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Middle East

The achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East remains crucial for the international community. We reiterate our full support for the two-state solution and affirm that Arab-Israeli peace, the state of Israel living in peace and security and the establishment of a state of Palestine, in which the Palestinian people can determine their own destiny, is in the fundamental interest of the international community. We welcome the initial steps taken by both parties in this direction in recent weeks. We urge the Parties to rapidly resume direct negotiations on all standing issues consistent with the Roadmap, the relevant UNSC Resolutions and the Madrid principles to result in an agreement that resolves all permanent status issues and in an end to all claims. We call on all concerned to take meaningful steps

to support this objective. We also call on the Parties to fulfil their obligations under the Roadmap – including the unequivocal rejection of violence, terrorism and incitement, and a freeze in settlement activity, including “natural growth” – and on Arab states to take meaningful steps toward normalization with Israel and to provide political and economic support to the Palestinian Authority. We underscore the need to restore Palestinian unity, on the basis of the Quartet principles, and we strongly reaffirm our continued commitment to these principles.

We call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. We also call for the immediate opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, in a manner that respects Israel’s security. We remain engaged to fully support the Palestinian Authority and to play an active role in promoting the commitment of the international community for the development of the Palestinian Territories in the framework of a wider regional approach. To that end, we stand ready to support politically, economically and in the security field the implementation of the future peace agreement once reached, including through the launching of an ambitious and comprehensive plan for Palestine that would develop infrastructure and foster economic activities in the future Palestinian State, thereby favouring its progressive integration in the region. We also express support for efforts to improve economic conditions on the ground now. In this regard, we welcome recent steps by Israel in the West Bank which, if expanded and sustained, can have a significant impact on Palestinian freedom of movement.

We look forward to a comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbours, also building upon the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which will be a key element of this regional process. We stand ready to assist the Parties to that end. Within that context, we urge a resumption of peace negotiations also on the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks. We support the proposal of the Russian Federation to convene, in consultation with the Quartet and the Parties, an international conference on the Middle East peace process in Moscow in 2009.

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