

New York, 9 December 2010 - Readout of the Secretary-General's meeting with Defence Minister Ehud Barak of the State of Israel

The Secretary-General and Defence Minister Ehud Barak discussed the ongoing efforts to move the Middle East peace process forward. The Secretary-General emphasized that it was vital to break the current diplomatic stalemate and resume negotiations. He expressed concern at the settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. He also raised the issue of UN freedom of movement between Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The Secretary-General took positive note of the decision by the Government of Israel to allow exports from Gaza, which he sees as essential to revive Gaza's economy. He also urged the Defence Minister to facilitate additional UN reconstruction work in Gaza. The Secretary-General expressed his continuing concern at the detention of Gilad Shalit, and the need for further steps on implementation of resolution 1860.

The Secretary-General and the Defence Minister also discussed the regional situation, including the Israeli military withdrawal from the northern part of the village of Ghajar, and Iran.