

Middle East Road Map is distressed, but far from dead, says Annan

11 December 2003 – The Road Map peace plan for the Middle East is in distress, but it is not dead, and a new mood in the region could inspire the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians to get back to the negotiating table, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said today.

Speaking at a joint [press conference](#) in Berlin with Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Mr. Annan said he was encouraged that "today, in almost all the newspapers in the region, they are talking about the peace alternative."

The Road Map - a peace process co-sponsored by the diplomatic Quartet of the European Union, the Russian Federation, the UN and the United States - calls for parallel and reciprocal steps leading to Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security by 2005.

The Secretary-General said: "It's a difficult situation. The Road Map is in a bit of a distress. Some think it's dead, but it's not dead at all. 'Distress' doesn't mean death. But we hope we can get it back on track."

He added that people in the region know there is an alternative to killing and recent peace initiatives from civil society had created a new dynamic.

During the press conference, Mr. Annan said that he talked about the situation in Cyprus, which is currently divided, with Mr. Schröder.

"As I have indicated to the parties, my good offices are available the moment they show the will - the political will - to move forward and seek a settlement."

Mr. Annan was also asked for his views about the decision taken yesterday to exclude Germany, France and Russia from reconstruction contracts in Iraq, and he stressed the need for the actions being taken on Iraq to be unifying rather than divisive. "And in that respect," he said, "I would not characterize the decision taken yesterday as unifying."

The Secretary-General and the Chancellor discussed Afghanistan, Iraq, next year's renewable energy conference in Bonn and reform of the UN during their meeting. The two leaders also talked about how to intensify cooperation between the UN and Germany.

Today Mr. Annan is scheduled to hold meetings with Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, its Defence Minister Peter Struck and the leader of the biggest opposition party in Germany, the Christian Democratic Union.

Yesterday, before he left the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva for Germany, the Secretary-General met Greece's Foreign Minister George Papandreou.

Later today Mr. Annan and his wife Nane are due to meet German President Johannes Rau before attending a dinner hosted by Mr. Schröder with chief executives of many Global Compact companies.

Tonight Mrs. Annan will address a group of women from political and women's organizations in an event hosted by the German UN Association.

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