

---

**New York, 8 February 2011 - Secretary-General's remarks to the press following his briefing of the Security Council**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to see you again. As you know I came back last Sunday afternoon, after a two weeks long trip to four countries, six stops. I have just briefed the Security Council on my recent visit to Switzerland, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom and Germany. Let me give you just a few highlights; then I can take your questions.

/...

In Munich, I participated in the Munich International Security Conference. At the Quartet meeting in Munich, the Quartet decided to step up its search for comprehensive Middle East peace, including through dialogue with the Palestinians and Israelis. The Quartet will meet again in mid-March. Later today, after this meeting, I will brief the Permanent Representatives of Arab League's Follow-up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Quartet met against the backdrop of dramatic developments in the region. While the Quartet did not discuss Egypt in detail, we are all conscious that it remains a crucial partner for both the Palestinian Authority and for Israel, and for the peace process.

/...

Thank you very much. Now I will be happy to answer your questions.

/...

**Q:** On Egypt. You have been saying that the people want bold reforms but that the transition should be orderly. And as you are probably aware, there is a deep dispute about who should lead this transition which will depend on how bold it actually is. Many of the protesters have been calling for the constitution to be suspended, for President Mubarak to step down and for a national unity government to lead the transition, which could take some time. What is actually happening is that President Mubarak's right hand man, Omar Suleiman, has stepped into place. He has said that President Mubarak will not leave at the moment and he has made proposals which protesters have called piecemeal and cosmetic. Where does the UN stand on this? Who do you think should be leading the transition, and can you actually support both, because they seem to be asking for very different things?

**SG:** We need to address the situation in Egypt or elsewhere in a comprehensive way, particularly when it comes to Egypt. As you know, Egypt is one of the very important countries. They have been playing a very important role in the Middle East peace process. President Mubarak himself has been playing a key role in this process, and therefore, while I would urge that Egyptian Government leaders and people discuss their reform measures and transitions, according to their own rules and regulations and political situation there; at the same time, the very strategic role which Egypt has been playing in the overall Middle East peace process should also be preserved. That is why I am asking that this transition should be orderly and peaceful, so that there should not be any negative sudden impact.

/...

**Q:** Mr. Secretary-General. You had, when you were in Munich, of course you had this meeting of the Quartet and it seems that the Middle East peace process, so to speak, has been almost dead, but now you are trying to revive it. Although, now I believe Ms. Ashton in the morning said no, it's very much alive, but it doesn't seem it's moving, and that is echoing. The Middle East/Palestinian question is echoing in everything that is happening in the Middle East, whether it is Tunisia, whether it is Egypt. So how are the leaders in Munich [coming up] with any new ideas to push this process forward?

**SG:** I am also concerned by the very slow process, almost an impasse now of the Middle East peace process. That is why the Quartet principals met in Munich. This Quartet meeting was convened against a backdrop of [?] very difficult situations in the region. As I said, even though we did not discuss in detail the current situation in the region, but the very fact that this Quartet meeting was held against the backdrop of that situation was very important. And secondly, the Quartet principals decided to step up our efforts. The Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative can have a very important role to play to facilitate the peace process in the Middle East. We will continue to do that. Thirdly, we agreed as a sign of commitment, to meet again some time in March, on the occasion of the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting. The detailed time and venue should be decided. In the meantime, we have instructed our envoys to continue their negotiations and roles, first of all among envoys with the parties concerned. As a part of this process, I am going to meet Arab partners this afternoon, right after this meeting. And also our envoys will continue to meet with the parties. This is quite an important sign of our commitment, that the Quartet should be more visibly engaged in the future process.

/...