



## Secretary-General

SG/SM/10434

GAPAL/1005

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

### IN MESSAGE TO UN SEMINAR, SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS ON PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

#### TO ADHERE TO QUARTET PRINCIPLES; PLEDGES UN ASSISTANCE

Following is the text of the message by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Cairo, delivered today by Angela Kane, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Political Affairs:

It gives me pleasure to send my greetings to the participants in this United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, which has been organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

This Seminar comes at a critical time. The Palestinian people are undergoing a major political transition in the midst of a stalemated peace process, continuing violence and worsening humanitarian conditions.

Last January, the world witnessed the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, which marked an important milestone in the Palestinian people's continued pursuit of democracy and self-determination. I respect the decision of the Palestinian people. I also hope that the new Palestinian Authority Cabinet will address their aspirations for peace and statehood, as articulated by President Abbas.

For this reason, I call upon the Palestinian Authority to reaffirm Palestinian commitment to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. These principles and United Nations resolutions underlie the efforts to achieve a two-State solution. That is why they have been emphasized by the Security Council and the Quartet, and why regional partners are working to ensure that the new Government aligns itself with the Arab Peace Initiative.

Israelis have also elected new leadership. I urge the new Israeli Government to live up to its commitments, including those contained in the Road Map. I call upon Israel to cease settlement activity and other actions that could prejudice final status issues, and encourage it to recognize that a peaceful solution to the conflict cannot be imposed unilaterally or outside the framework of a comprehensive regional peace.

I remain extremely worried about the intensification of violence, including Palestinian rocket attacks and suicide bombings, as well as Israeli air strikes, shelling and ground operations. Civilians on both sides have been killed and injured from this violence, igniting feelings of anger and revenge. I reiterate my call on both sides to abide by their obligations under international law, and refrain from further actions that might escalate the situation and put civilians at risk.

I am also concerned at the prospect of a further deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people. A combination of factors is coming together, which carry the danger of leading to a serious humanitarian crisis. Key donors have discontinued direct support to the Palestinian Authority; Israel continues to withhold tax clearance revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, despite its obligations under the Paris protocol; and the contraction of economic activity is expected to reduce Palestinian domestic tax revenues. The irregular operation of the Karni crossing and the system of internal closures in the West Bank hinder the movement of people and goods, exacerbating poverty and unemployment. They also impose considerable daily hardship and humiliation on the Palestinian population, as does the continued construction of a barrier on Occupied Palestinian Territory, despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The United Nations has repeatedly expressed its concern over these matters and continues to remind Israel that it must uphold its responsibilities as an occupying Power under international law. I call upon both parties to work towards the implementation of last November's agreement on access and movement, in particular to ensure a smooth functioning of the commercial crossing at Karni, which is so critical to the economic viability of the Gaza Strip. And I strongly urge the international donor community to find effective ways of continuing and intensifying support of the Palestinian people.

At this crucial time, I wish to add a final word about the work of the United Nations, which carries out a wide range of activities throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In light of current developments, it is likely that the scale of those activities will increase. UN entities will continue to discharge their responsibilities, in keeping with their respective mandates. But all concerned must understand that the Palestinian Authority provides the bulk of the irreplaceable basic services necessary to avert a humanitarian crisis. Increased UN and NGO activity cannot fill the void that would be created were the institutions of the Palestinian Authority to be unable to do so. These institutions, moreover, are the blocks on which we hope to build a Palestinian State. Bearing in mind all these considerations, the United Nations will continue to work with our partners and the parties to try to find ways to ensure that the needs of the Palestinians are met.

At the same time, the international community must find a way to advance the goal of the two-State solution, which is vital to the peace and security of both peoples and the region. Reaching that goal will take the right mixture of firm adherence to basic principles and creativity to meet a rapidly evolving reality. The United Nations will continue to support international efforts aimed at bringing an end to the occupation that began in 1967, and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement leading to peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful seminar.

\* \* \* \* \*

For information media • not an official record