
Palestinian State Ready in Near Future

The international donor group in support of the Palestinians (AHLC) today reconfirmed its support for the Palestinian government program that aims to establish a Palestinian state by August 2011.

Today's donor meeting reported on sustained economic growth in the Palestinian Territory and additional progress in the state-building effort.

– Progress has advanced so far that the World Bank now states that the Palestinian Authority is ready to establish a state at any point in the near future, says Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

However, serious challenges remain. Restricted access to markets and areas of the West Bank under direct Israeli control, including East Jerusalem, is a main obstacle to continued growth of the Palestinian economy.

– In order for a Palestinian state to break out of its donor dependence and become sustainable, it needs political and economic space to do so, says Foreign Minister Støre.

The AHLC meeting preceded today's meeting between the Middle East Quartet and the Arab League Follow-up Committee, where Støre is invited in his capacity as the Chair of the AHLC.

– The task of the AHLC is directly linked to the objective of bringing the peace process to its rightful end by backing up the search for a two-state solution, says Støre.

Today's donor meeting brought together Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon with representatives of key donor countries and the Quartet Representative Tony Blair. In attendance was also US peace envoy George Mitchell, who briefed participants on the progress in the political negotiation process.