

Quartet Statement, London, June 23 2005

The Quartet met today in London and reaffirmed its support for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank, and an orderly Palestinian takeover there. The Quartet reiterates its belief that this is a moment of optimism in the search for peace in the Middle East, and is an opportunity that should not be missed to revitalize the Roadmap. The Quartet encourages Israelis and Palestinians to take full advantage of this opportunity in order to move closer to the goal of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Quartet affirms that a new Palestinian state must be truly viable with contiguity in the West Bank.

The Quartet welcomes the meeting on June 21 between Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas. Contacts between the parties should now be intensified at all levels.

The Quartet notes that less than two months remain until the announced start to disengagement, and emphasizes the urgent need for Israel and the Palestinians to work directly and cooperatively with each other, with the assistance of James Wolfensohn, the Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement. The Quartet underlines that the coordinated support of the international donor community is crucial for the success of Mr. Wolfensohn's mission, and urges Arab states to engage fully in this regard.

The Quartet members reiterate their full support for Mr. Wolfensohn and his efforts to assist with the non-security aspects of disengagement and revival of the Palestinian economy. These efforts include strengthening the overall capacity of the Palestinian Authority; facilitating legal and judicial reform; completing the reform of the financial system to establish a sound, transparent regulatory regime; and implementing anti-corruption efforts, a comprehensive budget strategy, and wage and pension reform. Private sector job creation is also critical in reviving the economy, as is a vibrant civil society sector. The Quartet also urges Israel to take immediate steps, without endangering Israeli security, to relieve the economic hardships faced by the Palestinian people and to facilitate rehabilitation and reconstruction by easing the flow of goods and people in and out of Gaza and the West Bank and between them.

The Quartet notes that peace and security are essential components for political and economic revival; and stresses that the Palestinians must confront violence and terror in order for political and economic life to flourish. It urges both parties to avoid and prevent any escalation in violence so that withdrawal can proceed peacefully. The Quartet encourages continued Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation towards that end. The Quartet condemns the recent upsurge in violence in Gaza, including the firing of mortars and Qassams into Israeli towns and homes, and which has claimed innocent lives on both sides. In this regard, the Quartet notes and welcomes the Palestinian Authority's full cooperation with the mission of General William Ward, the U.S. Security Coordinator, to assist the Palestinians in reforming and restructuring their security forces, and to coordinate international assistance towards those efforts. Rapid reform of the security services and strengthening of the rule of law are essential elements that can improve security for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

As we work to make disengagement succeed, we must not lose sight of the path ahead. The Quartet reaffirms that the two-state vision and the Roadmap are the best way to achieve a permanent peace and an end to the occupation that began in 1967. The Quartet expresses its concern over settlement activity. In this context, the Quartet reminds both parties that they continue to have obligations under the Roadmap; and reaffirms the need to avoid any action that contravenes the Roadmap or prejudices final status negotiations. Any final agreement must be reached through negotiations between the two parties.

The Quartet reiterates its commitment to the principles outlined in its previous statements, including those of May 9, 2005; March 1, 2005; and May 4, 2004; reaffirms that the two-state vision and the Roadmap are the best way to achieve a mutually-agreed settlement between the two parties; and reiterates its commitment to a just, comprehensive, and lasting settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Quartet envoys will convene again before the beginning of withdrawal.