

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

ESCALATION IN GAZA

The Secretary-General joins the Security Council's call for an immediate stop to all violence and all military activities. He deplores that violence is continuing today, and he strongly urges once again an immediate stop to all acts of violence. He is saddened by Palestinian casualties, among them eight UNRWA trainees and one UNRWA staff member, and one Israeli casualty.

The Secretary-General also expects the Security Council's call for all parties to address the humanitarian and economic needs in Gaza to be fully heeded, in particular, for border crossings to be open by Israel for the continuous provision of humanitarian supplies. The UN has repeatedly brought to the attention of the Government of Israel shortages of humanitarian supplies in Gaza in recent weeks and months. The Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory met with Israeli officials today and received a guarantee that all required humanitarian supplies and personnel would be allowed entry into Gaza, further to assurances given personally to the Secretary-General by Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Minister Livni. The Secretary-General fully expects this cooperation to continue on a rolling basis in the coming days.

The Secretary-General has spoken to the other members of the Quartet and regional leaders including Prime Minister Olmert, Foreign Minister Livni, President Abbas, President Mubarak, President Assad, and Secretary-General Moussa, to underscore the urgent need to restore calm in full, and is in close touch with his envoy, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry, and UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd, who is in Gaza. The UN is working actively to promote urgent implementation of the Security Council's calls to end the violence, reopen the crossings, and restore calm in full.

New York, 28 December 2008.