

## **Secretary-General's remarks at the Cairo Conference on Palestine**

**Cairo, Egypt, 12 October 2014**

I want to thank President al-Sisi for his initiative. This important event has helped lay the foundation for what we hope to be a durable ceasefire that must be further consolidated.

I also want to thank Foreign Minister Shoukri for his continuing leadership.

Foreign Minister Brende, thank you for your country's leadership and commitment to lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are here to show our solidarity.

We are here to stand with the people of Gaza who have endured a terrible summer of suffering.

I want to convey my profound condolences to all those who tragically lost loved ones during the 51 days of conflict.

My thoughts are also with the many who were injured or made homeless.

It is in all their names that we must act.

In 2009, the international community gathered in Sharm el-Sheikh in the wake of another devastating war in Gaza.

We pledged our support. We expressed our commitment. We resolved to rebuild.

And yet here we are again.

The cycle of building and destroying has continued— only worse.

More than 2,100 Palestinians were killed in the most recent war, along with more than 70 Israelis.

Almost one-third of Gaza's population was uprooted from their homes— with many no longer having homes to return to.

Entire neighborhoods were flattened.

Public infrastructure was demolished.

Blackouts continue up to 18 hours a day. More than 450,000 people cannot access the municipal water supply network.

Dozens of schools, hospitals and clinics were destroyed or damaged. UN facilities sheltering women and children were hit, resulting in many casualties. Eleven staff members of the United Nations were killed in the course of the conflict.

Meanwhile rockets fired by Hamas and other armed groups from Gaza continued to be fired indiscriminately causing fear, panic and suffering.

And, of course, the war exacted a toll that may be harder to measure– but that is equally devastating.

Families on both sides – especially children – have suffered deep psychological trauma.

The children of Gaza who have not yet reached grade three have already lived through three wars.

The United Nations and international partners have worked hand-in-hand with the Palestinian Authority to address Gaza's urgent priorities.

But the needs are massive and time is short.

To effectively respond, the humanitarian community in Palestine has worked with the Palestinian Government to develop the "Gaza Crisis Appeal".

Our "UN Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip" amounts to about \$2.1 billion for early recovery, reconstruction, and other efforts.

These initiatives deserve the most generous support.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ultimately, the successful reconstruction of Gaza requires a strong political foundation.

I am encouraged by the comprehensive reconciliation agreement reached in Cairo on 25 September. I urge all concerned to ensure that this time, deeds follow words.

The United Nations will continue to support the Government of National Consensus as it extends its functions and manages Gaza's significant and urgent reconstruction needs. It is essential that our support benefit both refugee and non-refugee populations.

I welcome the temporary tripartite agreement brokered by the United Nations to secure entry of reconstruction materials into Gaza.

I am encouraged by the recent historic Palestinian unity government meeting in Gaza led by Prime Minister Hamdallah.

My message to all sides is clear:

First, promote an environment conducive for peace, mutual understanding and respect for human rights. This must include an investigation into potential violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict.

Second, make the most of the vital opportunity presented by the upcoming Cairo talks.

Third, strengthen the ceasefire which is crucial for the resumption of broader peace talks.

Fourth, refrain from unilateral actions which only exacerbate tensions and resentment.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Gaza remains a tinderbox.

The people desperately need to see results in their daily lives. Today. Now.

Leaders on both sides need to overcome their differences and demonstrate the courage and vision to end the conflict once and for all.

I welcome the inflow of funds, resources and staff into the beleaguered Gaza Strip to aid in its reconstruction.

Yet we must not lose sight of the root causes of the recent hostilities: a restrictive occupation that has lasted almost half a century, the continued denial of Palestinian rights and the lack of tangible progress in peace negotiations.

I call on all parties to come together to chart a clear course towards a just and final peace -- including achieving a full lifting of the blockade, ensuring Israel's legitimate security concerns; and establishing two States living side by side in peace and security.

Going back to the status quo is not an option; this is the moment for transformational change.

I urge you to give generously to allow this important work to go forward.

I do not want my successors or yours to make conferences such as this a ritual: building and destroying-- and then expecting the international community to foot the bill.

The parties to the conflict must finally make the tough but necessary decisions to enable a brighter future.

Let us each do our part.

Let us commit to make this the most successful conference to rebuild Gaza.

And let it be the last.

Thank you.