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## Syria's decision to use diplomacy instead of retaliation is wise - UN envoy



Terje Roed-Larsen

9 October 2003 – The senior United Nations envoy for the Middle East, Terje Roed-Larsen, said today all parties to the Middle East conflict should allow the international community to work out a solution, instead of taking the kind of unilateral action that has brought a complete standstill to diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation.

Repeating in Damascus the advice he had given in Beirut yesterday that the parties stop the cycle of retaliation, Mr. Roed-Larsen, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told reporters attacks and counter-attacks were leading the region down a steep and precarious path toward more violence.

On Sunday Israeli forces crossed Lebanese airspace and struck an area that Israel said was a training-camp for militants deep inside Syria as retaliation for a suicide bombing in Israel on Saturday. An assault on Monday from Lebanese territory across the Blue Line marking the Israeli line of withdrawal killed an Israeli soldier.

"I am here today at a critical juncture," Mr. Roed-Larsen said after his meeting with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Foreign Minister Faruk El-Shara'a. "It has never been more urgent to re-establish momentum towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. However, as you all know, the trend of events is increasingly in the opposite direction."

He said the Syrian Government had made a wise decision to present its case to the Security Council.

On the second leg of a regional tour that took him to Lebanon and will take him to Jordan, Mr. Roed-Larsen said: "The Israeli action was fraught with danger. By disturbing a front that has been stable for years, it risks having unpredictable and destabilizing consequences for the whole region, already rife with complex conflicts."