



Press Release

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry – Briefing to the Security Council

New York, 16 September 2014

Special Coordinator Serry informed the Security Council that the ceasefire brokered by Egypt has largely held since 26 August but remains worryingly fragile, with the underlying dynamics still unaddressed.

Having recently visited Gaza, Special Coordinator Serry described the levels of destruction to infrastructure, hospitals and schools in Gaza as “shocking”, noting that the conflict resulted in more than 2,100 Palestinians killed, most were civilians -- including some 500 children and 250 women, and 11 UNRWA staff. While on the Israeli side, 66 IDF soldiers and six civilians, including a child and a foreign national, were killed.

Special Coordinator Serry told the Council that the devastation unleashed by this most recent round of conflict has left civilians on both sides feeling, once again, “battered and embittered”. Special Coordinator Serry urged all concerned Parties to “act now to set a wiser and more responsible course” out of the current dangerous impasse by solidifying the calm, addressing urgent humanitarian issues, opening up Gaza for reconstruction and recovery and empowering the Palestinian Government of National Consensus (GNC).

In this regard, Special Coordinator Serry announced that “UNSCO has brokered a trilateral agreement between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the UN to enable work at the scale required in the Strip, involving the private sector in Gaza and giving a lead role to the Palestinian Authority in the reconstruction effort, while providing security assurances through UN monitoring that these materials will not be diverted from their entirely civilian purpose.” He also confirmed that “the UN stands ready to provide increased technical assistance to the Government of National Consensus in Gaza.”

Special Coordinator Serry also stressed the need for action on the West Bank: “Maintaining the status quo in the West Bank while addressing Gaza anew would send entirely the wrong signal”, he said. “I am pleased that Israel has confirmed that an additional 5,000 West Bank Palestinians will receive work permits in Israel. But positive Israeli actions on a range of issues -- such as empowering and enabling Palestinian planning and construction in Area C, to say nothing of ceasing Israeli settlement activity -- would send a powerful message,” he added.

Special Coordinator Serry noted that it would not be easy to revive a political process, but warned that fresh thinking is urgently needed to break out of current dynamics and preserve the possibility of two States.

In closing, the Special Coordinator said “When I warn that Gaza could implode, or explode again, or the two State paradigm could slip irreversibly away, I do not believe I am crying wolf. This Council should not underestimate the dangers. I hope the Council will have the occasion to make its own position clear. This would be a welcome step of confidence, commitment and hope at a time when the parties and the world desperately need it.”

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