

Press Release

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
Robert Serry - Briefing to the Security Council

New York, Monday 25 March 2013

As peoples in the Middle East face an ongoing period of extraordinary challenges and turmoil, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace process Robert Serry noted in his report to the Security Council that establishing the groundwork necessary for a credible Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains a core priority for the United Nations. He said the visit by President Obama to the region last week marks an important opportunity to reinvigorate efforts towards a two-state solution.

The Special Coordinator noted that both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas have recently reiterated their commitment to the two-state solution and that it is incumbent upon the United Nations, and the international community, to help them bridge their differences and support a serious international initiative, including through a revitalized Quartet that engages more broadly with key Arab partners, regional and other stakeholders.

Mr. Serry highlighted the recent conclusions from the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting that met in Brussels on 19 March which underscored that “it is an illusion that we can preserve the current situation indefinitely. The alternative to progress is sliding back, and a political horizon must be restored without delay.”

Special Coordinator Serry took note of initial signals of reversing negative measures on the ground. He now hopes these will take hold and create a conducive environment for a meaningful political process to take shape.

Special Coordinator Serry reported on worrying levels of violence on the ground. He said several clashes took place during protests and that tensions also extended to Jerusalem with multiple clashes taking place at the Temple Mount/Haram Al Sharif compound. Settler violence against Palestinians continued and Israeli security sources have also reported an increase in stone throwing as well as a suspected shooting. Special Coordinator Serry also expressed concern regarding the continued hunger strikes of Palestinian Prisoners.

Regarding Gaza, the Special Coordinator noted that the reporting period saw a serious setback in the implementation of the ceasefire brokered on 21 November as a result of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. In reaction, Israel rescinded the extension of the fishing limit, temporarily closed the Kerem Shalom crossing, and limited movement in and out of Gaza. He added that the United Nations condemned the firing of rockets into

civilian areas, and called on all sides to adhere to the understanding reached on 21 November 2012 in Cairo and to redouble efforts to solidify the calm.

In conclusion, Special Coordinator Serry said there is now an opening to develop a serious and substantial political initiative to achieve the negotiated two-state solution. He added that “both sides will now have to demonstrate political will and concerted action by the international community is needed to support their efforts”.

Ends.