

# OFF-THE-CUFF

## Secretary-General's press encounter at Gaza Reconstruction Conference

Cairo, Egypt, 12 October 2014

Assalaam alaikum. Good afternoon.

Since I am leaving shortly for Israel and Palestine, I wanted to have this chance to share a few words about the Gaza reconstruction conference.

I would like to highlight three quick points.

First, today the international community clearly recognized the massive needs in Gaza – and is underscoring its commitment to act in a massive way.

Second, there was a universal understanding that Gaza cannot be rebuilt on a weak political foundation. That is why the United Nations will continue to support the Government of National Consensus. The recent unity government cabinet meeting in Gaza is a good sign of progress that must continue.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, as I said this morning, this must be the last Gaza reconstruction conference. The cycle of building and destroying must end. Donors may be fatigued – but the people of Gaza are bruised and bloody. Enough is enough.

It is time to chart a course to a just and final peace between Israelis and Palestinians – one that addresses all the outstanding issues.

As a part of this effort to look ahead and build a better future, I believe it is important to be on the ground. That is why I am announcing today that I will visit Gaza on Tuesday to listen directly to the people of Gaza, survey the situation for myself and help advance our reconstruction efforts.

Finally, let me just say a few words about my visit yesterday to Libya.

I went to Libya to show my commitment to the people and the political process that is underway.

The situation is extremely fragile. I was joined by the Italian Foreign Minister and as well as special envoys from a number of other countries. We went to lend our collective and full support to the effort to bridge the political divides – build robust and inclusive institutions – and, of course, end the fighting.

The future of Libya hangs in the balance – with all its implications not only for the Libyan people but the wider region as a whole.

I told Libyan leaders that the United Nations stands with them in their pursuit of peace, development and human rights. Dialogue is the only way to end the suffering, restore stability and build a better future for the people of Libya.

But violent confrontations must cease immediately or that better future will be a distant dream.

Finally, I want to reiterate my great concern over the situation in and around the Syrian city of Kobane. With the continuing attacks by ISIL or Daesh, thousands of lives are at stake.

I once again call on all parties that can act to step up to prevent a massacre and protect civilians in Kobane.

With those brief remarks, I am ready to take a couple of questions.

Thank you.

Q: [Inaudible on Libya and Gaza]

SG: First on Libya. I went there to help facilitate a dialogue between all the parties. I met the legitimately elected representatives of parliament. Both parties, who may have different views on their future. I met all of them. I urged them: this is your country. The future belongs to you. Why are you continuing to fight and kill people? There is strong support and good will the international community. You must not miss this opportunity. And I urged them to, first of all, lay down their arms and stop fighting, and engage dialogue to resolve all these underlying differences of their positions. My Special Envoy for Libya, Mr. Leon, will organize a second meeting in just two weeks time and they expressed their willingness to work together with my Special Envoy. I urged them again to stop fighting, first and foremost, and start their dialogue.

On your second question, it is absolutely necessary that the parties, Israeli and Palestinians, sit down together and continue their peace negotiations. We are ready to build Gaza. As I said, we can not continue to build and destroy and build and destroy like this. This should be the last reconstruction conference. Whatever we may reconstruct this may not be sustainable if it is not supported by political dialogue. That is why peace talks are the most important. There is no alternative to dialogue and resolving all these underlying issues through political negotiations.

Q: [inaudible on donor fatigue]

SG: I have no doubt of the sincerity and willingness of the international community, particularly donors, to help the Palestinian people. At the same time, we should understand the level of frustration on the part of the international community, particularly donors, when they supported reconstruction in 2009 and then, just two years later it was destroyed. Rebuild and destroy. This is already third time. To put it simply, for a third grader student in Palestine, a very young student, for them it is already third war. Then what do you expect? As Secretary-General I am also very much angry about this continuing violence. I have been urging that while we are ready to rebuild Gaza, it must be the last

time. I hope that my successor, and the successors of the many Foreign Ministers here, should not be obliged to come and donate. There is some fatigue on the part of the donors, if this situation is not supported by political dialogue.

Q: [inaudible about the mechanism to rebuild Gaza]

SG: The Palestine Authority has presented good proposals. The United Nations also has made good proposals. The important thing is how to deliver all the promised contributions. The United Nations will work very closely with donor countries and, as well as particularly, with the Palestinian authority. As you know there was a trilateral agreement between the United Nations, Palestine and Israel that there will be free movement of goods for reconstruction materials. That is very encouraging. At the same time we hope that the crossings will be open to facilitate the easy movement of people and goods. And there will be a clear mechanism for accountability and smooth implementation.

Q [Inaudible on US and allied bombing of ISIS positions in Syria]

SG: We are all deeply concerned about what is happening in northern Syria and ISIS' terrorist activities. That is why I just said that those countries who are able to provide support should do what they can. The lives of many civilian populations are at risk. We should not repeat that has happened in so many places in the past. And, while I am urging that ISIS and Daesh stop the terrorist activities, the international community should show solidarity and unity in addressing this issue.