
Moscow, Russia, 18 March 2010 - Secretary-General's remarks at press conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov**SG ...**

/...

At this time I'd like to highly commend the initiative of the Russian Government in convening this very important Quartet meeting at this critically important time. This is a time when Quartet leaders can discuss more in depth how the Quartet can best help facilitate the Middle East peace process. Now, these indirect negotiations which will begin should be further encouraged, and I believe that these indirect proximity talks should eventually lead to direct negotiations. We have seen and experienced much frustration by what has happened on the ground. This is not a tolerable situation, where so many people are affected by this situation, particularly in terms of the humanitarian situation. We will have, I'm sure, very in-depth discussions tomorrow among Quartet partners, and I appreciate again the Russian Government's position.

/...

Q: How effective will the result of tomorrow's Quartet meeting be for tackling the situation in the Middle East region? And in your opinion, are the countries involved prepared to listen to the decisions of the Quartet?

SG I believe that the Quartet could play a bigger role and have more of a role in encouraging and facilitating the peace process. This is our political responsibility. The Quartet is composed of the United Nations, the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union. These are four countries or entities, organizations, which can have the best support and maximum political impact. Therefore I believe that this Quartet meeting in Moscow will have a very positive influence and impact.

As I said, proximity talks are not an end in themselves; they should lead eventually to direct negotiations. There is no other alternative to direct negotiations through dialogue. This is what we are going to work hard for. Our special envoys are working hard, working on this Quartet agreement. As a way of doing more as a Quartet member, I am going to visit, right after this Quartet meeting, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. And I will also visit Gaza. First of all, just to discuss with the leaders of the directly concerned parties to encourage them as much as I can to engage in dialogue and negotiation. And I will also try to see for myself the current situation of the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinians in Gaza.