



Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL HAILS VITAL ROLE OF JOURNALISTS IN PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AT MEDIA SEMINAR ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the 2013 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, as delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Peter Laursky-Tieffenthal, in Istanbul, Turkey, on 8 October:

I am pleased to send greetings to all the participants of this international media seminar on peace in the Middle East. I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey for hosting this event.

This meeting comes at a time of renewed hope for the Middle East Peace Process. While many challenges remain, the resumption of direct talks is a welcome step towards reaching an agreement on an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace with a secure Israel.

For this new effort to succeed, Israelis and Palestinians must quickly see visible peace dividends. The status quo in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is not sustainable, and in the long run, the occupation is deeply damaging to Israelis and Palestinians alike. An enabling environment for economic progress is more urgent than ever.

The Israeli and Palestinian leadership and people face hard choices, but also tremendous opportunity. Absent real political progress, there could be dire consequences. Both should act responsibly and with restraint, and refrain from incitement and other actions that risk undermining the negotiations or prejudging final status issues. Stability is critical, and maximum efforts should be made to avoid violence and reverse negative trends.

On the margins of the general debate this year, the Middle East Quartet met for the first time in more than a year to support the rejuvenated peace process. The Quartet received a joint briefing by the Israeli and Palestinian chief negotiators, and I was heartened by their commitment to reach a comprehensive agreement on all the core issues.

The international community must work in concert, including through the Quartet, to assist them in forging a way forward for future generations.

Many of you, as journalists, activists, policy-makers and representatives of civil society, have played a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability and democracy. I urge you to continue to advance peace and increase mutual understanding between communities, especially Palestinians and Israelis.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful gathering.

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