

Middle East peace, Iraq and AIDS focus of Annan's talks with leaders in Davos

23 January 2004 – United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan met in Switzerland today with officials and leaders from several countries for talks covering the Middle East peace process, developments in Iraq and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In the margins of the World Economic Forum, held each year in Davos, the Secretary-General spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom about Israel's separation barrier, which Mr. Annan "sees as an obstacle to the Road Map for peace," a UN spokesman said in New York.

The Road Map initiative of the Quartet - the UN, European Union, Russian Federation and United States - calls for a series of parallel and reciprocal steps leading to two states living side by side in peace by 2005.

In separate meetings with Mr. Shalom and with Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath, the Secretary-General also discussed conditions for resuming the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and raised the matter of the pending advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice ([ICJ](#)) on the separation barrier, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Mr. Annan also met this morning with the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, with whom he discussed Iraq and the expansion of the European Community to 25 members.

The Secretary-General and new Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada discussed efforts to provide affordable medication for AIDS patients in poor countries. He briefed the Prime Minister on Iraq, while Mr. Martin raised the issues of Zimbabwe and the Secretary-General's high-level panel on threats, challenges and change, Mr. Dujarric said.

His last meeting of the morning was with Dr. Richard Feachem, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

In the afternoon, Mr. Annan [met](#) with the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf. The Secretary-General told reporters afterwards that he was extremely pleased with the recent developments between India and Pakistan, adding that peace between the two countries and improved relations would be very important not just for them but for the region and the world.

"I am confident that the two leaders are going to do whatever they can to bring about peace," he said, praising the fact that they are "engaged in such a determined manner."

The Secretary-General's other appointments for the day included meetings the Foreign Minister of Iran, Kamal Kharazi, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amre Moussa, and the President of the US pharmaceutical company Merck.

[Speaking](#) to reporters on his way into the conference centre earlier on Friday, the Secretary-General said he had had good discussions with several of the leaders in Davos on Iraq and developments in the region, and that he would make a decision fairly shortly on the Iraqi and coalition request that he send a team to the country to look at the feasibility of holding direct elections there prior to the return of sovereignty at the end of June.

On the Middle East, the Secretary-General said his talks focused on what could be done to move the peace process forward, "because there is an impasse at the moment."

"Everybody is searching for a way to move forward," he said, adding, "And the questions of the wall was very much part of the discussion that we had."

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