



## Secretary-General

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### INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST HELP BRING PARTIES BACK TO TALKS,

### SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS MEETING IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, delivered by Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, in Brussels on 28 June:

It is my pleasure to send greetings to this timely Meeting, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The current lack of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is a source of great concern. Less than three months remain until the September target date that had been set last year for reaching an agreement on permanent status issues and for completing the Palestinian Authority's two-year State-building programme. With historic popular protest and political change taking place throughout the region, it is critical for Palestinians and Israel to re-engage in serious negotiations.

The two-State solution is in the best interest of both parties, and embodies their legitimate aspirations. The Palestinians have the right to establish a sovereign, independent and viable State of their own. Israel has the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders. To achieve this and to overcome the current stalemate, it is important to avoid steps that might damage trust.

President [Barack] Obama's speech of 19 May contained important ideas which can serve as the basis for a return to good-faith negotiations. The affirmation of key principles related to borders and security arrangements are particularly important. I appeal to the parties to return to negotiations without preconditions and without delay. I hope the Quartet can give impetus to this objective through a meeting at the Principals level soon.

The situation on the ground remains worrisome. Continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and Israel's Road Map obligations. It further undermines Palestinian confidence in direct negotiations. It is vital that Israel respects international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Palestinian State-building agenda has ensured institutional readiness for statehood in the West Bank, as confirmed by the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee in April. However, the institutional achievements are approaching their limits within the political and physical space currently available, as they do not apply to East Jerusalem, much of Area C and Gaza. The persistence of the occupation and the unresolved issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the continuing Palestinian divide, deprive the Palestinian Authority of the ability to extend its institutional authority to areas outside its reach. Constraints on urban development and obstacles to free movement and access in the West Bank continue to impede Palestinian economic viability. Israel must roll back all measures of occupation and allow economic and institutional progress to continue in order to assist their emerging Palestinian neighbour.

In Gaza, further measures of liberalization are needed to solidify modest progress and empower those seeking continued calm. The calm which has largely been observed for the past three months is extremely important and must be maintained. I welcome Israel's approval of a further \$100 million of UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] construction projects. At the same time, I stress the need for the free and secure movement of people, construction materials and other goods, and for the implementation of all aspects of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

I continue to support efforts at achieving Palestinian unity within the framework of the positions of the Quartet, the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is essential for Palestinians to agree on a Government that can live up to the expectations of ordinary people, maintain security cooperation and calm, meet the concerns of the international community and support negotiations with Israel. This process must be given a chance by all international parties.

I appeal to donors to remain fully engaged. Inadequate donor support for the Palestinian Authority's budget would hamper Government operations and upset the State-building agenda. I welcomed Israel's continued transfer of VAT and customs revenues. Israel's adherence to its international obligations is the right way to promote cooperation with a responsible Palestinian partner. Continued donor engagement can encourage moderation, enhance security, restore hope, help begin the reconstruction of Gaza and bolster Palestinian unity.

The international community must do its part to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. Time is of the essence. I will continue to do everything possible, as Secretary-General and within the Quartet, to help the parties to achieve an end to the occupation that began in 1967, an end to the conflict, a resolution of all final status issues — including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and security — and the emergence of a sovereign, independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful Meeting.

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