

Press Release

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

New York, Wednesday 23 January 2013

Against the backdrop of Israeli elections held yesterday, elections in Jordan today and the US Administration commencing a second term this week, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry said at today's meeting of the Security Council that "we are entering a critical period ahead, in which concerted action will be vital if we are to salvage the two-state solution."

Serry noted increased alarm among regional and international partners that the two-state solution is "slipping away", and questions raised about "the effectiveness of international efforts to bring about decisive results". While Quartet members recognized the urgent need for action, Serry expressed his genuine concern that "a clear and realistic path is still lacking". He reiterated the United Nations intention to remain an integral part of efforts to urgently address "the dangerous political vacuum", and the willingness to work with any initiative that will achieve the international community's common goal, including in the context of the Quartet.

As no international effort alone is sufficient for progress absent the requisite will of the parties themselves, he urged them to "abstain from actions that will make efforts to resume meaningful negotiations even harder in the period ahead."

Serry also noted worrying trends on the ground, including continued Israeli settlement construction and increased violence, and the seriously weakened capacity of the Palestinian Authority to meet its financial obligations. He called on Israel to restore the timely, predictable and transparent transfers of tax and customs revenues without further delay. He also called on Members of the Arab League to urgently provide financial assistance in accordance with pledged commitments of 9 December 2012.

Serry warned "we should be under no illusion that the viability of the Palestinian Authority will be increasingly at stake if its standing is based on political 'quick-sand'. Ultimately, there is no future for the Palestinian Authority without a two-state solution."

On Gaza, Serry noted that the calm brokered by Egypt in November has largely held, but remains tenuous. Significantly, no rockets or mortar shells landed in Israel in the reporting period. The UN will remain engaged in Egyptian-led efforts to further progress on all aspects of the implementation of the ceasefire. He also emphasized that progress on the implementation of SCR 1860 also means overcoming the Palestinian divide. "The peace process and reconciliation is not an "either-or" proposition and must be made compatible by advancing both in a mutually reinforcing way."

Serry concluded that "the consequences for inaction could be dire for everyone. Therefore the parties must not only remain open to new initiatives to overcome the current impasse, but they must also demonstrate their seriousness."

Ends.