
COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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PRESS RELEASE

2840th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Brussels, 10 December 2007

President: Mr Luís AMADO

Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal

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Middle East

Middle East Peace Process - Council conclusions

The Council had an exchange of views with the Palestinian Prime Minister, Salem FAYYAD, on prospects after the Annapolis meeting.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The EU welcomes the holding of the Annapolis Conference and the joint understanding reached between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas to immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty before the end of 2008. This should lead to the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza that will unite all Palestinians, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours. It is also important that the parties implement their Road Map obligations in parallel to their negotiations. The EU welcomes the wide participation of Arab partners at the conference and calls for their continued and positive involvement.
2. The EU is determined to accompany this new momentum by supporting the parties in their negotiations in a sustained and active manner and through working closely with other members of the Quartet and partners in the region to keep the negotiations on track. As set out in the EU Action Strategy: "State-building for Peace in the Middle East" the EU stands ready to adapt and enhance its activities in support of a new, substantive and credible process. Amongst its immediate priorities the EU aims to further strengthen security and law and order. In this context, 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 engage constructively in providing accreditation to the mission without further delay. The EU will also further strengthen its programmes to foster institution building, good governance, civil society contributions and support for growth of the Palestinian economy working in close cooperation with the Quartet Representative. The Council welcomes the work of Tony Blair and in particular, his recent announcement of a number of quick impact projects.
3. The Paris Donors' conference in December will be an important opportunity for the whole international community to back up its commitment to assist in the economic and financial development of a future viable Palestinian State and to provide the necessary support to the post- Annapolis process. In this context, the EU looks forward to the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. In order to allow for the establishment of a new support mechanism the EU endorses the further extension of the TIM for three months.
4. The Council reiterates its grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for the continued provision of essential services. All parties must work urgently for the opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. As a first step the EU welcomes the recent opening of crossing for the export of agricultural products. Such moves will support progress on the political track.
5. The Council recalls that peace in the Middle East requires a comprehensive solution through a lasting and just settlement of the conflict in all its tracks based on the principles of land for peace, the relevant UNSC resolutions, the Road Map, and previous agreements reached between the parties. The Council emphasises again the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward."

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