

**MIDDLE EAST QUARTET STATEMENT****21 March 2007**

The Quartet Principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. 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-- discussed by telephone the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the establishment of a Palestinian National Unity Government.

The Quartet reiterated its respect for Palestinian democracy and the agreement reached in Mecca on 8 February 2007, which laid the foundation for Palestinian reconciliation. The Quartet expressed hope that the establishment of a new government on 17 March 2007 would help end intra-Palestinian violence and ensure calm. The Quartet reaffirmed its previous statements with regard to the need for a Palestinian government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and encouraged progress in this direction. The Quartet agreed that the commitment of the new government in this regard will be measured not only on the basis of its composition and platform, but also its actions.

The Quartet expressed its expectation that the unity government will act responsibly, demonstrate clear and credible commitment to the Quartet principles, and support the efforts of President Abbas to pursue a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thereby achieving the peace, security, and freedom the Israeli and Palestinian people desire and deserve.

The Quartet reiterated the continuing need to coordinate and mobilize international assistance in support of the Palestinian people, and endorsed the continuation of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a three-month period while it evaluates the situation and the international community works to develop a more sustainable international mechanism for support to the Palestinians.

The Quartet expressed its strong support for Secretary Rice's efforts to further facilitate discussions with President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert with the aim of defining more clearly the political horizon for the establishment of a Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Quartet agreed to meet in the region soon to review developments and discuss the way ahead.

---