

Quartet Statement

London, 30 January 2006

Representatives of the Quartet -- U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, U.S. 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 Roadmap, 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 nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. 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 U.S. Security Coordinator LTG Keith Dayton at today's meeting. 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 nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. The Quartet calls upon the newly elected 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 Roadmap 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.

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

Press Availability with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan; His Excellency Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; European Union External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner; Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov; Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ursula Plassnik

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We had a very useful and constructive meeting on the situation in the Middle East. We congratulated the Palestinian people on the 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's affirmation that the Palestinian Authority is committed to the roadmap and previous agreements and obligations between the parties and the negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is the view of the Quartet that all members of the future Palestinian government must be committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the roadmap. We urge parties to respect their existing agreements, including on movements and access.

The Quartet received updates from Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn and U.S. 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 only a few days ago. And the Quartet called on the Palestinian Authority to ensure law and order, prevent terrorist attacks and dismantle infrastructure of terror.

The Quartet acknowledged the positive role of the Palestinian Authority -- the Palestinian Authority forces -- excuse me -- the Palestinian Authority 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 nonviolence, recognition of Israel and the acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the roadmap. The Quartet calls upon the newly elected 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 roadmap to avoid unilateral actions which prejudice final status issues. The Quartet reiterated its view that settlement expansion must stop and reiterated its view again that -- 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 roadmap and previous statements and reaffirmed its commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict based upon UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The Quartet will remain seized of the matter and will engage key regional actors.

We will now take your questions.

MR. MCCORMACK (Spokesperson to US SoS Rice): The first question goes to Sylvie Lanteaume from AFP.

QUESTION: I have two questions, one to Madame Secretary. Madame Secretary, there is a strong concern that if all direct aid to a Hamas-led government is cut there will be chaos and Syria and Iran would take advantage of it. How would you avoid this chaos? And I have another question for Mr. Solana. Do you think that the international community should give some time to Hamas and keep financing the Palestinian Authority and even after Hamas takes power and in that case, how much, how long would you give them?

SECRETARY RICE: I think that the international community and the Quartet here today has been quite clear that we have deep concern for the Palestinian people and for their well being; that we're mindful of their needs. We have noted we're particularly mindful also of their humanitarian needs and everyone wants to see those needs met.

Those who have been elected by the Palestinian people have an obligation and that obligation is to speak to the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a better life and for a peaceful life. Now, that peaceful life can, the Quartet has reiterated, be achieved only through a two-state solution that recognizes the right of Israel to exist, that is a commitment to nonviolence, that undertakes the obligations of the roadmap. And I should just mention that there are a set of obligations that have been taken by Palestinian leaders over more than a decade and those obligations are noted here.

It is incumbent now on all to insist that any future Palestinian government will indeed live up to those obligations and that is what we have done here today.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE SOLANA: Well, you know the conditions are clear and it says very clear in the statement that is for the new government. Therefore, the time that go from today until the new government will be governed by a take-care government or caretaking government. It will be chaired by President Abbas, but there is no other time considered. What I would like to say on behalf of the European Union is that once these conditions are fulfilled, the European Union will stand ready to continue to support the Palestinian economic development and democratic stability, but it has to be compliant with all these conditions which are here.

QUESTION: Right now.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE SOLANA: The moment of the new government.

MR. MCCORMACK: Next question to Roland --

SECRETARY RICE: Could I -- Sean, I just wanted to clarify because Javier just said something very important. There is a commitment here to try and live up to the obligations that were undertaken to the caretaker government, which Abu Mazen oversees. There is then a question of a new government upon its formation, but I think it's important to note that we do believe that Abu Mazen deserves to be supported.

QUESTION: A question to Minister Plassnik. Minister, the conditions set out tonight are tougher than the ones drafted this afternoon by the foreign ministers of European Union. Did Secretary Rice convince the Europeans that a tougher line towards Hamas is necessary?

FOREIGN MINISTER PLASSNIK: We are working into the same direction with the same aspirations that have been readout by Secretary General Kofi Annan and we had a very good meeting today in Brussels to agree on the common position of the European Union. We had a very good meeting this afternoon and these elements that we have identified, the objectives and also the basic principles, we entirely share, and on the basis of these principles that have been outlined we will work in the future.

MR. MCCORMACK: Final question goes to (inaudible) from *Al Hayat*.

QUESTION: Good evening. (Inaudible) from *Al Hayat* newspaper. In the area there is quite concern about Hamas movement winning, of course, because many people are moderates and would like the peace process to go forward. Nevertheless, there is questioning about what democracy that Americans and the whole world wants in the area if indeed a government is elected democratically and then we ask them to change their position and their charter. How do you answer that?

SECRETARY RICE: You want to start?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Well, first of all, I think we all must recognize that the elections were free, fair and secure. And obviously the Palestinian people have voted for a government of its choice. But I think most of them, I believe, were voting for peace, they were voting for better conditions, they were voting for an honest government and they were voting in the hope that their lives and future would be better, but not necessarily for a basic covenant of one group or the other. And I think it is important that the government that is coming in maintains the position that President Abu Mazen expressed that -- and when we say that they should recognize all commitments made by the Palestinian Authority, there's a need for continuity, so that when they make agreements others will recognize it.

On the question of recognizing the state of Israel, it's a very basic part of the roadmap and both Israel and Palestine has to admit -- accept the two-state solution and it is on that basis that we are moving forward. And of course, the question of disarmament and violence is also something that is part of the roadmap and has to be dealt with.

And so I think the fact that one has indicated that these three principles or requirements has to be met doesn't mean one is walking away from Hamas. If Hamas accepts them and transforms itself from an armed movement into a political party respecting the rules of the game and representing its people, I think the international community should be able to work with them.

QUESTION: Can I ask Secretary Rice to answer that, please?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think that the Secretary General has affirmed, as the President did, President Bush did, on the very first day that we congratulate the Palestinian people on the exercise of their democratic rights. You know, there are those who ask whether the United States is really committed to democracy. We have, in fact, encouraged that when elections are to take place that they take place and that they take place in a free and fair way.

And I do think that there are obligations and responsibilities that come with governing and it is not the first time that elected representatives have then had to deal with those obligations and those responsibilities. And in the case of the Palestinian people, I think you see a group of people here who are committed to trying to help the Palestinian people secure a better life. They deserve a better

life. These are wonderful people that are in their own lives and in their own interactions tolerant of one another. They have had a tolerance for many religions within their boundaries. They have had good relations with the outside world.

And I think you see here a commitment to want to see the Palestinian people have the best possible life. It is the assessment of all of us that the best possible life will come in the context of a two-state solution in which both Israel and the Palestinians are able to live side by side in peace, and in order to do that there are certain practicalities that have to be accepted and certain principles that have to be accepted by any government.

MR. MCCORMACK: Thank you.

Source: US Department of State
