
OFF-THE-CUFF**Secretary-General's remarks at a press encounter with the President of Israel****New York, 29 June 2014**

Mr. President,

It is a great honour and pleasure to be with you today. Before I say something I would like to sincerely congratulate you for your very successful visit to Washington – your meetings with the Congressional leaders and President [Barack] Obama. I would like to congratulate you in receiving the highest honour of Congressional gold medal that is recognition of not only the American Government and people, but also the world for your continuing contribution and devotion for peace in the region, and the wider region. And I have deep admiration and respect for your leadership.

I've already issued a statement on the kidnapping of the young Israeli students. Under any circumstances or any reasons this cannot be justified; it's totally unacceptable and I've condemned it in the strongest possible terms. And I'm sending again my strong solidarity, first of all, with those young people who were kidnapped and must be enduring terrible days, and their families and friends, and the people of Israel. The United Nations takes this very seriously and I've spoken to Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu again, sending my strong solidarity. We will do whatever we can in close coordination with international partners.

In general, we are very much troubled by this continuing terrorist attacks. I'm coming from the African Union Summit meeting in Equatorial Guinea, and I visited Namibia and Kenya – in many parts of Africa, they are also suffering from terrorist attacks. This is again, we are seeing in the Middle East, in Iraq and Syria, and elsewhere. So the United Nations under this global counter-terrorism strategy, which was adopted by the General Assembly, and also with the counter-terrorism centre that we have, we will try to help those countries to enhance their capacities. We need the whole world's unity and solidarity to address this terrorism – that you can count on the United Nations.

Now, since I'm standing with you, Mr. President, I would really like to express my deepest admiration for your leadership during many, many decades – your life-long career. You have played an instrumental and central role in establishing the State of Israel and your early national institutions. And you have been a dedicated and committed leader in bringing peace in the Middle East peace process.

For me as a Secretary-General, you have been a strong partner of the United Nations, and you really wanted to see Israel contribute more to the work of the international community. That I really appreciate very much.

While our shared vision of peace between Israelis and Palestinians is yet to materialize, particularly these days when we are very much concerned about not being able to see the Middle East peace process moving on. But still you have been remaining as a constant optimist and visionary in the Middle East peace process. I count on your continuing leadership. I have been to Israel many times, and have been meeting you here and there. Every time I met you, I was deeply inspired by your vision and leadership. We need such a vision and leadership when many people in this world have been showing themselves just to fan the flames of conflict, widening the divisions instead of bridging the gap. And you have always remained the constant voice of calm and reason; that we really appreciate.

I know that you may be retiring soon from the Presidency, but I hope you are not retiring from the world stage. We need to hear – you are such a voice of reason, leadership and vision in promoting reconciliation and lasting peace, and mutual cooperation and understand. I sincerely wish you continued good health and continued success. And I hope with your vision and devotion, not only will the Israeli people will enjoy lasting peace and security, but also we can work together to realize the two state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side for peace and security.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.