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## Statement from CMEP on UN Security Council Resolution on Middle East (February 2, 2011)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a coalition of 24 national church communions and faith-based organizations advocating for robust U.S. government policies to help end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is deeply concerned with the lack of progress in negotiations for a comprehensive peace. Brief direct talks were suspended last September. U.S. proposals intended to reignite direct negotiations failed to bring the parties back to the table.

A United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Israel to stop illegal construction of settlements in the territories over which it gained control in 1967, including East Jerusalem, has been submitted for Security Council consideration and will be discussed by the Middle East Quartet (U.S., UN, EU and Russia) later this week. The language of this resolution reflects language that the United States has historically used to describe settlement construction activity: illegal, an obstacle to peace, and not legitimate.

CMEP calls on the Obama Administration not to stand in the way of this resolution in a Security Council vote. Furthermore, in the context of the resolution's consideration, CMEP urges the U.S. government to take this opportunity to spur both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take decisive new steps toward a comprehensive peace agreement.

With new tensions and transformations rapidly emerging in the Middle East, regional stability and security require a comprehensive peace agreement in the near future. In addition to believing the current situation to be politically unsustainable, CMEP continues to be deeply concerned about the impact of the existing stalemate on people's daily lives. The absence of any progress toward a resolution compounds the humanitarian situation on the ground, stranding many Palestinians in a state of perpetual food insecurity and leaving most without access to adequate water resources.

Palestinians deserve self-determination and Israelis deserve the security of a comprehensive peace and recognition by their neighbors. The outlook for an agreement is not hopeless. Recent reports confirm that in 2008 both sides made significant progress in defining their positions on important final status issues, including security, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. Yet little progress has been made since then. The United States must send a robust message in word and deed to both parties that delay is not an option and that new substantial steps toward a comprehensive agreement are needed immediately.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" is a call from Jesus that is today most timely and urgent. Churches for Middle East Peace offers its prayers and active support to all who are willing to take bold steps to help bring about a comprehensive peace among Israelis and Palestinians.

Warren Clark, Executive Director

Martin Shupack, Board Chair