



## Secretary-General

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### SECRETARY-GENERAL, ADDRESSING ASIA-PACIFIC MEETING ON QUESTION OF PALESTINE

#### VOICES SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT GAZA SITUATION, ISRAELI ACTIONS IN WEST BANK

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine, delivered by Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in Jakarta today, 8 June:

It is my pleasure to send greetings to the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

This meeting takes place in the context of renewed international efforts to rejuvenate the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace based on the two-State solution and the implementation of prior commitments by both sides. I am encouraged by President Obama's commitment to this endeavour. I support the initiative of the Russian Federation to convene an international conference in Moscow. I welcome the active efforts of Arab and Muslim countries to advance the Arab Peace Initiative. And I look forward to a meeting of the Quartet in the near future.

When we turn our eyes to the situation on the ground, the scale and urgency of the challenge becomes clear. There has been almost no progress in recent months on implementing Security Council resolution 1850 (2008) on the political process, or resolution 1860 (2009) on the crisis in and around Gaza. Urgent needs include a durable and fully respected ceasefire, prevention of the illicit supply of weapons to Gaza, the reopening of the crossings in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, and progress on Palestinian reconciliation under the legitimate Palestinian Authority. The United Nations continues to support Egypt's efforts to assist the Palestinian factions in overcoming their differences.

I remain seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Nearly five months after the end of the hostilities, nothing beyond basic needs such as food and medicine is allowed in. Essential recovery efforts and long-term development initiatives are impossible in these conditions. I call on Israel to allow in the fuel, funds and materials that are urgently required to repair destroyed and damaged schools, clinics, sanitation networks and shelters and to restore a functioning market.

In the West Bank, there have been encouraging developments by the Palestinian Authority towards building the institutions of an independent State and improving the security situation through the newly trained Palestinian Authority security forces. However, routine incursions by the Israel Defense Forces are a hindrance to progress. Palestinians continue to endure unacceptable unilateral actions, such as house demolitions, intensified settlement activity, settler violence, and ever increasing movement restrictions due to permits, checkpoints and the wall and fence barrier. The time has come for Israel to fundamentally change its policies in this regard, as it has repeatedly promised to do. There must be a full settlement freeze in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including from natural growth, and settlement outposts must be evacuated. Furthermore, I am extremely worried about intensifying Israeli actions to alter the status of East Jerusalem.

Our shared challenge is to begin implementing transformative changes on the ground and to create irreversible momentum towards an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. We have a clear objective: an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. I remain fully committed to working with the parties and all concerned towards a negotiated political settlement. Resolving this conflict is fundamental to the secure future of Israelis, Palestinians, the region and the world.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful meeting.

