

**B. LYNN PASCOE
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**

**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

27 September 2011

Mr. President,

1. More than a week of intensive diplomacy at the United Nations has underscored the institutional readiness of the Palestinian Authority to run a state, and has seen the Palestinian President apply for membership for a State of Palestine in the United Nations. The Quartet has noted this application, while calling for resumed negotiations and urging concrete proposals from the parties on territory and security within three months of talks resuming. The Quartet reaffirmed the international legal basis for the peace process, and its support, expressed on 20 May 2011, for the vision of Israeli-Palestinian peace outlined by President Obama. It also urged the parties to avoid provocations on the ground.

2. Judged by the passions of last week, the parties remain far apart. No one can deny the depth of their dispute. But there are now some building blocks in place that could help make negotiations more effective than before— a clear timetable, expectations that the parties must come forward with proposals, and an active role of the Quartet. It will not be easy to chart a way forward, but now is the time for everyone to give diplomacy a chance.

3. Let me begin by noting an important international success story. The Palestinian Authority is capable of running a State. This strong international consensus was clear at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 18 September, here in New York. The meeting confirmed the assessments of the World Bank, the IMF and UNSCO of the capability of the Palestinian Authority. The efforts to build robust state institutions and revive the Palestinian economy have brought real security and economic improvements. We commend President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad on this achievement. The Palestinian Authority has achieved what it set out to do two years ago, and this must be noted, preserved, and built upon.

4. For this reason, the AHLC meeting urged greater facilitation by the Israeli government—including enhanced measures to enable private sector growth in the West Bank and Gaza, continued, predictable and improved revenue transfers from Israel, and allowing Area C to develop. The meeting expressed concern over the fiscal situation, which many attributed to structural constraints on the private sector, while underscoring the importance of donor support to the Palestinian Authority. In this regard, I welcome the USD 200 million transferred by Saudi Arabia for the Palestinian Authority's recurrent expenditures and development spending. With a USD 150 million financing gap for the remainder of the year, additional and timely donor support to meet the Authority's needs is critical, including to ensure payment of salaries and contracts.

5. When meeting last Friday, Quartet Principals stated that a Donors Conference should be held to give further impetus to the statebuilding agenda. They also proposed, as part of the context of renewed negotiations,

to identify additional steps they can support individually and collectively so as to secure significantly greater independence and sovereignty for the Palestinian Authority over its affairs.

Mr. President,

6. I stress the statebuilding achievements for a reason: the main obstacles to a Palestinian State are not institutional, but political: the unresolved issues in the conflict between the parties, the continuing Israeli occupation, and the ongoing Palestinian divide.

7. Last Friday, 23 September, President Abbas submitted to the Secretary-General an application for membership for a State of Palestine in the United Nations. In accordance with the Charter and the rules of procedure, the Secretary-General transmitted the application to the President of the Security Council on the same day, and sent a copy to the President of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General respects the prerogatives of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The application is now before you; it is your issue to decide.

8. As these deliberations continue, we must spare no effort to help the parties back to the negotiating table. The Quartet will now work for a preparatory meeting of the parties within a month to agree on an agenda and a method of proceeding. Let me appeal to both parties to agree to move forward. The Quartet made clear that it would expect the parties to come forward with comprehensive proposals on territory and security within three months of resumed negotiations. This would be a moment where the parties

would be truly tested in their readiness to make serious proposals that addressed the core concerns of the other. It is also designed to ensure that the talks move quickly to the heart of the matters in dispute. The goal would be to make substantial progress within six months, with a Moscow Conference held at the appropriate time, and to reach an agreement not later than the end of 2012. Special Coordinator Serry played an active role with the other Quartet envoys and Quartet Representative Blair to develop this framework. As the Quartet has made clear, the parties should refrain from provocative actions if negotiations are to be effective. The Quartet reiterated the obligations of both parties under the Roadmap.

9. Resuming negotiations, and making progress, is easier said than done, as was evident from the eloquent and deeply felt speeches of both leaders to the General Assembly. Yet, despite frustrations and lack of trust, each leader extended his hand for peace, and both parties have undertaken to review carefully the Quartet call. We hope that, whatever their reservations, each side now engages towards the preparatory meeting envisaged by the Quartet. The United Nations intends to be a full participant in this effort, and Special Coordinator Serry has already returned to the region to follow up with both parties and his Quartet partners.

Mr. President,

10. I will not give a detailed report of developments on the ground this month. But I do wish to highlight a few key matters. During the reporting period, a total of two Palestinians were killed, including one militant, while 102 Palestinians including 12 children were injured, and 2 IDF personnel

and 10 Israeli civilians were injured, illustrating the human cost of the ongoing conflict.

11. In the current atmosphere, it is essential that all sides impress on their security forces and civilian population the need to act responsibly. They must do their utmost to avoid escalation, and take early action to defuse possible tensions. I commend the peaceful nature of the large public demonstrations held in support of the application for Palestinian membership in the main Palestinian cities in the West Bank.

12. Extremists on both sides must not be allowed to inflame the situation. The past month has seen an upsurge in Israeli settler violence, including on 5 September the fifth arson attack on a mosque in the past two months. The rule of law must be enforced by the Israeli authorities against this phenomenon. Security must also be ensured for Israelis, as was underscored by a car and knife attack in Tel Aviv by a West Bank Palestinian on 29 August; and by Israeli reports that they had foiled a suicide attack during August in Jerusalem.

13. One hundred new units were approved in the Beit Aryeh settlement in the northern West Bank since the last briefing. The Israeli authorities also announced their intention to expropriate two hundred acres of land around a settler outpost in the West Bank. More Palestinian structures in Area C have been demolished to date in 2011 than in either of the past two years. Today's decision by the Jerusalem District Planning Committee to advance planning for a large number of units in East Jerusalem is of particular

concern. We have repeatedly stated that settlement activity is illegal and contrary to Israel's Roadmap commitments.

14. On Gaza, despite the restoration of an uneasy calm in late August, 18 rockets, including three Grad rockets, were fired into Israel during the reporting period. We condemn these indiscriminate attacks which must cease. During the same period Israeli forces conducted four incursions and two airstrikes into Gaza, resulting in six Palestinian civilians being injured, including three children. We urge Israel to show maximum restraint.

15. We continue to call for further easing of Israeli closure measures on Gaza, particularly in regard to imports of construction materials, exports, and freedom of movement of people. We can report no movement on Palestinian reconciliation based on PLO commitments, although President Abbas stated that he hopes the implementation of the reconciliation accord will be accelerated in the coming weeks. There also has been no progress regarding access to or the release of Staff Sergeant Shalit, who remains in Hamas captivity.

Mr. President,

16. Allow me to comment briefly on your country Lebanon, where the overall security situation remained calm. On 20 September, in the West Bekaa, the Lebanese Internal Security Forces arrested four men and killed two others suspected to have links with the kidnappers of the seven Estonian nationals who had been abducted in March and released in July. The situation in the UNIFIL area of operations also has remained generally stable. However, UNIFIL's freedom of movement was impeded in an

incident on 13 September in the vicinity of the village of Ayta Ash Sha'b which resulted in the light injury of one UNIFIL soldier. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continued on an almost daily basis, although at a diminished pace.

17. We welcome the strong commitment to the Special Tribunal expressed by President Sleiman in his address to the General Assembly on 21 September and by Prime Minister Miqati on several occasions.

18. In north Lebanon, the United Nations continues to coordinate closely with the Government of Lebanon on the provision of assistance to the displaced Syrian nationals, as well as on matters of protection and the determination of their status. Their number has reached 3,780.

19. The increase in Syrian nationals seeking refuge across the border is a reflection of the escalating political and human rights crisis in Syria, which has killed at least 2,700 people since March. The polarization continues to deepen between the Syrian regime, which appears determined to pursue its policy of violent repression despite international and regional calls to change course, and a growing popular opposition that has continued to organize protests across the country.

20. On 15 September, a coalition of Syrian opposition leaders announced the formation of a Syrian National Council and released a national Consensus Charter affirming the peaceful, inclusive and non-sectarian character of the Syrian uprising and committing to the establishment of a modern state guaranteeing the rule of law and respect for human rights. We

are aware of reports of increased defections from within the Army and continued violence against and mistreatment of activists and their supporters.

21. On 12 September, the President of the UN Human Rights Council appointed three experts to form the international Commission of Inquiry mandated by the Council on 23 August. They will meet this week in Geneva to discuss their program and methods of work, and establish contacts with relevant stakeholders. We underline the importance of accountability for all human rights violations committed in Syria since March, and hope that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic will extend its full cooperation to the Commission.

Thank you, Mr. President.