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**‘Gaza should be free, open and connected to the world’**

*Sunday, Oct 12, 2014 in Office of Tony Blair, Office of the Quartet Representative*

[“Gaza should be free, open and connected to the world,” Quartet Representative Tony Blair said today \(Sunday\).](#) In an address to the Cairo Conference on reconstruction for Gaza and supporting the PA, Mr. Blair said the international community agrees a new approach is needed to Gaza. He added, however, that “it should not take a war and the deaths of so many innocent people to make us repeat it and act on it. We know what is necessary. The rockets, tunnels and other forms of terror should cease. Gaza and the West Bank should be united in one sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine.”

Mr. Blair said the Office of the Quartet Representative would work closely with the Palestinian Authority on a long-term strategy for Gaza, including issues of governance and rule of law, as well as with the private sector in Gaza and the West Bank to restore economic growth.

Mr Blair also stressed that a long-term strategy for Gaza that offers Palestinians hope was a key factor in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to a future, independent Palestinian state.

“Israel will never subdue the spirit of the Palestinian people and their aspiration for Statehood. No amount of terror will ever force Israel to agree a Palestinian State. It will only happen through a process of genuine negotiation,” he said. Mr. Blair added that “For such a negotiation to succeed, we need an Israeli Government prepared to conduct the negotiation on the basis of the borders of 1967 amended by agreed land swaps. We need a Palestinian politics unified around the principles of peace. We need the powers of the region willing to advance the Arab Peace Initiative with practical measures of political and economic support. But we begin with Gaza. Without Gaza re-united with the West Bank, politically and economically, there can be no State.”

He praised the international community for turning out in force at the conference, “which should show the people of Gaza that we do care passionately about Gaza; its people, its future and the need for it to have hope.”

“The recurrent theme today is that this will not come to anything unless there is a political horizon for statehood,” he said, adding, “We know that the credibility of the process has been damaged and that the trust between the parties is low.” Mr. Blair went on to say “The single-most frustrating thing in this whole business of destruction and reconstruction is that despite everything, we have two peoples – Israelis and Palestinians – who when asked will still say they want peace, still say they want it on the basis of two states, and still are prepared to believe that statehood would be possible in the future.” He said that the gap between the two sides was “not a gap of principle, but a gap of credibility.”

The Quartet Representative ended by saying: “What we should take from this conference today is that on this matter the international community is united, is determined, and whatever the challenges it’s going to carry on, pursue this course for peace until we are satisfied that the Palestinian and Israeli people have hope for the future. It begins with Gaza, it begins today.”

**Notes to editors and further information**

- Mr Blair is one of the co-chairs of the Cairo Conference, along with the UN, EU, France, Italy, the Arab League, Jordan and Japan.
- The conference is hosted by Egypt, Norway and the Palestinian Authority.
- Read the [chairs’ conclusions](#)
- The final Chairs’ Summary will be available online later Sunday through the [Cairo Conference website](#)
- The National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza is available online [here](#)

<http://www.quartetrep.org/quartet/news-entry/blair-cairo-conference/>