

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



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PRESS RELEASE

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov Holds Phone Conversations with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and EU Council Secretary General/High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana

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Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov held on February 10 and 11 telephone conversations with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and EU Council Secretary General/High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. The focus of attention was issues related to the situation in the Middle East and in Palestinian-Israeli settlement.

Sergey Lavrov gave additional explanations on the essence of the Russian initiative aimed at forging dialogue with the Hamas movement, which won the recent Palestinian Legislative Council (parliament) elections. He reaffirmed that our initiative rests on the platform of the Quartet of international mediators, as agreed upon in London on January 30, and is directed to the practical implementation of this platform.

It is the Russian side's conviction that in the interests of providing an avenue for restoring the Palestine-Israel settlement process based on the Roadmap it is necessary, without dragging it out, to begin to talk to Hamas as an influential force of Palestinian society. The dialogue must aim, already at the stage of formation of a new Palestinian government, for continuity in the Palestinian National Authority's policy of putting an end to violence and reaching a peaceful settlement with Israel. It was this line being pursued by PNA Head Mahmoud Abbas, with the invariable backing of Russia and other Quartet members, that received a convincing mandate from the overwhelming majority of Palestinians in the presidential elections in January 2005.

From this vantage point the efforts already undertaken by countries of the region, Egypt primarily, which are now conducting contacts with Hamas leaders, deserve high appraisal. In the course of these contacts some encouraging remarks have been heard from the movement's representatives. This needs to be taken into consideration. Sergey Lavrov underlined the intention of the Russian cosponsor of the Middle East peace process to act in coordination with its partners in the Quartet and in the region.

