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**AHLC STATEMENT**  
**BRUSSELS, 19 APRIL 2016**

Minister Brende, Minister Bishara, Excellencies

The importance of this AHLC delivering concrete results that will be felt by the ordinary Palestinian in the weeks ahead can hardly be over-stated given the setbacks in the period since we met last met.

The UN report to this AHLC regrets the wave of violence that has taken hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian lives and injured thousands more in the last six months across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Including, most recently, yesterday's events in Jerusalem; our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and we wish them a full and rapid recovery. We regret the sharp rise in administrative detentions and return of punitive measures against the innocent families of perpetrators, which have followed in the wake of this surge of violence.

We note the acceleration of demolitions of Palestinian property in Area C – much of it provided by the donors in this room - already exceeding the 2015 total in just the first trimester of 2016. And the continuation of the Israeli settlement enterprise and the continuing lack of approvals of community plans in Area C, despite promising signals at the last AHLC.

The UN report to this AHLC records that Gaza's agony is far from over. That while donors have contributed generously to repair the scars of yet another round of hostilities, and that we can point to progress, some 75,000 people are waiting for their house to be rebuilt and aid funds are not getting to the right places fast enough. Gaza's economy continues to de-develop. The 'dual use list' became longer, not shorter, over the last year. And the ongoing rift between Ramallah and Gaza continued to hit Gaza's citizens as well, affecting salaries, fuel supplies and essential drugs to name just a few examples of the manifestations of a divided Government.

Our report documents that one in three Palestinians needs some form of humanitarian aid in 2016, be it assistance to the food insecure, rental assistance to the displaced, psycho-social support to children and the removal of Explosive Remnants of War in Gaza especially, or helping communities access water and health services in Area C of the West Bank. Protection remains the key task of the humanitarian community in Palestine.

The UN report to this AHLC reiterates familiar recommendations – a call to fundamentally revisit the dual use list, the greater easing of restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza, the need to freeze demolitions and approve plans for Area C, and the urgency of

addressing Gaza's acute water and electricity needs. We recall the importance of reunifying Palestinian governance. This report also urges donors to accelerate their delivery of funding to Gaza's reconstruction with an emphasis on housing and the economy. In light of developments over recent months, we especially call for recalibration in the use of force by the Israeli Security Forces, an end to the practice of administrative detention and collective punishment, and greater efforts to protect schools and students in these volatile times.

As we focus at this AHLC on the Palestinian economy and development assistance, we believe the need to re-establish a political horizon remains as crucial as ever. Billions of dollars of development aid have now been committed to the path to peace between Israel and Palestine by an international community wanting to help. Yet, the road to a political settlement is harder than ever to discern. And the acts on the streets of the West Bank and East Jerusalem these last months suggest despair is overtaking hope.

Our thematic focus these past days has been on stabilizing the PA budget and building a sustainable economy. We applaud the cooperation that has taken place between Ministers of Finance these past months. We welcome Palestinian Finance Minister Bishara's active leadership in shaping this agenda and seeking a clear focus for these AHLC discussions. The United Nations family remains heavily invested in Palestine and we will do our part to help build a sustainable economy, and one that delivers for those who matter most.

As echoed in our report to this AHLC, we believe that we all need to keep a watch on the statebuilding task as well, if only to make sure our collective achievements – and investments - from the last 23 years are not reversed. Simply protecting the status quo on statebuilding efforts won't be easy as this post-Oslo transition enters its 24<sup>th</sup> year. The same applies for progress in building a culture of parliamentary democracy, which risks seeing a retreat as we pass 10 years without elections.

Our message to this AHLC is clear – restoring a political horizon is a sine qua non for all of our other ambitions, for the economy, for governance, for donor engagement, and to reverse the spiraling vulnerability of ordinary Palestinians.

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