

21 February 2007

**MIDDLE EAST QUARTET STATEMENT FOLLOWING 21 FEBRUARY BERLIN MEETING**

The following statement by the Middle East Quartet ( United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union) was issued 21 February, following its meeting in Berlin:

The Quartet principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

Secretary Rice reported on her recent 18 February meetings with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, the 19 February trilateral and United States efforts to facilitate discussions between the parties. The Quartet welcomed these efforts and expressed the hope that the result-oriented dialogue initiated between Israeli and Palestinian leaders will continue in the framework of a renewed political process, with the aim of defining more clearly the political horizon and launching meaningful negotiations. The Quartet reaffirmed its determination to promote such a process, in cooperation with the parties and other regional partners. The Quartet urged the parties to refrain from measures that prejudice issues to be resolved in negotiations.

The Quartet reaffirmed its statements regarding its support for a Palestinian Government committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map, and encouraged progress in this direction.

The Quartet discussed efforts under way for a Palestinian national unity Government, pursuant to the agreement reached in Mecca on 8 February. The Quartet expressed its appreciation for the role of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and the cessation of violence among Palestinians.

The Quartet concluded with a discussion of possible further steps by the international community in the context of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

It welcomed preliminary ideas put forward by the European Commission to meet the needs to better coordinate and mobilize international assistance in support of the political process and to meet the needs of the Palestinian people.

The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to meet regularly and asked envoys to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead. It was agreed to schedule a meeting in the region soon.