
Piecemeal approaches will not resolve Middle East conflict – Ban Ki-moon

27 November 2007 – It is time to “abandon piecemeal approaches” to resolving the Middle East conflict and start final status negotiations that deal with all the issues in dispute, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told an international meeting on the region being held today in the United States city of Annapolis.

Mr. Ban said final status talks must “begin in earnest” and deal with such issues as Jerusalem, refugees, the borders, West Bank settlements, security and water.

“The broad outlines of solutions to these issues are clear,” the Secretary-General observed in his speech. “There is no reason they cannot be resolved in 2008.” He called on the international community to help the Palestinian Authority “to rebuild, reform and perform,” and he also stressed the need for the situation on the ground to “improve, rapidly and visibly.”

“Without implementing long-standing commitments under the Road Map and the Agreement on Movement and Access, the diplomatic process cannot succeed. Progress requires parallel action and clear monitoring.”

Welcoming the commitment of both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to try to resolve the conflict, the leadership of the US as host of the Annapolis meeting, and the presence at the conference of many Arab countries, Mr. Ban pledged the UN’s backing to the renewed peace efforts.

“The UN has few higher priorities than seeing this conflict resolved... Above all, today marks a beginning, not an end. I know that different expectations exist. But I ask you all to approach this effort with flexibility, patience and resolve. Let us base expectations on a realistic assessment and take responsibility for the things we each can do, without losing faith.”

The Secretary-General stressed the need to “reverse this growing sense of despair” among Palestinians that their dream of statehood may never become a reality.

“The [peace] process must end the occupation and create an independent and viable State of Palestine, at peace with itself and its neighbours.”

Mr. Ban added that, “for its part, Israel faces genuine security challenges,” with a renewed threat of attack and some people questioning its very right to exist.

“We must reverse this loss of faith, and build a process that delivers on the vital interests of Israelis: a Palestinian State that is a true partner, secure and recognized borders, and a permanent end to the conflict.”

He also called for concrete initiatives to ease the humanitarian suffering of the people of Gaza, where border restrictions have severely hurt the local economy. While in Annapolis, Mr. Ban has participated in a series of bilateral discussions on the Middle East peace process, including talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, the League of Arab States’ Secretary-General Amr Mousa, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and the High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. He also took part in a meeting yesterday with the Quartet, the diplomatic grouping that brings together the UN, the US, the European Union and Russia.