



**Statement by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,  
Mr. Nickolay Mladenov to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean Parliamentary Session on  
“Extremism, Terrorism, and Tragedies of Illegal Immigration in the Mediterranean: which Policies  
to Face these Renewed Challenges?”**

**Rabat, 26 May 2015**

I regret that I have been unable to join you today at this meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in the beautiful city of Rabat, but I am grateful for the opportunity to send a message to this honorable and important forum.

The founding vision of the United Nations was that of a global organization which empowers regional and sub-regional organizations and is, in turn, empowered by them. The importance of that cooperation was recognized in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and it continues to be a cornerstone for the work of the Organization around the world today – including in Israel and Palestine.

Indeed, as the Secretary General stated earlier this month at a high-level debate of the General Assembly, “the collaboration between the United Nations and our regional partners is richer and more diverse than ever before”. In that spirit, I would like to affirm to you today my personal commitment to build on the good cooperation established over the past years between my office, UNSCO, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

It is now nearly two months since I began my position as Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. During this short period I met with Palestinian and Israeli leaders, made visits to Gaza, and held discussions with key partners in the Middle East, as well as in Europe and the United States. I have found a complicated and changing political reality, but three basic constants remain unchanged.

The first is the validity of the two-state vision as the only vision for long-term peace between Israelis and Palestinians. There is no other way to fulfill the rightful aspiration of both peoples to national self-determination and to a life that is free, secure and dignified.

The second unchanged truth is that a peaceful two-state vision can be achieved only by a negotiated agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships. As I stated in my briefing to the Security Council last week, I do not underestimate the difficulties both sides face in making the compromises that would be necessary for such an agreement, yet, as history has shown time and time again, also in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, leaders who take bold steps toward peace often find their people aligning behind them.

And this links to the third constant in the reality of this conflict, which is the vital role of the international community in creating the conditions needed for a peace agreement to be reached and implemented.

This is where the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations becomes crucial, also on the issues which this session is dedicated to, particularly the challenges of extremism and terrorism.

As Parliamentarians, you must have participated in parliamentary debates tackling the dangers of extremist ideologies and the threat of terrorism to your respective countries. You are aware of the poisonous effect those threats have on any society, let alone societies caught in a long and bloody conflict: they spread fear, which breeds hate, which justifies violence, which heightens fear yet again, in a vicious cycle. When this cycle spirals out of control, the voices of the moderate majorities are silenced; the courageous efforts of those trying to build bridges are lost from sight. Tragically, we have seen this dynamic at work between Israelis and Palestinians too many times.

The cause of peace in the Middle East commands all of us to develop our cooperation in the fight against extremism and terrorism. That imperative is valid for all states represented in our organizations, including Israel and Palestine whose governments must continue their security cooperation despite the tensions and disagreements between them.

But as all experts would tell you, the fight against extremism and terrorism requires cooperation on a wide range of issues - from promoting human rights, gender equality, trade, education and scientific research to combatting crime, environmental degradation, and, as this session intends to highlight, human trafficking.

This much is true everywhere in the world, but in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I have little doubt that extremist ideas and their violent manifestations also draw strength from a diminishing belief in the possibility of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Our main challenge lies not so much in convincing that the status-quo is wrong and that peace is right, but in overcoming the deep mistrust that exists between the parties which makes progress toward two states difficult.

Ultimately, the just cause of peace requires new oxygen; words and actions from the parties themselves. For trust to be built, the new Israeli government must demonstrate its commitment to a two-state solution, most importantly by halting the entrenchment and expansion of settlements. Trust also requires a unified Palestinian government which recognizes Israel and is committed to peace and non-violence. For violence to be contained, Palestinian lives in Gaza and the West Bank must be improved and their hope restored. The United Nations and the international community have been urging both sides to take those important steps, but that is not where our role should end.

Regional cooperation carries the potential of overcoming the trust-deficit by offering a supportive framework for a peace deal. The success of any peace process also needs external shock absorbers, supporting structures, and safety nets – a key role for regional partners. These are particularly necessary at the present time, when events throughout the Middle East are reinforcing notions of uncertainty and pervasive danger.

As the peace process appears to be entering a new phase, I look forward to continued cooperation and future exchanges between UNSCO and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

ENDS