



Press Release

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry – Briefing to the Security Council

New York, 18 August 2014

Few hours before the expiry of the current temporary ceasefire, Special Coordinator Serry briefed the Security Council with a focus on the situation between Gaza and Israel. Having recently travelled to Cairo in support of the Israeli-Palestinian talks, Serry emphasized that the effort underway under Egyptian auspices was crucial to break the deadlock of violence and retaliation. “I urge the parties to reach an understanding on a durable ceasefire which also addresses the underlying issues afflicting Gaza”, Serry said.

The Special Coordinator told the Council that the destruction from the latest escalation was so severe that large-scale reconstruction, with the involvement at scale of the Palestinian Authority and the private sector, was needed. “The basic equation must consist of ending the blockade on Gaza, and addressing Israel’s legitimate security concerns”, he said. The United Nations had a mechanism, Serry explained, to monitor the exclusively civilian use of construction materials entering Gaza for UN projects, and was ready to explore how to expand this proven system. The United Nations supported today’s announcement by Norway and Egypt to co-host a donor’s conference once a durable ceasefire was in place, as well as adequate access conditions to Gaza.

Recalling his recent meeting in Gaza with Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Abu Amr, the Special Coordinator expressed his encouragement that the Government of National Consensus was resolved to spearhead the reconstruction agenda for Gaza, as part of assuming its rightful responsibilities and bringing Gaza back under one legitimate Palestinian Government that adhered to the PLO commitments. “I call on all in Gaza to rally behind the Government of National Consensus and empower it to take charge and effect the positive, transformative change that Gaza so badly needs. Right now, Gaza urgently needs houses, hospitals and schools – not rockets, tunnels and conflict”, Serry said. This included the legitimate Palestinian Authority undertaking institutional restructuring, also of the security sector, and gradually redeploying restructured PA Security Forces. He underscored that the United Nations stood ready to support the Government of National Consensus in its tasks, together with other international and regional partners.

Serry reminded the Council that UN premises had repeatedly come under fire during the fighting, killing 38 Palestinians sheltering there. He also honored the memory of the 11 UNRWA workers killed in Gaza in the line of duty, noting that the Secretary-General had called for a thorough investigation into all incidents involving UN premises to ensure full accountability.

In closing, the Special Coordinator said that several incidents in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that had resulted in numerous deaths and injuries were, together with the Gaza crisis, “a bleak warning to all concerned what the future will bring if we do not reverse the current negative trend towards a one-state reality, which is now on the parties’ doorstep.” He called for an urgent return to peace negotiations.

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