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Secretary-General

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MIDDLE EAST CRISES APPROACHING 'POINT OF NO RETURN', SECRETARY-GENERAL WARNS **IN MESSAGE FOR AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE GLOBAL FORUM**

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's video message for the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Global Forum in Washington, D.C., on 3 June:

Distinguished leaders, AJC officials and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to greet the AJC Global Forum.

I thank the American Jewish Committee for its commitment to the United Nations. You were at the San Francisco conference in 1945, helping make human rights part of the Organization's Charter. We have stood side-by-side in the fight against injustice, intolerance and genocide. Today we meet regularly to discuss pressing global challenges, from poverty to nuclear proliferation.

This year's Forum takes place amid crisis across the Middle East. In Syria, the conflict has had a devastating impact on ordinary citizens. The country is on the brink of disintegration. Sectarian tensions are on the rise. Regional stability is at risk. For the first time in decades, there has been firing across the Golan disengagement lines.

All those providing arms, or thinking of providing arms, must be mindful that this conflict will not be resolved through military means. The current window of diplomatic opportunity is the best chance for a negotiated solution we have had in nearly a year. A political solution is the only path to a new Syria that fulfils people's aspirations for freedom, dignity and justice.

We are also approaching a point of no return in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The occupation, now nearing half a century, is not acceptable morally, politically, strategically – humanly. I know many of you fully recognize that no interests are truly served by maintaining the status quo.

I have been, and will remain, outspoken in my insistence that Israel has a right to live in peace and security. But Israel needs to stop settlement activity and take concrete action to end the occupation. We all need to support Secretary of State [John] Kerry's courageous initiative. This may well be the last chance for the two-State solution. The United Nations will do all it can to help resume a meaningful peace process.

Ladies and gentlemen, all around us, our world is changing. New economic powers are emerging. Climate impacts are gathering force. People are rising up against oppression and corruption. Half the world's people are now under 25 years of age.

Whether addressing immediate crises or building long-term foundations of peace, the United Nations will remain committed to solutions that advance the global good.

Thank you for your support. I wish you all a memorable forum.

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