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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY
WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
New York, 29 November 2005**

A solution to the question of Palestine remains elusive. Palestinians have yet to see the beginnings of the establishment of their own State. Israelis as well are yet to feel secure in their own State.

Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians' success in ensuring calm during that period had raised hopes for a renewal of the political process. However, the ensuing upsurge in violence seriously undermined the fledgling coordination between the parties, bringing back feelings of frustration and disappointment.

After the agreement two weeks ago to open the Rafah crossing, facilitate movement between Gaza and the West Bank, and reduce closures in the West Bank, a new opportunity has emerged to cooperate effectively and bring about tangible benefits in the lives of ordinary people – particularly among Palestinians, who have suffered a serious economic decline and severe humanitarian problems due to the events of recent years. I strongly urge the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships to work with each other, with Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn, and with the Quartet to ensure that the agreement is implemented in full and on time. Action by the parties will complement the continued assistance provided by international donors to alleviate humanitarian suffering and boost the Palestinian economy.

Both Palestinians and Israelis will soon go to the polls, in elections which will have an important bearing on the future of the peace process. The electoral season should not be allowed to prevent the parties from the essential work of building mutual trust and following through with the implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. In addition, if disengagement is to be a springboard to progress on broader issues, it is vital that the parties give new impetus to meeting their obligations under the Road Map, which they have accepted and which has been endorsed by the Security Council. Palestinians need to be assured that the future viability of a Palestinian State will not be eroded by settlement expansion and barrier construction. Israelis need to be assured that their security will not be compromised by failure to act decisively against terror.

I therefore reiterate the recent call of the Quartet for renewed action in parallel by both parties to meet their obligations under the Road Map, which encompass clearly specified action on security, Palestinian institution-building, humanitarian response, civil society, and settlements. Performance of Road Map obligations is the way to move forward towards the shared goal of a sovereign, contiguous and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. For my part, I remain firmly committed to efforts aimed at achieving a

comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515 and the principle of land for peace. Let us all work hard to help the Palestinian people exercise their inalienable rights and realize their aspiration to live in peace and prosperity in a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.