
COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Provisional Version

PRESS RELEASE

2824th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Luxembourg, 15-16 October 2007

President: Mr Luís AMADO
Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2823rd meeting on General Affairs (13900/07).

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MIDDLE EAST

Middle East peace process - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council warmly welcomes the present opportunity for progress on Israel-Palestinian peace. It commends the efforts of Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and encourages them to take courageous steps in their political dialogue. This dialogue must achieve concrete results, leading to meaningful final status negotiations and to their shared goal of a two-state solution with the establishment of a independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.
2. The Council expresses its full support to the upcoming international meeting as set out in the Quartet statement of 23 September 2007. The Council expects this meeting to provide support to the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations in order to move forward urgently on a successful path to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that will unite all Palestinians. It is a crucial opportunity for regional and international partners to effectively support a comprehensive Middle East Peace Process. It emphasizes the leading role of the Quartet in the preparation of the meeting and the implementation of its conclusions. Broad and constructive involvement by Arab States will be crucial. In this context, the EU supports the action taken forward on the Arab Peace Initiative. The Council invites the EU High Representative in full association with the Commission to examine, and where necessary, re-focus EU activities with a view to developing an EU action plan in order to further support the parties in their ongoing negotiations and the subsequent implementation period.
3. In order to consolidate the progress achieved so far and to fulfil the potential of the current process, the Council calls upon the parties to desist from any actions that threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, in conformity with international law. Progress in negotiations, enhanced cooperation on the ground and building Palestinian institutions should be concurrent and mutually-reinforcing processes and lead to improvements in the day to day life of the Palestinian population. The EU urges the parties to take additional steps to meet previous commitments, including those under the Road Map and the Agreement on Movement and Access.
4. The Council reiterates its full support to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. The Council endorses the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism until December 31, 2007 and stands ready to maintain its high levels of economic and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians and stresses that for this assistance to be effective in promoting economic development, it should accompany a credible political process. The EU reiterates the Quartet's call upon all countries able to do so to urgently provide financial support to the Palestinian Authority and undertakes to work with partners to facilitate the transition

to direct international assistance as soon as possible. The Council underlines the importance of the donors' meeting in December and welcomes the offer of France to host it.

5. The Council supports the work of Quartet Representative Tony Blair in developing with the Palestinian Authority government a multi-year agenda to strengthen institutions, help to create a climate of law and order and promote economic development, and looks forward to his next progress report.
6. The re-engagement and expansion of EUPOL COPPS is an important element in the improvement of security. To this end the Council expects Israel to provide accreditation to the mission without further delay.
7. The Council reiterates its grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza. It underlines the importance of uninterrupted emergency and humanitarian assistance without obstruction and calls for the continued provision of essential services. The Council reiterates its call on all parties to work urgently for the opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. This is essential to ensure the viability of the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions for the Palestinian people."

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