

Statement of the Quartet New York, 17 September 2002

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, and European Commissioner for External Affairs Chris Patten met today in New York.

Reaffirming their previous statements, the Quartet members reviewed developments since their last meeting, on July 16, 2002. They deplored and condemned the morally repugnant violence and terror, which must end. They agreed to intensify their efforts in support of their shared goal of achieving a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement based on their common vision, as inter alia expressed by President Bush, of two states, Israel and an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The Quartet will continue to encourage all parties to step up to their responsibilities to seek a just and comprehensive settlement to the conflict based on UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338, and 1397, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, and implementation of all existing agreements between the parties. The Quartet reaffirms the continuing importance of the initiative of Saudi Arabia, endorsed at the Arab League Beirut Summit, which is a vital plan of the foundation of international efforts to promote a comprehensive peace on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

The Quartet is working closely with the parties and consulting key regional actors on a concrete, three-phase implementation roadmap that could achieve a final settlement within three years. Comprehensive security performance is essential. The plan will not succeed unless it addresses political, economic, humanitarian, and institutional dimensions and should spell out reciprocal steps to be taken by the parties in each of its phases. In this approach, progress between the three phases would be strictly based on the parties' compliance with specific performance benchmarks to be monitored and assessed by the Quartet.

The Quartet also supports, in preparation for establishment of a Palestinian state, efforts by the Palestinians to develop a constitution which ensures separation of power, transparency, accountability, and the vibrant political system which Palestinians deserve.

The plan will contain in its initial phase (2002-first half of 2003) performance-based criteria for comprehensive security reform, Israeli withdrawals to their positions of September 28, 2000 as the security situation improves, and support for the Palestinians' holding of free, fair, and credible elections early in 2003, based on recommendations established by the Quartet's International Task Force on Palestinian Reform. The first phase should include a ministerial-level meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) to review the humanitarian situation and prospects for economic development in the West Bank and Gaza and identify priority areas for donor assistance, including to the reform process, before the end of the year. The Quartet Principals will meet alongside the AHLC ministerial.

In the plan's second phase (2003), our efforts should focus on the option of creating a Palestinian state with provisional borders based upon a new constitution, as a way station to a permanent status settlement.

In its final phase (2004-5), the plan envisages Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at a permanent status solution in 2005. Consistent with the vision expressed by President Bush, this means that the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 will be ended through a settlement negotiated between the parties and based on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, with Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognized borders.

The Quartet welcomes the Task Force's report on the progress of the seven Reform Support Groups, and notes that a number of significant achievements, especially in the area of financial reform, have been realized in a short period of time under very difficult circumstances. Under the aegis of the Quartet, the Task Force will continue its work of supporting the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority as they establish and prioritize reform benchmarks, particularly on the issues of elections, judicial reform, and the role of civil society.

Both the reform effort and the political process must include Israeli measures, consistent with Israel's legitimate security concerns, to improve the lives of Palestinians, including allowing the resumption of normal economic activity, facilitating the movement of goods, people, and essential services and to lift curfew and closures. Consistent with transparent and accountable Palestinian budget arrangements, the Quartet welcomes Israel's decision to transfer part of the Palestinian VAT and customs revenue that has been withheld since September 2000, and calls on Israel to continue this process and reestablish regular monthly revenue transfers to the Palestinian Ministry of Finance. And consistent with the recommendations of the Mitchell Commission, Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop.

The Quartet welcomes the report of UN Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy Catherine Bertini as well as the latest UNSCO report on the impact of closures. It calls on Israel and the Palestinians to recognize and act upon their respective responsibilities and to move quickly to ameliorate the sharply deteriorating humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. In particular, Israel must ensure full, safe and unfettered access for international and humanitarian personnel.

Reiterating the critical importance of restoring lasting calm through comprehensive performance on security, the Quartet calls on the Palestinians to work with the U.S. and regional partners to reform the Palestinian security services, strengthen policing and law and order for the civilian population, and tight the terror that has severely undermined the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians. Israelis and Palestinians should reestablish security cooperation and reciprocal steps should be taken by Israel as the Palestinians work to combat terrorism in all its forms.

The Quartet will continue to discuss the timing and modalities of an international conference.

The Quartet also met and discussed these issues with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, as representatives of the Arab League Follow-up Committee, and with representatives of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Quartet looks forward to continuing consultations.