



Secretary-General

SG/SM/15116
GA/PAL/1272

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

SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES ISRAELI, PALESTINIAN PARTIES AT INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO TRANSLATE FRAGILE HOPE FOR PEACE INTO ACTION

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks to the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, as delivered by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco in Beijing on 18 June:

It is my pleasure to send greetings to the participants in the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this timely event. I also express appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China for serving as host.

As regional tensions rise due to the escalating conflict in Syria, we must not lose sight of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A resolution of this conflict is not a matter of less urgency.

The fragile hope created by the renewed efforts of the United States must be sustained and translated into action by the parties. I am also encouraged by the recent commitment by Arab leaders to revive the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, with its promise for regional stability that can certainly become an important part of current peace efforts. I hope the Israeli Government will respond positively to this offer.

The coming weeks will be critical. The parties must avoid actions that undermine prospects for a resumption of meaningful negotiations.

In this regard, I remain deeply troubled by Israel's continuing settlement activity in the West Bank, which is illegal under international law. Settlement activity is deepening the Palestinian people's mistrust in the seriousness of the Israeli side about achieving peace; it also risks rendering a two-State solution impossible. Israel must abide by its commitments under the Road Map to freeze all settlement activity and dismantle outposts erected after 2001.

The situation in East Jerusalem is of particular concern as settlement activity continues, accompanied by home demolitions, forced evictions, land expropriation and displacement of the Palestinian population. The international community does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, which remains part of the occupied Palestinian territory subject to the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Progress towards peace requires tangible confidence-building measures and a clear political horizon. It also requires ensuring the viability of Palestinian state-building efforts and improved living conditions for all Palestinians. I appeal to the international community to ensure continued and predictable financial support for the Palestinian Government. Special attention is also needed to sustain UNRWA's [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] efforts, including contributions beyond the scope of traditional donors.

The condition of Gaza's civilian population remains a source of deep concern. The seven-year-old closure continues to cause serious humanitarian and economic consequences, including but far from limited to a lack of sufficient safe drinking water. I call for a complete opening of crossings into Gaza to allow legitimate trade and movements of people, in line with resolution 1860 (2009). At the same time, Israel's legitimate security concerns must be addressed by continuing to thwart militant attacks and preventing the smuggling of weapons.

The ceasefire understanding reached last November remains the best opportunity to change the negative dynamics in Gaza. All must exert maximum effort to preserve the ceasefire and its basic tenets: adhering to a full calm and lifting the closure. I continue to support Egyptian efforts in this regard.

I also continue to support efforts to promote Palestinian reconciliation within the framework of the PLO commitments and under the leadership of President Abbas, which is an indispensable part of a permanent settlement.

Achieving a negotiated two-State solution that ends the occupation started in 1967 in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and resolves the core issues is long overdue. I cannot stress enough the risks of missing the current window of opportunity. It is imperative that everyone in the international community work collectively to make 2013 a positive year for Israeli-Palestinian peace and peace in the whole region.

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

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record