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I. SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE END TO VIOLENCE IN GAZA AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL

The following statement was issued by the spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 18 January 2008 (SG/SM/11380):

The Secretary-General appeals urgently for an immediate end to the violence now engulfing Gaza and affecting communities in southern Israel. He repeats his earlier calls for an immediate cessation of Palestinian sniper and rocket attacks into Israel, and for maximum restraint on the part of the Israel Defence Forces. He reminds the parties, once again, of their obligation to comply with international humanitarian law and not to endanger civilians.

Of particular concern today, in addition to the upsurge in violence, is the decision by Israel to close the crossing points in between Gaza and Israel used for the delivery of

humanitarian assistance. Such action cuts off the population from much-needed fuel supplies used to pump water and generate electricity to homes and hospitals. If this situation endures, the closure will also cause further shortages of food, medical and relief items in the Gaza Strip. The Secretary-General calls on Israel to refrain from actions that will harm the well-being of the general civilian population in Gaza.

The Secretary-General expresses his deep concern that the hostilities taking place on the ground will undermine the hopes for peace generated by the political process begun at Annapolis.

II. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS BRIEFS REPORTERS ON GAZA CLOSURE

On 18 January 2008, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes held a press conference in New York on the emerging humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The following are excerpts from the transcript of the press conference:

This morning's closure of border crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip in response to intensified cross-border rocket fire by Palestinian militants would, if prolonged, make the territory's already serious humanitarian situation "extremely severe and totally unacceptable", John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, said at a press conference today.

Briefing correspondents at Headquarters on the emerging humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Mr. Holmes said that, along with the Secretary-General, he would urge the Government of Israel to review its decision as soon as possible and to ease the restrictions it had put in place. Hopefully, normal crossings could resume as quickly as possible on Sunday, after the Shabbat period. The Palestinians were urged to end all sniper and rocket attacks against Israel,

and the Israel Defense Forces to exercise maximum restraint in their response.

Emphasizing the obligation of both parties to comply with international humanitarian law and to be very careful to protect civilians, he said the crossing points between Gaza and Israel were the lifeline for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and other goods to the territory. Today's action had cut off the population from the fuel supplies needed to provide some of the electricity used to pump water and to supply homes and hospitals. While some reserves remained, they would run out in a few days if supplies were not resumed quickly.

There was also the general problem of access to drugs and food, he said, noting that humanitarian organizations working in Gaza described the situation there as dire in terms of poverty levels, dependence on outside aid,

unemployment and other economic effects of the blockade. The current high levels of violence in Gaza, southern Israel and the West Bank, and the escalation of that violence during the past week risked a descent into a further spiral of violence, putting an already "extremely worrying and fragile" situation into an even more dangerous context.

He reported that the number of rocket attacks from Gaza had escalated severely in the past few days. About 150 Qassam rockets had been launched into Israel between 16 and 18 January, as compared to 150 or so for all of December. Israeli reactions had caused the deaths of some 32 Palestinians, including civilians, and many injuries.

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III. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ISSUES STATEMENT ON SITUATION IN GAZA

On 18 January 2008, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, John Dugard, issued the following statement (Press release HR/08/006):

The killing of some 40 Palestinians in Gaza in the past week, the targeting of a Government office near a wedding party venue with what must have been foreseen loss of life and injury to many civilians, and the closure of all crossings into Gaza raise very serious questions about Israel's respect for international law and its commitment to the peace process. Recent action violates the strict prohibition on collective punishment contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention. It also violates one of the basic principles of international humanitarian law that military action must distinguish between military targets and civilian targets.

Israel must have known about the wedding party in Gaza near to the interior ministry when it launched missiles at the ministry building. Those responsible for such cowardly action are guilty of serious war crimes and should be prosecuted and punished for their crimes. The United States and other States which attended the Annapolis conference are under both a legal and a moral obligation to compel Israel to cease its actions against Gaza and to restore confidence in the peace process, ensure respect for international law and protect civilian life.

IV. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE GAZA STRIP

On 18 January 2008, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, in his capacity as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, submitted to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon the statement of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, adopted on 17 January 2008. The statement is reproduced below (A/62/652; S/2008/28):

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns the recent military assaults by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of 19 Palestinians and the serious wounding of 50 other people, as well as in widespread destruction of civilian property and farmlands. The situation is of grave concern to the Non-Aligned Movement, for such illegal actions by Israel have caused the death of more than 150 Palestinian civilians, including children and women, during the past month and a half.

This violent military escalation by Israel constitutes a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, fuels the cycle of violence and threatens international peace and security and the fragile peace process between the two sides. Moreover, such actions exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip,

where the civilian population continues to be collectively punished under a crippling siege.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the international community, especially the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities and to call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease its violations and to comply with its obligations under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, as the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people during this critical period and reaffirms its long-standing principled positions calling, inter alia, for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab lands occupied since 1967 and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

V. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR SUBMITS REPORT TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

On 21 January 2008, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, John Dugard, submitted his report to the Human Rights Council. The summary of the report is reproduced below (A/HRC/7/17):

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territory. Israel's obligations as an occupying Power have not diminished as

a result of the prolonged nature of the occupation.

Israel remains the occupying Power in Gaza despite its claim that Gaza is a “hostile territory”. This means that its actions must be measured against the standards of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Judged by these standards, Israel is in serious violation of its legal obligations. The collective punishment of Gaza by Israel is expressly prohibited by international humanitarian law and has resulted in a serious humanitarian crisis.

The human rights situation in the West Bank has worsened, despite expectations that it would improve following the removal of Hamas from the Government of the West Bank. Settlements expand, the construction of the wall continues, and checkpoints increase in number. Military incursions and arrests have intensified, 779 Palestinian prisoners have been released but some 11,000 remain in Israeli jails.

The right of self-determination of the Palestinian people is seriously threatened by

the separation of Gaza and the West Bank resulting from the seizure of power by Hamas in Gaza in June 2007. Every effort must be made by the international community to restore Palestinian unity.

On 27 November, a new peace process was initiated at a meeting in Annapolis. This process must take place within a normative framework that respects international law, international humanitarian law and human rights. The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is an essential feature of this framework and cannot be overlooked by the Annapolis peace process, the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, the Quartet and the United Nations. The Secretary-General as the representative of the United Nations must ensure that the Advisory Opinion, which represents the law of the United Nations, is respected by all parties engaged in the Annapolis process.

VI. UNITED NATIONS AND PARTNER AGENCIES LAUNCH 2008 CONSOLIDATED HUMANITARIAN APPEAL FOR THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 22 January 2008, the United Nations and humanitarian partner agencies launched the 2008 consolidated appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The related press release is reproduced below:

The United Nations and humanitarian partner agencies launched today their largest ever appeal for Palestinians - \$462 million - as the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is forced into greater dependency on humanitarian assistance in 2008.

According to Maxwell Gaylard, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, “Closures not only hurt the economic well-

being of families and communities in the occupied Palestinian territory, they also erode the basic human dignity of the Palestinian population. It is for this reason that we call for continuing support for our efforts in bringing real and meaningful assistance where it is most needed in the West Bank and Gaza. The current lockdown of Gaza is of mounting concern.”

Despite welcome developments on the political horizon, if the closures continue, living conditions for 3.8 million Palestinians are expected to further deteriorate

Restrictions on the freedom of movement of goods and people are already stifling the economy and quality of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In addition, the United Nations and other humanitarian organisations are also facing new obstacles, increased costs and restrictions in delivering aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the closure regime becomes more entrenched.

Twelve United Nations agencies together with 28 nongovernmental organizations (15 international and 13 national) launched a joint appeal for \$461.9 million to meet the basic human needs of the Palestinian population in 2008. It is the largest appeal for emergency humanitarian assistance ever launched in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the third biggest in the world, after the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“The situation in the West Bank and Gaza is dire and getting worse. With the total shutdown of Gaza, the vast majority of people there are now dependent on United Nations assistance, which is now in serious jeopardy”, said Filippo Grandi, the Deputy Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, “In the West Bank, hundreds of physical obstacles are destroying the economy and hindering aid delivery at a time when the international community is trying to put new life into efforts to get the peace process back on track and build capacity and institutions.”

According to the most recent figures, 57 per cent of Palestinian households are living in poverty, with about 49 per cent in the West Bank and 79 per cent in the Gaza Strip.

The funding sought in 2008 will alleviate suffering by feeding the vulnerable, educating children, creating jobs and self-reliance, providing healthcare and sanitation and protecting human rights.

VII. DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ISSUES STATEMENT ON HEALTH SITUATION IN GAZA

On 22 January 2008, Director-General of the World Health Organization Margaret Chan issued a statement on the health situation in the Gaza Strip:

The World Health Organization is concerned about the health situation in and around Gaza and the suffering this has caused for civilian populations in the area.

In Gaza, the lack of electrical power, arising from a fuel shortage, and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, including medicines, jeopardize the

continuity of basic health care and curtail access to specialist care outside Gaza.

Frequent electricity cuts and the limited power available to run hospital generators are of particular concern, as they disrupt the functioning of intensive care units, operating theatres, and emergency rooms. In the central pharmacy, power shortages have interrupted refrigeration of

perishable medical supplies, including vaccines. WHO consignments of essential medicines and consumables have recently been delayed at the border.

WHO welcomes the easing of movement of some fuel and supplies today. However, WHO calls for additional

measures to ensure no further disruptions. WHO further calls for restoration of electricity to health facilities, lifting of restrictions on the movement of medicines and essential commodities to Gaza, and for patients to have access to health care outside Gaza.

VIII. SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS EMERGENCY MEETING

On 22 January 2008, the Security Council convened to consider “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question,” at the request of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the League of Arab States (S/2008/31). The briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe (S/PV.5824) is reproduced below:

The crisis in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel has escalated dramatically since last Tuesday, 15 January 2008. The precursor to this escalation has been daily rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli civilian residential areas by several militant groups from Gaza and regular Israel Defence Force (IDF) military attacks on and into Gaza. There are also the tight Israeli restrictions on crossings into Gaza for the stated purpose of bringing about a cessation of rocket fire.

IDF entered the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, 15 January, and were engaged by Hamas militants in a heavy battle, which included IDF air and tank operations. Hamas claimed responsibility for sniper and rocket attacks against Israel.

Since then, over 150 rockets and mortar attacks have been launched at Israel by militants, injuring 11 Israelis, and a sniper attack killed an Ecuadorian national on a kibbutz in Israel.

Forty-two Palestinians have been killed and 117 injured by IDF, which has launched 8 ground incursions, 15 air strikes and 10 surface-to-surface missiles in the past

week. Among the dead are a number of Palestinian civilians, who have been killed in ground battles between IDF and militants and in Israeli air strikes and targeted killing operations.

There has been a significant de-escalation in violence in the past few days, with a much lower level of rocket fire and IDF incursions. Between first light this morning and 2.00 p.m. local time, one rocket landed on an open field and three mortar shells were fired; there have been no IDF incursions or operations. The situation, however, remains extremely fragile.

The Secretary-General has expressed his deep concern over the bloodshed and has appealed for an immediate end to the violence. He has stressed the responsibilities of all parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and not to endanger civilians.

Indiscriminate rocket and mortar firing towards civilian population centres and crossing points is totally unacceptable. We

have condemned and continue to condemn it unreservedly. Such attacks terrorize Israeli communities near Gaza, particularly in the town of Sderot. They also endanger humanitarian workers at crossing points. They have been a regular occurrence since well before Israel's disengagement, causing civilian casualties, damage, school closures and high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder. Over 100,000 Israelis live within range of standard Qassam rocket fire.

We are further concerned that IDF Corporal Gilad Shalit is still being held captive in Gaza and that Hamas continues to deny the International Committee of the Red Cross access, in contravention of international humanitarian law. We continue to be concerned by allegations of smuggling of weapons and materiel into Gaza.

We equally call for strict observance of international humanitarian law by Israel and its armed forces. I must state firmly that the Israeli occupation - including with respect to Gaza - carries clear obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We are cognizant of Israel's security concerns. We also take note that Israel stresses that in using military force it does not target civilians and claims that it takes care to avoid civilian casualties. However, Israel is obliged not to take disproportionate measures or endanger civilians, and must thoroughly investigate incidents leading to civilian casualties and ensure adequate accountability. I would also like to reiterate that the basic principled position of the United Nations in opposition to extra-judicial killings is compounded by the frequency with which such operations are carried out in densely populated civilian areas. This is why the Secretary-General

has repeatedly called on Israel to exercise maximum restraint.

The Gaza crossings have remained largely closed since the Hamas takeover in June 2007, except for imports to meet minimal humanitarian needs. Compared with the already precarious first half of 2007, imports into Gaza have dropped 77 per cent, and exports from Gaza by 98 per cent. Most Palestinians cannot exit Gaza; exceptions are made for some students and humanitarian workers, and some - but not all - needy medical cases.

Large United Nations construction projects, which could bring employment and housing to Gazans, including some left homeless by earlier IDF operations, are frozen because building materials are not available. At a time when United Nations security procedures are ever more critical, the requests of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to import even bullet-proof windows to protect its Gaza offices have been denied.

On 17 January, Israel augmented quantities of fuel allowed into Gaza pursuant to a petition before the Israeli High Court. However, on 18 January, as rocket fire intensified, Israel imposed a comprehensive closure of the Gaza Strip, halting the import of fuel, food and medical and relief items. The Gaza power plant, which supplies electricity to Gaza City and the middle camps, shut down on Sunday evening, leaving every area in Gaza except Rafah with daily power cuts of 8 to 12 hours a day. Approximately 40 per cent of the population did not have regular access to running water. Fifty per cent of bakeries were reported closed owing to a lack of electricity and shortages of flour and grain. Hospitals were running on generators, and two reduced their

activities to intensive care units only. Thirty million litres of raw sewage was pumped into the Mediterranean Sea owing to the breakdown of sewage pumping equipment.

Earlier today, Palestinian demonstrators who had tried to force open the Rafah border crossing were dispersed by Egyptian security forces, with injuries reported.

The United Nations has been actively involved, through interventions of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, and the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Karen Koning AbuZayd, in seeking an urgent easing of the blanket closure of Gaza.

Today, Israel reopened two crossings for fuel and the delivery of humanitarian supplies by international organizations. As of yet, it is not clear whether the crossings will stay open. We strongly urge Israel at a minimum to allow for the regular and unimpeded delivery of fuel and basic necessities. Approximately 600,000 litres of industrial fuel will be delivered today, with a target of 2.2 million litres throughout the week for use by hospitals, industrial vehicles, UNRWA operations and the power plant. The plant resumed operations at 11.30 a.m. local time this morning.

However, allow me to underline that the humanitarian situation is still extremely fragile. The 2.2 million litres of fuel will only restore the electricity flow to what it was at the beginning of January. That could mean cuts of 8 to 10 hours every day in the mid-region of Gaza and every second day everywhere in other parts of the Strip. In addition, benzine is still not being allowed into Gaza, causing widespread closure of petrol stations. Unless supplies are allowed

in, the stocks of the World Food Programme, which relies on benzine, will be depleted by Thursday morning.

The entry of commercial humanitarian supplies required to meet the total humanitarian needs of Gaza is still not permitted. In December, only 43.5 per cent of basic commercial food import needs were met. It is imperative that both commercial and international humanitarian assistance be allowed into Gaza.

As the Secretary-General stated last September when the Israeli cabinet decided to intensify its closure measures, Israel must reconsider and cease its policy of pressuring the civilian population of Gaza for the unacceptable actions of militants. Collective penalties, let me recall, are prohibited under international law. In that context, I take this opportunity to reiterate the Secretary-General's strong support for the plan of Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad for the Authority to man crossings into Gaza, particularly Karni. Early implementation of that initiative should be a priority for the benefit of the civilian population of Gaza.

The events of the past week have also underlined the ever-present potential for the Annapolis process to be undermined by the deterioration of the situation on the ground and, in particular, the continuing crisis in Gaza. Less than two weeks ago, the parties launched negotiations on core issues, and President Bush visited the region to underline his commitment to assisting them to reach a peace treaty in 2008 and to implement the first phase of the road map. The Quartet representatives and the entire international community are fully engaged in that effort in what should be a year of hope and opportunity for Israelis and

Palestinians. Crisis management and containment in Gaza would seem to be a minimal requirement if that process is to be given a chance to succeed.

Finally, I wish to reiterate the deep commitment of the United Nations to the welfare of the civilian population affected by the conflict. The work being performed by United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, in Gaza is one of the few things that stands between the current crisis conditions and an even more

dramatic deterioration of the situation. Special Coordinator Serry and Commissioner-General AbuZayd of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were in Gaza last week at the height of the violence, and the Special Coordinator also visited the Israeli town of Sderot as it came under increasing rocket attack. The United Nations will continue to do everything it can to ensure that civilians are protected and assisted, whatever the political environment.

IX. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HOLDS SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION

The Human Rights Council held its sixth special session on human rights violations emanating from Israeli military incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the recent ones in occupied Gaza and West Bank town of Nablus, on 23 and 24 January 2008. The Council adopted a draft resolution (A/HRC/S-6/L.1) by a vote of 30 in favour, 1 against, with 15 abstentions, which is reproduced below:

S-6/... Human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights,

Affirming the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Recognizing that the Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Nablus, constitute grave violations of the human and humanitarian rights of the Palestinian civilians therein, exacerbate the severe humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and undermine international efforts, including the Annapolis Conference and the Paris Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State, aimed at invigorating the peace process and establishing a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State by the end of 2008,

Recognizing also that the Israeli siege imposed on the occupied Gaza Strip, including the closure of the border crossings and the cutting of the supply of fuel, food

and medicine, constitutes collective punishment of the Palestinian civilians and leads to disastrous humanitarian and environmental consequences,

1. *Expresses grave concern* at the repeated Israeli military attacks carried out in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, which have resulted in loss of life and injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women and children;

2. *Calls for* urgent international action to put an immediate end to the grave violations committed by the occupying Power, Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the series of incessant and repeated Israeli military attacks and incursions therein and the siege of the occupied Gaza Strip;

3. *Demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, lift immediately the siege it has imposed on the occupied Gaza Strip, restore continued supply of fuel, food and medicine and reopen the border crossings;

4. *Calls for* immediate protection of the Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law;

5. *Urges* all parties concerned to respect the rules of human rights law and international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population;

6. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Council, at its next session, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

X. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL

On 30 January 2008, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are excerpts from the briefing (S/PV.5827):

This past month has underscored the gap between the aspirations of the political process and the grim realities of the situation on the ground in the Middle East. Continued efforts to progress along the Annapolis track, with the beginning of negotiations on core issues and a visit by the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush, were overshadowed by an intensification of violence in Gaza and southern Israel, combined with periods of total closure of the Gaza Strip and increased humanitarian suffering and violations of human rights.

Since I last briefed the Council, on 22 January, there have been significant developments in the crisis in Gaza.

On 23 January, Palestinian militants destroyed entire sections of the border fence with Egypt. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Gazans have crossed the border, and many who had earlier been stranded in Egypt have returned to Gaza. Following efforts by Egyptian security forces to close the border on 25 January, Hamas toppled additional sections of the border fence. A number of Egyptian security personnel

sustained injuries when fired upon by Palestinian militants, but they exercised restraint, and the situation remained, by and large, calm. By 29 January, shops in the border area had largely run out of goods, and Egyptian forces took steps to begin sealing the border.

In Egypt, Palestinians purchased food, medicine and other supplies that are mostly unavailable in Gaza due to closure. There have also been claims, which we are unable to verify, of weapons and explosives entering Gaza. We support Egypt's continuing efforts to find a peaceful and orderly solution along the border.

From 18 January, when Israel imposed a comprehensive closure, until yesterday, only 32 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, including 10 from a Jordanian donation. That compares to a daily average of 93 trucks during the first two weeks of 2008 and of 250 trucks before June 2007. There is now a backlog of approximately 224 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World Health Organization and World Food Programme (WFP) trucks, although we understand that 35 trucks of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross have been scheduled to go into Gaza today. WFP distributions in some areas of Gaza have already run out of sugar and salt, and UNRWA reported that its stocks of canned meat would run out within a week. United Nations Palestinian staff with permits to exit Gaza are not currently allowed to do so, resulting in the hampering of United Nations operations.

Fuel imports from Israel resumed on 22 January, with a total of 1.566 million litres of industrial diesel going into Gaza

from Israel for the week ending 27 January. It is expected that 2.2 million litres of industrial fuel will be allowed this week; however, just over 3 million litres are necessary to avoid power cuts, and reserves of up to 20 million litres are necessary to ensure normal functioning of the power plant. At the current level of fuel supply, electricity cuts will continue, in some areas for as much as eight hours a day.

Some water wells are functioning again after having been reconnected to electricity and functioning generators, but UNICEF reports that 40 per cent of Gazans still have limited access to safe water.

The crisis adds new urgency to the proposal of the Palestinian Authority to operate the Gaza crossings. We reiterate the Secretary-General's strong support for those proposals, and welcome the recent Arab League and European Council resolutions in that respect. We also welcome the diplomatic efforts currently under way on that issue. We call on all parties to work urgently for the controlled reopening of the crossings in and out of the Strip for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant international agreements related to access and movement concluded in November 2005. Such flows should include materials and equipment to enable United Nations rehousing and rubble removal projects to resume. The United Nations stands ready to assist efforts to implement the Palestinian Authority's proposals in any way it can.

It has been a month of heavy bloodshed; a total of 108 Palestinians have been killed and 229 injured in conflict with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Three Israelis have been killed and 24 injured by

Palestinian militants. IDF incursions into West Bank cities and towns continue on a regular basis. During the reporting period, for example, the entire city of Nablus was placed under curfew for three days in early January. There were also a number of incidents of violence in the West Bank, including in occupied East Jerusalem, where Palestinian militants attacked Israeli border police and religious seminary students.

Today, Israel's Supreme Court declared legal the reductions to the fuel and electricity supply of Gaza. The ruling effectively approves the decision adopted by the Government on 19 September 2007 to impose sanctions on the Gaza Strip in response to continued rocket and mortar fire on Israel. I take this opportunity to remind the Council of the Secretary-General's statement of 19 September, in which he noted his concern for the 1.4 million residents of Gaza - including the old, the young and the sick - who are already suffering from the impact of prolonged closure, and said that they should not be punished for the unacceptable actions of militants and extremists.

We note that levels of violence have been significantly reduced in the past week in Gaza and southern Israel. We remain concerned, however, that 77 rockets and mortars were fired in the past week by Palestinian militants and that there were also four IDF incursions and air strikes on Gaza.

In last week's briefing, the United Nations condemned the firing of rockets against civilians in southern Israel and called on all parties to abide by international law and not endanger civilians. The United Nations has also clearly stated its deep concerns over Israeli military actions,

including targeted killings and the grave humanitarian consequences of Israel's closure policy. As such, I will not repeat those statements of position at this time.

On a more positive note, the parties began negotiations on the core issues during the reporting period. United States President Bush visited the region and committed himself to doing all he could to ensure that a peace agreement is achieved in 2008. He stressed that the point of departure for permanent status negotiations was "an end to the occupation that began in 1967", and made a number of public observations regarding borders, refugees, Jerusalem and security. He also issued strong calls for both sides to fulfil their commitments under the road map, including for removal of outposts and a settlement freeze, and for action against violence and terrorism. United States General William Fraser has been appointed to lead United States efforts to monitor implementation of phase I of the road map in accordance with the Annapolis joint understanding.

The Paris donor conference Co-Chairs - the European Commission, Norway, France and Quartet Representative Tony Blair - met last week to follow up on commitments made by participants in Paris. The Chairs stressed the importance of tangible and visible changes on the ground through implementing the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan without delay. The total amount of aid pledged has reached \$7.7 billion. A significant number of donors intend to transfer their aid to the single treasury account of the Palestinian Authority. Co-Chairs have agreed to meet again in March.

At the request of Prime Minister Fayyad, the World Bank is putting in place arrangements for a new multi-donor trust fund to channel donor support to the Palestinian Authority's recurrent operating budget. The European Commission has announced that the Palestinian European aid mechanism, designed in close consultation with the Palestinian Authority, will be launched on 1 February as a follow-up to the Temporary International Mechanism. That mechanism will be open to all donors and will combine investment and recurrent support more comprehensively than the Temporary International Mechanism currently does.

Quartet Representative Blair continues his efforts to secure implementation of projects to support Palestinian economic revitalization. The United Nations country team met earlier this week to strengthen interagency coordination, particularly in support of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan.

Palestinian reform efforts and the assistance of donors cannot make a sustained impact without a significant easing of closure, in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that there are 563 obstacles to Palestinian movement in the West Bank. It is vital that those closures be eased in the context of increased mobility, security and confidence.

In that regard, Palestinian Authority security forces continue to work to maintain law and order, including disarming and arresting militants. We encourage the Palestinian Authority to continue and

deepen its efforts to meet its phase-I road map obligations on security, and call for improved cooperation to support those efforts.

The Secretary-General has reaffirmed the United Nations position on the illegality of settlements. Phase I of the road map requires the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including "natural growth". We call on Israel to act to meet its obligations to halt settlement activity, dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001 and reopen Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. Construction work on the barrier continues within occupied Palestinian territory in deviation from the Green Line and contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

...

The Secretary-General fully supports the efforts of Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas to reach a peace agreement in 2008 and encourages them to make tangible progress on all core issues, including final status issues. However, it is equally critical that the situation on the ground should stabilize and improve, in order to sustain the Annapolis process.

The Secretary-General will continue to work closely with Quartet partners, countries in the region and the Council towards implementation of the road map and a two-State solution that would result in the coexistence in peace and security of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, in fulfilment of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

XI. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 31 January 2008, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, in his capacity as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, submitted to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon the statement of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, adopted on 31 January 2008. The statement is reproduced below (A/62/672; S/2008/70):

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) expresses its deep regret that, once again, the Security Council was unable to act to address the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, resulting from the illegal and deliberate policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population.

This recent failure of the Security Council to deal with the situation in Gaza will not help to ameliorate the situation on the ground, will not help to advance the peace process and will not engender confidence in the credibility of the Security Council and its ability to effectively address those serious issues that come before it.

NAM expresses its appreciation to the members of the NAM Caucus in the Security Council and to other members of the Security Council, in fact, the overwhelming majority of them, that exerted serious efforts and acted in good faith in an effort to have the Security Council uphold its responsibilities and respond in a timely and practical manner to the ongoing escalating tragedy in the Gaza Strip.

NAM reiterates its deep concern about the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing illegal Israeli practices throughout the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and once again calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by its obligations under international law and to immediately cease its collective punishment of the Palestinian people and all other illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. NAM calls upon Israel to open the Gaza Strip's border crossings to allow for the movement of persons and goods, including essential humanitarian supplies, such as food and medicine, and fuel supplies in order to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian civilian population. In this regard, NAM welcomes the Palestinian Authority proposal to assume responsibility for the Palestinian side of the Gaza Strip's border crossings.

NAM reaffirms its commitment to continuing its efforts to alleviating the hardship of the Palestinian people during this difficult time and to promoting the achievement of a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, with the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.