**QUOTE**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 868(NW854E)**

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**MS D CARTER (COPE) TO ASK THE MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION:**

Whether the Government is working with international partners to help end the siege of Gaza and push for a rapprochement between Gaza and Israel so that the conflict in the Middle East could find a resolution and come to an end in the region which is creating huge problems for neighbouring countries and the world; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

**RESPONSE:**

Government is not only working with international partners and stakeholders regarding the “siege of Gaza and push for a rapprochement between Gaza and Israel”, but to address the full spectrum of challenges between Palestine and Israel, including those in the occupied territories and Jerusalem.The South African Government interacts on this issue with the international community in many structures, including the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and BRICS.

In addition this issue also forms part of discussions in our bilateral relations.This process of engaging international partners and stakeholders is further facilitated through the appointment in 2014, of the Special Envoys for the Middle East Peace Process, former Minister Skweyiya and Former Deputy Minister Pahad. Since their appointment, the Special Envoys have visited Palestine, Israel and neighbouring countries to convey President Zuma’s grave concern over the then escalating violence, the civilian displacement and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

More recently visits included high-level discussions to understand the impact of conflict in the broader Middle East region on the Middle East Peace Process and to assess a possible South African contribution. The Envoys intend briefing all structures of Parliament as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made.Similarly, DIRCO will also brief Parliamentary structures.

**UNQUOTE**