



Secretary-General

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STATEMENT BY MIDDLE EAST QUARTET – 9 NOVEMBER 2008

This is the text of a statement issued in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 9 November by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union):

Representatives of the Quartet — United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner — met today, and heard from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni at their request. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

President Abbas and Minister Livni briefed the Quartet on Palestinian-Israeli negotiating efforts since the 27 November 2007 international conference in Annapolis, Maryland, that formally launched bilateral negotiations to bring an end to the conflict by achieving the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Palestinian and Israeli representatives reaffirmed their commitment, as stated in the Annapolis “Joint Understanding”, to vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, as specified in previous agreements.

The parties’ representatives affirmed that, over the last year, they have engaged in direct, sustained and intensive bilateral negotiations, based on a joint work plan that included the establishment of more than 10 committees. They described how the parties have been actively engaged not only on core issues but on an array of other topics necessary to turn the two-State solution into a reality. Without minimizing the gaps and obstacles that remain, the representatives of the parties shared their assessment that the present negotiations are substantial and promising and they have succeeded in putting in place a solid negotiating structure for continued progress in the future.

President Abbas and Foreign Minister Livni stated the parties had reached a number of mutual understandings on the principles governing their negotiating process. These include:

- the need for continuous, uninterrupted, direct, bilateral negotiations;
- the principle that nothing would be considered agreed until everything is agreed; and
- the need to reach a comprehensive agreement addressing all issues, as agreed at Annapolis, rather than just announce agreement on selected items in isolation.

The parties’ representatives also confirmed that, as stated in the Annapolis Joint Understanding, the parties remained committed to implementation of their respective obligations under the Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and to the agreed mechanism for monitoring and judging Road Map implementation and that, unless otherwise agreed by the parties, implementation of the future peace treaty will be subject to implementation of the Road Map, as judged by the United States.

In addition to describing the structure of the negotiations and indicating areas in which progress has been achieved, President Abbas and Minister Livni expressed gratitude for international support provided during the last year and requested continued support from the Quartet and all members of the international community. First, they asked that the international community support the parties’ sustained efforts in the framework of the Annapolis process and that it respect the agreed principles for their negotiations as described to the Quartet. Second, they asked that all States promote an environment conducive to peace, non-violence and the two-State solution. In this regard, they urged political and economic assistance, especially in relation to institutional and security reform, capacity-building, economic development and the fulfilment of pledges, to the legitimate Palestinian Government which has accepted the Quartet principles and respects the PLO commitments.

They asked the international community to redouble efforts to confront and deny support for extremism, incitement, terrorism and intolerance. Finally, the representatives stressed that, absent the joint request of the parties, third parties should not intervene in the bilateral negotiations. At the same time, they confirmed that international support and assistance will be vital once an agreement is reached, and that they intend to jointly consult members of the international community on this issue at the appropriate time.

The Quartet expressed its appreciation for the description by the parties of their joint efforts, which confirmed the seriousness of the Annapolis process and underscored the determination of the parties to reach a comprehensive agreement. The Quartet reiterated its commitment to supporting the parties’ efforts, underlined its commitment to the irreversibility of the bilateral negotiations, pledged to respect the bilateral and confidential nature of the negotiations, and called on all States to adhere to these same commitments. The Quartet endorsed the goals set out by the parties and called on all States to lend their diplomatic and political support to that end, including by encouraging and recognizing progress to date.

The Quartet renewed its call on relevant States and international organizations to assist in the development of the Palestinian economy, to maximize the resources available to the Palestinian Authority and to contribute to the Palestinian institution-building programme in preparation for statehood, as decided during the Paris, Bethlehem and Berlin Conferences. The Quartet cited Jenin as an example of the success of reforms instituted by the Palestinian Government and of cooperation between the two sides, made possible in the context of the Annapolis process. The Quartet further welcomed the recent deployment of Palestinian security services in the Hebron governorate as a sign of the progress that has resulted from increased security cooperation. The Quartet emphasized its determination to continue to work with Israel and the Palestinian Government to facilitate access and movement, and an improvement in conditions on the ground in order to address urgent humanitarian needs, foster economic activity and improve the atmosphere for the negotiations. The Quartet reiterated its call to the parties to fully implement their obligations under phase one of the Road Map, including in relation to freezing settlement activity and the dismantlement of the infrastructure of terrorism.

The Quartet emphasized the importance of continuity of the peace process. The Quartet agreed that the spring of 2009 could be an appropriate time for an international meeting in Moscow.

The Quartet reaffirmed its previous statements, including the 26 September 2008, statement issued in New York. Further, welcoming the recent calls for a broader peace, the Quartet offered its support for the expansion of ongoing diplomatic efforts towards regional peace, noted the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515.

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