

UN envoy calls on Israel, Palestinians to build peace momentum and mutual trust



Terje Roed-Larsen
briefs Council
members

17 July 2003 – With recent progress in the Middle East peace process affording a glimmer of hope, both sides must now build momentum and mutual trust, with the Palestinians disarming terrorists, and Israel easing the daily lives of Palestinians and releasing more prisoners, the top United Nations Middle East envoy told the Security Council today.

"Hope is beginning to supplant despair after more than 1,000 days of violence and 3,500 dead," Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said at an [open briefing](#) to the 15-member body. "Israel and Palestinians are meeting regularly and working together at all levels," he added in reference to the newly launched Road Map peace plan.

The plan, sponsored by the so-called diplomatic Quartet of the UN, United States, European Union and Russian Federation, calls for Israel and the Palestinians to take a series of parallel and reciprocal steps culminating in the achievement of two states living side by side in peace by 2005.

"I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the pressing need to create and build momentum," Mr. Roed-Larsen said. "Both sides need to take steps to build trust and confidence. Each needs to demonstrate to the other that progress brings real and tangible benefits. Each needs to strengthen the capacity of the other to move forward through bold and courageous steps."

The Palestinian Authority has a specific duty to assume security responsibility since "terrorist attacks are damaging" to the peace process, he added. "We hope that the ceasefire between (Palestinian militant groups) will lead to the disarming by the Palestinian Authority of all armed groups so that ... weapons are only held by members of the Palestinian security services," he said.

Turning to Israel he declared: "We would strongly urge the government of Israel to do more in terms of prisoner releases and in easing the daily living conditions of the Palestinians. I can think of few actions that would do more to build real trust and confidence. Prisoner releases in Northern Ireland set an encouraging precedent in this respect."

He also called on Israel to continue its withdrawals from occupied territory, to continue to refrain from targeted assassinations, to remove settlement outposts and prevent the erection of new ones, and to halt construction of a physical separation wall between the two peoples. "Its construction is a unilateral act not in keeping with the Road Map because it makes more difficult the creation of a viable contiguous Palestinian state," he said.

"Let me be clear where we stand," he added. "The Government of Israel should further ease and eventually lift the closure regime in the West Bank as a follow up to the steps it has taken in the Gaza Strip. The peace process will only seem real to the Palestinians when they are able to move freely, go to work and school, seek medical care and attend to other aspects of normal life without confronting checkpoints and humiliating procedures."

The key to whether the Palestinians see the peace process as meaningful lies largely in the hands of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, he said.

[Video of Security Council meeting](#)