



**Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator
for the Middle East Peace Process**

Press Release

**UN REPORT CALLS FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE ON GAZA
AND RENEWED URGENCY IN THE WEST BANK**

Monday 15 September 2014, Jerusalem – A United Nations report has called for a fundamental change in the dynamics in the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the recent conflict, while addressing with renewed urgency the situation in the West Bank. “This is the only path that can lay the basis for a dignified civilian life and a renewed effort at Israeli-Palestinian peace,” the report said.

The report, issued by the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for the upcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) to be hosted by the Secretary-General in New York on 22 September, says the major escalation in the Gaza Strip has taken a devastating toll on civilian lives and resulted in an unprecedented amount of destruction which brought into stark relief the need for fundamental change. “Neither Israeli closure nor militant smuggling of weapons or material for tunnels nor the continued division of the Palestinians can offer anything beyond setting the stage for another, even more catastrophic war.”

The report stresses that “reconstruction, recovery, governance and security in the Gaza Strip must take place in the context of the return of one legitimate Palestinian authority to the Strip, and that the UN, in cooperation with other partners, will support the Government of National Consensus (GNC) in these tasks.”

On a positive note, the report stresses that the UN continues to work intensively with the concerned Parties to finalize a mechanism to kick-start shelter rehabilitation and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip at the scale required, while addressing legitimate security concerns. In this regard, Special Coordinator Robert Serry will brief the UN Security Council on 16 September and the AHLC on 22 September.

Although largely eclipsed by events in the Gaza Strip, circumstances on the ground in the West Bank deteriorated, with a rise in violence, continued settlement expansion, land expropriation, and a high number of reported confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers, the report states.

The report also highlights that in spite of the continued pressures on the Palestinians and fiscal difficulties affecting the Palestinian Authority (PA) during the past year, further progress has been made in enhancing Palestinian institutions, including advances in national planning, budget management and service delivery. However, the report explains how the deteriorating socio-economic trends in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip indicate that the status quo is not sustainable and that real progress needs to be made.

The report stresses that “steps from all parties are required to break away from the cycle of PA deficits, which are financed through uncertain donor support”. On those steps, the report says that “achieving longer-term fiscal sustainability requires further and more far-reaching relaxation of Israeli restrictions that spurs sustained private sector-led growth and creates employment, providing increased tax revenue for the PA. Fundamental change that allows for socio-economic development is essential, for example through access to Area C.”

Beyond addressing the PA’s medium and long-term fiscal sustainability, the report highlights that “the GNC faces massive challenges in assuming its full responsibilities and overseeing reconstruction in the Gaza Strip and in bringing the West Bank and Gaza Strip together under one legitimate government.” “It is now essential that all Palestinian parties support the GNC and take no actions that would undermine its efforts. The GNC must be facilitated and enabled – in particular by Israel – in this task throughout the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and constructively assisted by regional stakeholders and the wider international community,” the report concludes.

Note to Editors: The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) serves as the principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the oPt. The AHLC is chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the EU and the US. In addition, the United Nations participates together with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The AHLC seeks to promote dialogue between donors, the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel. The full report to the AHLC prepared by the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is attached to this release and includes an executive summary of its main conclusions.