



General Assembly
GA/PAL/1070

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

BUREAU OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ISSUES STATEMENT ON ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

SAYING IT OPENED NEW PAGE IN INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACE IN REGION

The following statement was issued today by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People:

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People welcomes the holding of the Annapolis Conference and the Joint Understanding reached by the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert.

The Bureau views this Conference as an important pivotal point for permanent status negotiations aimed at ending the occupation and establishing a viable Palestinian State on all the areas occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem, living side by side with Israel and its neighbours in peace and security. The Bureau welcomes in particular the commitment by all parties to work towards the fulfilment of that goal.

The Conference, convened under the auspices of the United States Administration, was a serious and determined effort on the part of President Abbas, Prime Minister Olmert, the Quartet, regional partners, especially Arab countries, and many other key participants, to reignite the political process with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is now critically important for the parties not to lose the current momentum and move forward to addressing all permanent status issues, without exception, namely borders, Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, settlements, security and water resources. The world community has a stake and a major role to play in support of this massive challenge. The Bureau welcomes the initiative of the Russian Federation to host a conference in Moscow early next year to follow up on the implementation of the understandings reached at Annapolis. It is hoped that the conference will provide additional impetus and vigour to the current peacemaking efforts.

The Bureau also believes that engagement of the international community on issues of economic development of a future State of Palestine should go hand in hand with and buttress progress in the political area. In this connection, the Bureau welcomes the upcoming Paris donors' conference.

The Annapolis Conference has opened a new page in international efforts to achieve peace in the region. We hope that the parties will have enough courage, patience and foresight to lead their negotiations to an effective and mutually acceptable conclusion during the year 2008. As they embark on this difficult journey, the United Nations should play a helping role and continue to maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to all the aspects of the question of Palestine, until it is resolved in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized.

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