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PRESS RELEASE

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process warns Security Council of "Dramatic" Deadlock in Peace Process, Calls for "Credible Political Path Forward" and Bold Actions on the Ground

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In a briefing to the Security Council today in which he described the **“profound and persistent deadlock”** between Israelis and Palestinians, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry described as **“dramatic”** the failure of the parties to meet their agreed timeline for a permanent status agreement by September this year.

The Special Coordinator underscored what is at stake given the current deadlock. He noted that **“the Palestinian Authority has, in key areas, reached a level of institutional performance sufficient for a functioning state”** and made real security and economic gains in the recent period. As a result, Mr. Serry said that **“the Palestinian Authority is ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood at any point in the near future.”**

However, continued Mr. Serry, **“without a credible political path forward, accompanied by more far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and its statebuilding agenda – and, I fear, of the two State solution itself – cannot be taken for granted,”** Mr Serry warned. He called on the international community to unite and **“shape a legitimate and balanced way forward that helps the parties overcome their differences and ultimately return to negotiations. We will continue to work with Quartet partners to seek urgent action in this regard. We also note the prerogatives of the Security Council and the General Assembly.”**

Mr. Serry noted that Israeli steps of enablement on the ground had been made in the past, **“bold measures have been lacking in recent times”**, while worrying developments were taking place in the Israeli-controlled Area C of the West Bank, including a surge in demolitions with 700 Palestinians displaced this year, and continued settlement activity, including the recent confiscation of 19 hectares of private Palestinian land. **“Settlements are illegal under international law and prejudge final status discussions, and**

settlement activity must cease", he said. **"I urge Israel to do more to empower its moderate, committed and peaceful Palestinian partner"**, Mr. Serry said. He also called on donors to ensure that the Palestinian Authority's fiscal position is stabilized, so that it can continue to pay salaries and meet its other financial obligations.

Mr. Serry expressed concern that a calm between Israel and Gaza that was restored in early April was "challenged by the firing of some 18 rockets into Israel since 23 June". He also reported that Israel conducted three incursions and 16 air strikes, killing two Palestinian militants and injuring eight, but also killing one Palestinian civilian and injuring fourteen. **"Militants' firing of indiscriminate rockets towards civilian areas is unacceptable and must cease. Israel must also show restraint. Tensions have subsided in recent days. My office remains active in promoting a full restoration of calm, which remains a cornerstone for any broader achievements."**

Mr. Serry said the Gaza economy was growing, but from a very low base. He noted approval of \$265 million of UN projects for Gaza as a **"significant start"** to address Gaza's vast basic needs including education, housing, and sanitation. However, he urged Israel to allow aggregate, iron bar and cement for use by Gaza's private sector, to facilitate exports, and to enable freer movement of people in and out of the Strip, stressing that **"We continue to seek the full reopening of all legitimate crossings."** He noted the importance of continuing to combat weapons smuggling.

Noting the closure of a Gaza youth NGO and efforts to intrusively audit international NGOs, Mr. Serry called on Hamas to fully respect **"the free and independent exercise of the functions of these Organizations"**. He also urged **"full respect for the work of UN agencies"**, noting that some of their activities in support of Palestinian beneficiaries had been misrepresented recently.

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