

Statement by the Middle East Quartet

The Quartet remains concerned about the unsustainable conditions facing the civilian population in Gaza but notes that efforts have improved conditions over the last year, including a marked increase in the range and scope of goods and materials moving into Gaza, an increase in international project activity, and the facilitation of some exports. In that regard, the Quartet commends the recent approval by Israel of materials for new homes and schools to be constructed by UNRWA, but notes that considerably more needs to be done to increase the flow of people and goods to and from Gaza, including a liberalization of the market in aggregate, steel bar and cement. Members of the Quartet continue to urge full implementation of Israel's June 2010 policy decision and further meaningful steps to improve the situation in Gaza consistent with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). They will work, including through UN and Quartet Representative Tony Blair, with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, donors and the international community to ensure that the needs of the people of Gaza are being met.

The Quartet recognizes that Israel has legitimate security concerns that must continue to be safeguarded. Members of the Quartet are committed to working with Israel, Egypt and the international community to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition into Gaza and believe efforts to maintain security while enabling movement and access for Palestinian people and goods are critical. In this context, the Quartet strongly urges all those wishing to deliver goods to the people of Gaza to do so through established channels so that their cargo can be inspected and transferred via established land crossings. The Quartet regrets the injury and deaths caused by the 2010 flotilla, urges restraint and calls on all Governments concerned to use their influence to discourage additional flotillas, which risk the safety of their participants and carry the potential for escalation.

The Quartet also calls for an end to the deplorable five-year detention of Gilad Shalit.

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