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Rt Hon. Margaret Beckett MP
Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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17 July 2006

Dear Foreign Secretary,

The Board of Directors of the United Nations Association of the UK met on Saturday, 15 July 2006 and asked me to write to you to express UNA-UK's dismay at the rapid deterioration of the situation in the Middle East.

We urge the British government to support international efforts to reduce tension in the region, particularly through the UN; and we welcome the statement issued by the G8 leaders meeting in St Petersburg as a first step in that direction. We particularly welcome the support given by the UN Secretary-General and the Prime Minister for the idea of an international force which could ensure the integrity of the international border between Israel and Lebanon, and prevent further attacks across that border.

UNA-UK considers that nothing can justify the firing of rockets into Israel, which have killed Israeli civilians, nor the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers; but nor can the disproportionate use of force by Israel in Gaza and the Lebanon, which has resulted in escalating numbers of civilian deaths, be justified.

We welcome and strongly support the European Union's role in bringing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and hope this can be sustained in the current circumstances, however serious the obstacles.

The resumption of conflict in this region has shown yet again how dangerous it is not to have an ongoing viable peace process in the Middle East. We urge the UK government to use every means to re-establish such a process and to support it as soon as the present crisis is overcome.

Chair, UNA-UK