



**Secretary-General's message to International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East
[delivered by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information]**

Budapest, Hungary, 12 July 2011 — I am pleased to send greetings to all the participants of this international media seminar on peace in the Middle East. I thank the Government of Hungary for hosting this event.

As members of the media and representatives of civil society, you play a vital role in raising public awareness and promoting mutual understanding between Palestinians and Israelis. I am greatly encouraged that you have come together to explore and deepen new avenues of dialogue and outreach.

You gather at a pivotal time in the peace process. The continuing impasse in peace negotiations is a matter of concern. Historic changes in the region only emphasize the urgency for action.

A genuine end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needs to address all final status issues – including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and security, and an end to the occupation that began in 1967. This should lead to the emergence of a sovereign, independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel.

I am convinced that this is in the best interest of both parties and embodies their legitimate aspirations. Israel has the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders. Palestinians have the right to establish a sovereign, independent and viable State of their own.

The immediate priority should be for the parties to return to negotiations without preconditions. [President Obama's speech of 19 May 2011](#) contained important ideas, particularly on territory and security, which can serve as a basis for a return to good-faith negotiations. The Quartet, which met yesterday in Washington, is striving to give impetus to this objective.

The parties should avoid steps that might damage trust. Continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and Israel's Roadmap commitments. The Palestinians need to instill confidence and guarantee security.

The situation in Gaza is unsustainable. It must be addressed if we are to see a peaceful settlement of the conflict. I continue to stress the need for the free and secure movement of people, construction materials and other goods, and for the implementation of all aspects of [Security Council resolution 1860](#) (2009). Israel has made efforts, but more is needed.

Progress on Palestinian unity is also essential. It should be made within the framework of the positions of the Quartet, the commitments of the PLO and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is vital that, until elections, any Palestinian government is committed to the programme of President Abbas and maintains security cooperation in the West Bank and calm in Gaza. The international community should judge such a Government by its actions.

Too many Palestinians and Israelis have suffered over the past many years. At a time when the region is coming alive and pressing to become part of the future, it is our duty to do all we can to help the parties realize peace and security.

Thank you for coming together in this cause. Please accept my best wishes for a successful gathering.