



**United Nations
Secretary-General**

New York

19 September 2016

Secretary-General's message to meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee

[Delivered by Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs at the United Nations]

I thank all the members of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for their engagement. I am also grateful to Norway for chairing this important forum.

This meeting has taken place every year during my tenure as Secretary-General. Looking back on that period, I regret that we face a situation where the realization of the hopes and dreams of Palestinians and Israelis alike seems more distant than ever.

As we enter the fiftieth year of occupation, we face a scenario where the very viability of the two-state solution is in peril.

To build an independent Palestinian state, it is critical that the contiguity of the West Bank is preserved and that every effort is made to bolster the economy. There are legitimate fears that Area C is being slowly annexed by Israel. Settlements continue to be built. Palestinian access to land continues to be hampered. Area C is essential to accommodate the Palestinian population and to enable the development of a dynamic Palestinian private sector. In East Jerusalem, there is a need to revitalize the economy while strengthening the delivery of services.

In Gaza, two years have passed since the ceasefire that ended the most devastating hostilities since the beginning of the occupation. Significant progress has been made in rebuilding homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

However, as I have seen for myself on the ground, people are still struggling. That includes the 65,000 people whose homes have yet to be re-built and hundreds of thousands of people who do not have access to basic services. Without renewed economic investment and sincere efforts to enable trade, Palestinians in Gaza will remain locked in a vicious cycle of poverty, despair and isolation. Reuniting Palestinians under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority on the basis of the PLO platform and Quartet principles remains a priority. I continue to call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 in all its elements to achieve lasting progress, for building on a full calm and for the lifting of the closure.

The acute financial situation of the Palestinian Authority presents a serious additional risk. Without the support of the international community the consequences may prove widely destabilizing. Continued support to the Palestinian Authority, including budget support, and the alignment of programming behind Palestinian national priorities is essential to sustain its state-building achievements.

I hope today's meeting will point the way towards increased Palestinian and Israeli economic cooperation, an easing of restrictions on access and movement of Palestinians, and tangible improvements in both the West Bank and Gaza. Such positive measures would be mutually reinforcing and result in concrete benefits on the ground and foster badly needed trust.

We must all continue to show the determination necessary to keep working on a shared agenda. In that spirit, the UN will continue to help create and support those who work towards the goal of a better socio-economic environment for the Palestinian people, and to drive forward the process of building a Palestinian State.

By the end of this year, yet another timeline for reaching a negotiated solution will have lapsed and we must recognize that the window for achieving it is closing fast.

The establishment of a viable, democratic and sovereign State of Palestine living side by side with Israel is long overdue. Either we move forward, towards two States living in peace and security, or backwards towards renewed conflict, deeper despair, isolation and long-term insecurity and suffering for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Thank you again for your support.