

Secretary-General's remarks at press encounter with H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I want to say how delighted I am to have in the UN again the Arab League Secretary-General, my good friend, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and to say that the relationship between the Arab League and the UN is, at the present moment, witnessing a quantum leap – not only because we have decided to open an office in Cairo from this month onwards, but especially because we have been working together, more and more closely, namely in trying to address some of the most difficult conflicts in the region...

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ARAB LEAGUE: In the world, Secretary-General.

In the world. And I am extremely grateful for, namely, the support that the Arab League has been providing for our Special Representatives in countries as diverse as Syria or Yemen or Libya or Somalia, and we have decided that those Special Representatives and the Envoys of the UN will work more closely together with the Arab League in order to make sure that the strategies of the two organizations converge in the solution of so many difficult problems.

On the other hand, I wanted to reaffirm our strong commitment to the two-state solution in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We believe that there is no Plan B. And we believe, we hope that, one day, we will have two states living in peace and security, side by side, both with Jerusalem as their capital.

And, at the same time, I want to say how worried I am with the recent developments in the Gulf. We believe that the truth needs to be clearly established in relation to these attacks. We believe that responsibilities need to be clearly defined. And, as I said to the Security Council, the world cannot afford a major confrontation in the Gulf.

The floor is yours.

[...]

Q: Thank you. My question is for the Secretary-General. Yesterday, you asked for the facts to be established regarding those attacks in the Gulf, but you didn't go beyond that. Do you want an international investigation – independent and reliable – as called for by some Arab countries?

SG: As I said, it is very important to know the truth, and it is very important that responsibilities are clarified. Obviously, that can only be done if there is some independent entity that verifies those facts. So, whatever happens in the international community, we will be supportive of any initiative in this regard, provided it is truly independent.

Q: So, this is not going to be a UN investigation?

SG: The Secretary-General of the UN has not the right to launch investigations. Only the Security Council can do it. I am, in relation to that, obviously not the right person to answer your question.

Q: Secretary-General Guterres, we just heard you call for a truce to be established in the Gulf. Who have you spoken to from the United States or from Iran regarding such a truce? And what more do you think could be done by the United Nations to try and mediate this growing dispute between the United States and Iran? And, Mr. Secretary-General, yesterday you called for the Security Council

to act. What do you want them to do?

SG: I didn't mention a truce, because we only mention a truce when there is a war. What I said is that we condemn, we condemn clearly all the attacks that took place recently, and we believe there should be clearly a definition of responsibilities in relation to them, and that we believe it is very important to avoid, at all costs, a major confrontation in the Gulf.

Obviously, the good offices of the Secretary-General are always available, but the good offices of the Secretary-General – without a mandate from the bodies of the UN – can only be exercised with the full agreement of the parties.

Q: And who have you spoken with from the United States and Iran?

SG: We have been, obviously, talking to everybody, but, as I said, the good offices of the Secretary-General of the UN always depends on the will of the parties. At the present moment, we don't see a mechanism of dialogue possible to be in place.

Q: Have you viewed the video that the United States released last night, and what is your assessment of it? Perhaps, did the US Ambassador come, Secretary-General Guterres, and walk you through it, or have you had any sort of briefing from the Americans? So, what is your assessment of that video?

SG: I have not seen the video and I have not received any briefing. I have just seen what is in the media.

Thank you very much. Shukran.