

Statement by Middle East Quartet

30 September 2015

The following statement by the Middle East Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union) was issued today:

Representatives of the Quartet — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry and European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini — met in New York on 30 September.

The Quartet agreed to consult with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, and Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Nabil Elaraby, as part of its regular and direct outreach to key Arab partners. The Quartet also agreed to hear from other stakeholders from the international community. The Quartet emphasized the importance of constructive international contributions to advancing a comprehensive peace and affirmed that it will continue its outreach efforts.

The Quartet reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to achieving a two-state outcome that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for Statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. It recalled its previous statements and relevant Security Council resolutions and pledged its active support for a just, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It noted that the intensifying threat of terrorism, sectarian extremism and radicalization in the Middle East reinforces the need to pursue a negotiated two-State solution.

The Quartet noted with deep concern recent violence and escalating tensions surrounding the holy sites in Jerusalem and called upon all parties to exercise restraint, refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric, and preserve unchanged the status quo at the holy sites in both word and practice.

The Quartet expressed its serious concern that current trends on the ground — including continued acts of violence against Palestinians and Israelis, ongoing settlement activity and the high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures — are dangerously imperiling the viability of a two-State solution. The Quartet condemned in the strongest possible terms violence against Israeli and Palestinian civilians and reiterated that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of a negotiated solution.

The Quartet underscored that the status quo is not sustainable and stressed the importance of both sides' demonstrating, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-State solution in order to rebuild trust and avoid a cycle of escalation. The Quartet expressed strong support for concrete and significant steps that will help stabilize the situation, reverse current trends by showing meaningful progress towards creating a two-State reality on the ground and restore hope among Palestinians and Israelis that a negotiated peace is possible.

The Quartet acknowledged Israel's recent steps to ease certain restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza. It noted that positive and significant policy shifts, particularly in Area C, will be critical to increasing the Palestinian Authority's ability to address key economic, security and institutional challenges, and can be advanced while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs. Consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements, progress in the areas of housing, water, energy, communications, agriculture and natural resources will significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Quartet stressed that the Palestinian commitment to building institutions, improving governance and strongly opposing incitement and violence in all forms remains critically important to laying the groundwork for a viable independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. The Quartet expressed support for the Palestinians to achieve genuine national unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) principles. The Quartet

noted the importance of ensuring that the governance framework of the West Bank and Gaza is integrated under the single legitimate authority that takes control of the border crossings in Gaza, implements civil service integration and pays public sector salaries.

The Quartet urged an immediate focus on accelerating efforts to address the dire situation in Gaza, emphasized the importance of increased access through legal crossings and called on all international partners to expedite the disbursement of their pledges made at the Cairo Conference in October 2014.

The Quartet stands ready to support initiatives to advance these objectives in order to achieve a comprehensive two-State solution. The Quartet stressed the importance of continued support from key stakeholders in the region, and noted the significance and importance of the Arab Peace Initiative with its vision for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the opportunity for building a regional security framework. It also expressed appreciation for the support of many key partners from the international community and called on all to provide concrete measures to advance the prospects for a two-State solution.

The Quartet Envoys will engage directly with the parties in order to explore concrete actions both sides can take to demonstrate their genuine commitment to pursuing a two-State solution, including encouraging efforts to agree on significant steps, consistent with prior agreements, that benefit Israelis and Palestinians. The Envoys will also build on their outreach to regional States and international partners to examine how they may contribute to a comprehensive resolution of the conflict and will report back to the Quartet Principals.

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sg2220.doc.htm>