

Genuine change in Gaza could help restore confidence in peace process, UN envoy tells Security Council

20 November 2017 – Noting that with the signing last month of the Cairo agreement, Palestinians have set out on a path towards reconciliation, a senior United Nations official underscored on Monday the urgency to resolve the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and to return the enclave to full civilian and security control of the Palestinian Authority.

"I believe and hope that a genuine change in Gaza [...] [would contribute to restoring confidence in the feasibility of a comprehensive peace agreement](#)," Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council Monday.

"This is a Palestinian-owned process. All Palestinian factions must seize this opportunity to open a new page for their people," he added.

In his briefing, the UN envoy also underscored that for success to be achieved, past failures must be avoided, security for both Palestinians and Israelis must be preserved, and all sides must be willing to compromise in the interests of peace.

In the context of improving security, he welcomed the restoration of full security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (announced 8 November) noting that it the coordination is critical to the security of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

He however, expressed concern over the recent discovery of tunnel extending from Gaza into Israel, and condemning the continued construction of tunnels and statements by terrorist groups purporting violence.

"At a time when Palestinians in Gaza [...] who have lived with closures for a decade, survived three conflicts, and have had to struggle to merely exist [...] are seeing hope for the future, such actions and statements risk a dangerous escalation that could destroy the prospects for intra-Palestinian reconciliation."

The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to worsen with power outages now reported as much as 20 hours a day, piped water supply of 3-5 hours every five days, dwindling stocks of essential drugs and medical supplies and lack of functioning sanitation systems.

Turning to settlements, Mr. Mladenov informed the 15-member Council of Israeli planning authorities' approval of building permits for at least 418 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlements of Gilo and Ramat Shlomo as well as conditional approval of 178 housing units in the settlement of Nof Zion located in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Jabel Mukaber.

“The UN considers all settlement activities illegal under international law. They constitute a substantial obstacle to peace and should cease,” added Mr. Mladenov.

Also in his briefing, the envoy expressed concern over the implications of the latest developments related to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative office in the United States.

“Only through constructive dialogue can we hope to advance peace and I call on all parties to remain engaged,” he said, urging everyone, especially Palestinian leaders, Israel and the international community of their important responsibility to advance the peace efforts in the region.