
Annan voices hope for Israeli-Palestinian movement in Middle East peace process

23 November 2004 – United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today met with fellow members of the so-called diplomatic Quartet seeking to bring peace to the Middle East and told reporters afterwards he believed the time was now ripe to move ahead with a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after four years of violence in the region.

“We are all encouraged by what is happening,” Mr. Annan said in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, after talks with top officials of the European Union, Russia and the United States, the three other sponsors of the [Road Map](#) plan calling for parallel and reciprocal steps by both sides leading to two States living in peace by the end of 2005. Mr. Annan added that the Quartet reaffirmed its determination to work with the Palestinian leaders to support elections in January for a successor to President Yasser Arafat, who died earlier this month, to work with them on their reform processes and to ensure that the international community gives them the necessary support for their economic and social programmes.

“We also believe that this is an opportunity to really come together and move ahead with the implementation of the Road Map and we believe that the Israeli Government is also ready to do this,” he declared.

Mr. Annan, who is in the Egyptian resort town to attend an international meeting on reconstruction in Iraq, said specific help for the Palestinians could include the dispatch of election monitors and financial support both from the Quartet and other countries as well.

He also said elections would require some freedom of movement for the Palestinians and he hoped Israel would remove some of the restrictions it has imposed during the past four years of violence to facilitate the poll.

“Obviously that will have to be part of the process, if you are going to have elections, and people have to campaign and move around to vote, some of the restrictions will have to be lifted and we are hopeful that that will be done,” he told a questioner.