

Statement by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union)

The Quartet Principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- met today in Washington to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

The Quartet welcomed United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the representative of the European Union Presidency, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Recognizing the critical need to end the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, which would contribute to security and stability in the region, the Quartet pledged to support efforts to put in place a process with the goal of ending the occupation that began in 1967 and creating an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Quartet expressed the hope that the result-oriented dialogue initiated between Israeli and Palestinian leaders will continue in the framework of a renewed political process with the aim of launching meaningful negotiations.

The Quartet undertook to give active follow-up to these meetings and to remain closely engaged at this moment of increased activity and dialogue. The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to meet regularly at both the principals and envoys level according to an agreed calendar, including with the parties and other regional partners, to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead.

The Quartet noted its support for renewed dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders and welcomed the 23 December meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Abbas, and the subsequent implementation of some steps discussed at that meeting. The Quartet urged the parties to implement fully steps discussed at the 23 December meeting, to refrain from taking any measures that could predetermine the number of issues that will be resolved in negotiations, to meet their respective obligations under phase one of the Road Map and under the Agreement on Movement and Access, and to seek to fulfil their obligations under the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings of 2005.

The Quartet discussed United States efforts to facilitate discussions between the parties. The Quartet welcomed the upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas, and Secretary of State Rice, that could begin to define more clearly the political horizon for the Palestinian people, and help engender a sense of partnership. The Quartet affirmed the primacy of the Road Map, and welcomed United States efforts to accelerate progress on the Road Map.

2 February, 2007