

**STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE SPOKESPERSON
FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**Release of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit
and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners**

The Secretary-General welcomed the recent prisoner exchange agreement and views today's releases as a significant humanitarian breakthrough. He has long called for the end of the unacceptable captivity of Gilad Shalit and has also called for the release of Palestinian prisoners. For several years, the United Nations has actively supported channels of dialogue to resolve this issue.

The Secretary-General thanks Egypt for its contribution to this outcome, and Germany for its efforts. In the aftermath, the Secretary-General hopes that more far-reaching steps will be taken to end the closure of Gaza and enable reconstruction. He continues to call in the same context for an end to the smuggling of weapons and a sustained calm between Israel and Gaza.

New York, 18 October 2011