

STATEMENT BY MIDDLE EAST QUARTET

30 January 2006

The following statement was issued today by the Middle East Quartet (United Nations, European Union, Russian Federation, United States):

Representatives of the Quartet -- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- met today in London to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

The Quartet congratulated the Palestinian people on an electoral process that was free, fair and secure. The Quartet believes that the Palestinian people have the right to expect that a new Government will address their aspirations for peace and Statehood, and it welcomed President Abbas' affirmation that the Palestinian Authority is committed to the Road Map, previous agreements and obligations between the parties, and a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is the view of the Quartet that all members of a future Palestinian Government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. We urge both parties to respect their existing agreements, including on movement and access.

The Quartet received updates from Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn and United States Security Coordinator Lieutenant General Keith Dayton at today's meeting. We also had the good fortune of hearing from former President Carter, who helped supervise elections a few days ago. The Quartet called on the Palestinian Authority to ensure law and order, prevent terrorist attacks and dismantle the infrastructure of terror. The Quartet acknowledged the positive role of the Palestinian Authority security forces in helping maintain order during the recent elections. It expressed its view that progress on further consolidation, accountability and reform remains an important task.

Mindful of the needs of the Palestinian people, the Quartet discussed the issue of assistance to the Palestinian Authority. First, the Quartet expressed its concern over the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority, and urged measures to facilitate the work of the caretaker Government to stabilize public finances, taking into consideration established fiscal accountability and reform benchmarks. Second, the Quartet concluded that it was inevitable that future assistance to any new Government would be reviewed by donors against that Government's commitment to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. The Quartet calls upon the newly elected Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) to support the formation of a Government committed to these principles, as well as the rule of law, tolerance, reform and sound fiscal management.

Both parties are reminded of their obligations under the Road Map to avoid unilateral actions which prejudice final status issues. The Quartet reiterated its view that settlement expansion must stop, reiterated its concern regarding the route of the barrier, and noted Acting Prime Minister Olmert's recent statements that Israel will continue the process of removing unauthorized outposts.

The Quartet expressed its concern for the health of Prime Minister Sharon and its hope for his rapid recovery.

Finally, the Quartet reiterated its commitment to the principles outlined in the Road Map and previous statements, and reaffirmed its commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, based upon United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. The Quartet will remain seized of the matter and will engage key regional actors.