

Briefing by Minister Aziz Pahad on current international issues

7 June 2007

G8 Africa Outreach and G8 + 5

President Thabo Mbeki on Wednesday, 6 June 2007 departed for Heiligendamm, Germany ahead of the G-8 + 5 Outreach and African Outreach sessions of the G8 Summit scheduled on Friday, 8 June 2007.

President Mbeki, supported by Ministers Dlamini Zuma and Mandisi Mpahlwa, will participate in the G-8 Outreach sessions within the context of South Africa's priority to strengthen relations with to the G8 with a view to consolidation of the African developmental agenda.

The 2007 G8 Heiligendamm Summit will be held under the banner: 'Growth and Responsibility, with a focus on key global challenges: the world economy and Africa's economic, political and social development.'

This theme is very important for us because while the latest United Nations (UN) report ahead of the Summit indicates certain progress it does raise concerns that unless the developed countries act decisively the developing countries will not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We are happy that for the last few years, South Africa has participated in the G8 meetings is now one of five countries - India, Brazil, South Africa, China and Mexico ♦ to form part of the G8's engagement with the South.

President Mbeki has said that, at the Heiligendamm Summit, as was agreed to at the 2006 St Petersburg Summit, the G8 and its development partners must assess the movement in terms of the implementation of the set of agreements reached between the G8 and the African continent and how to increase and expedite the implementation of the 2005 Gleneagles Commitments.

President Mbeki has also expressed confidence that the matter of climate change will be given renewed impetus and support at the 2007 Summit.

G8 + 5 Outreach Dialogue + African Dialogue

The Outreach dialogue between the Group of Eight Member-States and their chosen Partners, +5 (India, Brazil, South Africa, China and Mexico) and African (South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, and Ghana) under the baton of Germany, is guided by these central themes for the G8 2007 Summit.

Furthermore, the +5 Outreach engagement will focus on the Promotion of Research of Innovation and the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights, the Promotion of International Investment, Energy Security, Climate Change and Development with a particular focus on Africa.

For African engagement, an agenda of Strengthening Good Governance, Sustainable Investment for Development, Peace and Security and the Strengthening of the Health Care System, and fighting HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, has been set.

Global challenges that have gained significant importance during the process of preparation by Germany for the Summit, are Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and then the successful conclusion of the Doha Round of Negotiations. The latter is gaining urgency among G8 Member-States as the US Congressional mandate to participate in the negotiations will end at the end of June 2007. The Group of Eight, in line with the Saint Petersburg commitment made, wishes to bring the World Trade Organisation's Doha Round Negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The Summit of 2007 will further focus on investment, innovation, sustainability, protectionism in investment, employment, global financial imbalances, innovation and trademark piracy and the freedom of investment in industrial, emerging countries and the underdeveloped, in particular African, countries. This includes addressing global investment conditions and the social dimension of globalisation.

The G8 Summit will also focus on the crisis in the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Sudan/Darfur, Afghanistan, Somalia, Kosovo and Zimbabwe, and other topical international political crises and conflicts.

Africa and MDGs

The South African government welcomes the decision by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to launch a new working group to reinvigorate the partnership between donors and sub-Saharan governments to support many countries in Africa lagging in the achievement of development goals and assistance to them stagnating.

"There is now a danger that the commitment you made at the Summit in Gleneagles in 2005 to double aid to Africa by 2010 will not be met," Mr. Ban said in a letter to the Heads of State and Government of the Group of Eight industrialised countries (G8), who will be gathering in Germany at the end of this week.

In the letter, he called on the G-8 countries ♦ Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States ♦ for leadership in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and tackling climate change.

To achieve the MDGs, internationally agreed targets to slash extreme poverty and other ills around the world by 2015, Mr Ban asked the countries to both reverse the drop in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and also successfully conclude the Doha trade talks on equitable trade.

"You have a vital role to play in the further development of an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system," he wrote.

On climate change, he emphasised that the reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on the issue earlier this year dispel any doubt that the world does not know enough to act to prevent the consequences, which may be dire.

"The cost of inaction will exceed the cost of taking early action, probably by several orders of magnitude, as the impact of climate change has the potential to undo progress made on human development," he said.

In that light, he stressed the necessity of special effort to put in place a long term global framework to tackle climate change, in a way that addresses the needs of all countries.

"I urge you to take the lead in your country, and support developing countries to achieve economic growth while contributing to lasting solutions to climate change," he said, addressing each of the G-8 leaders.

China and Africa

The campaign to question China's increased political and economic relations with Africa is intensifying.

China therefore defended its role in Africa on Monday, 4 June 2007 ahead of the G8 summit in Germany later this week.

Assistant Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai said, "China and African countries have had a very friendly, brotherly partnership since the establishment of new China, since the 1950s, and that has continued up to now."

"It can be said that this has been widely praised around the globe ♦ In this world there will always be people willing to criticise others. If they want to say something, then that's their business. Whether or not it's true, is another matter."

The Chinese government also on Monday released its position paper for the G8 meetings in Heiligendamm, Germany, on 6-8 June, outlining Beijing's policy on Africa.

"China wishes to stress that there is neither an invariable model nor a one-size-fits-all standard for good governance," the paper said.

"It depends on whether the policy and system can promote a country's economic and social development and serve the fundamental interests of its people. The issue of conditionality of aid should be tackled with caution," it added.

"China maintains that the United Nations has a bigger role to play in conflict prevention and settlement and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa," the paper said.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on Friday praised China's "helpful" role in Sudan. "The Chinese government has been exerting its utmost efforts (on Darfur), as I understand and appreciate," he said.

The position of the South African government remains consistent: we believe that the Chinese involvement should not necessarily be seen as a dangerous thing for Africa in general and South Africa in particular. Africa should collectively and bilaterally ensure that the Chinese involvement in Africa is different to previous relations with other developed nations and we should have a developmental element of Chinese relations with Africa.

The reality is that China and India are two of the fastest growing economies of the world and are now partners with South Africa in the G-8 + 5 Outreach programme and as such, will intensify their activities in Africa and this is not necessarily a bad thing. It will depend on how Africa frames its relations with China.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Sudan/Darfur

We remain very concerned about developments in Darfur and welcomes the call from the Security Council for full and immediate implementation of UN Support Packages for the African Union (AU) Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

South Africa fully supports the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Darfur and therefore agree with the Security Council's call that parties must meet their international commitments, support the political processes, end violence against civilians, attacks on peacekeepers, and facilitate humanitarian relief.

Security Council Calls for Full, Immediate Implementation of United Nations 'Support Packages' To African Union Mission In Sudan

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2007/15 reads as follows:

"The Security Council welcomes the transmission of the report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the hybrid operation in Darfur, which contains recommendations regarding a mandate and a structure for the hybrid operation, details on the various components of the proposed operation and their specific tasks, and a description of the ongoing efforts of the international community to support the peace process in Darfur and to strengthen the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS).

"The Security Council notes that agreement between the African Union and the United Nations on this joint report is an important development in the comprehensive approach to the peace process in Darfur, which also includes re-energising the political process, strengthening the ceasefire and implementing the three-phase approach to peacekeeping, culminating in an African Union-United Nations hybrid operation.

"The Security Council calls for the full implementation without delay of the United Nations light and heavy support packages of assistance to AMIS, as well as for the report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the hybrid operation to be considered and taken forward immediately. The Security Council further demands that all parties meet their international

obligations, support the political process, end violence against civilians and attacks on peacekeepers, and facilitate humanitarian relief."

With respect to the size of the force, a joint UN-AU report released on 31 May 2007, detailed two options for the size of the force's military component: under one plan, there would be 19 555 troops and under the other there would be 17 605 troops. The police component would require 3 772 officers.

An overall mandate must be approved by both the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, and is likely to focus on the protection of civilians, the facilitation of full humanitarian access, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the restoration of security through the enforcement of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Rodolphe Adada, the joint AU-UN Special Representative for Darfur appointed earlier this month, would head the operation and be responsible for its management and functioning. The Force Commander would be an African, while several other senior appointments would be made jointly following consultation with the UN and AU.

South Africa welcomes the progress that has been made with regard to the Light Support Package and calls for the speedy implementation of the Heavy Support Package.

South Africa appeals to the Government of Sudan and all other parties to agree and co-operate with the AU-UN Hybrid Operation Initiative to expedite its operationalisation.

South Africa urges the Member States to provide funding for the Hybrid Operation in Darfur through the UN assessed budget.

South Africa urges both the Government of Sudan and rebel groups to adhere to the ceasefire agreements.

Secretary-General Strongly Condemns Killing Of United Nations Officer In Sudan

The South African government supports the Secretary-General's strong condemnation of the killing on 25 May of a United Nations officer from Egypt, who was deployed in El Fasher in support of the African Union Mission in the Sudan and deplors the armed hijacking of a United Nations convoy in El Fasher on 28 May, in which three vehicles were stolen and the passengers robbed.

The Secretary-General urges the Government of Sudan to facilitate the immediate deployment of the heavy support package to AMIS, and agree to the United Nations-African Union hybrid operation without delay.

China urges patience on Sudan

China urged the international community last week to show patience with Sudan and said new sanctions would only complicate efforts to implement a United Nations peace plan for strife-torn Darfur.

"New sanctions against Sudan would only complicate the issue," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu told media. "China appeals to all parties to maintain restraint and patience."

"Relevant parties are making joint efforts to win positive achievements on the Darfur issue," Jiang said.

Sudan has agreed in principle to the "Annan peace plan," which proposes sending in UN troops to bolster an African Union peacekeeping force, but has delayed implementing the package.

Pope appeals for negotiated solution to Darfur Crisis

Pope Benedict XVI has asked for a negotiated solution to the bloody conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan when receiving letters of credence of Ahmed Hamid Elfaki Hamid, the new Sudanese ambassador to the Holy See.

"In this deadly conflict, that primarily affects the civil populations, everyone knows that no solution to arrive at a just peace can be implemented with the force of arms," the Pope said.

The Pope underlined the need for "a culture of dialogue and negotiation, so as to arrive to a political solution of the conflict, which respects the cultural, ethnic and religious minorities ♦ It is never too late to courageously make the necessary, and at times demanding, decisions to bring to an end a crisis situation, with the condition that all parties involve themselves with sincerity and with determination in their resolve."

The Holy Father made a call "to all persons that have responsibility in this situation so that they continue their efforts and make the required decisions."

Hundreds of Sudanese flee to town in Central African Republic (CAR), UN says

Some 1 500 Sudanese refugees have sought refuge in a single town in the Central African Republic, claiming that Sudanese Government forces and armed militias attacked their town two weeks ago, a United Nations spokesperson Michele Montas said

"The agencies say the number of refugees continues to grow," Ms Montas said. "The majority of them are women and children, who have travelled the 200 kilometres between the two towns on foot."

The World Food Programme (WFP) is providing a one-month initial food ration for the refugees who have already arrived in the town, and the UN High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR) along with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is providing non-food items, Ms. Montas added.

"We did not find evidence of the presence of armed elements in the group and the refugees assured the mission that everyone originates from DaFak in Sudan and no Chadian nationals among them," said Bruno Geddo, Representative of UNHCR.

"We will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of the operation," he added.

"Considering that the majority of the refugees appear to be women and children, WFP will provide emergency food assistance, while at the same time carry out an assessment of the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable individuals among the local population in Sam Ouandja," said that agency's Representative in CAR, Jean-Charles Dei.

"Beyond the need for humanitarian assistance, the United Nations remains highly concerned about the protection of civilians and calls for the national authorities to continue to facilitate humanitarian access to displaced populations in need," said Jean-Sebastien Munie, Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) chief in the country.

Lebanon

Security Council agrees on establishment of special tribunal

The Security Council agreed on 30 May 2007 that the special tribunal set up to try the suspected killers of the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri will enter into force on 10 June unless Lebanon ratifies the tribunal itself before that date.

A resolution endorsing the tribunal's formal establishment was adopted after 10 Council members voted in favour and no members voted against. Five countries — China, Russia, Indonesia, Qatar and South Africa — abstained.

The tribunal will be of 'an international character' to deal with the assassination of Mr Hariri, who was killed along with 22 others in a massive car bombing in downtown Beirut in February 2005.

Statement in explanation of the South African vote on the Lebanon Tribunal

South Africa unequivocally condemns the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and other Lebanese leaders. Indeed, there is a consensus within Lebanon and internationally on the need for the United Nations to assist the Lebanese authorities in their efforts to bring to justice those responsible for these grave crimes and bring an end to all impunity.

It is for this reason that the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) was set up to assist Lebanon with its criminal investigation. The decision was also taken to set up a Special Tribunal comprised of Lebanese and international

jurists and prosecutors located outside Lebanon to prosecute any persons identified by the UNIIIC and the Lebanese authorities as suspects in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and other Lebanese leaders.

South Africa fully supports the creation of the tribunal and expects it to operate with impartiality and in accordance with Lebanese law and the highest international standards of criminal justice.

My delegation regards Lebanese ownership of the tribunal as being of paramount importance and believes that it is incumbent on the Lebanese authorities and people to reach a consensus position on the matter.

For this reason, we still hold the hope that the Lebanese parties could use the period specified in the resolution ♦ between now and 10 June 2007 ♦ to come to a political agreement on this Tribunal and not leave it to be imposed on Lebanon.

We maintain that it is not appropriate for the Security Council to impose such a tribunal on Lebanon, especially under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In this regard, my delegation has frequently cautioned that the Security Council should be judicious in its invocation of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The Security Council is mandated to act with impartiality and without bias. It cannot be seen to be taking sides in internal Lebanese politics.

There is a danger that the imposition of the Special Tribunal on Lebanon without all the Parties consent will detrimentally affect the political stability of an already fragile Lebanese State. It will also politicise international criminal law, thereby undermining the very foundations of international law.

We furthermore have concerns about the precedent that this resolution will set. The principle of national consensus in establishing international tribunals is an important aspect of peace building and national reconciliation.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) reports that 19 civilians, including children and women, have died as a result of unprovoked attacks on the villages of Nyabuluze and Mhungu in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, during the night of 26-27 May. The attacks were reportedly carried out by elements of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Rasta militiamen. A third attack, on the village of Chihamba, was prevented in the early morning hours of 27 May by the intervention of a MONUC patrol. Media reports that 12 more abductees were also killed remain unconfirmed.

South Africa condemns this massacre in the strongest possible terms. Those responsible for the massacre must be arrested and prosecuted.

Visit to South Africa by President Joseph Kabila

President Kabila and a senior government delegation from the DRC will pay a State Visit to South Africa next week. We will therefore have an excellent opportunity to review political and economic developments in the DRC.

President Kabila will also be accompanied by a high level business delegation.

This visit comes within the context of South Africa's commitment to consolidate relations with and support political processes in the DRC.

Burundi

Years of conflict has left the people of Burundi impoverished, with social and economic structures virtually destroyed.

The International Community must intensify its post-conflict efforts, inter alia, inclusive growth and employment generation, implementation of reforms, including in the areas of security sector and justice system reforms, radical improvement in good governance, transparency and human rights, as well as a significant improvement in living conditions.

South Africa calls for support for the implementation of the Priority Action Programme prepared by the Government of Burundi, in close consultations with its partners. The hard won peace will not be irreversible unless we operationalise this Priority Action Programme.

Burundi is one of the first countries receiving support from the Peacebuilding Commission, viz. US\$35 million from the Peacebuilding Fund to support critical peacebuilding projects in Burundi. Only then will the hard-won peace in Burundi be irreversible.

Government and Paliphehutu-FNL negotiations

Negotiations between the Government of Burundi and the Paliphehutu-FNL had been suspended but following consultations by the Facilitator and his team with the government and the Paliphehutu-FNL, the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) is now again operational and negotiations have resumed.

Two meetings of the JVMM have since been held.

Earlier this week Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, on behalf of the Facilitator Minister Charles Nqakula, consulted with President Nkurunziza and the Paliphehutu-FNL with a view to finalising arrangements for a meeting between President Nkurunziza and Chairman Agathon Rwasa.

It is now agreed that a meeting will take place in Dar-es-Salaam later in the month at a date to be determined.

South Africa applauds the steady progress in the peace process and urges parties to remain focused on finalising the processes so that Burundi can join the nations of the world as a stable, peaceful and secure country.

Somalia

Assassination Attempt on Somalian Prime Minister

The South African government condemns the assassination attempt against the Somalian Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi escaped unhurt when a suicide bomber killed seven people outside the Somali prime minister's home in Mogadishu on Sunday, 3 June 2007.

Security sources said Ali Mohamed Gedi was unhurt, but five soldiers and two civilians died when the bomber detonated a car rigged with explosives at the gates of his residence in a heavily guarded neighbourhood of the capital.

South Africa is gravely concerned about the continuing heavy fighting in Mogadishu, which has reportedly killed more than 250 people and forced more than 320 000 from their homes in the past six days alone. South Africa condemns the reported indiscriminate use of heavy weapons against civilian population centres, which is in disregard of international humanitarian law.

South Africa urges all the parties to immediately cease hostilities and to facilitate access for the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance. There is no military solution to the Somali conflict. South Africa calls for an urgent resumption of political dialogue. Accordingly, the Somali Reconciliation Conference has to be urgently convened.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B Lynn Pascoe, will shortly visit the Horn of Africa for consultations in and around the region focused largely on peace and stabilisation in Somalia. A meeting in London of the International Contact Group (ICG) for Somalia, to be attended by leaders of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, senior officials from ICG member states, and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Francois Lonseny-Fall was held earlier in the week.

Humanitarian aid to Somalia

United Nations agencies said their efforts to deliver aid are being thwarted by the deteriorating security situation in Somalia, where hundreds of thousands of people affected by violence in and around the capital city of Mogadishu face a dire humanitarian situation.

The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that access to areas around Mogadishu and key airstrips in southern and central Somalia is essential to deliver much-needed supplies such as food and water to avert a crisis.



The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 213 000 people have fled fighting in the capital in recent months, while the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that hospitals are overflowing with casualties and health clinics are facing a rising number of cases of acute water diarrhoea.

"We have heard the appeal of Somali civil society to the humanitarian community for more help and we continue to respond, as far as we are able, with supplies and technical support," said Christian Balslev-Olesen, Somalia Representative for UNICEF.

"But our access is limited," he added. "And so we reiterate our call to all parties involved in the conflict to do everything within their power to allow us to reach those who need our assistance the most."

"UNICEF warehouses in the capital containing relief supplies cannot be reached due to conflict in the area and the use of Mogadishu airport to bring in further supplies carries its own security risks," Mr Balslev-Olesen said.

UNHCR began distributing supplies to 40 000 displaced people who have fled Mogadishu since February and are currently residing in the small town of Afgooye, 30 kilometres west of the capital, the agency's spokesperson Ron Redmond told reporters in Geneva.

There was also an explosion yesterday on the main road linking Afgooye  which shelters one fifth of the 213 000 Somalis who are believed to have fled the capital  and Mogadishu, isolating the small town.

"There are concerns that with this vital road now cut off, aid agencies will have an even harder time trying to bring supplies from warehouses in Mogadishu for distribution to thousands of displaced people in Afgooye and surrounding areas," Mr Redmond said.

On its first day of distribution in Afgooye, UNHCR and its Somali non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners reached 1 500 families or roughly 9 000 people, all of whom were living outdoors, either under trees or out in the open. By this morning, many had erected makeshift shelters with the plastic sheeting they received.

The agency hopes to reach an additional 500 families or 3 000 people living outdoors.

"UNHCR plans to airlift more relief supplies from Dubai next week, and to distribute them in Afgooye," Mr Redmond said, adding that these additional supplies will cover 15 000 people.

"Because of security concerns, the UN is unable to work in these parts of Somalia and is providing assistance through Somali NGOs," Mr Redmond noted.

Appeal for aid

To meet the needs of Somalis, UN agencies and its partners have appealed for \$262 million. So far, 34% of that has been contributed with donors giving \$88 million.

Meanwhile, in a new report, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that Somalia must seize the opportunity to consolidate peace after 16 years of instability.

"While the challenges are considerable, there are political, humanitarian and regional security imperatives that can assist the Somali people in recovering from years of statelessness and to avoid a slide back into chaos and more violence," Mr Ban says in the report.

Although it is imperative that fighting cease immediately, a military solution to the current violence raging in Mogadishu would be 'counterproductive' since it would foster resentment among various clans and communities while impeding the reconciliation process that is currently underway, the report notes.

Mr Ban urges the international community to provide political, technical and financial support to the nascent national reconciliation congress, which could potentially "play an important role in the broader process of addressing the past and building the future."

He says the UN must cooperate closely with the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organisation that has been involved in efforts to stabilise Somalia, along with the African Union (AU) and the League of Arab States.

The report also suggests that the Security Council approve of planning for a potential peacekeeping operation for the war-ravaged country, examining the funds necessary and seeking firm pledges from countries to send troops and police.

Mr Ban underscores that the primary responsibility for securing a lasting peace lies with Somalis who must overcome their differences and allow for an all-inclusive peace process. To this end, he says that recovery and reconstruction efforts are key to fostering reconciliation and rebuilding to make a significant impact on the lives of the people.

He appeals to donors to support emergency relief operations, and stresses the importance of maintaining a safe space in which humanitarian workers can provide the necessary assistance.

Mr Ban cites the "massive and systemic" human rights violations which have occurred in the east African country which have been reported by several independent UN experts since 1991, and encourages their recommendations to be folded into national efforts in this area.

As the fighting in Somalia escalates, the United Nations says more than 321 000 residents have fled Mogadishu since February.

Meanwhile, Eritrea's exit from the seven-member Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has been seen as a blow to diplomatic efforts to unite foreign opinion on pacifying Somalia.

Western Sahara

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has invited Morocco and the Frente Polisario to talks, along with their neighbours Algeria and Mauritania, later this month in an attempt to resolve the long-standing dispute over the status of Western Sahara.

The talks involving representatives of the two parties and the neighbours will take place "in the proximity of New York" on 18-19 June.

Peter van Walsum, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, will conduct direct talks as a first step in the process of negotiations. The Secretary-General hopes the talks will lead to a mutually agreed political solution to the dispute.

The invitations to this month's talks follow a request from the Security Council in its latest resolution on Western Sahara, issued in late April, that Morocco and the Polisario Front enter into negotiations without preconditions.

Middle East

The South African government believes that the invigorated Arab League initiative and the Palestinian Ceasefire Initiative for a few days ago opens up, for the first time, a real possibility for peace.

The South African government again urges all parties to take seriously the openings that have occurred and call on the government of Israel to begin serious negotiations based on the 2002 Arab Peace Plan.

At the same time, we call for the lifting of sanctions against the Palestinian government, the recognition of the Palestinian government, the removal of restrictions placed on the people of Palestine, the removal of sanctions against the government and people of Palestine and the release of those Ministers and MPs arrested recently.

I do believe there can be movement if there is serious commitment to operationalising the two-State solution.

Secretary-General, on anniversary of 1967 Arab-Israeli War, says end to occupation, political solution to conflict only way forward

On this day, the Secretary-General remembers the men, women and children who have been killed or had their lives shattered by the tragedies of conflict in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinians, who continue to live under an occupation that has lasted 40 years. The United Nations remains committed to bringing assistance to those who suffer, and to working tirelessly for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with international law and the resolutions of the Security Council.

As the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war reminds us, statehood for Palestinians, security for Israelis and peace in the region cannot be achieved by force. An end to the occupation and a political solution to the conflict is the only way forward - for Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and the wider region. This will only be achieved through negotiations to bring about an end to the occupation, on the basis of the principle of land for peace, as envisaged in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

High Commissioner calls for human rights framework in search for lasting solution between Palestinians and Israelis

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said: "This week marks forty years of occupation of the Palestinian territory, a regime which has led to wide-ranging and serious violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost among them the right to self-determination. The occupation must give way to a lasting political solution allowing both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to live in peace within secure and internationally recognised borders.

In the long-standing search for this solution, however, human rights have for too long taken a back seat. It need not and must not be so. In fact, the protection afforded by international law is most vital in situations of conflict and volatility.

Both flaring crises and longer term resolution of the conflict must be addressed within a framework of international human rights and humanitarian law. This includes the relevant obligations as reaffirmed in July 2004 in the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The right to life continues to be violated within a general climate of impunity in the region. Whether through extrajudicial executions or indiscriminate artillery attacks carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces, or internal Palestinian violence, or indiscriminate Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians, the right to life has been stripped of its fundamental value. What needs to be urgently and concretely addressed is the paramount obligation to ensure protection of civilians in all circumstances. This also means ensuring appropriate redress in situations where such protection has failed.

Furthermore, greater efforts must be made to counter a growing sense of disempowerment among Palestinians throughout the occupied territory. Principal among these, immediate steps can and should be taken to remove obstacles, including settlements, impeding Palestinians' right to freedom of movement: within the West Bank in particular, including Jerusalem, but also between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This right is seriously compromised and has severely curtailed Palestinians' exercise of a wide range of other human rights, including health, education, work and family life. The plight and rights of those imprisoned, captured or otherwise detained ♦ particularly children ♦ should also be urgently addressed.

The international community has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that international human rights and humanitarian law is fully implemented by all in efforts towards a lasting solution. Achieving the highest possible level of respect for human rights in the region is an end in itself. Significantly, however, it can also contribute to building greater confidence among the parties and facilitate the search for a lasting solution. The human rights of Palestinians and Israelis cannot be subject to negotiation or compromise.

Report by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to Security Council 1 June 2007

Following South Africa's request that the Secretary-General brief the Security Council before and after Quartet meetings, the Secretary-General gave a detailed briefing to the Council on the Quartet meeting held on 30 May 2007.

This was the first time that the Secretary-General has come before the Council to explain the decision of the Quartet of which the UN is the Convener. South Africa welcomed the briefing by the Secretary-General and expressed the hope that Quartet meetings would be preceded by briefings to the Security Council as well.

In the consultations South Africa expressed regret that the Statement of the Quartet was "unbalanced" in that it did not equally condemn the violence perpetrated by Palestinian radicals and the Israeli Defence Forces.

South Africa maintains that the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed by the Arab League Summit at Riyadh earlier in the year remains a suitable basis for the resumption of the Middle East Peace Process.

Comments by the Secretary-General

The situation in the Middle East remains volatile and tense, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned the Security Council on Friday, 1 June 2007, with fresh clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the resumption of fighting at a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

The Quartet, which comprises the UN, the European Union, Russia and the United States, decided to meet at an undetermined location in the Middle East on 26 June or the day after to continue the momentum of international peace efforts, Mr Ban's spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters.

Quartet members will meet with Israelis and Palestinians and will then hold a separate meeting with members of the Arab League to follow up on the Arab Peace Initiative, Ms Montas added.

Quartet Statement: 30 May 2007

The Quartet Principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner - met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

The Quartet expressed its deep concern over recent factional violence in Gaza. It called for all Palestinians to immediately renounce all acts of violence and respect the ceasefire. It called upon the Palestinian Authority (PA) government, in co-operation with President Abbas and regional actors, to do everything necessary to restore law and order, including the release of kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston.

The Quartet strongly condemned the continued firing of Qassam rockets into Southern Israel as well as the build-up of arms by Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza. It endorsed PA President Abbas' call for an immediate end to such violence, and called upon all elements of the PA government and all Palestinian groups to co-operate with President Abbas to that end. The Quartet called for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit. The Quartet urged Israel to

exercise restraint to ensure that its security operations avoid civilian casualties or damage to civilian infrastructure. It noted that the detention of elected members of the Palestinian government and legislature raises particular concerns and called for them to be released. The Quartet noted its support for the 30 May Security Council Press Statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

The Quartet welcomed continued dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, including bilateral summits, and expressed support for US efforts to effect progress on security and movement and access issues. The Quartet agreed that movement and access are essential and in this regard called on both parties to implement fully the Movement and Access Agreement of 15 November 2005. The Quartet urged the parties to work positively and constructively in order to build confidence and to create an environment conducive to progress on the political horizon for Palestinian statehood, consistent with the Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, which should also be addressed in these bilateral discussions. Palestinians must know that their state will be viable, and Israelis must know a future state of Palestine will be a source of security, not a threat.

The Quartet commended the excellent work of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) and endorsed its extension for three months from July until September 2007. It called on donors to follow through on past pledges of support. The Quartet noted that the resumption of transfers of tax and customs revenues collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority would have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy. The Quartet encouraged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to consider resumption of such transfers via the Temporary International Mechanism to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. In light of increased regional support for the Palestinians, the Quartet agreed to review where additional donor assistance should be focused, with particular consideration for infrastructure and development programmes that can directly improve the daily lives of Palestinians. The Quartet invited concrete proposals from the parties on specific international support that could be useful at this stage.

The Quartet welcomed the extension of the European Union Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EU-BAM). It reiterated the importance of resuming normal operations at the Rafah crossing. Taking note of the continuing threat to Israeli and Palestinian security posed by smuggling, the Quartet welcomed progress in the Quadrilateral Security Committee and called for greater efforts by all parties to improve security along the Egypt-Gaza border.

The Quartet welcomed the reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative, noting that the initiative is recognised in the Roadmap as a vital element of international efforts to advance regional peace. The Arab Peace Initiative provides a welcome regional political horizon for Israel, complementing the efforts of the Quartet and of the parties themselves to advance towards negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Quartet noted its positive meeting with members of the Arab League in Sharm al-Sheikh on 4 May, and looked forward to continued engagement with the Arab States. It welcomed the intention of the Arab League to engage Israel on the initiative, and Israeli receptiveness to such engagement. Recalling elements of the 18 April decision by the Arab League Follow-up Committee, the Quartet urged all involved to demonstrate their seriousness and commitment to making peace. In that context, the

Quartet reiterated the need for a Palestinian Government committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and reaffirmed its willingness to support such a government. The Quartet encouraged continued and expanded Arab contacts with Israel, and Israeli action to address concerns raised in the 18 April Arab League decision, including a cessation of settlement expansion and the removal of illegal outposts, as called for in the Roadmap.

Looking ahead, the Quartet discussed a calendar for the coming months to support and encourage progress on the bilateral and regional tracks. The Quartet principals agreed to meet in the region in June with the Israelis and Palestinians to review progress and discuss the way forward. The Quartet also agreed to meet in the region with members of the Arab League to follow up on the Arab Peace Initiative and efforts to advance the regional track. Principals instructed the envoys to meet beforehand to follow up and explore options for the way forward.

Humanitarian aid for Palestinians

The UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), has launched a global appeal for US\$12,7 million in an effort to raise funds to meet the humanitarian needs of more than 27 000 Palestinians displaced from the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

Since 20 May the Lebanese army has laid siege to the camp after Islamist militants from a relatively unknown group called Fatah al-Islam killed dozens of its soldiers. The army has intensified its bombardment of the camp since 1 June, describing its actions as the "beginning of the end."

Richard Cook, UNRWA's director in Lebanon, said the \$12,7 million was an assessment of the cost of delivering assistance to the displaced over the coming 90 days. He highlighted the "unsustainable" situation in neighbouring Beddawi camp, 10 kilometres from Nahr al-Bared, where over 20 000 people have fled.

The appeal includes plans for food aid, shelter, emergency health, water and sanitation, security, and provisions to enable refugee pupils affected by the crisis to sit public exams.

"The overall objective of the appeal is to meet the immediate life-saving needs of the displaced refugees and to provide immediate and short-term support to ensure a safe return to Nahr al-Bared camp as soon as circumstances allow," Cook told media at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut.

Search for new refugee site

The UNRWA director confirmed the agency was looking for free land with adequate sanitation facilities on which to erect temporary accommodation to ease the massive overcrowding in Beddawi, where the population of the camp has more than doubled since the start of the crisis.

"It is a very sensitive issue for the refugees. Clearly many question, 'Is this the start of another camp?' and so we have to be very careful," Cook told the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) agency. "I take this opportunity to confirm UNRWA has no intention of moving the displaced Palestinians into temporary accommodation other than for their own well-being for a temporary period until they can return to Nahr al-Bared."

UNRWA has been unable to enter Nahr al-Bared camp since 22 May when its aid convoy came under attack.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has also been unable to deliver vital supplies of food and water into the camp, where up to 8 000 people remain caught in the fighting, since last Thursday. The camp has been without mains electricity since 20 May.

The Palestine Red Crescent (PRC) on Sunday evacuated 19 people from Nahr al-Bared, including one wounded, 11 women, two children and two elderly. Today the PRC evacuated at least nine people, one wounded and the rest women, children and the elderly.

Questions and answers

Question: Deputy Minister Pahad, there has been a suggestion that in the new Climate Change Initiative, South Africa is one of the countries who will be asked to curb greenhouse gas emissions although it was not asked to do so in the Kyoto Agreement. What is the view of the South African government in this regard?

Answer: This is in the ambit of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. As far as I know, Minister van Schalkwyk is studying news reports. We are not aware of any formal communication with the government of South Africa in this regard.

We are obviously very concerned about the climate change issue. As I said earlier, Africa will suffer most decisively if we do not get other countries, especially the developed countries to act positively in this regard. And the more successful economies viz. China, South Africa, India, and Brazil will also have to see how we can positively contribute to this matter.

Question: Deputy Minister, does the South African government believe in asymmetric climate change deals ♦ i.e. should the developed countries be making greater concessions?

Answer: I think Minister van Schalkwyk should say more on this matter. We are all in a state of development, the developed countries are already developed. We should have, and while we totally agree on the need for an international agreement on the curbing of greenhouse gases and as signatories to the Kyoto Protocol, the developed countries have to take the greater initiatives in this matter. This does not mean that we will renege on our own responsibilities in this matter. The situation demands that the

developed countries must move faster and quicker and I believe that most of us, especially the +5 will show our commitment to meet the target dates.

We cannot however be on the same footing as the developed countries.

Question: Deputy Minister, there has been talk of a meeting between Zanu-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in South Africa next week. Can you comment on this?

Answer: I think we have made it very clear that we are in the pre-negotiation facilitation phase. We have asked all parties to not do the preparatory work through the media since this makes it more difficult. Until there is a decision to officially indicate what meetings are planned and when, I will not be able to comment on any reports that have already appeared.

Question: Deputy Minister, can you comment on how long you expect the pre-negotiation phase to last?

Answer: I cannot indicate a timeframe but we must obviously move decisively since the elections have already been scheduled for 2008. It is vital that there must be movement since the economic situation continues to deteriorate, the general tensions continue to exacerbate. It is very difficult but I must say that the Zimbabweans themselves must understand the urgency of the matter and therefore act more decisively to bring an end to the facilitation phase so that all parties can be convinced that the conditions are free and fair for the elections to take place.

Question: Deputy Minister, are you suggesting that some elements of the Zimbabwean society are not convinced of the need to act decisively to resolve this matter?

Answer: No, this is not at all what I am suggesting. We have had no indication that any of the parties is unwilling to move with the same sense of urgency for which I am asking.

We must be able to co-ordinate our own programmes as the Facilitation with those of other role-players.

Question: Deputy Minister, Lord Triesman in Britain earlier this week said that the British government will give President Mbeki's Facilitation attempt until August to yield results. Are you able to comment on this?

Answer: I have seen media reports in this regard. However, I am not sure of any particular deadline that has been imposed, although it would be wonderful if we could have some decisive movement by August 2007.

I must also say that Lord Triesman does not have the mandate to impose any such deadlines since South Africa is acting under a Southern African Development Community (SADC) mandate.

Question: Deputy Minister, has the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis become a priority for the South African government?

Answer: Yes, there has been a decision that this matter be prioritised and following the conclusion of all budget votes in Parliament, the Facilitation team will have to clear their diaries if necessary to work on this matter.

Question: Deputy Minister, do you think that Lord Triesman's comments are indicative of the UK foreign policy?

Answer: I will respond to Lord Triesman when I have received the full text of his speech.

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