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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Telephone Conference of Quartet of International Mediators for Middle East Settlement**

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A regular ministerial telephone conference of the Quartet of international mediators for Middle East settlement took place on February 20. It was attended by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and also by the Quartet's special representative, James Wolfensohn.

The Quartet participants thoroughly examined the situation in Palestinian-Israeli relations in the context of the results of the Palestinian Legislative Council elections and the election campaign now unfolding in Israel. They heard Quartet special representative Wolfensohn's report on the difficult financial and economic position in the Palestinian territories.

During the teleconference, the Quartet's position as agreed in London on the parameters for donor assistance to the Palestinian National Authority was affirmed. Sergey Lavrov spoke in favor of regarding the Palestinian people's interests as of paramount importance in solving this acute question. He voiced the principled readiness of Russia to render the Palestinians urgent assistance.

It was agreed that considering the rapidly changing situation both in the Palestinian territories and in Israel, the Quartet participants will continue active contacts among themselves at all levels.

February 20, 2006