

## **Quartet Statement, December 15 2008**

Following is the text of the statement issued today in New York by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union):

Representatives of the Quartet -- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner -- endorsed the following statement on the situation in the Middle East. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet reaffirmed support for the bilateral, comprehensive, direct, uninterrupted, confidential and ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and commended Israel and the Palestinians for their continuous efforts to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues without exception, as stated by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni during their 9 November briefing in Sharm el-Sheikh. The Quartet expressed its considered view that the bilateral negotiations process launched at Annapolis is irreversible and that these negotiations should be intensified in order to put an end to the conflict and to establish, as soon as possible, the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. The Quartet affirmed that a final treaty and a lasting peace will be reached through simultaneous and mutually re-enforcing efforts on three tracks: negotiations; building the institutions of a Palestinian state -- including facilitating economic development through an improvement of conditions on the ground; and implementation of the parties' obligations under the Road Map, as stated in the Annapolis Joint Understanding.

Taking note of the resolutions adopted by the Arab League on 26 November, the Quartet reiterated that a lasting solution to the situation in Gaza can only be achieved through peaceful means. It reiterated its previous call for all Palestinians to commit themselves to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations. Restoring Palestinian unity based on the commitments of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) -- the legitimate and internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people -- would be an important factor in this process.

The Quartet reiterated its support for the Egyptian-brokered calm that came into effect on 19 June 2008, urged that it be respected and extended, and expressed the hope that it would lead to improved security and humanitarian conditions for Israelis and Palestinians alike, actions to alleviate humanitarian conditions and the restoration of normal civilian life in Gaza. In this regard, the Quartet expressed concern that the Egyptian-brokered calm had been challenged, condemned indiscriminate attacks on Israel and called for an immediate cessation of violence. The Quartet stated its acute concern regarding the recent increase in the closures of crossing points in response to violence in Gaza, which have limited the range and quantity of basic commodities, humanitarian supplies and Palestinian Authority and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) currency needs available in Gaza, worsening the economic and humanitarian situation on the ground. The Quartet emphasized that the provision of humanitarian supplies, including food, fuel, pharmaceuticals, water and sewage maintenance items, to the people in Gaza must be assured continuously. The Quartet also reiterated its previous call for Israel to allow into Gaza sufficient materials to facilitate the resumption of stalled United Nations and other donor projects and expressed its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and Quartet Representative Blair in this regard. The Quartet called for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit.

The Quartet called on all States to demonstrate their support for the Annapolis process and their commitment to the two-State solution by contributing to an environment conducive to an end to the conflict. In this regard, it noted that lasting peace can only be based on an enduring commitment to freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect and mutual recognition, the propagation of a culture of peace and non-violence, and the confrontation of terrorism and incitement, and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations.

Responding to the request of the parties, international donors have pledged at the Paris conference unprecedented levels of support for the success of Annapolis, providing an essential element of stability as the process unfolded. The Quartet further called on all States and international organizations to continue to provide economic assistance in a spirit of equitable burden-sharing to the legitimate Palestinian government, which accepts the Quartet principles, in the areas of security reform, institution- and capacity-building, economic development and through the fulfilment of pledges. The Quartet called for a redoubling of support for Palestinian efforts to develop a sustainable economy that promotes growth, employs its people and integrates into the global economic system. Significant improvements of access and movement and security are indispensable in that context.

The Quartet commended the Palestinian Authority for its progress in security performance and welcomed the robust Israeli-Palestinian cooperation for the expansion of security and law and order in the West Bank, most notably in Jenin and Hebron. The Quartet viewed the successful deployment of the Palestinian security services to Hebron as the most recent demonstration of the substantial progress that has been made since Annapolis.

Reminding the parties of their renewed commitment at Annapolis to implement their Road Map obligations, the Quartet called on the Palestinians to continue their efforts to reform the security services and dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism. The Quartet also called on Israel to freeze all settlement activities, which have a negative impact on the negotiating environment and on Palestinian economic recovery, and to address the growing threat of settler extremism. The Quartet urged further progress on the ground in the period ahead in fulfilment of the package of measures of Quartet Representative Blair.

The Quartet offered its support for an intensification of diplomatic efforts towards peaceful coexistence among all States in the region and a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1402 and 1515. In this context, the Quartet welcomed efforts to reinvigorate the Arab Peace Initiative, as part of a comprehensive approach for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and looked forward to an intensification of Israeli-Syrian negotiations. The Quartet supported, in consultation with the parties, an international meeting in Moscow in 2009.