

## **Hailing new Palestinian president, Annan looks forward to independent state**

10 January 2005 – United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today welcomed the election of new Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as "a significant step in what is a historic democratic transition" in the occupied territories, and said he was looking forward to working for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

"The commitment to democracy of the Palestinian people and their institutions is a strong foundation for President Abbas to build on," he said in a statement issued by his spokesman.

Mr. Annan voiced pleasure at reports indicating that the election of a successor to Yasser Arafat, who died in November, was conducted in a politically competitive yet peaceful atmosphere, and he congratulated the Palestinian Central Elections Commission for organizing a credible and genuine poll under challenging conditions.

The Secretary-General said he was looking forward to working with Mr. Abbas on the implementation of the Road Map, referring to the peace plan sponsored by the diplomatic Quartet - the UN, European Union, Russia and the United States - which has called for parallel and reciprocal steps by both Israelis and Palestinians leading to two states living side by side in peace by the end of this year.

In comments yesterday in Sri Lanka, where he was touring the devastation caused by last month's Indian Ocean tsunami, Mr. Annan said he was "very impressed" with the elections.

"This election has been very well prepared, perhaps one of the best prepared that we have been involved in," he said, referring to the world body's technical and logistical assistance.

The new Palestinian leader will need not only the cooperation of his people, but also the support of the international community, which has to ensure the economic viability of a Palestinian state and help the Palestinians with reform, he added.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council also welcomed yesterday's balloting for president and congratulated the Palestinian people on the election.

*Link: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=12994>*