
COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Council Conclusions on Middle East Peace Process

2817th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting Brussels, 23 July 2007

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Reiterating its conclusions of 18 June, the Council stresses the urgency of taking forward a credible peace process which will give the Palestinian people the perspective of an independent, democratic and viable state living side-by-side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security, and bring peace and stability to the Middle East. The Council calls on the parties to desist from any action that threatens the viability of this solution.
2. In this context, settlement activities in and around East Jerusalem as well as in the rest of the West Bank and the ongoing construction of the barrier on Palestinian land which are against international law are of particular concern. The EU will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by the parties. Stopping all violence among the parties is of the utmost importance for the peace process to succeed. The EU strongly condemns the firing of Qassam rockets into Israeli territory. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to self defence, the EU calls on Israel to exercise utmost restraint and underlines that action should not be disproportionate or in contradiction to international humanitarian law. While welcoming the release of the BBC journalist Alan Johnston, the EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier, and commends efforts, including by partners in the region to that effect. It equally calls for the immediate release of Palestinian legislators detained by Israel.
3. The Council strongly encourages the parties to continue their bilateral dialogue, which should both achieve concrete results and lead to meaningful political negotiations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement. The Council welcomes the meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas on 16 July and reiterates its hope that these meetings will soon lead, in the framework of a renewed political process, to meaningful negotiations on the final status. The Council emphasizes again the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward. It expresses its hope that the ongoing dialogue between the Arab League and Israel will support a renewed political process aimed at advancing regional peace. In accordance with the Roadmap, the Quartet, in consultation with the parties, should in due course convene an international conference to achieve these goals. In this context, the EU welcomes the speech of President Bush of 16 July and is determined to work with the US, other Quartet partners as well as partners in the region, in an effort to bring about an early end to the Israeli-Arab conflict. It expects the Quartet to participate in the international meeting proposed by President Bush and stands ready to play an active role.
4. The EU welcomes the meeting of Quartet Principals in Lisbon. In this context the EU emphasizes its determination to play an active role with a view to urgently put in place a political and diplomatic process offering a political perspective in the quest for a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, in conformity with the relevant UNSC resolutions and on the basis of the Roadmap, notably its goals and principles. It looks forward to a meeting in the region with the Israelis and the Palestinians and representatives of the Arab League. The EU will continue to play an active role in the Quartet whose commitment is underlined by the appointment of Tony Blair as Quartet Representative. The Council warmly welcomes the appointment and looks forward to working with him.
5. The Council welcomes, as a first step, the partial transfer by Israel of withheld Palestinian tax and custom revenues but it reiterates its call for the immediate, complete and regular release of the remaining and future funds. The Council welcomes the initial release of 255 prisoners and detainees as part of the commitment by Israel following the recent meetings between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert in Sharm el- Sheik and Jerusalem. The Council urges further steps to meet the commitments made at these meetings, including a removal of checkpoints and barriers in the West Bank. Such moves will support progress on the political track.
6. The Council reiterates its full support for President Abbas and the government under Prime Minister Fayyad. The Council reaffirms its position on events in Gaza. Reconciliation and national unity behind the programme of peace articulated by President Abbas are the only way to achieve Palestinian national goals by peaceful, lawful and democratic means. The EU opposes any division of the Palestinian territories and confirms its readiness to engage with all Palestinian parties whose policy and actions reflect the Quartet principles.
7. The EU has resumed relations with institutions of the Palestinian Authority. The EU has started to provide direct financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian government. The Council confirms its commitment to help build the institutions and economy of the future Palestinian state and stresses the need to fully develop the economy in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the promotion of cooperation with the Palestinian private sector. The Council has confirmed its support to the Palestinian Civil Police through reengagement of the EUPOL COPPS. The Council calls on Israel to provide the necessary conditions to this end.
8. Gravely concerned by the critical humanitarian situation, the EU will continue doing its utmost to ensure the provision of emergency and humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza, whom it will not abandon. The Council calls on all parties to work towards an opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian and commercial flows. Kami and other crossings must be open on a regular and predictable basis, in view of reaching the transit volumes foreseen in the Agreement on Movement and Access. This is necessary to ensure the viability of the Palestinian economy and to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people, both in Gaza and in the West Bank. It also underlines the need to re-open the Rafah crossing point and stands ready to resume the full activities of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Rafah as soon as conditions allow."

