

Remarks ...

Foreign Minister of Spain Josep Pique,
 United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan,
 Foreign Minister of Russia Igor Ivanov,
 and European Union Senior Official Javier Solana
 Secretary Colin L. Powell

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FOREIGN MINISTER PIQUE (translated from Spanish): Good morning to all, thank you for your presence. We have less than 30 minutes for this press conference. I will make a very brief introduction so I can turn it over to the Secretary General of the United Nations, who will be the spokesperson for all of us, and then there will be time for questions; but keep in mind the time constraints that we have.

As you know, we have just met – the institutions that we represent, the EU, the UN, the US, the Russian Federation – to discuss the grave situation in the Middle East and to express a joint declaration on our vision of the situation and the possibilities of getting to a swift solution. Now I will turn it over to the Secretary General of the United Nations, who will read the declaration and make comments he deems necessary. Mr. Annan.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Before sharing the joint statement with you, I would like to say a few words about the grave situation in the Middle East.

We are all meeting today against a backdrop of a steadily escalating three-fold crisis in the Middle East. We face continuing intensification of fighting between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We face mounting humanitarian and human rights crises in the West Bank and Gaza with enormous suffering for the innocent civilian population caught up in the hostilities, and we face rising tensions throughout the region, particularly along Israel's northern border.

I am frankly appalled by the humanitarian situation. The international community demands that the Government of Israel honor its obligation under international law to protect civilians and that the IDF stop the damage, to end destruction of civilian and personal property. Respect for international humanitarian law and the humanitarian organizations is the most basic requirement for any nation that lays claim to democracy and membership of the international community.

I also call on the donor community to be generous in assisting UNRWA and the other international organizations in meeting the endless challenges. I call on the Government of Lebanon and all relevant parties to condemn and prevent such violations. The Security Council itself confirmed in June 2000 that Israel had withdrawn from southern Lebanon in compliance with UN Security Council resolutions [425](#) and [426](#). Attacks at any point across the blue line including in the Shebaa Farms area in the occupied Golan Heights are violations of Security Council resolutions. Respect for decisions of the Security Council is the most basic requirement of international legitimacy.

Finally, I would like to thank the government of Spain for hosting us today in Madrid just over ten years since the Madrid conference set out the essential principles for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

I will now share with you the communiqué that we have agreed on.

"We express our grave concern about the present situation, including the mounting humanitarian crisis and the growing risk to regional security. We reiterate our shared condemnation of violence and terrorism, express our deep distress at the loss of innocent Palestinian and Israeli life, and extend our deepest sympathy to the families of those killed and wounded. Believing that there has been too much suffering and too much bloodshed, we call on the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to act in the interests of their own people, the region, and the international community and to immediately halt this senseless confrontation.

"In this regard, we express our grave concern about the most recent attacks from Lebanon across the UN-determined Blue Line. The Quartet calls on all parties to respect the Blue Line, halt all attacks, and show the utmost restraint. The conflict should not be allowed to spread and threaten regional security and stability.

"The UN, EU and Russia express their strong support for Secretary of State Powell's mission, and urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cooperate fully with his mission and with their continuing efforts to restore calm and resume a political process.

"We reiterate that there is no military solution to the conflict and call on the parties to move towards a political resolution of their disputes based on UNSCR [242](#) and [338](#), and the principle of land for peace, which formed the basis for the Madrid Conference of 1991. We re-affirm our support to the objective expressed by President Bush and spelled out in UNSCR [1397](#) of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side within secure and recognized borders. We warmly welcome Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's peace initiative, as endorsed in Beirut by the Arab League, as a significant contribution towards a comprehensive peace, including Syria and Lebanon.

"To enable progress towards our shared goals, we reaffirm that UNSCR [1402](#) must be fully implemented immediately, as called for in UNSCR [1403](#). We call on Israel to halt immediately its military operations. We call for an immediate, meaningful cease-fire and an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah, specifically including Chairman Arafat's headquarters. We call on Israel to fully comply with international humanitarian principles and to allow full and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations and services. We call on Israel to refrain from the excessive use of force and undertake all possible efforts to ensure the protection of civilians.

"We call on Chairman Arafat, as the recognized, elected leader of the Palestinian people, to undertake immediately the maximum possible effort to stop terror attacks against innocent Israelis. We call on the Palestinian Authority to act decisively and to take all possible steps within its capacity to dismantle terrorist infrastructure, including terrorist financing, and to stop incitement to violence. We call on Chairman Arafat to use the full weight of his political authority to persuade the Palestinian people that any and all terrorist attacks against Israelis should end immediately and to authorize his representatives to resume immediately security coordination with Israel.

"Terrorism, including suicide bombs, is illegal and immoral, has inflicted grave harm to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, and must be condemned as called for in UNSCR [1373](#).

"We call on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to reach agreement on cease-fire proposals put forward by General Zinni without further delay. We commend the efforts of General Zinni to date to achieve this objective.

"The Quartet stands ready to assist the parties in implementing their agreements, in particular the Tenet security workplan and the [Mitchell recommendations](#), including through a third-party mechanism, as agreed to by the parties.

" We affirm that the Tenet and Mitchell plans must be fully implemented, including an end to all settlement activity. We affirm that there must be immediate, parallel and accelerated movement towards near-term and tangible political progress, and that there must be a defined series of steps leading to permanent peace - involving recognition, normalization and security between the sides, an end to Israeli occupation, and an end to the conflict. This will allow Israel to enjoy enduring peace and security and the Palestinian people to realize their hopes and aspirations in security and dignity.

"In support of these objectives, we call on the international community, particularly the Arab states, to preserve, strengthen and assist the Palestinian Authority, including through efforts to rebuild its infrastructure, security and governance capacity. We call also on the donor community and the international financial institutions to renew their commitment to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and to assist in economic and institutional reconstruction. We pay tribute to the courageous efforts of the humanitarian agencies and workers.

" We agreed on the need to keep the situation in the Middle East under review by the Quartet at the principal's level through regular consultations. Our Special Envoys will continue their efforts on the ground to assist the parties in reaching an end to confrontation and resumption of political negotiations."

The Minister reminded me to share with you that the Quartet is hoping to meet fairly shortly and we are going to remain consistently seized of the problem. Of course Secretary Powell, as I said, is going with our full support. Depending on the outcome of his mission, we will meet sooner than later.

QUESTION: I would like to ask Secretary Powell whether you share Kofi Annan's opening statement and the level of which he says he is frankly appalled by Israel's actions and their interference with humanitarian efforts, and also ask Mr. Annan and any others who might want to comment to respond to the latest terror attack today in Haifa.

SECRETARY POWELL: We are concerned about the humanitarian situation. In that instance, the Secretary General was speaking in his own authority as the Secretary General of the United Nations, but certainly all of us are concerned with the humanitarian situation.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: I will say that obviously the situation is very grave, the humanitarian situation. I suspect that none of us will know the full gravity of the situation until we gain access to all the territories that are now the theater of battle. I have a sense that we will be shocked by what we see. We are getting too many independent reports for it not to be credible.

But let me say that on the question of the suicide attacks, I think the statement that I read made it quite clear that it is morally repugnant and should be condemned and no one can defend it. Attacks against innocent and unarmed civilians is terrorism that we cannot tolerate.

QUESTION: Judy Dempsey Financial Times. You mentioned a third-party mechanism. Is there now a consensus among the Quartet that there should be some kind of monitoring mechanism either to implement a cease-fire or to monitor how the cease-fire can be implemented? Could you spell out what you would like, although the Israelis have always resisted this?

SECRETARY POWELL: As you may recall from the G-8 summit meeting last year when this was discussed, the US indicated that it would be willing to put in place US monitors at the beginning of the Tenet Process, the Mitchell Process, and that still remains our position. I think some limited US presence would be acceptable of course by both sides; and once we get started, we might take a look at what else might be done to allow the two sides to have confidence in what either side is doing and to keep the process moving along. The reference here in the first instance refers to the US monitoring offer that was made at the G-8 meeting last year.

QUESTION: Secretary Powell, the communiqué said that you hope to coordinate activities. I was wondering if that may include the possibility of trade sanctions which are being contemplated by the Europeans. Were sanctions discussed, what is the US position on sanctions, and do you think that is an appropriate step for the Europeans to take?

SECRETARY POWELL: We did not discuss sanctions in our Quartet meeting, and I will leave it to Minister Pique if he wishes to say anything about the European Union position. I know there have been different ideas presented, but I will yield to him with respect to that.

FOREIGN MINISTER PIQUE (translated from Spanish): Thank you very much. What we are considering is the possibility of convening the Council of Associations between the European Union and Israel to analyze the situation and to have a profound political dialogue on what we should do to make peace and guarantee security. We will continue to analyze the different possibilities; it is premature to predict.

What we should do is concentrate on what we are doing now and focus on the expression of the communiqué, and the support of the mission of Secretary Powell and to see the evolution of the results.

QUESTION (translated from Spanish): Can you be more specific on the question of sanctions? What position will the US take if your mission fails, if in the next few days you meet with no results? And to Minister Pique, if after today's meeting the EU might have a role in the crisis as far as the finance of the reconstruction?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I'm hoping for a success in my mission so it would be premature and rather hypothetical for me to speak about what other actions the United States might take either alone or in coordination with our partners. That is not something we are considering right now within the United States Government.

FOREIGN MINISTER PIQUE: In respect to your question, I'll be brief. We are here.

QUESTION: Secretary Powell and other members, you've spoken a lot of the political track, about advancing political talks. Can you be more concrete? Do you have any ideas for some sort of political process, another Madrid Conference, some sort of forum where you can bring together these leaders, something you can hold out in particular to the Palestinians to show them why they should cease fire now?

SECRETARY POWELL: We are exploring different ideas and ways this might happen. It would be premature to announce here this morning, but let me make the point that in the Mitchell Plan -- and I am pleased to be standing next to one of the authors, Javier Solana -- its whole purpose was to get to a political discussion and negotiations; and we have been coming back from that purpose by putting in place first a need for security measures, ceasefires and the like.

What I have been saying in recent days is that we need to accelerate the political process closer to the ceasefire and the security apparatus that might be put in place because I think the Palestinian people, the world, the Israeli people, should be anxious to get to a dialogue that will result in a negotiation process that will lead to a solution to this crisis. I think we are all in agreement and the world is in agreement that the solution will not be produced by terror or a response to terror, this is not going to get us there. What will get us there are political discussions, and the sooner we can get to them the better. Now I have to speak to the parties in the region at greater length to see how they view this matter and to see how we can go forward and, in due course, I'm sure that we will let the whole world know what we believe is the proper way to go forward.

QUESTION: Question for Mr. Powell and Mr. Annan. Acts of resistance in the occupied territories, not in Israel, against the soldiers of occupation, not against Israeli civilians. Is it terrorism for you, and for you?

SECRETARY POWELL: What I would say right now is that violence of whatever form, whether one would call it an act of terrorism or an act of resistance at this point is counterproductive. It does not lead to the vision that the Palestinian people have of the state where they can live side by side in peace with Israel. What we have to see now is an end to the violence; with whatever title you want to give to that violence, it is violence nonetheless. It is totally destabilizing the region and it is destroying that vision, and so our call today is for violence to end and response to violence to end. Withdrawal from current incursions that the Israeli Government is conducting is a way of moving forward with all of us united, Palestinian people, the international community, the Israeli people all committed to a vision of two states, a Jewish state called Israel and a Palestinian state called Palestine, living behind recognized borders in peace with one another. The violence we are now seeing detracts from that vision, whatever title one puts on it.

QUESTION: Two short questions for Minister Ivanov and Mr. Solana. What is your idea of the chance of use of embargo from the European Union, and Mr. Solana, do you agree that Europe has been too timid in this phase of the crisis? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER IVANOV: (In Russian, no translation available)

MR. SOLANA: I don't agree. I think that maybe people think Europe could have gone farther but I do think we have done what we should in order to bring peace to the place, which is very close to the interest and values of Europe.

QUESTION: The Secretary of State told us yesterday that he is making an effort to have Syria and Iran do what they could to restrain militia activities, terrorists, pick your word. How do you feel about Syria's behavior? Is this something that you would support, that Syria and Iran should curb particularly in Lebanon?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: No, I have in recent days and weeks been in touch with the leaders in the region particularly with regards to the Blue Line -- which as you know was traced by the UN -- and I have spoken to President Assad, Prime Minister Harare, and President Lahud, and Foreign Minister Peres and doing everything to keep the border quiet because no one wants to open a second front. The leaders have given me the assurance that they are going to do whatever they can to respect the Blue Line, and the Security Council has itself indicated that these violations must cease. I have not spoken to Iran recently on this issue, but we have had a chance to talk in the past.

The last question please.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you talked several times about the physical destruction of the Palestinian authority. Can I ask both you and General Annan?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: We have only one general in the room. (laughter)

QUESTION: What Palestine institutions do you believe need to be rebuilt, by whom, and how soon?

SECRETARY POWELL: This was a subject of discussion this morning; it's also a subject I discussed with the other Arab leaders I met in the course of the week. If we are going to move forward, there will have to be an authority to work with. There will have to be tools of governance, tools of government, and an administration, organizations rebuilt that have been damaged or destroyed in recent months. There will have to be some sort of security apparatus that can control the populations and work with the Israelis. The whole purpose of the security arrangement is to exchange intelligence, exchange information and develop confidence and that they would act on such information to keep terrorist acts from happening, to control the violence. I have spoken to my colleagues here this morning and the other Arab leaders about the need for all to be ready to move forward to make the necessary investments of time, of money, of the resources to reconstruct that part of the Palestinian Authority that has been damaged in recent months. That's an essential predicate in order to move forward.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: I was going to say that in addition to what Secretary Powell has said, we also have to remember that it is a really deplorable economic and social situation in the occupied territory where we would also have to step up our assistance to the Palestinians to get them into meaningful activities when the violence subsides as well as rebuild all the infrastructure that Secretary Powell has referred to. So we have lots of work to do but we must first get the violence down.