UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT PRESS ENCOUNTER [AS DELIVERED]**

**Gaza, 28 June 2016**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, salam aleikum, Ramadan kareem

I am honoured to be in Gaza once again.

The Palestinians in Gaza have a very special place in my heart. I have visited Gaza four times in the ten years that I have been Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I have personally witnessed the ravages of war and have been profoundly moved by the resilience and determination of the Palestinian people. They have stood up and rebuilt their lives in the face of staggering obstacles and hardships.

I want to thank donor countries. I just had the privilege of visiting a rehabilitation hospital generously donated by the government of Qatar. I thank all donors for their support in the reconstruction effort.

Nearly 90 percent of schools and hospitals have been repaired. Many homes have been rebuilt. But so much more needs to be done.

We can help rebuild houses.

But can we rebuild lives?

Can we help those who have suffered the terror of war deal with the deep scars that violence leaves behind?

Can we ensure that accountability is upheld and the victims of conflict feel a profound sense of justice?

Can we create jobs and prosperity so that peace is sustainable?

My answer is yes.

I know from personal experience. I have seen my own country Korea recover from the devastation of war. I know what it is to live as a displaced person on the move with no home, in fear for your life and your own future. And I know what the United Nations can do to help.

I stand with the people of Gaza to say that the United Nations will always be with you.

They are enduring enormously difficult living conditions. The closure of Gaza suffocates its people, stifles its economy and impedes reconstruction efforts. It is a collective punishment for which there must be accountability.

Today, just a short drive from the hi-tech parks of Israel, they survive with less than 12 hours of electricity per day.

Today, some 70 percent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance, and over half of Gaza's youth have little to no job prospects or horizons of hope.

This situation cannot continue. It feeds anger and despair. It increases the danger of a new escalation of hostilities, which can only bring further suffering to the people of Gaza.

We need to speak openly of the challenges and the unacceptable difficulties that the people of Gaza face. Of the humiliation of the occupation and the closures, but also of the division between Gaza and the West Bank.

Palestine is one and until Gaza and the West Bank are united under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian government, based on the rule of law and the PLO principles, Gaza's prospects for full recovery will be limited. The responsibility for reconciliation remains with the Palestinian leaders.

I want to reiterate my thanks to all of the UN staff in Gaza and throughout Palestine. I am in awe of their commitment to helping the people of Palestine realize their aspirations.

Their service to Palestine is a service to humanity. Their heroism is an inspiration to all of us in the United Nations.

I take this opportunity, I want to pay my tribute to our UN colleagues who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

The international community has an ongoing responsibility to act decisively for peace. The United Nations will continue to work for a future without occupation and oppression; with dignity and democracy in a State of Palestine that exists in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Skukran jazeelan.

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