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**Deputy Secretary-General, Commemorating Palestinian Day of Solidarity,  
Says Children in Gaza Do Not Feel Diplomatic Advances, Only Glaring Lack of Hope**

Following are Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson's remarks at the meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in New York today:

I present this statement on behalf of the Secretary-General, who today is travelling. One year ago, the General Assembly commemorated the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Assembly focused on the question of Palestine and on growing hopes at the time that the international community would engage in finally bringing to an end this long-standing conflict of such consequences to so many areas of the world.

Yet, one year later, and more than one year since the last ruinous conflict in Gaza, security and hope in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remain at a very low point.

We continue to witness illegal settlement activities and settler-related violence. Demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures have continued, including punitive demolitions. Such policies and actions are directly contrary to the Government of Israel's stated intention to pursue a two-State solution.

In recent weeks, tensions and violence related to the Holy Sites in the Old City of Jerusalem have introduced a troubling and dangerous religious dimension to the conflict. During my visit to the region last month, I stressed the need to preserve the status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, in accordance with the agreements between Israel and Jordan and with the special role of the King of Jordan, as Custodian.

I welcome Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the status quo. This commitment needs to be accompanied by actions to defuse the situation and to restore confidence. During the current wave of violence we have witnessed heinous attacks, stabbings, shootings and attacks causing immense suffering among Israelis and Palestinians alike. I condemn such attacks and all acts of violence.

It is crucial that leaders on both sides in this sensitive moment play a constructive role towards solving the conflict. Both sides must reject inflammatory public statements, which only escalate the already tense and volatile situation.

Recognizing the security problems which Israel faces, I nonetheless remind Israeli authorities that the use of excessive force feeds anger and frustration. I urge Israeli security services to exercise maximum restraint. This goes in particular for the use of lethal force.

It is abundantly clear that Palestinians feel deep frustration over an occupation that has lasted nearly 50 years. Similarly, Israelis strongly fear for their security. The lack of a political horizon to achieve the two-State solution seriously increases the risk of the situation spiralling out of control.

The international community can and must play a greater role to break the impasse. The Middle East Quartet must continue its efforts to preserve the viability of a Palestinian State and establish conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations.

On 29 November 2012, the State of Palestine joined the United Nations as a non-member observer State. Today, 136 countries recognize the State of Palestine and its flag flies at the United Nations next to those of Member States.

However, these diplomatic advances are not felt by children in Gaza, or by the Palestinians of Nablus and Hebron. What they feel is a glaring lack of hope that their lives will change for the better and that they will be citizens of a State which will ensure their freedom and well-being.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, let us reaffirm our commitment to bring about the just peace that the peoples of both Israel and Palestine so desperately need and deserve. This would also be a major much needed contribution to international peace and security.

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