38 per cent. The West Bank's strong performance since 2008 has been enabled by PM Fayyad government's sound economic

management and reforms supported by donor aid, as well as some easing of Israeli internal barriers. Nevertheless, the West Bank's growth, which is estimated at 8 percent in 2010, is also bound to wane, especially with the Palestinian Authority (PA)'s continued fiscal retrenchment and declining aid, without a strong stimulus from a further easing of Israeli restrictions.

**The PA has pursued a tight fiscal stance in 2010, and continued to undertake structural reforms in line with the vision toward statehood presented in the Program of the Thirteenth Government.** The PA's fiscal performance has been broadly as envisaged in the 2010 budget, with a marked reduction in the recurrent deficit from 26 to 16 percent of GDP. Lower-than-expected donor aid for both recurrent spending and development projects has led to a buildup of expenditure arrears and borrowing from commercial banks. Progress in structural reforms in 2010 included applying the social safety net to target social assistance to the truly needy; the transfer of electricity distribution from several West Bank municipalities to commercial companies to reduce implicit electricity subsidies; and steps toward comprehensive pension reform.

**IMF staff considers that the PA is now able to conduct the sound economic policies expected of a future well-functioning Palestinian state, given its solid track record in reforms and institution-building in the public finance and financial areas.** Steady reforms in the public finance management system have enabled the PA to tightly control expenditures, apply rigorous budget preparation and execution practices, and establish fiscal transparency and accountability in line with international standards. These reforms, along with a

prudent fiscal policy, have contributed to a rise in the quality of spending and a sharp reduction in donor aid for recurrent spending, from \$1.8 billion in 2008 to \$1.2 billion in 2010, with a view to a further reduction to less than \$1 billion in 2011. The Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA)'s institutional reforms have enabled it to fulfill core functions of a central bank. These functions include the application of a rigorous banking supervision and regulatory framework, providing a strong credit and payment infrastructure, and monitoring compliance with a governance code and an anti-money laundering law.

**The PA has made major strides since 2008 in raising the quality, transparency and timeliness of the WBG's economic and financial statistics.** The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) is expected to meet all the requirements of the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) in 2011, reflecting the best practices applied by the PCBS as well as by the ministries and agencies that provide the source data. The quality, transparency and timeliness of the data produced today by the PCBS, Ministry of Finance, and the PMA compare favorably with those of IMF member countries that maintain high data management and dissemination standards.

**The draft Palestinian National Plan (PNP) for 2011–13 envisages a steady reduction in the recurrent budget deficit to about 4 percent of GDP by 2013.** The draft PNP is ambitious but achievable given the PA's strong track record in implementing the equally challenging Palestinian Reform and Development Plan for 2008–10 presented at the Paris Donors' Conference in December 2007. To further raise public sector efficiency, phase out reliance on aid for the recurrent budget, and



sustain private sector confidence, it is essential for the PA to step up the implementation of structural reforms, including electricity sector, pension, and civil service reforms. For 2011, it is particularly important for the PA to abide by the expenditure ceilings set in the 2011 budget to achieve the targeted reduction in the recurrent deficit from 16 to 13 per cent of GDP, especially given the highly uncertain global environment and prospects for donor aid. While expenditure arrears and domestic bank borrowing cannot be fully prevented in case of continued shortfalls in donor aid, the PA should do its utmost to minimize these by continuing with cost-saving measures, prioritization of operational expenditures, postponement of lower priority projects, and by making effective use of the Financial Management Information System to better match expenditure commitments with cash availability.

**To sustain the solid economic growth and reduce unemployment, prompt action needs to be taken by the Government of Israel (GoI) to ease restrictions on economic activity.** The measures envisaged in the agreement between the Quartet Representative and the GoI in February 2011 are prime examples of initial practical steps that could be implemented despite political challenges. To ensure sustained and broad-based growth, it is important to implement these measures as scheduled and build on them by phasing out

remaining restrictions on economic activity, in particular the restrictions on trade between the WBG and Israel, on internal barriers on movement in the West Bank, and on access by the private sector to about 60 percent of the West Bank's territory (Area C).

**A key component of the agreement between the Quartet Representative and the GoI is the decision by the GoI to engage in discussions with the PA to agree on new measures to enhance the collection of clearance revenue.** These discussions have started in March 2011, with the aim of settling outstanding issues by June 2011. One key objective should be to agree on practical steps to minimize clearance revenue leakages, including through: (i) enhanced monitoring by the PA officials of imports at border crossings to raise the collection of invoices for VAT and other taxes and fees; and (ii) an assessment of potential revenue on the basis of comprehensive data compiled by the GoI on imports from Israel into the WBG.

**It is essential that adequate aid to support the PA's reforms be pledged as soon as possible and disbursed in a timely manner.** For 2011, there is an urgent need to secure donor assistance to cover the recurrent financing requirements of \$967 million. About \$0.7 billion was disbursed or indicated by donors during the first quarter of 2011, leaving a financing gap of about \$0.3 billion in the remainder of the year.

## **VI. UN-HABITAT GOVERNING COUNCIL APPROVES RESOLUTION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

*On 15 April 2011 the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) approved a resolution on human settlements development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (23/2). The text of the resolution is reproduced below:*

*The Governing Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 19/18 of 9 May 2003, in which it endorsed the establishment of the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People and the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund, and its resolution 22/11 of 3 April 2009, in which it called upon member States to provide financial support to the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People and its Trust Fund,

*Recognizing* that shelter and human settlements remain key elements in improving the living conditions of Palestinians for building their State and in reaching a sustainable peace in the Middle East,

*Appreciating and recognizing* the important efforts of the Palestinian Authority in building the Palestinian institutions in order to improve the human settlements conditions of the Palestinian people while working towards sustainable urbanization,

*Noting* the special housing needs of the Palestinian people and the unsustainable urbanization trends leading to further deterioration in the Palestinian human settlements conditions, re-enforced by the existing situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

*Conscious* of the housing and human settlement needs of the Palestinian people

especially in areas where there are acute humanitarian and development needs,

*Expressing* the hope that the Palestinians and the Israelis will continue to support and facilitate the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People, in particular the ongoing discussions towards a smooth flow of building materials into the Gaza Strip from Israel and the West Bank, with a view to alleviating the housing crisis in Gaza and facilitating economic recovery,

*Noting with appreciation* the renewed efforts of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), as evident in the report of the Executive Director, to mobilize its core technical expertise on planning, land and housing issues as outlined in the Habitat programme document for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2010-2011) and the consequent improved focus of the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People in line with the Palestinian priorities and complementary to the efforts of other United Nations and international organizations and member States,

*Expressing its appreciation* to Governments and other stakeholders for their positive response to the call for financial support included in resolution 22/11,

1. *Calls upon* the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-

Habitat) to further focus its operations on planning, land and housing issues with a view to improving the housing and human settlements conditions of Palestinians, addressing the urbanization challenges, supporting the building of a Palestinian State and fostering humanitarian action and peacebuilding in the areas where there are acute humanitarian and development needs, identified through technical assessments by UN-Habitat in coordination with all concerned parties;

2. *Encourages* the Palestinian Authority, with the support of UN-Habitat and as part of its State-building effort, to continue its efforts and further enhance its legal and institutional framework, policies and practices related to planning, land and housing so as to prepare the ground for sustainable urbanization;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director to establish and chair an advisory board to the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People and the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund, comprising representatives to the United Nations of contributing member States, in order to

provide policy guidance to the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People, taking into account the evolving context, support fundraising based on identified gaps, review progress and reporting to the Governing Council and prepare the necessary Governing Council resolutions;

4. *Calls upon* member States and other stakeholders in a position to do so to financially support the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People and its Technical Cooperation Trust Fund so as to ensure the availability of the core expertise of UN-Habitat on planning, land and housing and the implementation of its specific programmes, as outlined in the UN-Habitat programme document for the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session on progress with regard to the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People, including progress in the mobilization of financial resources for the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund.

## **VII. SECRETARY-GENERAL DENOUNCES MURDER OF ITALIAN ABDUCTED IN GAZA**

*The following statement was issued on 15 April 2011 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon press release (SG/SM/13510):*

The Secretary-General deplores the abduction and murder of Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian citizen, in the Gaza Strip, and extends his condolences to his family. This crime was committed against a person who

lived and worked among the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Secretary-General calls for the perpetrators of this appalling crime to be brought to justice as soon as possible.

## VIII. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION CALLING FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF UNRWA

*On 18 April 2011, the General Assembly discussed the text of the draft resolution contained in the report of the Special-Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/65/422/Add.1), adopting it as resolution 65/272 (see A/65/PV.86). The text of the resolution is reproduced below:*

### **Resolution 65/272**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the management capacity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* its resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, by which it established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and all subsequent related resolutions, including its resolution 65/100 of 10 December 2010,

*Having considered* the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2009,<sup>1</sup>

*Taking note with appreciation* of the report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East<sup>2</sup> and the efforts of the Working Group to assist in ensuring the financial security of the Agency,

*Reiterating its deep concern* about the critical financial situation of the Agency, caused in part by the structural underfunding

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<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/65/13).*

<sup>2</sup> A/65/551.

of the Agency, as well as its rising expenditures resulting from the deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in the region and their significant negative impact on the provision of necessary Agency services to the Palestine refugees, including its emergency-related and development programmes,

*Reiterating* that the effective functioning of the Agency remains essential in all fields of operation,

*Recognizing* the need to maintain and extend the Agency's management reform process in order to enable the Agency to effectively deliver services to the Palestine refugees, most efficiently utilize donor resources and reduce operational and administrative costs, and encouraging in this regard the Agency's efforts to sustain change,

*Recalling* its resolution 3331 B (XXIX) of 17 December 1974, in which it decided that expenses for salaries of international staff in the service of the Agency which would otherwise be a charge on voluntary contributions should be financed by the regular budget of the United Nations for the duration of the Agency's mandate,

*Recalling* the recommendation of the Working Group at its extraordinary meeting in June 2009 that the General Assembly review, at its next session, the basis for its decision in resolution 3331 B (XXIX) to provide funding to the Agency for

international posts so as to enable the Agency to meet contemporary demands from stakeholders and the Assembly itself,<sup>3</sup>

*Stressing* the need to continue supporting the institutional strengthening of the Agency, including the need to reinforce the Agency's resource mobilization and advocacy capacities as well as the need for more predictable funding, through the provision of financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations, in accordance with the requests made in its resolutions 64/89 of 10 December 2009 and 65/100 of 10 December 2010,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the management capacity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East;<sup>4</sup>

2. *Takes note* of the grave financial situation faced by the Agency, including recurrent budgetary shortfalls due to underfunding and rising costs;

3. *Calls upon* the Agency to continue its management reform process in order to enhance its ability to raise and efficiently utilize resources, reduce operational and administrative costs, and implement change for more effective delivery of services to its beneficiaries;

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<sup>3</sup> A/65/551, para. 14 (d).

<sup>4</sup> A/65/705.

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to support the institutional strengthening of the Agency through the provision of financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations;

5. *Stresses* that approval of funding for the biennium 2012–2013 and for future bienniums, taking into consideration the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>4</sup> is subject to justification in the context of the proposed programme budget for the relevant bienniums and consideration thereof by the General Assembly;

6. *Reiterates its appeal* to all States, the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to continue and to increase their contributions to the Agency in order to address the serious financial constraints and underfunding, especially with respect to the deficit in the Agency's General Fund, and to support the Agency's valuable and necessary work in assisting the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation;

7. *Urges* the Commissioner-General to continue his efforts to sustain and increase the support of traditional donors and to enhance income from non-traditional donors, including through partnerships with public and private entities;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

## **IX. UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION REPORTS ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION IN GAZA AND OFFERS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESPONSE**

*On 18 April 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released a report that assessed the psychosocial conditions of education in the Gaza Strip and offered recommendations for response (UNESCO\_PSYRPT). The report is based on the findings of an assessment conducted by Kathleen Kostelny, PhD and Michael Wessells, PhD of the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity. The executive summary of the report is reproduced below:*

### **Executive Summary**

Between December 27th, 2008 and January 18th, 2009, the Israeli army waged a major military operation in the Gaza Strip, bombarding the territory from the air, ground and sea, and conducting a large scale ground incursion. “Operation Cast Lead” resulted in significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure. Moreover, military operations continue on a regular basis, notably in the areas near the border with Israel (the so-called buffer zone), resulting in death, injury and displacement. These operations occur against the backdrop of a severe, long-term blockade. While movement and access restrictions have long been a way of life in the occupied Palestinian territory, in 2006 restrictions imposed on Gaza escalated until just a short list of imports were permitted from 2007 to this day (with some modifications to the list in June 2010 following the international reaction to the army action on the Gaza flotilla). As has been well documented by the United Nations, the blockade negatively affects almost every aspect of life for the people of Gaza. It has also prevented the physical reconstruction and recovery of the Gaza Strip.

Although much has been made of the physical damage that remains unaddressed, equally important are the less tangible impacts of the prevailing humanitarian

situation. In the aftermath of the war, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 25,000 to 50,000 people — including some 14,000 to 28,000 children — were in need of some form of psychological intervention to address the longer-term psychological effects that had resulted from the hostilities. WHO noted that:

*The loss of care and protection of parents or primary caregivers, disruptions to daily life including school and play activities, and loss of adequate nutrition [meant] that children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to psychosocial distress.<sup>1</sup>*

A key sector to consider in this regard is education. Education is not only a basic human right, one that cannot be postponed or neglected during conflict or emergency, but also has a key role to play in protecting and sustaining the lives of children and young people. This is particularly true in the occupied Palestinian territory where generations have grown up living under military occupation, conflict and political instability. In the context of their ongoing statelessness, historic displacement and continued threat of forced displacement, education has a key role to play in equipping children and youth with the tools to succeed and to make positive contributions to a future Palestinian state.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2009). Page 2.

While data on the physical impacts of the military operations on the education system exist, less is known about the psychosocial impacts, and in particular how the psychosocial situation has affected access to and quality of the education sector, a sector vital to the recovery and rehabilitation of Gaza.

One year after the war, UNESCO sought to understand how the education system has been affected by the current situation in Gaza from a psychosocial perspective. In particular, how are learners, teachers, students and professors across the system coping? To answer this question, a large scale assessment that covered all levels of education and all the governorates in Gaza was conducted in the period December, 2009 to March, 2010. To provide a broad and deep picture of the strengths and challenges in the current education system, the assessment used a combination of qualitative methods and a quantitative survey that was administered by Palestinian researchers to a large, representative, multilevel sample of schools throughout Gaza. In all, 90 schools and four universities participated, with over 6,000 learners included in the sample. The survey does not seek to assess the situation relative to a previous baseline, but itself provides an inter-agency baseline that may be used to gauge the effects of future psychosocial interventions. The qualitative methods brought forward the voices and perspectives of those who make up the education system, asking how the situation has impacted them in their work and their learning, and probing what this means for the agencies that seek to support the education sector.

Overall, the assessment reveals worrying trends. While education remains highly valued among students, their families and teaching staff — indicative of the

positive role it can play in helping children and youth heal and grow even in highly adverse conditions — the education system is clearly suffering under the current blockade and military campaigns.

The findings show that learners, as well as teaching staff, are functioning under immense strains and this strongly affects their abilities to learn and to teach. The key research findings can be summarized as follows:

- Learners at all levels of education experience problems such as nervousness, sadness, and fear of attack.
- Learners' ability to learn and perform well in school has decreased due to internal problems, such as inability to concentrate, and external problems, such as lack of electricity at home for studying. Challenges to learning and performance in school have increased across grade levels.
- Both teachers and learners reported that learners have lower learning outcomes in comparison to before the war.
- Teachers and other education staff such as counselors and directors experience significant challenges to their psychosocial well-being.
- Teachers consistently report that they need more support since they have been affected, are uncertain how to support students who have been affected, or are unable to manage their students' unruly behavior and learning difficulties.
- Overall, boys experienced greater problems in learning and performing in school than girls; whereas girls experienced greater challenges to their psychosocial well-being.

- Learners' psychosocial challenges are particularly severe at higher levels of education, where feelings of hopelessness are pervasive.
- At all levels, learners report that they lack the psychosocial support needed to enable full educational participation and high levels of achievement.

The data upon which these findings are based is presented in both quantitative form and in a narrative form that illuminates the agency and perspectives of learners and

educators. Education policymakers and planners are encouraged to use both the data and findings to ensure coordinated, responsive psychosocial support and programming throughout the education system. Policymakers and planners are also urged to provide greater physical and psychological protection for educational facilities, students and staff not only in Gaza but also elsewhere in the (notably in Area C and East Jerusalem) where the education system faces many challenges and constraints.

## **X. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 21 April 2011, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, briefed the Security Council ahead of an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.6520). Excerpts from Mr. Pascoe's briefing are reproduced below:*

...

I regret to report that the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations has persisted in the last month. This is of particular concern given the institutional achievements of the Palestinian Authority and the evolving regional situation. Bold and decisive steps are needed to resolve this decades-long conflict, with vision, leadership and responsibility on the part of all concerned. It is also important that any outbreaks of violence that could undermine political efforts be prevented and that the parties refrain from provocative steps on the ground.

Quartet envoys continued to work with the Israelis and the Palestinians to maximize prospects for resuming direct negotiations on a two-State solution.

Regrettably, after follow-up meetings with the parties on 5 April, it was determined that more time was needed for consultations before the next Quartet meeting could be scheduled. The Quartet remains committed to convening such a meeting as soon as possible. The United Nations continues to work for a balanced and effective Quartet initiative that could help the parties to engage meaningfully in direct negotiations and give a clear international signal of the importance of finding a way forward.

...

The reporting period saw the highest levels of violence in Gaza and Israel since Operation Cast Lead more than two years ago. Violence was ongoing at the time of the last briefing, on 22 March. That same day, four members of a Palestinian family, including three children, were killed by an



Israeli strike in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed regret at the unintentional killing of civilians, while stating that Israel was responding to the firing of rockets at Israeli civilians from populated civilian areas in Gaza. The next day, on 23 March, an Israeli civilian was injured in Be'er Sheva by a Grad rocket fired from Gaza.

Efforts to de-escalate the violence led to a brief lull. However, on 2 April, an Israeli airstrike killed three leaders of the Hamas military wing who were allegedly involved in plans to kidnap Israeli citizens in the Sinai during Passover. The Hamas military wing used a guided anti-tank missile to hit a school bus on 7 April, injuring two people, one of whom, a teenager, died last week. Between 7 and 10 April, Israel launched heavy military operations in Gaza. Rockets continued to be fired into Israel, a number of them reportedly intercepted by Israel's new Iron Dome anti-missile defence system. Following further efforts to de-escalate the violence, a new, uneasy calm was restored on 10 April. It has been largely respected since, notwithstanding the firing of two Grad rockets towards Ashdod on 15 April. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Egyptian authorities were actively engaged in efforts to de-escalate the violence.

...

I regret to report no progress in efforts to secure the release of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, who has been in Hamas captivity since 25 June 2006. We continue to call for his release and for immediate humanitarian access to him. We also continue to follow closely the situation of several thousand Palestinians in Israeli

prisons, whose human rights must be respected. We continue to underscore the importance of releases of prisoners to the Palestinian Authority.

We also remain concerned that the Palestinian Authority is not able to extend its State-building work to Gaza due to the ongoing Palestinian political divide. This only underscores the need for progress towards Palestinian unity within the framework of the Palestinian Authority and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In this regard, I note that consultations on the Palestinian reconciliation continue, although they have not led to the formation of a unity Government, as President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad had hoped they would.

...

We are very concerned at ongoing Israeli settlement activity and demolition of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 4 April, the Government of Israel retroactively authorized construction work and plans for further expansion in the West Bank settlements. We remain very concerned at plans for more than 2,200 settlement units in East Jerusalem, although we note that their further consideration has been postponed until May. More permanent measures to curtail and halt settlement expansion are needed. Settlement activity is contrary to international law and Israel's commitments under the road map, and detrimentally affects Palestinian readiness to return to direct negotiations. We call on Israel to respect international humanitarian law.

...

The international community is rightly concerned over the protracted

stalemate in the peace process. We stress the importance of supporting and empowering the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and of bringing the parties back to the table. Despite the Palestinian Authority's accomplishments, the institutional achievements of the State-building agenda are approaching their limits within the political and physical space currently available. Far-reaching rather than incremental steps should be taken by Israel to lead to progress on the ground and to roll back measures of occupation to match the Palestinian Authority's achievements.

At the same time, the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations on all

final status issues is urgent. We believe that the international community must play its part in helping the parties to move forward, and we will continue to engage Quartet partners, hoping that the conditions will be met for the holding of a principals' meeting as soon as possible.

The United Nations will continue to work for a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the Security Council's resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

## **XI. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS ON THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND ISRAEL**

*On 23 April 2011, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council a report on children and armed conflict, which covers the period from January to December 2010 (A/65/820-S/2011/250). The portion of the report that focuses on developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel is reproduced below:*

...

### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

120. Eleven Palestinian children were killed and 360 injured (342 boys and 18 girls) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in incidents related to the armed conflict. Of the 360 children injured, 58 were under the age of 12; 83 per cent of the injuries occurred in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 17 per cent in Gaza; 302 children were injured by the Israeli security forces, 40 by Israeli settlers, 11 by unexploded ordnance, and 2 by unidentified perpetrators. In addition, five children were injured by

mishandling weapons and explosives, including one incident allegedly related to interfactional fighting by Palestinian armed groups. No Israeli children were killed in 2010 as a result of the conflict, but two were injured, including one as a result of a rocket from the Gaza Strip on 21 December launched by an unidentified Palestinian armed group.

121. There are serious concerns regarding the increasing number of civilians, including children, shot and injured in the so-called Gaza buffer zone imposed by Israel, which covers the area up to 300 metres from the Gaza fence. The exact boundaries of the zone are unclear, given that it is not physically delimited, but is known to be an

area where there are clashes between militants and the Israeli security forces. In May 2009, the Israeli Army made a statement indicating that any individual entering the zone would be endangering his or her life. However, Palestinians continue to collect gravel and scrap metal in abandoned settlements and industrial zones near the fence, which they later sell to support their families. In 2010, 40 boys and 4 girls were allegedly injured by Israeli fire in or near the buffer zone. Of those, 26 boys, some as young as 13, were shot while collecting gravel within 800 metres of the fence. In cases where sworn affidavits were taken, 19 children were shot in the leg, 2 in the arm and 1 child was shot in the head.

122. For the third consecutive year, the use of Palestinian children as human shields by Israeli security forces was reported, with three new cases documented in three separate incidents in the West Bank in 2010. A 16-year-old girl and a 13-year-old boy were used as human shields during house searches in two separate incidents in Nablus, and a 14-year-old boy was forced to walk in front of Israeli soldiers as a shield while stones were being thrown at them during clashes in Hebron. In the first prosecution of its kind, on 11 March 2010, two soldiers were charged with using a boy as a human shield during “Operation Cast Lead”. The soldiers were convicted by an Israeli military court on 3 October 2010 for “inappropriate behaviour” and “overstepping authority”. They were demoted from the rank of staff sergeant to sergeant and given three-month suspended prison sentences. To date, the measures taken by the Israeli security forces to prevent and punish the use of children as human shields have not reflected the gravity of such conduct.

123. As of December 2010, 213 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 were in Israeli detention or imprisoned by the Israeli security forces, including one girl on conflict-related charges. Two Palestinian children were held in administrative detention without charge or trial in 2010, including one boy having been detained for over 10 months. Of particular concern is the sharp increase in the last quarter of 2010 in the documented cases of arrest of young children in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. There are also increasing reports of violence and mistreatment of children by Israeli soldiers during patrols in Silwan, as well as during the arrest, transfer to detention and interrogation of children from East Jerusalem. According to Israeli police figures, 1,267 criminal files were opened against children accused of throwing stones in East Jerusalem between October 2009 and October 2010.

124. In 2010, 90 cases of ill treatment with regard to the treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention were documented by the United Nations and its partners, including through the sworn affidavits of children. Twenty-four of these children were below the age of 15, including two 10-year olds and one 7-year old. In more than 75 of these cases the excessive or extended use of hand-ties and blindfolds were reported, 62 children reported being beaten, 35 children reported position abuse and 16 children were kept in solitary confinement. In three cases, children reported the use of electric shocks on their bodies and four reported being threatened with electric shocks in the course of their interrogation, which resulted in confessions made under duress. Particularly concerning was the fact that there was an increase in documented cases of sexual violence, with 14 cases (13 boys and 1 girl) in 2010 compared to 9 cases (8 boys and 1 girl) in

2009. The cases involved threats of sexual violence (13 cases) and 1 actual sexual assault through the use of electrical cables on genitals. The high number of instances of such treatment reported and documented suggests that ill treatment of children is common in the Israeli military justice system. There is evidence that some children do not report incidents of ill treatment while in custody, owing to concerns about repercussions for making such complaints, and doubts about the effectiveness of the complaints process.

125. One case of ill treatment of a Palestinian boy by the Palestinian Preventive Security Force was also reported and documented in 2010. The case refers to an incident involving an alleged association with Hamas. The boy was threatened and beaten for the purposes of obtaining a confession. He was released after having been detained in solitary confinement for eight days after having been denied access to a lawyer or to presentation before a judge.

126. There was an increase in the number of attacks on schools and education facilities by Israeli security forces and settlers in 2010 (20 cases), compared to 2009 (9 cases). These attacks resulted in damage to schools or interruption of education, placing the safety of the children in Gaza and the West Bank at risk. The majority of cases involved the presence of Israeli security forces within school compounds following raids, forceful entry, and search and arrest operations, including the use of tear gas on students. There were also three incidents involving air strikes and shelling by Israeli security forces that resulted in damage to four schools in Gaza, although schools did not appear to have been directly targeted in these incidents. There was also an increasing number of incidents in 2010 in which Palestinian students were prevented from

accessing schools and had their safety compromised by Israeli security forces. Thirty-six such incidents were documented in the West Bank in 2010, purportedly involving security measures such as road closures searches, harassment or assaults at checkpoints by Israeli authorities and settlers. In other cases, children were exposed to settler violence as Israeli authorities did not provide military escorts to protect children who pass near historically violent settlements and outposts in the West Bank, particularly Hebron. In this regard, the Israeli authorities have not yet responded to the request of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in February 2009 to investigate the 2008 attack by Israeli settlers of children on their way to the Al-Tuwani School outside Hebron. Furthermore, they have failed to address the broader issue of settler violence against Palestinian children. In addition, the blockade on the Gaza Strip impacts on the availability, accessibility and quality of education in Gaza. Though the situation has improved since the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) commenced building 20 new schools after certain restrictions were lifted, UNRWA was unable to deliver education to a number of Palestinian refugee children owing to a shortage of school space resulting from the restriction on the importation of construction materials to rebuild schools destroyed or damaged during “Operation Cast Lead”. Those children are therefore attending Palestinian Authority schools.

127. In 2010, Palestinian armed groups were responsible for eight incidents related to access to education, including two attacks on UNRWA summer schools in Gaza and one incident of a rocket that was fired into Israel and landed near a kindergarten in Ashkelon. Of particular concern was the

attack in May on UNRWA summer camps located in Gaza by masked assailants. The attack and intimidation against UNRWA officials, for which no group has claimed responsibility, was apparently intended to have a negative effect on the attendance of the quarter million boys and girls who participated in those summer camps.

128. On 20 June 2010, the Israeli Security Cabinet declared the easing of the Gaza blockade, particularly pertaining to civilian goods and humanitarian access. While this has resulted in some improvement in the entry of construction materials, it amounts to only a fraction of what is needed to meet the humanitarian needs of the population of Gaza. Gaza's health-care system also suffers from a severe lack of adequate equipment and instruments. As a result, patients must seek treatment outside of Gaza. From January to November 2010, while 3,546 out

of 3,851 (92 per cent) applications for children who sought medical assistance outside of Gaza were approved, 294 applications were delayed and 11 were denied. Both the delays and denials in processing applications can be life-threatening to child patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. Four children, all under the age of 3, died while waiting for the appropriate permits to travel outside of Gaza in 2010.

129. Forced displacement continues to affect the lives of hundreds of Palestinian families. More than 431 Palestinian structures were demolished in 2010 in the West Bank (including Area C and East Jerusalem), including 137 residential structures, leaving homeless at least 594 people, 299 of them children.

...

## **XII. UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE CONVENES IN HELSINKI**

*The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Helsinki on 28 and 29 April 2011, under the theme "Mobilizing international efforts in support of the Palestinian Government's State-building programme", in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 65/13 and 65/14 of 30 November 2010. The meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session, during which presentations were made by 17 experts. At the opening session, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the Seminar was delivered by Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The text of the Secretary-General's message is reproduced below press release (SG/SM/13531-GA/PAL/1199):*

It is my pleasure to send greetings to the participants in this United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People. I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for focusing on mobilizing international efforts in support of

the Palestinian Authority's State-building programme.

This meeting takes place against the backdrop of significant progress by the Palestinian Authority in completing its two-year State-building programme by August. Indeed, the Palestinian Authority has

accelerated progress in improving its governmental functions in the limited territory under its control and despite constraints on the ground. As the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee recognized in Brussels earlier this month, the governmental capacity of the Palestinian Authority is sufficient for a functioning State in a number of key sectors. I commend President [Mahmoud] Abbas and Prime Minister [Salam] Fayyad for this remarkable achievement, in which donor support played an important role.

However, the institutional achievements of the Palestinian State-building programme are approaching their limits within the political and physical space currently available. Time is of the essence and serious efforts must now be exerted by all to bring the parties back to the negotiating table as soon as possible, based on existing agreements between the parties, the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. The goal remains clear — an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and to the conflict, with the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. The two-State solution is in the best interest of both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

It is imperative to stop actions that prejudice the outcome and undermine the climate of trust needed for progress in negotiations. In this regard, Israel's continued settlement activity in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem is unacceptable. I reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law, contradict the obligations made by Israel under the Road Map and represent an obstacle to peace.

Along with the continued impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, constraints on Palestinian urban development and obstacles to free movement and access in the West Bank remain among the most substantial impediments to Palestinian economic viability. While Israel has taken measures to facilitate movement, it must roll back its measures of occupation and facilitate continued economic and institutional progress in order to match the Palestinian State-building achievements.

Going forward, our task now is to support the Palestinian National Plan for 2011 to 2013, which will lay the basis for additional improvements in the Palestinian Authority institutions. The United Nations looks forward to aligning its future programming accordingly. I welcome the organization of a donors' conference at an appropriate time this year, which will provide an opportunity to reinforce support for this Plan.

Another major limit to progress is the inability of the Palestinian Authority to extend its State-building work in Gaza due to ongoing Palestinian divisions. Real progress towards Palestinian unity is necessary within the framework of the Palestinian Authority and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which are the prerequisites for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

The latest escalation of violence which led to civilian casualties in Israel and Gaza has clearly demonstrated the urgent need to fully implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). I reiterate my condemnation of continued indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza towards Israel. I am also deeply worried by Palestinian civilian casualties and I repeat my call on Israel to

exercise maximum restraint and act in accordance with international humanitarian law. All parties must do their utmost to protect civilians.

I am concerned at the situation in the Gaza Strip, which remains unsustainable. The Government of Israel must make sustained and far-reaching progress towards ending the closure of Gaza, within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Legitimate crossings must be able to operate in such a way that the needs of Gaza's civilian population and Israel's security needs can both be met. United Nations agencies, including UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), continue their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, improve living

conditions and promote economic recovery and reconstruction.

Serious and effective international assistance to the Palestinian people, continued performance of the Palestinian institutions and progress towards a viable and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians will all be vital in the coming months. The parties must persist in their goal of resolving all final status issues, and I count on their representatives to exercise responsible leadership to this end. Together with my partners in the Quartet, I will continue to do everything in my power to help them in this effort.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful meeting.

### **XIII. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ISSUES STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN UNITY**

*On 28 April 2011, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry issued the following a statement on Palestinian unity talks:*

The United Nations strongly supports all efforts for progress towards reunification of Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on which progress is overdue. Reunification is essential for achieving a two-state solution that should be reached through negotiations. In this regard, Special Coordinator Serry

notes with much interest the agreement recently announced between representatives of the two main Palestinian factions and the important contribution of Egypt in this regard. He hopes that reconciliation will now take place in a manner that promotes the cause of peace and will continue to follow developments closely.