



Permanent Mission of Germany
to the United Nations

Statement

by
H.E. Mr. Thomas Matussek
Permanent Representative of Germany
to the United Nations

at the Tenth Emergency Special Session on Palestine
of the General Assembly

New York, 16 January 2009

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

We are witnessing a dramatic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Germany deplores the high number of civilian casualties and the suffering of all civilians caused by the ongoing escalation of violence. Germany repeats its call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Foreign Affairs Minister Steinmeier has just come back from a second visit to the region within in a week. The efforts of the German Foreign Minister aim at supporting ongoing initiatives to reach a permanent and lasting ceasefire; a ceasefire that allows for the immediate access of humanitarian aid and guarantees the security of both Israel and the Palestinian people. There must be an unconditional halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and to the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip as well as to Israeli military action. The cessation of fighting should allow for lasting and normal opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The European Union has repeatedly stated its readiness to re-dispatch its EUBAM-mission to Rafah to enable its re-opening, in cooperation with Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Germany remains willing to contribute to this crucial mission.

Germany warmly welcomes the initiative presented by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and makes every effort to support it, especially through German expertise in the field of border management. We welcome the talks in Cairo and hope that they will soon lead to a ceasefire and to first concrete steps for permanent and lasting arrangements.

Mr. President,

The alarming humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip calls for immediate action: Food, urgent medical supplies and fuel must be distributed to the people in need. Safe evacuation of the injured must be allowed and immediate access of humanitarian workers should be made possible through the opening of crossing points. Germany welcomes the daily temporary humanitarian ceasefires and calls on both sides to continue to respect those daily ceasefires in order to allow for humanitarian access. Germany has stepped up its assistance for the people in need by contributing 11 Mio € to the humanitarian relief efforts.

The Israeli shelling of the UN compound in the Gaza strip is unacceptable and represent a dangerous escalation; we demand that the facts of this incident be clarified.

Finally, let me stress that Germany sees the urgent need to step up the peace process. We are convinced that there is only a political solution to the current crisis. The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the process set out in Annapolis and on the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza **Strip** existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. Work must be carried out, notably on the basis of the Arab peace initiative, to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive and operational manner. We welcome and support the efforts by Egypt and the Arab League aiming at inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Thank you.