

Tony Blair to be in charge of £3billion plan to revitalise Palestine's economy, U.S. secretary of state John Kerry reveals

- Kerry says plan could cut unemployment by almost two-thirds
- But Kerry said it all depends on peace between Israel and Palestinians
- Kerry has been working with Blair and global business leaders

By [Leon Watson](#)

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Secretary of State John Kerry has declared he believes a potential £3billion plan is emerging that could boost the Palestinian economy by up to 50 per cent in the next three years.

It could also cut unemployment by almost two-thirds, and average wages could jump 40 per cent, he said. But Kerry said it all depends on parallel progress on peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Kerry has been working with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and global business leaders to devise economic plans to revitalise the Palestinian economy.





U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said a potential £3billion plan is emerging that could expand the Palestinian economy



Kerry has been working with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (pictured) and global business leaders to devise economic plans

He offered few specific details and acknowledged that his vision might easily be taken as fantasy in a part of the world that has suffered through decades of conflict, and where peace prospects remain dim.

'We know it can be done,' he insisted. 'This is a plan for the Palestinian economy that is bigger, bolder and more ambitious than anything proposed' in the last two decades.

Kerry, outlining his hopes at a business conference on the Dead Sea in Jordan, was unsparing in his bold economic predictions:

- **Palestinian agriculture production could double or triple**
- **Tourism could triple**
- **100,000 new homes, many of them energy efficient, could be built in the next three years.**





Pictured here speaking at the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa at the King Hussein Convention Centre, near the Dead Sea, Kerry said tourism could triple in Palestine if the plan is a success



Kerry said 100,000 new homes could be built in the next three years in Palestine. Pictured here, a Palestinian youth throws a stone towards Israeli forces at the Qalandia checkpoint, in the Israeli occupied West Bank, Palestine

The former Massachusetts senator, who has been trying as well to restart direct Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, was to meet later Sunday in Amman with Blair, American hedge fund investor Tim Collins and the foreign ministers of Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

He said he has been coordinating with leading business experts around the world and that the plan would explore new opportunities in tourism, construction, light manufacturing, agriculture, energy and communications.

He said he has been coordinating with leading business experts around the world and that the plan would explore new opportunities in tourism, construction, light manufacturing, agriculture, energy and communications.

'Is this a fantasy?' Kerry asked the crowd. 'I don't think so, because there are already great examples of investment and entrepreneurship that are working in the West Bank.

'We know it can be done, but we've never experienced the kind of concentrated effort that this group is talking about bringing to the table.'

He said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas support the plan, but he added that it won't truly take hold unless both sides make headway on restarting peace talks.

Abbas also attended the conference in Jordan, as did Israeli President Shimon Peres, though they offered two starkly different messages on the peace impasse.

The Palestinian leader spent much of the time criticizing Israeli intransigence, while the Israeli Nobel Peace Prize laureate pressed his government's view that negotiations should begin immediately without preconditions.

Kerry allowed that barriers to commerce would have to be removed to spur economic growth. The Palestinians have long complained about limitations on movement and investment that have hampered its economic potential.

Kerry has made four trips to Israel and the Palestinian territories over the last two months in an effort to rejuvenate the peace process. He hasn't made any tangible success so far but insists he is engaged in productive talks with both sides.