

MAIN EUROPEAN UNION CONCLUSION ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS (MEPP)

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**EXCERPTS FROM EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS
(On Israel, Palestine and the final status negotiations)**

13/06/1980

Venice Declaration

4. On the bases thus set out, the time has come to promote the recognition and implementation of the two principles universally accepted by the international community: **the right to existence** and to security of all the states in the region, including **Israel, and justice for** all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the **Palestinian people**.

6. A just solution must finally be found to the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.

22/03/1999

Berlin European Council

The European Union calls in particular for an early resumption of final status negotiations in the coming months on an accelerated basis, and for these to be brought to a prompt conclusion and not prolonged indefinitely. The European Union believes **that it should be possible to conclude the negotiations within a target period of one year**. It expresses its readiness to work to facilitate an early conclusion to the negotiations.

The European Union urges both parties to refrain from activities which prejudice the outcome of those final status negotiations and from any activity contrary to international law, including all settlement activity, and to fight incitement and violence.

The European Union reaffirms the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state and looks forward to the early fulfilment of this right. It appeals to the parties to strive in good faith for a negotiated solution on the basis of the existing agreements, without prejudice to this right, which is not subject to any veto. The European Union is convinced that the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region. The European Union declares its readiness to consider the recognition of a Palestinian State in due course in accordance with the basic principles referred to above.

22/06/2002

Seville European Council

The European Council supports the early convening of an international conference. That conference should address political and economic aspects as well as matters relating to security. It should confirm the parameters of the political solution and establish a realistic and well-defined timescale.

The European Council strongly condemns all terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians. The peace process and the stability of the region cannot be hostage to terrorism. **The fight against terrorism must go on; but so at the same time must the negotiation of a political solution**.

A settlement can be achieved through negotiation, and only through negotiation. The objective is an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The end result should be two States living side by side within secure and recognised borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbours. In this context, a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem, and a just, viable and agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

22/07/2014

Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) conclusions on the Middle East peace process

1. The EU is extremely concerned at the continued escalation of violence in Gaza and calls for an immediate cessation of the hostilities based on a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement...

2. This tragic escalation of hostilities confirms again the **unsustainable nature of the status quo** with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. While fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security needs, the EU underlines that the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in Gaza must be addressed. It reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, in line with UNSC resolution 1860 (2009)...

6. The EU recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and of the Arab Peace Initiative, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU believes that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. The EU has set out and will continue to actively promote its position with regard to parameters in Council Conclusions of December 2009 and December 2010, and as expressed by the EU in the UN Security Council on 21 April 2011. On this basis, **the EU is willing to work with the US and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following parameters:**

- **An agreement on the borders of the two states, based on 4 June 1967 lines** with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The EU will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties.
- **Security arrangements** that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over; and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including with new and vital threats in the region.
- **A just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question.**
- Fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for **Jerusalem**. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem **as the future capital of both states**.

7. The preservation of the viability of the two-state solution must remain a priority. The developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-state solution increasingly unattainable. Reaffirming its commitment to implement the Council Conclusions of May and December 2012 as well as the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, the EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, including East Jerusalem, especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E1, which severely threatens the two state solution; to put an end to settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions - including of EU funded projects -, evictions and forced transfers, and to increasing tensions and challenges to the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

A fundamental change of policy on these negative developments is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two-state solution.

10. The EU will do all it can to support the achievement of a lasting and just solution to the conflict. In this regard, the EU reiterates its offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a **Special Privileged Partnership with the EU in the event of a final peace agreement**. The EU is convinced that this support and partnership, by anchoring both the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine in an ever closer relationship with Europe, will provide a strategic framework for their stable, secure and prosperous development.

20/07/2015

FAC Conclusions on Middle East peace process

1. The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, based on the two-state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. **The EU reaffirms that there is no alternative to a negotiated two-state solution.** The regional context, including the ongoing radicalisation and spread of terrorism, makes it even more urgent to end the conflict. The status-quo is not an option, as the viability of the two-state solution is constantly being eroded by new facts on the ground. The EU urges both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to the two-state solution through concrete actions. Actions by either side which call into question their stated commitment to a negotiated solution must be avoided. The EU will actively support the parties to restore confidence and create an environment of trust necessary to engage in meaningful negotiations as soon as possible.

6. The preservation of the viability of the two-state solution is at the core of EU policy and will remain a priority. In this regard, and recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, **the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy** and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation – including of EU funded projects – evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access. These actions seriously threaten the two-state solution. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states. The EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two state solution. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

7. Securing a just and lasting peace will **require an increased common international effort.** The EU, notably through the action of its recently appointed Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, will work actively on a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the US, in the region and the United Nations Security Council. The establishment of an International support group is a possible way to contribute to this end; the Council asks the High Representative to explore options for implementation of this initiative with regional and international actors and to report back in early September. The EU's position on parameters, as set out in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of July 2014, provides a basis for achieving consensus on the way forward. The EU is ready to engage in joint work with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, and welcomes ongoing efforts of the Quartet in this regard."

21-22- March 2024

European Council Conclusions on Middle East

28. The European Union **remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-state solution. Palestinians and Israelis have an equal right to live in safety, dignity and peace.** The European Council calls on all parties to refrain from actions that undermine the principle of the two-state solution and the viability of a future Palestinian state. It recalls that the two CSDP missions – the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) and the European Union Border Assistance Mission to the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah) – can play an important role based on this principle in support of a future Palestinian state. The European Union stands ready to work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and regional and international parties **to contribute to reviving a political process,** including through the Peace Day initiative and a **Peace Conference to be convened as soon as possible,** and to support the Palestinian Authority as it undertakes the necessary reform. The European Union stands ready to **support a coordinated international effort to rebuild Gaza.**

Venice Declaration

June 13, 1980

1. The heads of state and government and the ministers of foreign affairs held a comprehensive exchange of views on all aspects of the present situation in the Middle East, including the state of negotiations resulting from the agreements signed between Egypt and Israel in March 1979. They agreed that growing tensions affecting this region constitute a serious danger and render a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict more necessary and pressing than ever.
2. The nine member states of the European Community consider that the traditional ties and common interests which link Europe to the Middle East oblige them to play a special role and now require them to work in a more concrete way towards peace.
3. In this regard, the nine countries of the community base themselves on (UN) Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the positions which they have expressed on several occasions, notably in their declarations of 29 June 1977, 10 September 1970, 26 March and 18 June 1979, as well as in the speech made on their behalf on 25 September 1979 by the Irish minister of foreign affairs at the 34th UN General Assembly.
4. On the bases thus set out, the time has come to promote the recognition and implementation of the two principles universally accepted by the international community: the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.
5. All of the countries in the area are entitled to live in peace within secure, recognized and guaranteed borders. The necessary guarantees for a peace settlement should be provided by the UN by a decision of the Security Council and, if necessary, on the basis of other mutually agreed procedures. The nine declare that they are prepared to participate within the framework of a comprehensive settlement in a system of concrete and binding international guarantees, including (guarantees) on the ground.
6. A just solution must finally be found to the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.
7. The achievement of these objectives requires the involvement and support of all the parties concerned in the peace settlement which the nine are endeavouring to promote in keeping with the principles formulated in the declaration referred to above. These principles apply to all the parties concerned, and thus to the Palestinian people, and to the PLO, which will have to be associated with the negotiations.

8. The nine recognize the special importance of the role played by the question of Jerusalem for all the parties concerned. The nine stress that they will not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem and that any agreement on the city's status should guarantee freedom of access for everyone to the holy places.
9. The nine stress the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967, as it has done for part of Sinai. They are deeply convinced that the Israeli settlements constitute a serious obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East. The nine consider that these settlements, as well as modifications in population and property in the occupied Arab territories, are illegal under international law.
10. Concerned as they are to put an end to violence, the nine consider that only the renunciation of force or the threatened use of force by all the parties can create a climate of confidence in the area, and constitute a basic element for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.
11. The nine have decided to make the necessary contacts with all the parties concerned. The objective of these contacts would be to ascertain the position of the various parties with respect to the principles set out in this declaration and in the light of the results of this consultation process to determine the form which such an initiative on their part could take.

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

MADRID, 26 AND 27 JUNE 1989

Declaration on the Middle East

The European Council has examined the situation in the Middle East conflict in the light of recent events and of contacts undertaken over several months by the Presidency and the Troïka with the parties concerned, and it has drawn the following conclusions:

1. The policy of the Twelve on the Middle East conflict is defined in the Venice Declaration of 13 June 1980 and other subsequent declarations. It consists in upholding the right to security of all States in the region, including Israel, that is to say, to live within secure, recognised and guaranteed frontiers, and in upholding justice for all the peoples of the region, which includes recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination with all that this implies.

The Twelve consider that these objectives should be achieved by peaceful means in the framework of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations, as the appropriate forum for the direct negotiations between the parties concerned, with a view to a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement.

The European Council is also of the view that the PLO should participate in this process.

It expresses its support for every effort by the permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations to bring the parties closer together, create a climate of confidence between them, and facilitate in this way the convening of the international peace conference.

2. The Community and its Member States have demonstrated their readiness to participate actively in the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict, and to cooperate fully in the economic and social development of the peoples of the region.

The European Council expressed its satisfaction regarding the policy of contacts with all the parties undertaken by the Presidency and the Troïka, and has decided to pursue it.

3. The European Council welcomes the support given by the Extraordinary Summit Meeting of the Arab League, held in Casablanca, to the decisions of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers, involving acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which resulted in the recognition of Israel's right to exist, as well as the renunciation of terrorism.

It also welcomes the efforts undertaken by the United States in their contacts with the parties directly concerned and particularly the dialogue entered into with the PLO.

Advantage should be taken of these favourable circumstances to engender a spirit of tolerance and peace with a view to entering resolutely on the path of negotiations.

4. The European Council deplors the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Territories and the constant increase in the number of dead and wounded and the suffering of the population.

It appeals urgently to the Israeli authorities to put an end to repressive measures, to implement resolutions 605, 607 and 608 of the Security Council and to respect the provisions of the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Populations in Times of War. They appeal in particular for the reopening of educational facilities in the West Bank.

5. On the basis of the positions of principle of the Twelve, the European Council welcomes the proposal for elections in the Occupied Territories as a contribution to the peace process, provided that :

- the elections are set in the context of a process towards a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement of the conflict.

- the elections take place in the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem, under adequate guarantees of freedom.

- no solution is excluded and the final negotiation takes place on the basis of Resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council of the United Nations, based on the principle of "land for peace".

6. The European Council launches a solemn appeal to the parties concerned to seize the opportunity to achieve peace. Respect by each of the parties for the legitimate rights of the other should facilitate the normalising of relations between all the countries of the region. The European Council calls upon the Arab countries to establish normal relations of peace and cooperation with Israel and asks that country in turn to recognise the right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination.

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

BERLIN EUROPEAN COUNCIL

24 AND 25 MARCH 1999

PART IV - OTHER DECLARATIONS

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The Heads of State or Government of the European Union reaffirm its support for a negotiated settlement in the Middle East, to reflect the principles of "land for peace" and ensure the security both collective and individual of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. In this context, the European Union welcomes the decision by the Palestinian National Council and associated bodies to reaffirm the nullification of the provisions in the Palestinian National Charter which called for the destruction of Israel and to reaffirm their commitment to recognize and live in peace with Israel. However, the European Union remains concerned at the current deadlock in the peace process and calls upon the parties to implement fully and immediately the Wye River Memorandum.

The European Union also calls upon the parties to reaffirm their commitments to the basic principles established within the framework of Madrid, Oslo and subsequent agreements, in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. It urges the parties to agree on an extension of the transitional period established by the Oslo agreements.

The European Union calls in particular for an early resumption of final status negotiations in the coming months on an accelerated basis, and for these to be brought to a prompt conclusion and not prolonged indefinitely. The European Union believes that it should be possible to conclude the negotiations within a target period of one year. It expresses its readiness to work to facilitate an early conclusion to the negotiations.

The European Union urges both parties to refrain from activities which prejudge the outcome of those final status negotiations and from any activity contrary to international law, including all settlement activity, and to fight incitement and violence.

The European Union reaffirms the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state and looks forward to the early fulfilment of this right. It appeals to the parties to strive in good faith for a negotiated solution on the basis of the existing agreements, without prejudice to this right, which is not subject to any veto. The European Union is convinced that the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region. The European Union declares its readiness to consider the recognition of a Palestinian State in due course in accordance with the basic principles referred to above.

The European Union also calls for an early resumption of negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the Middle East Peace Process, leading to the implementation of UNSCRs 242, 338 and 425.

Source: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/acfb2.html



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 24 October 2002 (29.10)
(OR. fr)**

13463/02

POLGEN 52

COVER NOTE

from : Presidency

to : delegations

Subject: **SEVILLE EUROPEAN COUNCIL
21 AND 22 JUNE 2002**

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

Delegations will find attached the revised version of the Presidency conclusions of the Seville European Council (21 and 22 June 2002).

Middle East

56. The European Council adopted the Declaration on the Middle East set out below (Annex VI).

India and Pakistan

57. The European Council adopted the Declaration on India and Pakistan set out below (Annex VII).

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Outermost regions

58. The European Council invites the Council and the Commission to press ahead with the implementation of Article 299(2) of the Treaty, which recognises the specific nature of the outermost regions, and to submit suitable proposals for their special needs to be taken into account through the various common policies, in particular transport policy, and in the reform of certain policies, in particular regional policy. In this connection, the European Council notes that the Commission intends to submit a new report on those regions, built on a global, coherent approach to the special characteristics of their situation and to ways of addressing them.
59. The European Council calls on the Council and the Commission to complete certain priority proceedings, in particular the question of dock dues in the French overseas departments.
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DECLARATION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The crisis in the Middle East has reached a dramatic turning point. Further escalation will render the situation uncontrollable. The parties on their own cannot find a solution. There is an urgent need for political action by the whole international community. The Quartet has a key role to play in starting a peace process.

The European Council supports the early convening of an international conference. That conference should address political and economic aspects as well as matters relating to security. It should confirm the parameters of the political solution and establish a realistic and well-defined timescale.

The European Council strongly condemns all terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians. The peace process and the stability of the region cannot be hostage to terrorism. The fight against terrorism must go on; but so at the same time must the negotiation of a political solution.

A settlement can be achieved through negotiation, and only through negotiation. The objective is an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The end result should be two States living side by side within secure and recognised borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbours. In this context, a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem, and a just, viable and agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

The reform of the Palestinian Authority is essential. The European Council expects the Palestinian Authority to make good its commitment to security reform, early elections and political and administrative reform. The European Union reaffirms its willingness to continue to assist in these reforms.

Military operations in the Occupied Territories must cease. Restrictions on the freedom of movement must be lifted. Walls will not bring peace.

The European Union stands ready to contribute fully to peace-building, as well as to the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy as an integral part of regional development.

The European Union will work with the parties and with its partners in the international community, especially with the United States in the framework of the Quartet, to pursue every opportunity for peace and for a decent future for all the people of the region.



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

*2985th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 8 December 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council of the European Union is seriously concerned about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. The European Union calls for the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed time-frame, to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. A comprehensive peace, which is a fundamental interest of the parties in the region and the EU, must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.
2. The Council reconfirms its support for the United States' efforts to resume negotiations on all final status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and water, respecting previous agreements and understandings. The European Union will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The Council reiterates the EU's readiness to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements, aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, and will continue the work undertaken on EU contributions on state-building, regional issues, refugees, security and Jerusalem. The Council underlines the need for a reinvigorated Quartet engagement and notes the crucial importance of an active Arab contribution building on the Arab Peace Initiative.

P R E S S

3. The EU stands ready to further develop its bilateral relations with the Palestinian Authority reflecting shared interests, including in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Recalling the Berlin declaration, the Council also reiterates its support for negotiations leading to Palestinian statehood, all efforts and steps to that end and its readiness, when appropriate, to recognise a Palestinian state. It will continue to assist Palestinian state-building, including through its CSDP missions and within the Quartet. The EU fully supports the implementation of the Palestinian Authority's Government Plan "Palestine, Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State" as an important contribution to this end and will work for enhanced international support for this plan.
4. Recalling the EU's position as expressed at the Association Council in June 2009, the Council reaffirms its readiness to further develop its bilateral relations with Israel within the framework of the ENP. The EU reiterates its commitment towards the security of Israel and its full integration into the region, which is best guaranteed through peace between Israel and its neighbours.
5. Encouraging further concrete confidence building measures, the Council takes positive note of the recent decision of the Government of Israel on a partial and temporary settlement freeze as a first step in the right direction and hopes that it will contribute towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations.
6. Developments on the ground play a crucial part in creating the context for successful negotiations. The Council reiterates that settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. The Council urges the government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities, in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.
7. The EU welcomes Israel's steps to ease restrictions of movement in the West Bank which have made a contribution to economic growth. The Council calls for further and sustained improvements of movement and access, noting that many check points and road blocks remain in place. The Council also calls on the Palestinian Authority to build on its efforts to improve law and order.
8. The Council is deeply concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem. In view of recent incidents, it calls on all parties to refrain from provocative actions. The Council recalls that it has never recognised the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. The Council calls for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem in accordance with the Roadmap. It also calls on the Israeli government to cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

9. Gravely concerned about the situation in Gaza, the Council urges the full implementation of UNSCR 1860 and the full respect of international humanitarian law. In this context, the continued policy of closure is unacceptable and politically counterproductive. It has devastated the private sector economy and damaged the natural environment, notably water and other natural resources. The EU again reiterates its calls for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. In this context, the Council calls for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. While extremists stand to gain from the current situation, the civilian population, half of which are under the age of 18, suffers. Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the Council continues to call for a complete stop to all violence and arms smuggling into Gaza. The Council calls on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.
10. The Council calls on all Palestinians to promote reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas, support for the mediation efforts by Egypt and the Arab League and the prevention of a permanent division between the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The Council would welcome the organisation of free and fair Palestinian elections when conditions permit.
11. A comprehensive peace must include a settlement between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon. Concerning the Syrian track, the EU welcomes recent statements by Israel and Syria confirming their willingness to advance towards peace and supports all efforts aimed at the reactivation of the talks between the two countries.
12. The EU recalls that a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a regional approach and will continue its work on this in line with the June 2009 Council Conclusions using all its instruments to this effect. The EU also calls on all regional actors to take confidence building measures in order to stimulate mutual trust and encourages Arab countries to be forthcoming, both politically and financially, in assisting the Palestinian Authority and to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA.



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

*3209th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 10 December 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. In light of recent developments and taking into account previous Council Conclusions, the European Union firmly believes that now is the time to take bold and concrete steps towards peace. The parties must engage in direct and substantial negotiations without pre-conditions in order to achieve a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ending all claims.
2. The European Union reaffirms its position that clear parameters outlining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. All parties must avoid acts which undermine confidence and the viability of a two-state solution. The European Union underlines the urgency of renewed, structured and substantial peace efforts in 2013 and, towards this end, it is ready to work with the US and other international partners, including within the Quartet. There will be no sustainable peace until the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and those of Israelis for security are fulfilled through a comprehensive negotiated peace based on the two-state solution. The European Union recalls that the Arab Peace Initiative provides regional support for a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The European Union will work with those who are willing to join in such a quest for peace, stability and prosperity.
3. The European Union is deeply dismayed by and strongly opposes Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in particular plans to develop the E1 area. The E1 plan, if implemented, would seriously undermine the prospects of a negotiated resolution of the conflict by jeopardizing the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state and of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. It could also entail forced transfer of civilian population. In the light of its core objective of achieving the two-state solution, the EU will closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and act accordingly. The European Union reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace.

P R E S S

4. Recalling its parameters for the resumption of negotiations between the parties, as set out in previous Council Conclusions, including in December 2009, December 2010 and May 2011, the European Union reiterates that it will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The European Union expresses its commitment to ensure that – in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Recalling its Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions adopted in May 2012, the European Union and its Member States reiterate their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products.
5. The European Union calls on Israel to avoid any step undermining the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority. Any such action by Israel would undermine existing cooperation mechanisms between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and thus negatively affect the prospects of negotiations. Contractual obligations, notably under the Paris Protocol, regarding full, timely, predictable and transparent transfer of tax and custom revenues have to be respected.
6. On 29 November, the UN General Assembly voted in favour of resolution A/RES/67/19 on the granting of non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine. The European Union calls on the Palestinian leadership to use constructively this new status and not to undertake steps which would deepen the lack of trust and lead further away from a negotiated solution.
7. The European Union welcomes the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Israel which followed several days of intense violence and commends the efforts of Egypt and all those who engaged in mediation. This tragic escalation of hostilities underlined very clearly the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the European Union reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, the situation of which is unsustainable as long as it remains politically and economically separated from the West Bank. It is vital that all parts of the ceasefire agreement are implemented. The European Union is committed to facilitating the social and economic development of the Gaza Strip. Equally, the issue of illegal weapons' transfer into the Gaza Strip has to be effectively addressed as a matter of urgency. The European Union expresses its readiness to make use of its instruments in support of the parties' efforts, including the possible reactivation, in the appropriate way, of the EUBAM Rafah mission. The European Union underlines its readiness to explore further ways to address the situation in the Gaza Strip, including with concerned parties in the region , in line with UNSC Resolution 1860 (2009).

8. The European Union reiterates its call for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind the strong leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, in line with the principles set out in his speech of 4 May 2011, as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two-state solution.
 9. The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to vital threats in the region. The European Union will never stop opposing those who embrace and promote violence as a way to achieve political goals. The EU finds inflammatory statements by Hamas leaders that deny Israel's right to exist unacceptable. The European Union will never cease its efforts to combat terrorism which seeks to undermine the openness and tolerance of societies through indiscriminate acts of violence against civilians.
 10. It is in the fundamental interest of the European Union to support peace and democracy in the entire region and a strategic priority to see an end to this conflict which will continue to undermine peace and security along the EU southern borders, as long as it remains unresolved."
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Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

Foreign Affairs Council meeting

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is extremely concerned at the continued escalation of violence in Gaza and calls for an immediate cessation of the hostilities based on a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement. In this regard the EU welcomes on-going efforts by regional partners, and in particular by Egypt, and reiterates its readiness to provide the necessary support to this end.

The EU strongly condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, directly harming civilians. These are criminal and unjustifiable acts. The EU calls on Hamas to immediately put an end to these acts and to renounce violence. All terrorist groups in Gaza must disarm. The EU strongly condemns calls on the civilian population of Gaza to provide themselves as human shields.

The EU condemns the loss of hundreds of civilian lives, among them many women and children. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, the EU underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. The EU stresses the need for protection of civilians at all times. The EU is particularly appalled by the human cost of the Israeli military operation in Shuja'iyya, and is deeply concerned at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. All sides must meet their obligations and immediately allow safe and full humanitarian access in Gaza for the urgent distribution of assistance. The EU calls on all sides to implement in good faith an immediate cease fire.

2. This tragic escalation of hostilities confirms again the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. While fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security needs, the EU underlines that the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in Gaza must be addressed. It reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, in line with UNSC resolution 1860 (2009).

The EU stands ready, including through the reactivation of the EUBAM Rafah mission, if conditions allow, to contribute to a comprehensive and sustainable solution meeting the legitimate security, economic and humanitarian needs of Israelis and Palestinians.

3. The EU strongly condemns the abduction and brutal murder of teenagers from both sides. The perpetrators of these barbaric acts must be brought to justice. The EU commends Israeli and Palestinian leaders for their condemnation of the killings of the abducted teenagers and it deplors all irresponsible statements made in this context on either side. The EU believes that the tragic events of the past weeks reinforce the need for Israelis and Palestinians to work together to fight all forms of terror and violence and to combat incitement.
4. Recent events in the wider Middle East pose serious threats to the EU as well as to its immediate neighbours. The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region.
5. The EU has fully supported US-led peace efforts and underlines that these efforts must not go to waste. The EU is convinced that the regional context and the current crisis make a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more necessary than ever. The EU urges the parties to resume meaningful negotiations with the aim of achieving a comprehensive peace agreement based on a two-state solution. The only way to resolve the conflict is through an agreement that ends the occupation which began in 1967, that ends all claims and that fulfils the aspirations of both parties. A one state reality would not be compatible with these aspirations.
6. The EU recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and of the Arab Peace Initiative, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU believes that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. The EU has set out and will continue to actively promote its position with regard to parameters in Council Conclusions of December 2009 and December 2010, and as expressed by the EU in the UN Security Council on 21 April 2011. On this basis, the EU is willing to work with the US and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following parameters:
 - An agreement on the borders of the two states, based on 4 June 1967 lines with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The EU will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties.
 - Security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over; and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including with new and vital threats in the region.
 - A just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question.
 - Fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

7. The preservation of the viability of the two-state solution must remain a priority . The developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-state solution increasingly unattainable. Reaffirming its commitment to implement the Council Conclusions of May and December 2012 as well as the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, the EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, including East Jerusalem, especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E1, which severely threatens the two state solution; to put an end to settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions - including of EU funded projects -, evictions and forced transfers, and to increasing tensions and challenges to the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

A fundamental change of policy on these negative developments is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two state solution.

8. The EU has welcomed the appointment of a Palestinian government of independent personalities and the declaration by President Abbas that this new government was committed to the principle of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, to the recognition of Israel's legitimate right to exist, to upholding non-violence and to the respect of previous agreements. The EU's engagement with the new Palestinian government is based on its continued adherence, in words and actions, to these policies and commitments. The EU underlines the need for the Palestinian government to take charge of the Gaza Strip and end the internal division. The EU calls on the new Palestinian government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians.

The European Union reiterates its call upon the Palestinian leadership to use constructively its UN status and not to undertake steps which would lead further away from a negotiated solution.

9. The EU underlines that the future development of the relations between the EU and both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-state solution.

The EU's continued support to Palestinian state-building requires a credible prospect for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights.

10. The EU will do all it can to support the achievement of a lasting and just solution to the conflict. In this regard, the EU reiterates its offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a Special Privileged Partnership with the EU in the event of a final peace agreement. The EU is convinced that this support and partnership, by anchoring both the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine in an ever closer relationship with Europe, will provide a strategic framework for their stable, secure and prosperous development."

11095/15

(OR. en)

PRESSE 48
PR CO 40

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3404th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 20 July 2015

President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

Middle East peace process

The Council discussed what the EU can do to revive the Middle East peace process and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU reaffirms that there is no alternative to a negotiated two state solution. The regional context, including the ongoing radicalisation and spread of terrorism, makes it even more urgent to end the conflict. The status-quo is not an option, as the viability of the two state solution is constantly being eroded by new facts on the ground. The EU urges both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to the two state solution through concrete actions. Actions by either side which call into question their stated commitment to a negotiated solution must be avoided. The EU will actively support the parties to restore confidence and create an environment of trust necessary to engage in meaningful negotiations as soon as possible.
2. An immediate priority must be to address the grave situation in the Gaza Strip. One year after the conflict, the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the Gaza Strip remains dire. In light of the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, all international community pledges should be honoured. The EU furthermore expresses its concern over UNRWA's severe lack of funds and, as a leading donor to UNRWA, calls on all concerned donors to step up their funding.

The EU believes that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region.

3. The EU welcomes recent steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions in Gaza. However, further positive measures are now needed that enable the full delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery on a permanent basis. The EU calls for a fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Recent rocket fire by militant groups is unacceptable and underlines again the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must commit to non-violence and peace. The EU calls on all parties to agree on a durable ceasefire that prevents a return to conflict, strengthens Gaza, as it is an integral part of a future Palestinian state, and reinforces the link between Gaza and the West Bank.

4. The EU urges all Palestinian factions to find common ground, based on non-violence and reconciliation, and to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation is an important element for reaching the two state solution. In that regard, the EU calls on the Palestinian factions to make reconciliation and the return of the PA to Gaza a top priority. The PA must take greater responsibility in this regard and assume its government function in the Gaza Strip, including in the field of security, civil administration and through its presence at the Gaza crossing points. The EU is ready to provide full support to these efforts, including through the rapid reactivation and possible extension in scope and mandate of its EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS missions.
5. The EU is committed to working with all sides, including through implementation of existing agreements, to allow the socio-economic development of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and empower Palestinian institutions in preparation for statehood, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. The EU stresses that actions such as the easing of restrictions must be part of a fundamental change of policy with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory. It calls on Israel to enable accelerated Palestinian construction, as well as social and economic development in Area C. Such actions will serve to strengthen the prosperity and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. It further calls on Israeli authorities to halt plans for forced transfer of population and demolition of Palestinian housing and infrastructure in the Susya and Abu Nwar communities.
6. The preservation of the viability of the two state solution is at the core of EU policy and will remain a priority. In this regard, and recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation – including of EU funded projects – evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access. These actions seriously threaten the two state solution. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states. The EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two state solution. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

7. Securing a just and lasting peace will require an increased common international effort. The EU, notably through the action of its recently appointed Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, will work actively on a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the US, in the region and the United Nations Security Council. The establishment of an International support group is a possible way to contribute to this end; the Council asks the High Representative to explore options for implementation of this initiative with regional and international actors and to report back in early September. The EU's position on parameters, as set out in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of July 2014, provides a basis for achieving consensus on the way forward. The EU is ready to engage in joint work with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, and welcomes ongoing efforts of the Quartet in this regard."

EU action plan on human rights and democracy

The Council adopted the new EU action plan on human rights and democracy for 2015 to 2019 "Keeping human rights at the heart of the EU agenda".

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. Welcoming the Joint Communication *"Keeping human rights at the heart of the EU agenda"*, as presented by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission, the Council adopts a new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2015-2019. With this Action Plan, the Council reaffirms the European Union's commitment to promote and protect human rights and to support democracy worldwide.
2. Based on the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the 2012-2014 Action Plan, the European Union has made considerable progress in improving the impact and coherence of its actions on human rights and democracy. The EU has further developed guidelines on key human rights issues, enhanced the effectiveness of bilateral human rights and democracy work, successfully promoted action at the multilateral level, and improved the mainstreaming of human rights across the EU's external action. The Council also welcomes the important work of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis, who greatly contributes to the effectiveness, coherence and visibility of EU human rights policy, and expresses full political support for his work.



5304/16

(OR. en)

PRESSE 2
PR CO 2

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3443rd Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 18 January 2016

President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Middle East Peace Process**

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council is deeply concerned that the continuing cycle of violence has led to a serious loss of human life in Israel and the Palestinian territory in recent months. The EU firmly condemns the terror attacks and violence from all sides and in any circumstances, including the death of children. The EU calls on political leaders to work together through visible actions to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites, and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.
2. The EU urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement or provocation and calls on the parties to condemn attacks when they occur and adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force. It commends both sides for upholding security coordination in the light of an extremely challenging situation. The EU welcomes progress on the Duma investigation and calls for Israel to hold all perpetrators of settler violence to account. The EU also calls on both sides to jointly and resolutely fight incitement and hate speech, for instance by establishing a mechanism to consult on incitement along the lines of their previous commitments.
3. The EU is convinced that only the reestablishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed. The EU reaffirms its support to the Quartet calls for significant transformative steps to be taken, consistent with the transition envisaged by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and rebuild trust. The EU urges both sides to implement these measures at the earliest juncture possible. A fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, will significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.
4. The EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-state solution - based on parameters set out in the Council Conclusions of July 2014 - that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. It strongly opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two state solution and urges both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations. To this end, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and will consider further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution, which is constantly eroded by new facts on the ground.

5. Securing a just and lasting peace, ending all claims, will require an increased common international effort. The EU, including through the action of its Special Representative, will work actively with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the United States, in the region and in the United Nations Security Council, towards a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process. Recalling the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that presided over the Madrid Conference 25 years ago, the establishment of an International Support Group and a further international conference are both possible ways to contribute to this end. The EU recalls its willingness to engage further with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative which provides key elements for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the opportunity for building a regional security framework.
6. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region. The EU calls for the protection of children, including ensuring the right to education in a safe and secure school environment. The Council highlights the importance of unhindered work of civil society both in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and follows recent developments in this regard with concern.
7. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. It urges Israel to end all settlement activity and to dismantle the outposts erected since March 2001, in line with prior obligations. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.
8. The EU and its Member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This does not constitute a boycott of Israel which the EU strongly opposes.
9. The EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process which is an important element for reaching the two state solution. The EU will continue its support to Palestinian aspirations for Statehood. It is of the utmost importance that the positive results of the past are not lost and Palestinian institutions must continue to grow stronger, more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. The EU calls upon the government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians. Strong, inclusive and democratic institutions, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights, are crucial in view of the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, the EU calls on all Palestinian factions to find common ground and to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population."



European Council

**Brussels, 27 October 2023
(OR. en)**

EUCO 14/23

**CO EUR 11
CONCL 5**

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: European Council meeting (26 and 27 October 2023)
– Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

II. MIDDLE EAST

15. Reaffirming the Statement of its Members of 15 October 2023, the European Council reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. The use of civilians as human shields by Hamas is a particularly deplorable atrocity.

The European Council strongly emphasises Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law. It reiterates its call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any precondition.

The European Council reiterates the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times in line with international humanitarian law. It deplores all loss of civilian life.

The European Council reviewed the state of play and the follow-up on the different strands of action, including concerted efforts to assist EU citizens.

16. The European Council expresses its gravest concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through all necessary measures including humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs. The European Union will work closely with partners in the region to protect civilians, provide assistance and facilitate access to food, water, medical care, fuel and shelter, ensuring that such assistance is not abused by terrorist organisations.
17. The European Council recalls the need to avoid regional escalation and to engage with partners in this respect including with the Palestinian Authority.
18. The European Union is ready to contribute to reviving a political process on the basis of the two-state solution, including through the Peace Day Effort, and welcomes diplomatic peace and security initiatives and supports the holding of an international peace conference soon.
19. The European Council stresses the need to fight dissemination of disinformation and illegal content, and highlights the legal responsibility of platforms in this context.



European Council

**Brussels, 22 March 2024
(OR. en)**

EUCO 7/24

**CO EUR 6
CONCL 2**

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: European Council meeting (21 and 22 March 2024)
– Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

18. A stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members.
19. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States.

III. MIDDLE EAST

20. The European Council discussed the latest developments in the Middle East. It is appalled by the unprecedented loss of civilian lives and the critical humanitarian situation. The European Council calls for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian assistance.
21. The European Council recalls its previous conclusions condemning Hamas in the strongest possible terms for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel on 7 October 2023, recognising Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law, and calling for the immediate release of all hostages without any precondition. Their safety and well-being is of grave concern. Hamas and other armed groups must immediately grant humanitarian access to all remaining hostages. The European Council calls on the Council to accelerate work on the adoption of further relevant restrictive measures against Hamas.

22. The European Council is deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and its disproportionate effect on civilians, particularly children, as well as the imminent risk of famine caused by the insufficient entry of aid into Gaza. Full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access into and throughout the Gaza Strip via all routes is essential to provide the civilian population with life-saving assistance and basic services at scale. The European Council welcomes the Amalthea Initiative opening a maritime route for emergency assistance from Cyprus to Gaza, which supplements land routes that remain the main way to deliver the volumes needed. Additional land routes and crossings are needed.
23. Immediate measures should be taken to prevent any further population displacement and provide safe shelter to the population to ensure that civilians are protected at all times. The European Council urges the Israeli government not to undertake a ground operation in Rafah, which would worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation and prevent the urgently needed provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance. Over a million Palestinians are currently seeking safety from the fighting and access to humanitarian assistance there.
24. All parties must respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The European Council stresses the importance of respecting and implementing the 26 January 2024 order of the International Court of Justice, which is legally binding. Violations of international humanitarian law need to be thoroughly and independently investigated and accountability ensured. The European Council takes note of the reports by UN Special Representative Pramila Patten with grave concern and is appalled by the sexual violence during the 7 October attacks. The European Union supports independent investigations into all allegations of sexual violence, noting also the reports by UN Special Rapporteur Reem Alsalem.

25. The European Council stresses that the services UNRWA provides in Gaza and across the region are essential. The European Council notes the recent EU measures and the financial support. It welcomes the swift launch by the UN of an internal investigation and external review following the serious allegations against 12 UNRWA staff about their alleged participation in the 7 October terrorist attacks. It looks forward to the results of the investigation and further decisive action by the UN to ensure accountability and strengthen control and oversight.
26. The European Council calls for an immediate halt to violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as well as for ensuring safe access to the holy sites. The European Council strongly condemns extremist settler violence. Perpetrators must be held to account. The European Council calls on the Council to accelerate work on the adoption of relevant targeted restrictive measures. The European Council condemns Israeli Government decisions to further expand illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank. It urges Israel to reverse these decisions.
27. The European Union will continue to work intensely with regional and international partners to prevent further regional escalation, notably in Lebanon and the Red Sea. The European Council calls on all actors, notably Iran, to refrain from escalatory actions. It welcomes the launch of EU Operation ASPIDES to safeguard freedom of navigation and the security of seafarers in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the broader region.

28. The European Union remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-state solution. Palestinians and Israelis have an equal right to live in safety, dignity and peace. The European Council calls on all parties to refrain from actions that undermine the principle of the two-state solution and the viability of a future Palestinian state. It recalls that the two CSDP missions – the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) and the European Union Border Assistance Mission to the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah) – can play an important role based on this principle in support of a future Palestinian state. The European Union stands ready to work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and regional and international parties to contribute to reviving a political process, including through the Peace Day initiative and a Peace Conference to be convened as soon as possible, and to support the Palestinian Authority as it undertakes the necessary reform. The European Union stands ready to support a coordinated international effort to rebuild Gaza.

IV. ENLARGEMENT AND REFORMS

29. Recalling the Granada Declaration, the European Council took stock of preparations for enlargement and internal reforms recalling that work on both tracks needs to advance in parallel to ensure that both future Member States and the EU are ready at the time of accession. The European Council will address internal reforms at an upcoming meeting with a view to adopting by summer 2024 conclusions on a roadmap for future work.
30. Building on the Commission's recommendation of 12 March 2024, the European Council decides to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Council invites the Commission to prepare the negotiating framework with a view to its adoption by the Council the moment all relevant steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of 12 October 2022 are taken.