

27 November 2007

**MIDDLE EAST QUARTET EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE**

Following is the text of the statement issued yesterday in Washington, D.C., by the Quartet ( United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union):

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, Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- met today in Washington to discuss the situation in the Middle East ahead of the upcoming Annapolis Conference. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet expressed strong support for the 27 November Annapolis Conference. It welcomed the commitment of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to launch bilateral negotiations towards the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, and the realization of Israeli-Palestinian peace. This reflects the results of months of work by the parties and by the Quartet, including the Quartet's engagement with members of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee to expand the circle of support for peace. The Quartet welcomed the parties' continuing efforts to fulfil their respective commitments under Phase One of the Road Map and urged the international community to provide robust support for all the parties' efforts. The principals took note of the broad international support for the Annapolis Conference and looked forward to the December Paris Donors' Conference to muster international financial backing for efforts to build the foundation for a viable and prosperous Palestinian State. The Quartet agreed to remain closely involved, and to that end will meet again in December, and looks forward to inviting members of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee to attend.

The Quartet affirmed its commitment to seize this opportunity to mobilize international support to achieve meaningful progress towards a just and lasting negotiated settlement to this conflict, and ultimately a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.