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**BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO SHARED AGENDA IS CREATION OF CONDITIONS TO RESUME
TALKS, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL ON DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIANS**

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, observed on 29 November:

Sixty-two years ago, the General Assembly, in resolution 181, put forth a vision of two States. The State of Israel exists. The State of Palestine does not. The Palestinian people continue to struggle for their inalienable right to self-determination.

The international community continues to assist and protect the Palestinian people, including through the work of United Nations agencies, UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] foremost among them. Such humanitarian efforts are vital, but are not enough. Our paramount focus must be a political solution that addresses the roots of the conflict.

It is vital that a sovereign State of Palestine is achieved. This should be on the basis of the 1967 lines with agreed land swaps and a just and agreed solution to the refugee issue -- a State that lives side by side in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders, as envisaged in the resolutions of the Security Council.

I welcome the commitment of Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu and President [Mahmoud] Abbas to a two-State solution, but am deeply concerned that talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have been suspended for almost a year. I support the clear commitment and efforts of the United States to bring about a resumption of meaningful negotiations on all final status issues, including the security of Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees and Jerusalem.

The biggest challenge to this shared agenda is to create the conditions in which the parties have the trust and confidence to return to genuine and substantive talks.

On the Palestinian side, the Palestinian Authority has made significant progress in meeting its Road Map obligations in the West Bank. I call on all Palestinians to fight violent extremism and to refrain from incitement, and to continue their unyielding struggle to build their own state institutions. These efforts have resulted in economic and security improvements, which should be sustained and extended. I welcome initial steps taken by Israel to contribute to these positive trends, and call on Israeli authorities to expand these measures so that change can become truly transformative.

I am deeply concerned that, in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank, illegal settlement construction continues. I have noted Prime Minister Netanyahu's recent announcement of settlement restraint. While this is a step beyond earlier positions, it falls short of Israel's obligations under the Road Map, particularly given the exclusion of East Jerusalem. I repeat my call on Israel to meet in full its Road Map commitments to freeze all settlement activity, including "natural growth", and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

In addition, the barrier continues to restrict Palestinian access to key social services, agricultural land and East Jerusalem. The International Court of Justice has stated that the barrier's deviation from the 1967 line into Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to international law.

I am also concerned about the situation in Jerusalem. Actions such as the evictions of Palestinians and house demolitions, as well as the continued closure of Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem, run contrary to Israel's Road Map obligations. I call on Israel to cease such actions in East Jerusalem, which stoke tensions, cause suffering and further undermine trust, and to reopen Palestinian institutions.

I reiterate my belief that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be negotiated between the parties. As the Quartet has previously stated, unilateral actions cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. Jerusalem should emerge as the capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all.

There remains an urgent need for a durable resolution of the crisis in Gaza. With the arrival of inclement winter weather, the humanitarian situation is of profound concern. The closure of Gaza should be lifted, consistent with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), to allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid,

commercial goods and people. Consistent with this same resolution, efforts must also be made to address Israel's legitimate security concerns, including through mechanisms to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza and an end to Palestinian rocket fire at Israeli civilians.

Ten months after the end of hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel, the issue of accountability for the many reported violations of international humanitarian and human rights law has not been adequately addressed. I call on both Israel and the relevant Palestinian authorities to conduct, without delay, credible domestic investigations into the allegations of serious human rights violations relating to the Gaza conflict.

The reunification of Gaza and the West Bank is also essential. There can be no two-State solution without a unified Palestinian territory. I support Egypt's efforts in this regard.

Now more than ever, politics must be made credible. Those who try to undermine moves towards peace through violence or by changing facts on the ground must not be allowed to set the agenda.

The United Nations, for its part, will continue to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East through negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. And I will continue to engage all concerned to bring about the end of the occupation and realize the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

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