GAZA FLOTILLA: INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT FACT-FINDING MISSION OPENS IN GENEVA

10 August 2010

http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news\_media.nsf/(httpNewsByYear\_en)/E3374B9CFC197173C125777B0057FDA0?OpenDocument

GENEVA – The international independent fact-finding mission of high-level experts appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council to inquire into the Gaza flotilla incident on 31 May 2010 held its inaugural meeting at the Palais Wilson in Geneva yesterday.

Further to an urgent debate held on 1 and 2 June, the Human Rights Council decided to dispatch an independent fact-finding mission to determine whether any violation of international law, international humanitarian and human rights law had taken place.

The Mission of high-level experts is chaired by Judge K. Hudson-Phillips, former judge of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and has two other eminent members. Sir Desmond de Silva, Queen’s Counsel, was Chief Prosecutor of the Sierra Leone War Crimes Tribunal and Ms. Shanthi Dairiam was a human rights expert of Malaysia and former member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Chairman indicated that in approaching the task the Mission had been given the authority to settle its own terms of reference taking into account the resolution of the Council. He indicated that the Mission interprets the resolution as requesting it to ascertain the facts surrounding the flotilla incident and then give an opinion as to whether there had been any violation of the law.

Judge Hudson-Phillips emphasized that the Mission intended to approach its task in a totally unbiased manner, free from any assumptions or prejudgments.

The Chairman of the Mission noted that the Mission’s principal task is to conduct an inquiry into legal issues and possible violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. He hoped that the Mission would be permitted full access to all relevant persons and material in all of the countries concerned, so as to enable the Mission to ascertain the proper factual basis for its legal opinion.

To this end, the Mission intends to make contacts with all ambassadors of the countries involved in the coming days. It is its intention to travel to the region in order to interview persons and gather first-hand information as far as possible.

As requested by the Human Rights Council’s resolution, the Mission will present its report at the next session of the Council in September.