
**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Council Conclusions on Middle East Peace Process

*2796th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 23 April 2007*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council welcomes the Arab Peace Initiative as reaffirmed in the declaration of the Arab League Summit of 29 March and supports it as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward. The Council welcomes the positive reaction of the Israeli Prime Minister and hopes that a constructive dialogue between Israel and the Arab side on the Initiative will start soon. The EU stands ready to work closely with the special committee and working groups to be established by the Arab League.
 2. The EU continues to play an active role notably in the framework of increased Quartet engagement. To this end, the Council looks forward to an early Quartet meeting in the region and to close cooperation with regional partners. It invites the Quartet to lead an effort by the international community for successful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on the basis of the Road Map and to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.
 3. The Council welcomes the intention of President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert to meet on a regular basis. These meetings should contribute to the effective and sustainable improvement of the living conditions in the Palestinian territories and to security. The EU will continue to work closely with the parties including by practical measures regarding access and movement, governance and the security sector. The Council expresses the hope that the meetings between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, in the framework of a renewed political process, will soon lead to meaningful negotiations on the final status. The ultimate goal should be an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security.
 4. The EU recalls its readiness to work with and to resume its direct assistance to a Palestinian government whose policy and actions reflect the Quartet principles. In that context, it continues to closely evaluate the policy and actions of the new National Unity Government. It has initiated cooperation with members of the government who accept these principles.
 5. The EU stresses the importance of strengthening the Palestinian institutions. It commends the Palestinian Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad for re-establishing the Single Treasury Account. It encourages the minister to undertake further measures to ensure budgetary transparency and has offered its support in that respect.
 6. Mindful of the continuing needs of the Palestinian people, the Council endorses the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a further three months. It reiterates its call on Israel for the immediate resumption of the transfer of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues, directly or through the TIM. The Council recalls the utmost importance of the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. It urges that Rafah and all other crossing points, notably Karni, be re-opened and remain open.
 7. The Council calls on the parties to consolidate the cease-fire in Gaza and to extend it to the West Bank. It condemns the continued firing of rockets into Israeli territory and urges the Palestinian leadership to do everything in its power to put an end to such acts. It reiterates its call on the parties to put an end to all acts of violence, and to all activities which are contrary to international law. The EU remains deeply concerned with the continuation of settlement activities, and the ongoing construction of the barrier on Palestinian land.
 8. The Council calls for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commends efforts, including by partners in the region, to that effect. It also calls for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained by Israel.
 9. The Council condemns the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston in Gaza on 12 March 2007. The Council demands his unconditional and immediate release."
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