

Kerry: Time Running Out to Revive Mideast Peace

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry urged Israel and the Palestinians on Monday to revive stalled peace talks, warning that the alternative was a “negative spiral of responses.”

“We’re running out of time. If we do not succeed now, we may not get another chance,” Kerry said in a speech to the American Jewish Committee in which he urged American Jews to support peace efforts to revive stalled peace talks. “The status quo is simply not sustainable.”

Kerry said the best way to ensure Israel’s security was by ending “once and for all conflict with the Palestinians by summoning the courage to achieve peace and by reaching a negotiated resolution.”

“The absence of peace is perpetual conflict. ... We will find ourselves in a negative spiral of responses and counter-responses that could literally slam the door on a two-state solution,” he said.

Kerry, who has visited Israel four times in his four months in office to try to restart peace talks, acknowledged skepticism that the two sides could resolve their differences.

peace efforts broke down in 2010 in a dispute over Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The Palestinians want a settlement construction freeze, while Israel insists talks should be held without preconditions.

“I fully recognize the challenges and predicament in which Israel finds itself, but I also firmly believe this is a hopeful time if we choose to make it so. This can actually be a time for possibility, a time for promise,” Kerry said.

“I still believe peace is achievable,” he added.

Kerry said a stable Palestinian state and a flourishing economy would strengthen Israel’s security. During a visit to Jordan last month, he announced a plan to spur Palestinian growth with up to \$4 billion in private investment.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair is leading a group working to identify opportunities in tourism, construction, energy, agriculture and high-tech industries in the Palestinian territories.

Earlier on Monday, Kerry said he would decide at some point whether to return to Israel and the Palestinian territories to push for decisions by the two sides on reviving talks.

“I will make a judgment at some point whether I need to go and push a little bit, or help that process, and I am certainly willing to. I am open to that possibility but we are not raising any expectations about an American plan,” Kerry told reporters at a news conference with the Polish foreign minister.

Kerry said he looked forward to working with new Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, who was appointed on Sunday to replace Western-favored economist Salam Fayyad, who quit in April.

(Editing by Peter Cooney)

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