
Secretary-General's joint press encounter with President Shimon Peres of Israel (SG's remarks only)**Ramallah, 1 February 2012**

SG: It's a great honour and pleasure for me to visit Israel for the fourth time as Secretary-General of the United Nations. . . I am very pleased to visit at the early start of my second term as Secretary-General. President Peres and I just concluded a very constructive breakfast meeting on the situation in the Middle East and also the current situation happening in and around this area. I very much appreciate our good relationship and your leadership and I also always highly value our open dialogue and the President's wisdom. This is a critical moment for Israel and the region. I am encouraged that Israelis and Palestinians have begun and re-engaged in direct dialogue in the framework of the Middle East Quartet and under Jordanian hospices. I hope these talks can be sustained. I talked with President Peres about ways in which the United Nations and the international community might support their progress. Israel's cooperation in creating a positive dynamic is vital. President Peres has always been a strong advocate of the Middle East Process and a supporter of peace efforts. I am heartened to have him as a partner in this endeavour. The President and I also touched upon the regional situation. I am well aware of the many security challenges that Israel sees around it. But I also know that President Peres has always been a visionary when it comes to the opportunities for a free, democratic and peaceful and prosperous Middle East. I remain convinced that Israel can positively contribute to these changes and improve its strategic relations with its neighbours, including by constructively engaging in the peace process with the Palestinians. And I am here to continue to talk with the Prime Minister and other senior leadership, as well as the Palestinian leadership this evening. I thank you very much.

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Q: Mr. President, the peace process has been suspended for a long time. The world is looking with frustration for it to continue and to achieve the dream of the two states side by side, living in peace and security. However, the Secretary-General is here to urge both parties to resume with all honesty and goodwill these talks, but I am sure the United Nations is looking for some kind of goodwill and gestures towards building the confidence between the two parties. Is your Government willing to consider these goodwill measures that might be asked by the United Nations, including the settlement policy of Israel that is considered illegal even by the Secretary-General on many occasions. Are they willing to look into this as a freeze maybe while the negotiating is undergoing as a goodwill gesture? Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Mr. Secretary-General, yesterday I am sure you watched the events at the Security Council and you saw the positions of all countries and it actually doesn't auger well for the resolution for the Syrian problem. In case the Security Council does not reach a unified position, does not reach a resolution, through the use of veto of some countries, what are the dangers to the Middle East by the failure of the Security Council to deal with this exacerbating problem, thank you very much?

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