



Press Release

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

New York, Monday 16 December 2013

Briefing the Security Council today, Special Coordinator Serry looked back on 2013 as an important year for the peace process, as the parties were now engaged in a serious effort to implement their commitment to a negotiated two-state solution. Sincerely hoping that this effort would lead, next year, to decisive and irreversible progress towards a comprehensive settlement realizing the vision of two states for two peoples, Serry said: “If both parties, with continued effective support by the international community, take the bold steps needed to see through what they have started this year, we will reach in 2014 a moment of truth regarding a two-state solution”.

Serry reiterated the UN’s concern about the fragile situation on the ground. With the third prisoners’ release approaching, he urged both sides to refrain from steps that would increase mistrust and undermine the prospects for progress in the critical period ahead “when bolder decisions are required to bridge the gaps towards a final status agreement.”

Serry warned that continued settlement activity cannot be reconciled with the goal of the two-state solution and is illegal under international law. He also voiced concern about recurrent violence and incitement.

The Special Coordinator briefed the Council on the impact of current inclement weather in Gaza where, as a result of heavy flooding, around 10,000 people had been displaced. The UN on the ground was actively engaged with relevant parties to address the most urgent issues. Israel had provided four water pumps for Gaza and expanded operations at Kerem Shalom. Serry was pleased the Gaza Power Plant had resumed operations as of yesterday thanks to Qatar’s donation of USD 10 million for the Palestinian Authority to purchase fuel for the Gaza Power Plant. “This

is an important, but by no means sufficient development to start addressing Gaza's structural energy problem".

The Special Coordinator noted positively the decision of the Government of Israel to resume the transfer of construction materials for UN projects in Gaza, under an agreed mechanism for the secure transfer and use of this material. "The current relative calm points to the importance of preserving the ceasefire understanding of a year ago, also as a basis for progress on other issues, including the further opening of the crossings". In this regard, he highlighted the importance for Israel to reinstate its decision to allow construction materials for the private sector into the Strip.

ENDS