

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL****MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY
WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
29 November 2010**

Every year on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we reflect on the situation of the Palestinians and consider what more we can do for peace.

Two timelines reach a critical point in 2011.

First, Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu have pledged to seek a framework agreement on permanent status by September. Second, the Palestinian Authority is on track to complete its two-year agenda of readiness for statehood by August.

At its meeting in September 2010, the Quartet stated that an agreement can be reached in the timeframe set out by the leaders themselves, and that the Palestinian Authority, if it maintains its current performance in institution-building and the delivery of public services, is well-positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future.

Yet few Palestinians are optimistic that anything decisive will be achieved next year, or even at all. Looking at the situation on the ground, I understand this despair. Soon after direct talks on final status began in September, they were undermined by the expiry of Israel's commendable settlement moratorium. Construction of hundreds of new units throughout the West Bank commenced, and new approvals for settlements in East Jerusalem were given. This development is a serious blow to the credibility of the political process. The obligation remains on Israel to meet its responsibilities under international law and the Roadmap to freeze settlement activity.

It is also true that few Israelis seem hopeful that peace can be achieved soon, and I am sensitive to Israel's security concerns. But I ask all Israelis to look with fresh eyes at the indisputable emergence of a reliable security partner on the ground, and the continued commitment of President Abbas to Israel's right to live in peace and security, and to his rejection of violence and terrorism. I also remind everyone of the promise of the Arab Peace Initiative that a two-State solution and comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace would be followed by the establishment of normal relations between Israel and all Arab States.

I commend the steps taken during the past year to improve conditions on the ground. However, much more is needed. The Palestinian Authority must continue to roll

out the institutions of statehood, combat terrorist attacks and curb incitement. Meanwhile, it is both Israel's interest and its duty to begin rolling back the measures of occupation, particularly with respect to movement, access and security actions.

I remain very concerned about conditions in Gaza. I express appreciation for the modification of Israel's policy and the approval of a substantial number of United Nations projects. But this can only be a first step. Full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 should follow. Israel needs to enable broader civilian reconstruction, free movement of persons and the export of goods, and to facilitate the swift implementation of projects. Rocket fire from Gaza must stop. A prisoner exchange, the extension of de facto calm and progress on Palestinian reconciliation are also key steps.

An overwhelming international consensus exists on the need to end the occupation that began in 1967, address the fundamental security concerns of both parties, find a solution to the refugee issue and see Jerusalem emerge from negotiation as the capital of two States. I challenge the two leaders to show statesmanship and political courage in reaching a historic peace. The international community, for its part, must be ready to assume its own responsibilities for peace.

Let the year ahead be the one in which we realize, finally, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515 and 1850, previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. I will do everything in my power to support these efforts.