

## **‘Winds of Change are Blowing’**

### **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s remarks to the League of Arab States Summit**

**Baghdad, 29 March 2012**

*In seiner Ansprache vor der 23. Konferenz der Arabischen Liga in Bagdad würdigt UN-Generalsekretär Ban Ki-Moon die in Gang gekommenen Transformationsprozesse des „Arabischen Erwachens“ auf dem Weg zu Demokratie und Stabilität, die Bemühungen des Sondergesandten Kofi Annan um eine friedliche Regelung des innenpolitischen Konflikts in Syrien und verweist gleichzeitig auf die wichtige Rolle, welche die Arabische Liga und ihre Mitgliedsstaaten dabei spielen können. Schließlich appelliert Ban an die israelische und palästinensische Führung, Mut und Weitsicht für eine historische Vereinbarung im Rahmen der Zwei-Staaten-Lösung zu zeigen.*

This summit comes at a momentous time for Iraq and the Arab world. I congratulate the people and Government of Iraq for hosting it. Indeed, after so many years of suffering — repression, sanctions, war and economic hardship — our collective presence in Baghdad is a testament to the great strides Iraq has made.

This summit in Baghdad clearly shows that Iraq is regaining its place in the Arab world and the wider international community. The days of the Saddam Hussein regime are well behind us.

This is the Arab League’s first Summit since the remarkable series of events that have transformed the Arab region. The lessons are eloquent and clear. The winds of change will not cease to blow. For decades, the people of the Arab world have seen tyrannies topple and democracies emerge in Europe, Asia and Africa. Now they see it is their time. The flame of democracy lit in Tunisia will not be dimmed. The Arab peoples are calling for dignity, freedom and human rights. Young people and women are in the vanguard.

My message to you is simple. It draws on all that we have seen and all that we know. Listen. Listen to the people. The road to democracy is not easy. But other regions have gone through similar transitions.

You can count on the United Nations for support. We are strongly committed to promoting peace and stability, sustainable development and human rights throughout the Arab world. Helping countries in transition is one of the top priorities for my second term.

For the transitions in the Arab world to succeed, four factors will be critical: First, reform must be real and genuine. Leaders must choose the path of meaningful reform, or make way for those who will. Second, inclusive dialogue is crucial. Inclusive Government should be the watchword in the region's new democracies. Third, women must be at the centre of the region's future. The empowerment of women is critical for the region to move forward. Fourth, we must create opportunities for young people. Arab countries need to give their youth a compelling view of the future, as well as creating 50 million jobs within the next decade to absorb young entrants into the workforce.

The Arab Awakening has given the League of Arab States a new sense of purpose. The United Nations has long cooperated with the League, but today those ties are much, much closer and are bringing more tangible results. We saw it in Libya, and we see it now in Syria.

Our designation of my distinguished predecessor, Kofi Annan, as our Joint Special Envoy on Syria is a striking example of our work together.

The conflict in Syria is on a dangerous trajectory with potential ramifications for the entire region. The Government has failed to fulfil its responsibility to protect its own people. Instead, it has subjected citizens in several cities to military assault and disproportionate use of force. I know you have been working hard over the past few days here in Baghdad to forge a united front on this worsening crisis. It has been at the top of my discussions with numerous world leaders over the past few days, including Mr.[Nabil] Elaraby your Secretary-General.

As you know, the Syrian Government has written to the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Annan, accepting his six-point plan, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. I share Mr. Annan's view that this is an important initial step that could bring an end to the violence and the bloodshed, provide aid to those people who are suffering, and create an environment conducive to a political dialogue that would fulfil the long-held legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. It is essential that President Assad put those commitments into immediate effect. The world is waiting for commitments to be translated into action. The key here is implementation. There is no time to waste.

At the same time, I call on the opposition to fully cooperate with Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's proposal. And I appreciate the work done by those of you here today to ensure this violence stops immediately. Mr. Annan is working urgently with all parties, including the opposition, to secure that implementation and to get an inclusive political process in place. I sincerely appreciate his tireless efforts and the evident support he is receiving from the international community.

The dangerous impasse between Israelis and Palestinians is also a major concern for your organization and mine. I appeal to Israeli and Palestinian leaders to show courage and vision to reach a historic agreement. The two-State solution is long overdue. The Palestinians have a legitimate right to an independent and viable State. Israel has a legitimate right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders.

Together with my Quartet partners, I will remain engaged in helping the parties forge a way forward. I commend Jordan's efforts to encourage the parties to come back to the negotiating table. I also attach great importance to the role and efforts of the League of Arab States follow-up committee. Your continued support for the

Palestinian Authority, including resources to pursue its State-building efforts, is crucially important. Sustained support to UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] and the vital services it provides to the Palestinian refugees is also indispensable.

Together, we must create the conditions for meaningful negotiations that will resolve the core issues of the conflict and end the occupation that started in 1967.

These are historic times for the Arab world. Though the challenges you face are formidable, the opportunities are greater.

This body, this League of Arab States, has taken a strong—indeed unprecedented—stand in the past year. You have led by example, and there is no turning back. The winds of change are blowing. I urge you to set your sails to catch them. The turmoil of transition will not be easy. Sadly, we may well see more loss of life and more upheaval. Some will question whether the gains are worth the price. And some will cling to discredited systems and assumptions. But, the arc is clear: towards more freedom, not less; towards transparent, inclusive, accountable governance.

As leaders of this Arab region, you have the power to make sure all your people realize their legitimate aspirations. You have the power to deliver the economic growth and national renewal that will turn the current awakening into a full blossoming for the people of the Arab world. I urge you today, and in the coming months and years, to put your people first. It will be your legacy, and it will reverberate down the generations. Thank you.

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