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PRESS RELEASE

Visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov to the State of Israel and to the Palestinian Territories

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Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, paid a working visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories on June 26-27. His talks took place with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and Israeli First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni. Lavrov met with relatives of the kidnapped Israeli servicemen.

The talks focused on the situation in the Middle East with emphasis on the latest worrying developments in the Palestinian territories.

Lavrov laid special stress on the necessity of stabilizing the situation as soon as possible and overcoming the consequences of the inter-Palestinian confrontation on the basis of the Quartet principles and the Mecca agreement. The importance was emphasized of concerted efforts, aimed at preventing an escalation in the present crisis and preparing conditions for the resumption of negotiation contacts in the interest of normalizing Palestinian-Israeli relations and promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict on an internationally recognized basis.

Mutual concern over the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, was expressed and the need for urgent measure to rectify it and solve the acute socioeconomic problems in the region was stressed.

The Israeli side noted the useful contribution of Russia to efforts for establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Practical issues in Russian-Israeli relations were also examined. The sides, expressing satisfaction with the positive dynamics in bilateral cooperation, stated the presence of wide prospects for the further development of ties between our countries in different fields.

In Ramallah Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov held talks with Palestinian National Authority Head Mahmoud Abbas.

The Russian minister backed the efforts of Abbas, directed at normalizing the situation and restoring order in the Palestinian territories under existing constitutional procedures and with respect for the Palestinians' democratic gains. He accentuated the importance of inter-Palestinian consensus in the interest of preserving the prospects for accomplishing the main task, that of achieving a Palestinian-Israeli settlement whose ultimate aim will be to establish an independent, viable and territorially integral Palestinian state.

Considering the complicated humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, the participants in the talks focused attention on rendering international assistance to the Palestinians. The PNA Head expressed gratitude for the energetic support of efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and gave a high assessment of Russia's contribution to restoring a normal life in the Palestinian territories.

A number of concrete issues in Russian-Palestinian relations were also discussed.

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