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TO: Mr. Vijay Nambiar
A: Chef de Cabinet
Executive Office of the Secretary-General

DATE: 23 April 2008

REFERENCE:

THROUGH:
S/C DE:

FROM: Horst Heitmann
DE: Director
Security Council Affairs Division
Department of Political Affairs

SUBJECT: **Security Council: Report on Activities**
OBJET:

Attached please find, for the attention of the Secretary-General, a note on the informal consultations of the Security Council on the Middle East on Wednesday, 23 April 2008 (p.m.).

cc: Mr. Pascoe (O/R)
Mr. Menkerios (O/R)

APR 24 2008

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, 23 April 2008 (p.m.)

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Middle East (Palestine)

In previously unscheduled consultations, Council members took up Costa Rica's proposal of the same morning for the President to issue a press statement on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The United States stated that in the light of the "fundamental differences" among members on the issue, reaching a common position was unlikely. While his country was concerned with the humanitarian situation in Gaza, he reiterated that the Council's position must be balanced and comprehensive, and address all underlying issues. Such efforts must address terrorist attacks against Israel and Hamas's usurpation of power in Gaza, he stressed. Ambassador Wolff suggested that members could share their national positions with the press and that the Council continue with its approved April programme of work.

Panama noted his understanding that when a press statement or a PRST was issued, consensus among members was required. In his view, such action differed from when a Council President spoke to the press to "give his sense" of a particular discussion. In such a case, members could speak to the press and give a different account if they wished. Ambassador Arias stressed that a President should always be allowed to give an "impression of the discussion that had been carried out". Responding to Panama, France recalled an "identical" instance last September. He then, and now, believed that if members could not agree on the specific wording of a press statement, consensus was at least needed on the "principle" of such a statement. On Costa Rica's proposed elements, Ambassador Ripert agreed with the United States, stating that it would be a "difficult exercise to undertake". The only solution was for consensus on a text, which was not possible in this case.

Libya emphasized the dire and tragic humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the 1.5 million inhabitants needed "everything" - food, medicine and all other basic necessities of life. The source of the current situation, the "occupation", had to be recognized, whereas rockets and attacks on Israel were a result of this occupation. Ambassador Dabbashi went as far as comparing the situation in Gaza with the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. He observed that the international community at large could not understand when the Council expressed its concern about the situation while at the same time doing nothing about it.

At this point, the President (Ambassador Kumalo) observed that there was no agreement among members on how to proceed with the discussion and abruptly adjourned the consultations.

Davey McNab/Georg Siep
SCSB/SCAD/23 April 2008