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FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS
UN DAY REMARKS
UN Common Premises, Ramallah -- 27 October 2011**

Thank you all for coming today. It is a great honour to have you here at the UN premises, and to see many of my good friends with whom we work so closely on a regular basis. Every year on UN Day we reaffirm the universal values that drive the Organization.

During his UN Day remarks the Secretary-General reaffirmed the mission of the United Nations:

To build a better world.

To leave no one behind.

To stand for the poorest and most vulnerable in the name of global peace and social justice.

In these efforts, the Question of Palestine is centrally important to the UN. To be sure, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dramatically shaped this Organization and it is at the centre of our efforts, and indeed all efforts, to establish peace and stability in the region and the world.

This UN Day marks the 66th year since the inception of the Organization. Throughout that period the UN has maintained a strong commitment to uphold international law in the pursuit of a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict. After all, the UN itself represents the hope of international law; we embody the principle of self-determination and we take very seriously our responsibility to uphold international humanitarian law with regard to the occupation that began in 1967 and in our engagement with all parties to this conflict.

It means consistently speaking out against settlements and the separation wall that are contrary to international law. And on this point, I continue to share your concern about the persistent construction of settlements in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. The Secretary-General and I have made clear that these developments, including recent announcements, are unacceptable and run counter to the Quartet's call to restart a process of negotiation and avoid provocations.

We continue to work toward a negotiated resolution of all core issues to this conflict, including Jerusalem, borders, security, settlements, refugees, water and all other issues between the parties. Let me salute the tireless work of UNRWA in support of the plight of refugees, as well as the work of other UN agencies in the West Bank and Gaza, whose representatives are gathered here today.

However, I want to also highlight the tremendous achievements related to the Palestinian Authority's statebuilding agenda. UNSCO, alongside the World Bank, the IMF and others in the international community, has stated clearly on several occasions that the Palestinian Authority's institutions are ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood at any point in the near future. The performance of the Palestinian security forces has impressively contributed to establishing law and order in Palestinian cities for the benefit of the Palestinian people. Key infrastructure has been promoted and the provision of basic services is improving. This is the result of the dedicated work of President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad, Palestinian Ministers and the stances they have taken, including a strong commitment to non-violence.

These achievements have remarkably taken place despite the continued occupation and persistent Palestinian division. It is the duty and responsibility of the Palestinians to work for reconciliation in a way that upholds the historic commitments of the PLO which can lay the basis for a Palestinian state that encompasses both Gaza and West Bank.

In Gaza, it is also my hope, as expressed by the Secretary-General, that the ongoing prisoner exchange will be followed by a lifting of the closure, including through immediate far-reaching steps to that end in close coordination with the Palestinian Authority. The UN is working to ensure a continuation of the economic recovery being experienced. Despite a recent drop in unemployment, the sustainability of progress is not yet clear and parts of the population continue to rely on humanitarian assistance.

Now we are at a moment when President Abbas has brought the issue of Palestine back to the United Nations. I felt history in the making last month when President Abbas delivered his application for United Nations membership to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General immediately transmitted the application to the Security Council, as membership in the United Nations remains for the Member States to decide, and the Security Council is currently examining the application.

The Secretary-General has said a Palestinian state is long overdue. The status quo is not sustainable and the actions of Palestinians are changing the political and psychological atmosphere, as are the changes sweeping the region. As President Abbas took this step, tens of thousands of Palestinians demonstrated peacefully, powerfully reminding the world of their yearning for a State of their own.

However, in all of this it is also clear that there is no substitute for a negotiated settlement that resolves all final status issues, and President Abbas has stated clearly that this remains his priority. The 23 September Quartet statement provided a framework for the parties to find a way forward, and called for proposals within 90 days on borders and security with a view to achieving progress in six months and an agreement by the end of 2012.

Yesterday I participated in separate Quartet Envoys meetings with the Parties in Jerusalem and I was happy to host the Palestinian Delegation led by Saeb Erekat at Government House. We reiterated the Quartet's call upon the Parties to refrain from provocative actions, including settlements. In what may be, I hope, a significant step forward, both Parties agreed with the Quartet to come forward with comprehensive proposals on territory and security within the next three months. Our aim remains to engage the Parties in meaningful direct negotiations as soon as possible. The Quartet also stressed the need for active steps to preserve and build on the achievements of the Palestinian Authority in preparing institutions for statehood.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my personal commitment, and the commitment of the UN, to our common goals: a two-state solution that will see the birth of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security; a resolution of all final status issues; the end of the occupation and an end of conflict. And a partnership with the United Nations that bolsters peace and social justice.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Prime Minister Fayyad.