

Quartet Statement

New York City, 20 September 2006

Quartet principals -- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- met today in New York to discuss developments in the Middle East since their last meeting on 9 May.

Taking stock of recent developments in the region, the Quartet stressed the urgent need to make progress towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Quartet expressed its concern at the grave crisis in Gaza and the continued stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Quartet welcomed the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to form a Government of National Unity, in the hope that the platform of such a Government would reflect Quartet principles and allow for early engagement.

The Quartet underlined the urgent need for the parties to implement fully all aspects of the Agreement on Movement and Access. Accordingly, Rafah and all other passages should remain open, consistent with relevant agreements.

The Quartet encouraged greater donor support to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, with a particular emphasis on security-sector reform, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and economic development. The Quartet commended the efforts of the World Bank and the European Union to facilitate needs-based assistance directly to the Palestinian people via the Temporary International Mechanism endorsed by the Quartet on 17 June. Mindful of the continuing needs of the Palestinian people, the Quartet endorsed the continuation and expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism for a three-month period, and agreed to again review the need for such a mechanism at the end of that period.

The Quartet noted that the resumption of transfers of tax and customs revenues collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority would have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy. The Quartet encouraged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to consider resumption of such transfers via the Temporary International Mechanism to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Quartet welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to request James D. Wolfensohn to report on the situation on the ground.

The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to the "Road Map" as the means to realize the goal of two democratic States -- Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security. The Quartet stressed the need for a credible political process in order to make

progress towards a two-State solution through dialogue and parallel implementation of obligations. In this context, the Quartet welcomed the prospect of a meeting between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Abbas in the near future. The Quartet agreed to meet on a regular basis in the coming period at both the principals and envoys level, including with the parties and other regional partners, to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead.