

OFF-THE-CUFF

Secretary-General's joint press conference with Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah

Ramallah, 13 October 2014

Thank you Mr. Prime Minister,

Assalaam alaikum. Shukra Jazilan,

Good morning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be in Ramallah again. I would like to thank the Prime Minister Hamdallah and his Cabinet members for their warm welcome and hospitality.

I was last here in July during a tremendously difficult time. Civilians in Gaza were dying by the hundreds, and suffering by the hundreds of thousands of people.

I travelled to the region then to contribute to the international effort to stop the fighting.

This time, I am here with a message of hope – the hope of rebuilding Gaza and creating a brighter future for the people.

I just attended the Cairo Conference on Palestine: Reconstruction of Gaza yesterday, where donors pledged financial assistance for the reconstruction of Gaza, following the unprecedented level of destruction caused by the recent conflict.

The amount which had been committed, pledged by international community is quite encouraging considering current international situations, the crisis happening here and there. I was very much encouraged by such a strong support.

The Palestinian Government of National Consensus will play the lead role in managing these funds and supervising Gaza's reconstruction, with the support of the international community.

We would like to see the unity government succeed in assuming its rightful responsibilities and functions in Gaza. I am greatly encouraged by the recent Cabinet meeting chaired by H.E. Prime Minister Hamdallah in Gaza.

The United Nations was the first to welcome and support the unity government when it was formed, on the basis of PLO commitment. We will continue supporting it as it performs its challenging tasks.

We facilitated new temporary mechanism for monitoring and allowing building materials in Gaza.

I wish to express my appreciation to Prime Minister Hamdallah for his close cooperation with my Special Coordinator Robert Serry in these discussions. The mechanism was endorsed in Cairo, as was just said by the Prime Minister.

I am confident that this mechanism, if implemented in good faith by the parties, can allow for the large-scale reconstruction urgently needed in Gaza.

Ultimately, it is my hope that this will strengthen the linkage between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and the flow of goods and people.

Mr. Prime Minister,
Ladies and gentlemen,

While rebuilding is important, we must also tackle the root causes of instability in Gaza. This is the only way to avoid yet another tragic conflict in the future.

In my years as a Secretary-General, Gaza has suffered catastrophic destruction three times.

As I said yesterday, the students, 3rd grade students in Gaza, at such a young age, they have suffered three wars already at a very young age.

We must stop this endless, needless, mindless cycle of suffering.

At the same time, we must give renewed attention to the West Bank. I once again strongly condemn the continued settlement activity by Israel. I am also deeply concerned by repeated provocations at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. These only inflame tensions and must stop.

Ultimately, the situation can only be resolved as part of a broader political horizon that ends the nearly half century of occupation and leads towards a two-state solution where the State of Palestine co-exists with Israel in peace and security.

I know many Palestinians are understandably frustrated over a peace process that began over 20 years ago and has not yet produced a final agreement.

But giving up hope will only guarantee victory for the advocates of violence.

I urge Palestinians to show courage and continue engaging in a meaningful peace process.

I am urging Israelis to do the same.

And I welcome renewed international political leadership and action.

Time is not on the side of peace.

We need to act immediately to prevent deepening an already unsustainable status quo. The United Nations, all systems, will continue to fully support all efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution.

I am visiting here with my top senior advisors, Mr Robert Serry, Special Coordinator, and Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Krähenbühl, and my Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, we are all committed, and the United Nations is behind you, we are standing with you and I thank you very much and Shukran jazeelan.

Q: Did you, the UN, receive any international guarantees not to let Israel destroy the reconstruction in the Gaza Strip?

SG: As you know there was a trilateral agreement brokered by our UNSCO, Robert Serry, among United Nations, Israelis and Palestinians for monitoring and supervising this transfer of goods for reconstruction materials. The United Nations will make sure that there will be efficient and effective quick delivery of goods. This will be different from previous one. This has much more broader comprehensive mandate and authorization, therefore I'm sure that this will be very effectively implemented.

Q: Do you support, as the UN Secretary-General, the Palestinians now planning to join UN institutions and the ICC, do you support them in this plan or this movement?

SG: As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I do not really have a particular comment on that, except that the Member States of the United Nations and observer states can have the right to work with the ICC when they have a case but I believe that the State of Palestine has not yet joined this statute that's what I can tell you at this time.

Q: [Inaudible]

SG: As you know, I was very heavily engaged, first of all, in trying to facilitate and brokering the earliest possible end of fighting at the time with massive, a lot of countries, actors engaging. Particularly for me, with [US] Secretary of State [Kerry], I have been travelling together in this region to bring this violence to an end. I have been urging continuously and today that, if we do not address the root causes, which have already been identified, which are already on the table for negotiations then, I'm afraid, to tell you that this ceasefire cannot be a sustainable one. While I am encouraged that the ceasefire is largely holding, and there was goodwill shown by the international community yesterday in Cairo for the reconstruction of Gaza, but first and foremost, the parties must sit down

together and resolve all these pending issues, underlying issues, through dialogue, political means, otherwise you cannot expect that this ceasefire and reconstruction can be sustainable.

Thank you.