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Statement attributable to Mr. Robert Serry

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I am concerned that Israel has not heeded the Quartet's call to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Settlements are contrary to the Roadmap and international law and their continuation is causing a crisis of confidence in the effort to bring about meaningful political negotiations. In light of the persistent deadlock on this issue, a strategy adjustment is essential. The international community needs to act in unison to promote a negotiated end-game for a two State solution. I welcome US intentions to continue with its efforts and the United Nations will be consulting closely with Quartet partners on the way ahead. I am travelling to New York for consultations with the Secretary-General and to brief the Security Council on 14 December.

On a more positive note, I was pleased to be informed by the Israeli government today of its decision to allow exports from Gaza. The government has assured me that exports will be permitted both to foreign destinations and to the West Bank. The United Nations will be closely monitoring the implementation of this decision. I hope that a full range of exports will be permitted and that crossing capacity will continue to be adjusted as necessary to meet demand. The restarting of exports is essential to revive Gaza's economy and its legitimate business sector.

I can also confirm that United Nations agencies have now received approval to complete construction projects in Gaza totalling \$110 million. As I discussed with Defence Minister Barak earlier this week, this is a step forward, but approval and implementation procedures still need to move faster. Gaza's needs remain immense and further progress is critical. In accordance with today's decision, I call on Israel to expedite further approvals of UN projects, including more UNRWA schools. It is essential for calm to be respected and I call on militants to cease indiscriminate firing of any rockets from the Gaza strip toward Israel.

On another subject, the potential precedent set by today's Israeli court decision which led to the transfer of a Jerusalem Palestinian Legislative Council member to Ramallah is worrying. This case and that of three other lawmakers currently facing court proceedings continue to raise serious human rights concerns regarding Palestinian residency rights in East Jerusalem. I will be raising the UN's concerns directly with the Israeli government and international partners. It is essential that all parties refrain from provocative actions, particularly at this time.