

Annan backs UN Middle East envoy in urging peace talks

14 July 2004 - A day after the senior United Nations envoy to the Middle East briefed the Security Council on the situation in that troubled region, Secretary-General Kofi Annan today echoed his call for peace talks.

Reacting to press reports that UN Special Coordinator Terje Roed-Larsen is no longer welcome in Palestinian territory, a spokesperson for Mr. Annan issued a [statement](#) voicing the Secretary-General's "full support for and confidence in" the envoy.

Marie Okabe clarified that in briefing the Council, Mr. Roed-Larsen intended "to convey concerns within the Quartet and more widely in the international community regarding a lack of implementation by both parties of their Road Map obligations."

She said the Quartet - a diplomatic grouping comprised of the UN, United States, European Union and Russian Federation - has agreed that "the Palestinian Authority must carry out its reform process, including the full empowerment of the Palestinian Prime Minister; the Government of Israel must dismantle settlement outposts and freeze settlement activity; and both sides must return to the negotiating table.

"The Secretary-General believes that the parties need to focus on the tasks at hand in order to work towards the just, lasting and comprehensive settlement that is so urgently needed," she added.

Asked about the press reports, Ms. Okabe said, "We are seeking clarification from the Palestinian Authority on that issue."

Source: UN News Service