

## **Secretary-General's remarks to the media with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel**

Jerusalem, 28 August 2017

Secretary-General: Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your warm welcome and I want to say that I started my visit this morning at Yad Vashem and it was clearly not only an occasion to fully appreciate what was the most horrendous crime against humanity that has been produced in the history of mankind, but also to see how much it was linked to forms of prosecution and discrimination of the Jewish people for millennia – what we now call anti-Semitism – and, indeed, it is for me clear that to express that the right of existence of the state of Israel doesn't exist or the wish to destroy the state of Israel is unacceptable form of modern than anti-Semitism. You can be absolutely sure that, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am totally committed to be in this regard adamant: the right of existence of the State of Israel is clear and the right of existence in security of the State of Israel is clear.

As you mentioned, Mr. Prime Minister, Member States are sovereign states. Member States define their positions based on their interests, their values and their convictions. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I believe it is my duty to be simultaneously an honest broker and the messenger for peace and to be an honest broker means to be impartial.

To be an honest broker means that all countries must be treated equally both by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat that the Secretary-General directs. This is for me very clear and you can be sure that these values will be upheld.

But I always feel that it is my duty as Secretary-General to be the messenger for peace. I had the privilege in past capacities as Prime Minister of Portugal and President of an international organization, a political organization, to witness very important moments in the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. I recall one meeting long ago during the Government of Ariel Sharon in which Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat met in my office as Prime Minister of Portugal secretly – I think now it can be revealed because time has passed – for four hours and they took me in confidence and I could witness at the same time the commitment for peace and the difficulties of that commitment. I have to say in total candor that I've always had a dream, a dream that one day I will be able to see in the Holy Land, a Holy Land in which Jerusalem is clearly a city linked, deeply linked, to three religions – that cannot be denied – two states able to live together in mutual recognition but, also, in peace and security.

It is my feeling that for that to be possible, and that is probably the culmination that was never put fully in place, it would be necessary, and the Secretary-General and the United Nations will always be at the disposal of the parties, but with humility to recognize that I have not the influence or the leverage to be determinant on that, but I think it is necessary to have, on the one hand, a political process and objectives with all the complexities and difficulties and the different positions in the beginning, but that would accompany a meaningful improvement of the economic and social commissions of life of the Palestinians, to create a dividend for peace to make people believe that peace is worth it. This is very much linked to the comments you made.

It is true that I have, in the past capacity in what I today express as the Secretary-General, expressed clearly my feeling that there are a number of obstacles, a variety, different kinds of obstacles not just one kind of obstacle. I've been expressing my opposition for instance to the settlement activity but clearly the combination of terrorism, violence and incitement and the understanding of the difficulties created by the separation between the West Bank and Gaza.

So there are here a number of complexities that require a strong wish for peace, but understanding that it will be a complex political process, and, once again, my feeling that it would be good in parallel to that political process to have a dividend for peace in which of course Israel has achieved in its economic development extraordinary results, in which the Palestinian people could also be able to live better in the economic and social dimensions.

I want to express to you my enormous admiration for the achievements of Israel in innovation, the achievements of Israel in technology and how important it is in this period of climate change and desertification, especially the cooperation that Israel can provide to different countries in the world, in which drought is condemning more and more populations to despair and forcing many people to flee. I think Israeli technology and the Israeli cooperation can give an extremely important impulse in our capacity to resist climate change and in our capacity to realize our sustainable development goals, especially in the most vulnerable areas of the world and maybe in Africa, and I have accompanied your effort in this regard and I want to say how much we can see that this is an extremely important dimension.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, you've mentioned it, I want to say that and in the letter that I recently wrote this is clearly expressed, I will do everything in my capacity to make sure that UNIFIL fully meets its mandate, and I understand the security concerns of Israel, and I repeat that the idea or the intension or the will to destroy the State of Israel is something totally unacceptable from my perspective.

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