

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

Middle East and North Africa

The Secretary-General welcomes President Obama's important speech on the historic developments taking place in the Middle East and North Africa. The Secretary-General has consistently expressed his support for the legitimate aspirations of the people in the region for greater freedom, dignity and a better life. The Secretary-General continues to call on the leaders throughout the region to reject the use of force, violence and repression, and to choose the path of comprehensive reform and inclusive dialogue. He believes it is the people of the region who will lead the way, and he pledges the full assistance of the United Nations.

On the Middle East Peace Process, the Secretary-General believes that President Obama has offered important ideas which could help the peace talks move forward, consistent with international positions and responding to the legitimate core concerns of both parties. He encourages Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to respond as statesmen and peacemakers to this important speech. He hopes all sides will demonstrate a renewed determination to achieve a peace agreement that provides for two States living side-by-side in dignity, security and peace.

New York, 19 May 2011