

Thank you very much, Foreign Minister Shoukry. Thank you Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Vice Prime Minister Mustafa; our co-host, Foreign Minister Brende; and our colleague Cathy Ashton, the EU High Representative. I want to particularly thank President Sisi and Foreign Minister Shoukry for their leadership and for their partnership in their efforts for the Palestinian Authority and to help bring all of us here today for their work with Israel on the ceasefire. And we respect and thank them also for their partnership with the United States, not just in working towards a durable ceasefire, but also in helping to pull together, and helping to pull together this massive reconstruction effort.

But President Sisi's efforts, I think it's fair to say, have really helped to reaffirm the pivotal role that Egypt has played in this region for so long. The same can also be said of Foreign Minister Brende and Norway, whose historic connection and commitment to these issues go back more than two decades to the Oslo Accords, and I'm personally always impressed by the deep engagement of Norway in efforts to make peace, not just here but elsewhere in the world. And of course, President Abbas, thank you for your perseverance and your partnership.

This has been a difficult few months on a difficult issue in a difficult neighborhood, and no one feels that more than the people of Gaza. This summer, as we've heard in some of the statistics that Secretary-General shared with us, more than half a million Gazans had to flee their homes and seek safety. Twenty thousand homes were destroyed or severely damaged, and more than a hundred thousand people remain displaced. And winter is fast approaching.

I have been to Gaza at a time like this, and I will never forget traveling to Izbet Abed Rabo in Gaza in 2009 and watching children playing in the rubble, seeing little Palestinian girls playing where just months earlier, homes and buildings had stood. The humanitarian challenge then was enormous, and shockingly, amazingly – and every speaker has mentioned we area back yet again – the humanitarian challenge is no less enormous in 2014. So the people of Gaza do need our help desperately – not tomorrow, not next week, but they need it now. And that's why we are all gathered here.

I am proud, personally, that the people of the United States have been working to do their part. We provided \$118 million in immediate humanitarian assistance at the time of the crisis, at its height, and the \$84 million that we also provided to UNRWA for operations.

Today, I'm pleased to announce an additional immediate \$212 million in assistance to the Palestinian people, and obviously we will have to see how things develop in the days ahead. But this immediate money will mean immediate relief and reconstruction, and this money will help meet the Palestinian Authority's budget needs. This money will, we hope, help promote security and stability, and economic development, and it will provide for immediate distribution of food, medicine, and shelter materials for hundreds of thousands for the coming winter. And it is money that is going to help reconstruct Gaza's damaged water and sanitation system, so that Palestinians in Gaza will have access to water that they can drink and homes that they can actually start rebuilding.

Taken together, the United States has provided more than \$400 million in assistance to the Palestinians over this last year, \$330 million just since this summer's conflict began. But I will say to all of you, and I think everybody knows it: We come here with a sense of awesome responsibility and even resignation about the challenge that we face because we all know that so much more needs to be done, even though there have been encouraging steps.

I'm particularly grateful to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Coordinator Robert Serry for helping to broker an important agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority for an end-use monitoring mechanism. And we appreciate Israel's cooperation in continuing to provide humanitarian access to Gaza through its crossing, which is essential if all of this is going to work.

We welcome that Israel has recently announced new measures that should allow increased trade in agricultural goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and more permits for Palestinian business leaders to enter Israel. We hope to see many more positive steps announced and implemented in the coming weeks and months. And we need to get back to the difficult work not just of reconstruction and recovery in Gaza, but of actually building Gaza's economy for the long term and developing its institutions under the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority and President Abbas must be empowered in all that we do in order to define and determine Gaza's future. There is, simply, no other way forward, and all of us here need to help the ability of the Palestinian Authority to be able to deliver. There are many steps that we can take. We can and should see Palestinian Authority customs officials at Gaza's borders. We can and should help the PA to expand its control in Gaza, streamline Gaza's workforce, and continue to play a key role in the end-use monitoring mechanism for Gaza. And this is absolutely essential, because as long as there is a possibility that Hamas could fire rockets on Israeli civilians at any time, the people of Gaza will remain at risk of future conflict. And even as we work to reconstruct Gaza, we cannot lose sight of the importance of the long-term economic investment for the Palestinian economy that can create a vibrant private sector.

Shortly after I became Secretary of State, working with the Quartet and international local business leaders, we launched the Initiative for the Palestinian Economy. The IPE is a comprehensive plan for Palestinian economic growth in the billions of dollars. And this effort is not about donor projects or corporate social responsibility; we're talking about real investment. We had McKinsey & Company come in and make analysis of every sector of the Palestinian economy and make a determination about those areas where you could actually reduce unemployment from 21 percent to 8 percent in a period of three years. We're talking about real investment that produces real jobs and opportunities for thousands of Palestinians, and that is what is going to make the difference over the long term.

Now, we were making real progress, laying down specific projects, creating new opportunities for goods and peoples to move in and out, when tragically conflict once again replaced dialogue. But what I really want to underscore to everyone is what all of us know, but not everyone perhaps wants to confront. This is the third time in less than six years that together with the people of Gaza, we have been forced to confront a reconstruction effort. This is the third time in less than six years that we've seen war break out and Gaza left in rubble. This is the third time in less than six years that we've had to rely on a ceasefire, a temporary measure, to halt the violence.

Now, I don't think there's any person here who wants to come yet again to rebuild Gaza only to think that two years from now or less we're going to be back at the same table talking about rebuilding Gaza again because the fundamental issues have not been dealt with. A ceasefire is not peace, and we've got to find a way to get back to the table and help people make tough choices, real choices. Choices that everybody in this room and outside of it understands have been on the table for too long. Choices about more than just a ceasefire. Because even the most durable of ceasefires is not a substitute for peace.

Even the most durable of ceasefires is not a substitute of security for Israel and a state and dignity for the Palestinians.

As everyone here knows, last year the United States joined Israel and the Palestinian Authority in renewed peace negotiations towards a final status settlement. The truth that has not been talked about very much, and there are still legitimate reasons for maintaining that respect for the process, but the truth is that real and significant process was made on substantive issues. Longtime gaps were narrowed and creative ideas were actively being deployed to solve remaining differences.

So I say clearly and with deep conviction here today: The United States remains fully, totally committed to returning to the negotiations not for the sake of it, but because the goal of this conference and the future of this region demand it. There is nothing sustainable about the status quo. In the end, the underlying causes of discontent and suspicion and anger that exist in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza can only be eliminated by resolving the conflict itself. There is no way to fully satisfy the parties' various demands, no way to bring the full measure of recovery to Gaza, without a long-term prospect for peace that builds confidence about the future. And everything else will be a Band-Aid fix, not a long-term resolution. Everything else will still regrettably fail to address the underlying discontent and suspicion in both Israel and Gaza and the West Bank. Everything else will be the prisoner of impatience that has brought us to this unacceptable and unsustainable status quo.

Make no mistake: What was compelling about a two-state solution a year ago is even more compelling today. Now, I know that in Israel as well as in Gaza and the West Bank, most people would quickly tell you today that as much as they want peace, they think it is a distant dream, something that's just not possible now. The problem is, having said that, no one then offers an alternative that makes sense. I say it is unacceptable to want peace but then buy into an attitude that makes it inevitable that you cannot have peace. It is unacceptable to simply shrug one's shoulders, say peace isn't possible now, and then by doing nothing to make it possible, actually add to the greater likelihood of a downward spiral.

So I say to you clearly and with great conviction: The United States will continue to work with our partners to find a way forward. We are convinced that the needs to both parties on even the most critical issues can be met, and that with common sense, goodwill, and courage we can not only address the long-term needs of Gaza, but we can actually achieve a lasting peace between Israel, the Palestinians, and all their neighbors. We have been clear from day one about the difficulty of the challenge ahead, and we knew there would be tough times. But in the end, we all want the same things: security for the Israelis; freedom, dignity, and a state for the Palestinians; peace and prosperity for both peoples.

So this is a time for leadership. It's a time for leaders to lead. And at a time when extremism, which offers no constructive vision for the future, is capitalizing on the vacuum, it is imperative for all of us to fill that vacuum with a prospect of peace. That's what the people of our countries expect from us, and that's what we must offer them – no less. So out of this conference must come not just money, but a renewed commitment from everybody to work for a peace that meets the aspirations of all – for Israelis, for Palestinians, and for all the peoples of this region. And I promise you the full commitment of President Obama, myself, and the United States of America to try to achieve that. Thank you.