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Secretary-General

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STATEMENT BY MIDDLE EAST QUARTET

Following is the text of a statement issued by the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union):

Quartet principals noted that recent events in Gaza and the West Bank make it more urgent than ever that we advance the search for peace in the Middle East. The Quartet reaffirms its objective to promote an end to the conflict in conformity with the Road Map, and expresses its intention to redouble its efforts in that regard. The urgency of recent events has reinforced the need for the international community, bearing in mind the obligations of the parties, to help Palestinians as they build the institutions and economy of a viable State in Gaza and the West Bank, able to take its place as a peaceful and prosperous partner to Israel and its other neighbours.

To facilitate efforts to these ends, following discussions among the principals, today the Quartet announced the appointment of Tony Blair (United Kingdom) as the Quartet Representative. Mr. Blair, who is stepping down from office this week, has long demonstrated his commitment on these issues.

As Quartet Representative, he will:

-- Mobilize international assistance to the Palestinians, working closely with donors and existing coordination bodies;

-- Help to identify and secure appropriate international support in addressing the institutional governance needs of the Palestinian State, focusing as a matter of urgency on the rule of law;

-- Develop plans to promote Palestinian economic development, including private sector partnerships, building on previously agreed frameworks, especially concerning access and movement; and

-- Liaise with other countries as appropriate in support of the agreed Quartet objectives.

As Representative, Tony Blair will bring continuity and intensity of focus to the work of the Quartet in support of the Palestinians, within the broader framework of the Quartet's efforts to promote an end to the conflict in conformity with the Road Map. He will spend significant time in the region working with the parties and others to help create viable and lasting Government institutions representing all Palestinians, a robust economy and a climate of law and order for the Palestinian people.

Tony Blair will be supported in this work by a small team of experts, based in Jerusalem, to be seconded by partner countries and institutions.

The Quartet representative will report to and consult regularly with the Quartet and be guided by it as necessary.

The Quartet looks forward to welcoming Mr. Blair at its next meeting.

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