

*Quartet Statement  
June 24, 2008*

Representatives of the Quartet – U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel – met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet reaffirmed its support for ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and stressed the urgent need for tangible progress towards the shared goal of an agreement by the end of 2008 on the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and an end to the conflict. The Quartet expressed its commitment to support the parties in taking and implementing the difficult decisions required in order to achieve these outcomes.

The Quartet underscored the urgent need for more visible progress on the ground in order to build confidence and support progress in the negotiations launched at Annapolis. Israel's removal of some significant West Bank checkpoints and the opening of a number of Palestinian police stations in Area B represent good steps. Greater efforts are required now to project a new reality, including through further urgent steps to improve access and movement. Likewise, Palestinian security performance has improved, including recent efforts in Jenin. Continued Palestinian efforts to fight terrorism and to implement a more comprehensive security strategy are necessary for sustainable long-term improvement. The Quartet urged the parties to build upon these efforts, fulfilling all of their obligations under the Roadmap and refraining from any steps that undermine confidence or could prejudice the outcome of negotiations. In particular, the Quartet reiterated its deep concern at continuing settlement activity and called on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

The Quartet voiced its support for the outcomes of the "Berlin Conference in Support of Palestinian Civil Security and the Rule of Law." With its focus on the Palestinian police and justice sector the conference provided a timely forum to re-focus and direct international support efforts towards two key sectors of Palestinian state-building. The Quartet called for speedy implementation of projects agreed and robust donor support in order to build the capacity of the Palestinian police and justice sector. The Quartet urged Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in that respect, and emphasized the importance of unobstructed delivery of security assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Noting the dire budget situation facing the Palestinian Authority, the Quartet urged all donors who have not fulfilled their pledges, especially the key regional partners, to fulfill their pledges from the December 2007 Paris donors' conference and to urgently provide budgetary support to meet the requirements of the Palestinian Authority government. It looked to the next AHLC meeting on September 22 to take stock of progress.

Recalling the centrality of economic development and institutional reform to the success of a future Palestinian state, the Quartet reaffirmed its support for Quartet Representative Tony Blair's efforts, and congratulated the Palestinian Authority on the success of the May 21-23 Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem. Commending the close cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on this initiative, the Quartet encouraged similar cooperation to break ground on short and medium term projects and to make progress in private sector activities that will create jobs for Palestinians and help change the conditions of life. The Quartet underscored the importance of uninterrupted transfers of Palestinian tax and customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority.

The Quartet noted that a lasting solution to the situation in Gaza can only be achieved through peaceful means. The Quartet expressed its continuing support for Egyptian efforts to restore calm to Gaza and southern Israel and welcomed the period of calm that began on June 19. The Quartet urged that the calm be respected in full and expressed the hope that it would endure, and lead to improved security for Palestinians and Israelis alike, and a return to normal civilian life in Gaza. In this respect, the Quartet looked forward to increased humanitarian and commercial flows through the Gaza crossings under the management of the Palestinian Authority, consistent with the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, and welcomed the European Union's offer to resume its monitoring mission at the Rafah crossing point. The Quartet expressed its strong support for the steady and sufficient supplies of fuel to Gaza and for the immediate resumption of stalled UN and other donor projects there. It further tasked the Quartet Representative to develop and promote implementation of measures, in coordination with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to improve conditions in Gaza, as a matter of urgency.

The Quartet welcomed the May 21 announcement by Syria, Israel and Turkey that indirect talks have been launched, with Turkey's facilitation, aimed at achieving peace in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference, and hopes that progress is made in this direction.

The Quartet principals looked forward to meeting again in September at the United Nations General Assembly. On that occasion the Quartet will consider, after further consultations with the parties, the timing and agenda of an international meeting in Moscow to lend support to the process launched in Annapolis. Quartet Principals will also continue their dialogue with members of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee.

The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on UNSCRs 242, 338, 1397 and 1515.