



Secretary-General SG/2152

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STATEMENT BY MIDDLE EAST QUARTET

Following is the text of the statement issued today in London by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union):

The Quartet – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, United States Under Secretary of State William Burns, and United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell – met in Trieste on 26 June 2009. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet affirmed its determination to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Road Map, and the agreements previously reached between the parties. The Quartet underscored that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and fulfils the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands through two States for two peoples, Israel and an independent, contiguous, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Quartet welcomed the commitment of Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu and President [Mahmoud] Abbas to the two-State solution, and reiterated that lasting peace throughout the region can only be based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement, and terror; and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations. The Quartet underscored the importance of fostering peaceful coexistence throughout the region through the conclusion of peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon, in a manner that is mutually reinforcing with efforts to establish the state of Palestine, and through the full normalization of relations between all States based on the Arab Peace Initiative.

The United States briefed the Quartet on its intensive, ongoing discussions with all parties in the region to create the conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to resolve all permanent status issues, without preconditions. The Quartet affirmed that these negotiations must result in an end to all claims. It agreed that Arab-Israeli peace and the establishment of a State of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza in which the Palestinian people can determine their own destiny is in the fundamental interests of the international community. The Quartet called on all parties concerned to take meaningful steps to support this objective.

In that context, the Quartet called on Israel and the Palestinians to implement their obligations under the Road Map and affirmed that unilateral actions taken by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. The Quartet urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth; to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001; and to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem, including home demolition and evictions. The Quartet acknowledged progress made by the Palestinian Authority to reform the Palestinian security sector and called on the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order and to fight violent extremism. It encouraged further Israeli cooperation for the success of Palestinian security reform. It also urged the Palestinian Government to enhance its efforts to build the institutions of the future Palestinian State. Both sides have to stop incitement and violence against civilians. Taking note of the 24 June meeting of the Arab League ministers and underscoring its commitment to comprehensive peace on all tracks, the Quartet expressed support for dialogue among all States in the region in the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative and called on Arab States to take steps to recognize Israel's rightful place in the region; to affirm that violence cannot achieve regional peace and security; and to assist the Palestinian people in building their future State through consistent support for the Palestinian Authority.

Noting the detrimental effect of Palestinian divisions and underscoring its desire for these divisions to be overcome, the Quartet called on all Palestinians to commit themselves to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations. Restoring Palestinian unity based on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commitments would be an important factor in this process, while facilitating reconstruction of Gaza and the organization of elections. The Quartet expressed support, on this basis, for the ongoing mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League for Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas and appealed to all States in the region to play a constructive role in supporting the reconciliation process.

The Quartet discussed Gaza and agreed that the current situation is unsustainable and not in the interests of any of those concerned. The Quartet expressed serious concern at the humanitarian and human rights situation of the civilian population. It reiterated the urgency of reaching a durable solution through the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1860. The Quartet called for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel, and medical treatment. The Quartet called for a complete halt to all violence, as well as an intensification of efforts to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition into Gaza and for a sustained reopening of all crossing points to ensure regular flow of people and humanitarian and commercial goods. The Quartet offered its support in this regard for the proposals of the United Nations to resume early recovery construction activities in Gaza. The Quartet called on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

The Quartet welcomed plans by the Government of Israel to promote Palestinian economic development. The Quartet declared its readiness to work closely with Israel, the Palestinian Government and international donors in order to achieve sustainable economic development on the basis of the full implementation of the Agreement on Access and Movement of 2005 and in the broader perspective of the two-State solution. Recalling the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC), the Quartet called for robust and sustained financial support for the Palestinian Authority. The Quartet welcomed recent steps by Israel, which if expanded and sustained, can have a significant impact on Palestinian freedom of movement. The Quartet recognizes that Israel has legitimate security concerns that must continue to be safeguarded, and believes efforts to maintain security while enabling movement and access for Palestinian people and goods are critical. Noting that delivering transformative change on the ground should form an integral and essential part of the agenda for peace, the Quartet encouraged cooperation of the parties with the Quartet Representative in order to deliver such change and in particular to improve the movement of goods and people in the West Bank and Gaza, concurrently with security and broader rule of law efforts.

The Quartet expressed its determination to support the parties and regional and international partners to successfully pursue negotiations and to implement agreements, on all tracks of the process. The Quartet tasked the envoys to meet regularly and actively follow up with the parties to promote implementation of Quartet positions and formulate recommendations for Quartet action.

The Quartet re-affirmed its previous statements and supports, in consultation with the parties, an international conference in Mbscow in 2009.

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