

The Office of Tony Blair

Secretary Clinton and Tony Blair hold Middle East talks in Washington DC at "fragile and challenging time"



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Quartet Representative Tony Blair met today in Washington DC to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East peace process at what he described as "a fragile and challenging time."

Speaking to reporters before their talks, Secretary Clinton welcomed Mr Blair back to the State Department saying: "We've been in close touch and have met a number of times since I was confirmed as Secretary of State, talking about a range of issues. And we look forward to another productive discussion today."

Tony Blair thanked her saying: "I am obviously delighted to come here and talk to Secretary of State Clinton and talk about the Middle East and to thank her for all the work that she and the Administration are doing to further that process at this most fragile and challenging time."

Tony Blair has stressed the need to create a context to launch credible political negotiations at the same time as carrying on the work of building a Palestinian state from the bottom up. That means both trying to encourage the West Bank economy, but also critically to relieve the situation in Gaza and start to get Palestinian politics to come around to a more unified position.

Since being appointed as Quartet Representative, Tony Blair has been working with the Palestinians to improve their economy and build the necessary governance and security capacity for statehood.

Tony Blair said: "Israel will not negotiate a Palestinian state unless they're sure that state will be securely and properly governed. That's the importance of the work that is happening with Prime Minister Fayyad now. And the Palestinians won't make the compromises necessary to agree a state unless they think they'll actually be able to run it, that the Israelis will get out, leave them to run their own territory.

"The basic point is this: If you ask people whether they want the two-state solution, Israelis and Palestinians, they'll say yes. If you ask them whether they think they're going to get it, then based on their recent history, they say no. But it's our job, in a sense, to bridge that credibility gap. And I think it is bridgeable."

Wednesday 07 October 2009