

PRESS CONFERENCE

by

**MR. VLADIMIR PETROVSKY
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA**

**CAIRO, EGYPT
5 MAY 1994**

1. The Palestinian-Israeli Accord deserves the whole-hearted support of the entire world community. It is a historic landmark and turns a new page in the peace process. It proves that just, comprehensive and durable peace, based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 can be achieved for all the peoples of the region.
2. The importance of this Accord extends beyond the Middle East. It has far-reaching ramifications for other trouble-spots around the world. It is a success story which demonstrates to other regions that there is no alternative to negotiated peaceful settlement. In this respect, tribute should be paid to Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, to President Mubarak and to Egyptian diplomacy, to the co-sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference - the US and Russia - as well as to Norway, which revived the best traditions of classic diplomacy in the process of seeking a peaceful settlement.
3. There is a certain historical logic to the Middle East sending a signal of hope to the world. This region has suffered tremendously as a result of the Cold War, but - having come through crisis and suffering - now is the time for it to show how it can acquire the status of an example - and a positive one.
4. The UN encourages peaceful settlement, not only through Resolutions and words of support, but through tangible deeds. Here in the Middle East, peace-keeping operations were born. There is an extensive rehabilitation programme being undertaken by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as by UNDP and UNICEF.

5. In 1993, these Agencies provided services and implemented special projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip amounting to nearly \$250 million, a figure currently accounting for one third of all public expenditure in the West Bank and about one half in the Gaza Strip. Currently, they are employing over 8,000 Palestinians and over 70 international staff in this work.

Before the signature of the Declaration of Principles, the Secretary-General assembled a Task Force of several of his senior associates to establish an integrated United Nations approach towards development in these areas, with a particular focus on Gaza, where needs are greatest; to co-ordinate with other institutions, agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in ongoing development projects so as to avoid a duplication of efforts; and to mobilize international financial support for this process. This Task Force has prepared a report, *Supporting the Transition: An Immediate Response of the United Nations to the Interim Period in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*.

It signals the unique and integrated field-level coherence of the three principal organizations already heavily engaged in operational activities in the occupied territories (UNDP, UNICEF and UNRWA), including the services they can provide over the next 9 to 12 months which, with additional funding, can begin immediately. They can have a rapid effect on economic and social infrastructure, education, health, public management and training, social services, agriculture and industry, and emergency activities. The cost of these additional activities is estimated at \$138 million. The first priority among these activities in the short term is the maintenance of existing services, the filling of gaps where services have been neglected and measures to ensure that there is no reduction, dislocation or deterioration in services. These activities will be beneficial, not only in direct terms, but also because the construction, upgrading and maintenance projects will create immediate employment; also, the improvement in the infrastructure will be beneficial to the Palestinians in any scenario.

The initial work of the World Bank on current conditions and development priorities in the occupied territories, including its report, *An Investment in Peace*, is viewed by the Secretary-General as a major contribution to the work of the international community. Building on already close collaboration, the United Nations organizations are currently moving into even closer partnership with the Bank.

6. Of course, peace-building still requires further efforts. But we now have a chance to live with the hope that the years of struggle, confrontation and bitterness are over. The top priority today is the implementation of the Peace Accord. For the mass media, the time has come to develop a new culture, the culture of peace, which creates favourable conditions for the establishment of truly comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, as has been urged by the UN for many decades.