



## Deputy Secretary-General

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### **CURRENT MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY MUST NOT BE LOST, DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS**

#### **AS PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OPENS 2014 SESSION**

Following are Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson's remarks at the opening of 2014 session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, 16 January:

Let me, first of all, on behalf of the Secretary-General, congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and your distinguished colleagues, on your election to the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Let me also welcome the proclamation of 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This is a recognition of the commitment of the international community to durable peace between Israel and Palestine.

The coming year will be crucial to achieving the two-State solution. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are working hard towards a peaceful, comprehensive settlement of all permanent status issues.

That means a settlement that ends the occupation that started in 1967 and which would end the conflict. It means securing an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine living alongside a secure State of Israel where each side recognizes the other's legitimate rights. It means accepting Jerusalem as the capital of the two States, with arrangements for Holy Sites acceptable to all. And it means a just solution for millions of Palestinian refugees around the region.

This is the essence of the United Nations' vision of the two-State solution. The international community is ready to renew its collective engagement towards these goals. But, the parties themselves need to make courageous commitments to advance the peace process.

All parties must act responsibly and refrain from actions that can undermine the negotiations. The Secretary-General and I are concerned by recent developments on the ground.

Last year saw an increase in violence and incitement from all sides. We deplore the killing of Israeli citizens and soldiers due to cross-border and terrorist attacks, as well as the killings of Palestinians as a result of Israeli raids. We reject all actions targeting civilians and call on all concerned to exert maximum restraint to prevent further loss of lives.

We are particularly concerned with escalating extremist and settler violence. This is seriously affecting the safety, livelihood and dignity of Palestinian civilians.

We urge the Israeli authorities to stop and punish the ongoing violence by Israeli extremists. We welcome Israel's release of Palestinian prisoners. But, at the same time, we know Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continues.

Announcements of new settlements jeopardize the negotiations. They cannot be reconciled with the goal of a two-State solution. All settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations.

We are also concerned by continued displacement of Palestinians through house demolitions in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Such action causes human suffering and is in conflict with Israel's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. The effects on Palestinian children can be particularly devastating.

The United Nations has called for a comprehensive halt to the demolition of Palestinian structures and to the displacement of Palestinian residents of the West Bank. A fair planning system with Palestinian participation must be put in place to support the development of these vulnerable communities.

The removal of Palestinian communities from their homes located in so-called "firing zones" also raises serious concerns. It amounts to "individual and mass forcible transfer, contrary to Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law".

The situation in Gaza is also deeply troubling. We condemn all rocket fire into Israel, as well as the construction of tunnels into Israel, which has led to Israel suspending the transfer of construction material into Gaza. We welcome the recent resumption of the transports for United Nations projects. We call on Israel to expand this to include all United Nations and private sector projects.

We recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, while urging Israel to ensure that the needs of the civilian population in Gaza are met. We hope that the Rafah crossing will resume normal operations expeditiously to help address the difficult humanitarian situation.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency [for Palestine Refugees in the Near East], UNRWA, which is a lifeline for millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and the region, continues to face serious financial difficulties. We call on all donors, including new ones, to make or increase contributions to sustain UNRWA's vital and indispensable operations. We particularly urge support for UNRWA's Core Budget, through which it implements its critical General Assembly-mandated activities.

Finally, we urge the Palestinians to do everything to overcome their divisions without delay in the interest of unity. Palestinian unity based on the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the positions of the Arab Peace Initiative is essential for the two-State solution.

We cannot afford to lose the current moment of opportunity. The Secretary-General and I urge all in the international community to work together to translate the solidarity and desire for peace expressed on this occasion into positive action for security and for justice.

Israel and Palestine need to live up to their commitment to a negotiated two-State solution consistent with Security Council resolutions. They need to resolve all core issues related to territory, security, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and water.

Parameters for an agreement have long been clear, laid out in UN Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map, the 2002 Arab Peace initiative and existing agreements between the parties. What is needed now is political will and courage, as well as recognition of historic responsibility and inspiring vision for younger generations.

This Committee can make important contributions to the shared goal of a durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Secretary-General and I will continue to do everything in our power to support you. Thank you.

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