

---

**SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PRESS ENCOUNTER FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM A VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST  
UNHQ, 2 APRIL 2006  
(unofficial transcript)**

SG: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's good to see you again, after about two weeks.

I visited seven stops in the Middle East in eleven days. It has been a very hectic, but very rewarding, trip for me.

I was able to witness at first hand, and also could have very constructive, useful constructive exchanges of views with many leaders in the Middle East countries.

My priorities were mainly on four issues. First of all, to constructively contribute as United Nations Secretary-General to the ongoing peace process in the Middle East, and also to help and discuss with the Lebanese Government to help with national reconciliation there, and to discuss the early establishment of a Special Tribunal for the assassination case of former Prime Minister [Rafic] Hariri, and to discuss with the Iraqi leaders on the International Compact [for] Iraq, as well as the United Nations role there, and fourthly, to discuss with the Sudanese President on the situation in Darfur and Somalia and other African issues.

/...

As you may know, with the formation of a National Unity Government in Palestine, the active diplomatic initiatives are on the way: Arab peace initiatives, Arab leaders who are determined to visit this issue again as a foundation for establishing a good relationship and peace between Israel and Arab countries, and particularly between Israel and the Palestinian authorities. I was also able to see their determined will to help resolve the Darfur situation.

/...

Q: We are very happy for your safe visit after Iraq, Sir. Let me ask about the Arab Summit and the issue of the Palestinians. Do you think that the time is right now to lift the embargo on the Palestinian government, and what is your policy, Sir, on contacting them? Will you meet all ministers, or just Fatah ministers? How do you see it?

SG: There was an understanding among the Quartet that we will wait and see how the National Unity Government, particularly Hamas, will perform in terms of all these international expectations. We hope that the National Unity Government will meet the expectations of the international community. When I had a brief meeting with the Foreign Minister Ziad Abu [Amr] of the National Unity Government he assured me that his government will continue to work to meet the expectations of the international community.

/...

Q: Sir, you tell us that the Palestinian Unity Government Foreign Minister told you that they are working to meet the expectations of the international community. Do you think that they can be convinced, or does that mean in any way that they might be convinced to recognize Israel, forsake campaign policies of violence, and honour their previous international agreements and treaties?

SG: I know they are fully aware of the expectations and principles of the international community. Realistically speaking, again, I thought from my meeting with the Foreign Minister of Palestine, and the National Unity Government, that it may take time for them to make their own positions coordinated among themselves. Therefore I would hope that while the international community encouraged them to change their positions and perform well in meeting the expectations of the international community, we would also hope to be a little bit patient on this matter.

/...