

International efforts towards Middle East peace must be matched by steps on the ground – UN envoy

24 March 2017 – Noting that international engagement on reviving the Middle East peace process over the last three months reconfirmed the consensus that the two-state solution is the only means of realizing the national aspirations of both peoples a senior United Nations official called for continued expansion of the momentum into a concrete vision to end the wider conflict.

“Shaping a credible political horizon through reviving engagement between the parties with intensified international and regional support is essential to advancing this goal,” Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council today.

In his briefing, the Mr. Mladenov highlighted that the recent increase in rockets fires from Gaza towards Israel was a worrying development and said that such potentially lethal provocations are unnecessary, dangerous and risk devastating escalation.

At the same, he also called on Israel to do more to improve the daily lives of the Palestinians and said that introduction of polices that increase Palestinian civil authority, support Palestinian development and preserve the prospect of a two-state solution, in line with the recommendations of the Middle East Quartet, remained essential.

He also spoke of the general situation over the past few months as well as detailed specific instances that had the potential to escalate the situation.

There had been a marked increase in statements, announcements and decisions related to construction and expansion, he continued.

Israel made two major announcements for a total of 5,500 housing units in settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank, he said. Within three weeks, some 3,000 housing units had advanced through the planning process and more than 240 units had reached the final approval stage. Eighty per cent of the 4,000 settlement moves in the last three months were concentrated in and around major Israeli population centres close to the 1967 line, while some 20 per cent were in outlying locations deep inside the occupied West Bank.

“While the [Security Council] called upon both parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement, and inflammatory rhetoric, such actions continued during the reporting period,” he noted.

Turning to tangible actions that can help progress the peace process, the UN Special Coordinator underlined that it is essential that international efforts are accompanied by significant steps taken on the ground by the

parties, to create an environment conducive to peace.

“The United Nations will continue to call on and work with the parties and all interested stakeholders to find a just, sustainable and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions,” he concluded.