

OFF-THE-CUFF

Secretary-General remarks at press encounter with the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Mr. Reuven Rivlin

Jerusalem, 13 October 2014

Khag Sameakh! [hagsah-MAY-ach] Happy holiday!

Mr. President, thank you for your warm welcome and very kind words about me and the United Nations.

I am glad to have the opportunity to meet you at the outset of your presidency. I would like to sincerely congratulate your presidency. You can count on the United Nations and under your leadership and wisdom and experience, you will lead this country to better prosperity and peace and security.

As a former two-time Speaker of the Knesset and a prominent lawyer, you have a rich and diverse background to draw on in your new and important function. I wish you the best in carrying out the weighty responsibilities of your office.

I am here in the wake of the vicious conflict in Gaza. I just attended the international donor conference for Gaza reconstruction.

While I am relieved that the ceasefire in Gaza is largely holding, there is much work ahead. Gaza needs to be re-built, repaired and healed.

I am confident that President Rivlin shares my belief in the need to improve the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike. Economic revival can change the dynamics on the ground and ultimately enhance stability.

Israel has taken steps in the right direction, easing restrictions on movement and trade. This is positive and we hope to see further steps in this direction. More cooperation will benefit both sides.

While we push ahead and address immediate issues and needs, we do not have the luxury of time or getting distracted from tackling the fundamental cause of strife, namely the absence of a comprehensive peace settlement.

Unilateral action is no foundation for the future. Israeli-Palestinian peace is necessary and urgent because it is the only route to securing long-denied Palestinian rights and to Israel's lasting security.

Once again Mr. President, it is a great honour to be in Israel and the region. I look forward to your leadership to advance peace, development and human rights for all.

Toda (Thank you).