



## Secretary-General

SG/2137

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

### STATEMENT BY MIDDLE EAST QUARTET

Following is the text of the statement issued today in London by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union):

Representatives of the Quartet – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel – met today in London to discuss the situation in the Middle East. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet expressed its strong support for ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and encouraged the parties to make every effort to realize the shared goal of an agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian State by the end of 2008. Commending the parties for their continuous and intensive negotiations, the Quartet emphasized the urgent need for progress and called on the international community to remain constructively engaged in support of negotiations with the goal of the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza and an end to the conflict.

The Quartet emphasized the importance of visible progress on the ground to build confidence and create an atmosphere supportive of negotiations. The Quartet welcomed concrete steps by both sides in the wake of the trilateral meeting between Secretary of State Rice, Prime Minister Fayyad and Defense Minister Barak, and stressed the urgent need for rapid and continued implementation of these and previous commitments to improve conditions on the ground. While taking note of some positive steps, including the removal of some roadblocks and an outpost by Israel, and improved security performance by the Palestinian Authority, the Quartet noted that much more remained to be done to improve the situation on the ground in order to change the conditions of life in the West Bank and to keep the political process on track.

In this context, the Quartet expressed its support for Quartet Representative Tony Blair, and underscored the urgent need for progress and close donor coordination. It also expressed its strong backing for the planned Bethlehem Conference on Private Sector Investment in May as well as the parties' agreement to improve security and economic conditions in Jenin, which can offer a model for important progress on the ground.

Noting the particular importance of justice sector reform, the Quartet looked forward to the meeting that will take place in Berlin in June to promote and coordinate donor assistance in this area.

The Quartet called upon both sides to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map. It also called on both sides to refrain from any steps that undermine confidence or could prejudice the outcome of negotiations. In this context, the Quartet expressed its deep concern at continuing settlement activity and called on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

It called on the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its commitments to fight terrorism and to accelerate steps to rebuild and refocus its security apparatus. It urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to increase cooperation in that respect and to facilitate the delivery of security assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The Quartet condemned continuing rocket attacks from Gaza on southern Israel, including against Sderot and Ashkelon, as well as the terrorist attacks at a seminary in Jerusalem on 6 March. The Quartet also expressed deep concern at Palestinian civilian casualties, including the recent death of a mother and four of her children in Gaza. It called for an end to all violence and terror and urged all parties to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians in accordance with international law.

Noting its deep concern over humanitarian conditions in Gaza, the Quartet called for continued emergency and humanitarian assistance and the provision of essential services to Gaza without obstruction. The Quartet expressed its continuing concern over the closure of major Gaza crossing points given the impact on the Palestinian economy and daily life. The Quartet condemned the terrorist attack on Nahal Oz fuel terminal on 9 April, and noted that such attacks on the Gaza crossings interfere with the supply of essential services and undermine the interests of the Palestinian people. Principals strongly encouraged Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to formulate a new approach on Gaza that would provide security to all Gazans, end all acts of terror, provide for the controlled and sustained opening of the Gaza crossings for humanitarian reasons and commercial flows, support the legitimate Palestinian Authority Government, and work towards conditions that would permit implementation of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

Looking forward to a productive meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the Quartet encouraged all parties to do their part to support Palestinian institutional capacity-building and economic development. The Quartet called for all donors to follow through on pledges made at the December 2007 Paris Donors' Conference. Underlining the crucial role of Arab States in support of the peace process, and the importance of the Arab League peace initiative, the Quartet encouraged the Arab States to fulfil both their political and financial roles in support of the Annapolis process.

The Quartet also discussed the proposal for an international meeting in Moscow to lend continued support to the parties in their negotiations and efforts on the ground.

The Quartet authorized its envoys to continue to work to facilitate the achievement of all of these goals.

The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515.

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