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SG/SM/17164

30 SEPTEMBER 2015

Bold Actions Urgently Needed 'to Stabilize Situation on the Ground, Improve Lives of Palestinians', Secretary-General Tells Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Meeting

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, in New York today:

I am pleased to welcome all of you to this important forum. I thank Norway for bringing us all together. I also want to extend my warmest wishes to our Muslim colleagues and their families on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, and to wish my Jewish colleagues a happy Sukkot.

This meeting is taking place against the backdrop of a very challenging and volatile situation on the ground. Violence and continuing clashes in and around the Old City of Jerusalem are a source of deep international concern. As the Middle East faces a vicious tide of terror and extremism, such serious provocations have the potential to ignite violence well beyond the walls of the Old City. All must demonstrate restraint and refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric. Rocket attacks by extremist Palestinian militants on Israel from Gaza are a further threat and must stop.

In the absence of a political process, the rise of violent extremism and terrorism in the region present a danger as much to the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians for statehood, as to the security of Israel. That is why bold and concrete actions are urgently required to stabilize the situation on the ground, improve the lives of Palestinians, strengthen Palestinian unity and enable a return to negotiations.

In Gaza, reconstruction has accelerated. Work has begun on the 18,000 homes that were totally destroyed or severely damaged. But, far more funding is needed to support this and the next phase of reconstruction. I call on international partners to disburse the funds pledged at the Cairo conference. Energy and water are also needed desperately.

These steps are critical, but insufficient. For Gaza to flourish, it will need to be able to trade with Israel, with the rest of Palestine and with the world. Lasting progress can be realized only through the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) in all its elements, building on a full calm and a lifting of the closure.

Progress in Area C is also essential. The World Bank has estimated that, if restrictions on Area C were lifted, the combined direct and indirect economic benefit could total \$3.4 billion, which would yield \$800 million a year in additional tax revenues. We need to take the steps that would make such progress possible.

I hope today's deliberations will help ensure continued support for the Palestinian Authority's State-building and development objectives, while strengthening Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation. Thank you again for your support.

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