

QUEST FOR PEACE BETWEEN ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS AT HISTORIC JUNCTURE, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL IN MESSAGE TO KYIV SUPPORT MEETING, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL IN MESSAGE TO KYIV SUPPORT MEETING

13 May 2003 - Following is Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message to the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace, delivered by Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in Kyiv, on 13 May:

It is my pleasure to address this important international event organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I would like to convey my greetings to all of you who have gathered in Kyiv, and my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government and the people of Ukraine for hosting the meeting.

Today, we find ourselves at a historic juncture in the quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Recent bold steps of the Palestinian leadership, such as the appointment of an empowered Prime Minister and the Cabinet, led to the publication of the Road Map by the Quartet -- comprised of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations.

The Road Map sets out a three-phase plan for reaching a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is part of a larger effort to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region. The plan was drawn up to assist the parties in realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, as affirmed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). It is contingent on parallel and reciprocal steps by the parties in the security, humanitarian, institution-building and political areas, monitored and facilitated by the Quartet.

The responsibility to bring this process to a successful conclusion rests primarily with the parties themselves. They should fully abide by their obligations under the Road Map and international law. Terrorist attacks against civilians, arbitrary assassinations, arrests and detentions, house demolitions, stifling closures and blockades, settlement activities -- all unilateral measures of one kind or another should come to an end. There should be no new victims added to the more than 3,000 already dead and the thousands of wounded. Children, women and all innocent civilians should at long last be able to live in peace and security.

The parties are expected to resume negotiations in order to work out the details of the final settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397. Both sides should recognize that they are partners in this endeavour and can only succeed or fail together. They should not allow extremists to hijack the process and dictate agendas.

Of course, the international community is there to help. The Quartet has been at the forefront of peace efforts. Regional Powers are also expected to continue to play their positive roles, as are members of the international donor community. Their generous assistance should help alleviate the hardship of the Palestinian people.

The United Nations remains fully committed to the tasks at hand through the work of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others. The UNRWA has been indispensable in providing assistance to Palestine refugees for over five decades. The Agency deserves the sustained support of the donors, as it struggles to cope with increased requests for services.

The recent positive developments should not make us complacent. Violence has not subsided yet and major efforts will be necessary to ensure that terrorist attacks and military incursions do not take place and undermine the prospects of implementation of the Quartet's Road Map. Implementation of the Road Map will not be easy, as it requires painful decisions and determination and sustained activity on both sides. The support of the international community, of all of you gathered here and those that you represent, remains crucial if the obstacles are to be surmounted and the desired results achieved.

I would also like to assure you of my strong personal commitment to these efforts.

I am hopeful that this meeting in Kyiv will make its own contribution to the cause of peace in the Middle East. Allow me to thank the Committee for holding this timely event and for faithfully pursuing the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. I wish you all a productive meeting.

Link: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sqsm8699.doc.htm>