



PRESS RELEASE

UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS CALLS FOR “PURPOSE, RATHER THAN PARALYSIS” TO SHAPE EVENTS BETWEEN NOW AND SEPTEMBER

19 May 2011

In a briefing today to the United Nations Security Council in New York, on the situation in the Middle East, UN Special Coordinator Robert Serry underscored that the Arab-Israeli conflict “will not be immune” to the “popular protests and political change” sweeping the Arab world, and called for a “meaningful political initiative” before September for a two State solution. Mr. Serry said that recent events continue to “shake the unsustainable *status quo* found in many parts of the Middle East.” He stressed that the Israelis and Palestinians themselves along with the international community, “must show purpose, rather than paralysis, as we approach a critical period in the search for peace in the Middle East”.

September is a key target date for achieving progress in negotiations and completing institutional readiness for Palestinian statehood, but Mr. Serry warned that “we are worryingly stuck” in the search for a two State solution. “In the absence of an initiative, it is too early to assess whether September will bring a new and more effective paradigm for resolving the conflict through negotiations, or renewed confrontation between the parties in the diplomatic arena or on the ground.”

Mr. Serry also briefed the Council on the details of the recent Palestinian reconciliation accord. He stressed the Secretary-General’s support for unity in the framework of the positions of the Quartet and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative. Acknowledging concerns about Hamas, while noting the maintenance of calm out of Gaza, Mr. Serry counseled against reaching a hasty view of the accord’s merits or prospects: “Reunification of Gaza and the West Bank is a vital goal for all interested in peace, and the process should not be undermined in its infancy”.

Noting the calm that has largely prevailed out of Gaza he stated that “the authorities in Gaza must now actively maintain this encouraging and important calm. Israel must show maximum restraint and ensure a conducive environment for calm.’ He also noted the continuing security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in the West Bank, stressing the importance of this continuing “under any future government.”

The Special Coordinator said that the successful Palestinian state-building agenda must go hand in hand with the unity process, so that “real security and economic improvements” can continue in the West Bank and begin to be broadened to include Gaza, and so “that elections can take place in a year”.

Regarding the closure of Gaza, Mr. Serry said that “measures of liberalization are also essential to solidify the modest progress already made and empower those seeking continued calm....a free flow of both people and construction materials for Gaza remains a central objective of the United Nations”.

The Special Coordinator noted that the Secretary-General is also following with concern media reports of potential new flotillas to Gaza that “can provoke unnecessary confrontations”.

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