UN and Saudi Arabia stress importance of Arab Peace Initiative

21 April 2008 – The senior United Nations envoy on the Middle East and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister have underscored the continued importance of the Arab Peace Initiative during a meeting in Riyadh on the latest developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process Robert Serry and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal also stressed their shared commitment to a comprehensive regional peace based on Security Council resolutions and international law during yesterday's meeting, UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters in New York today.

They conferred on the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian talks as well as on the situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory, including moves to address the grave humanitarian conditions faced by the Gaza Strip.

"In addition, they discussed efforts to ensure implementation of Phase I Road Map obligations," Ms. Montas said.

The Arab Peace Initiative, a plan adopted in Beirut by the region's leaders in March 2002, is based on the principle of land for peace. It calls for Israel to withdraw from all Arab lands occupied since 1967, recognize an independent Palestinian State and provide a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees. In return Arab countries would recognize Israel, end their conflict and normalize relations.

In a related development, no diesel or petrol has entered Gaza since the 9 April attack by Palestinian militants on the Nahal Oz fuel depot, according to Mr. Serry's office, known as UNSCO.

The UN and its humanitarian partners, which have already been squeezed by shortages, will shut down their operations – including the provision of health, education, food, water, sanitation and other key services to the area's 1.5 million residents – in a few days if fuel supplies are not restored immediately.

All international aid agencies operating in Gaza are scheduled to meet tomorrow to assess the increasingly dire situation.