
EU Presidency Statement on the Annapolis conference

The EU Presidency expresses its satisfaction with President Bush's initiative, which was subsequently endorsed by the Quartet during its meeting in Lisbon, on July this year.

The Presidency warmly congratulates the decision by the Parties, as referred to in the Joint Understanding, to take the historic step of immediately launching meaningful negotiations on all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements.

The Presidency also welcomes the pledge made by the Parties of reaching an agreement before the end of 2008 and underlines the importance of adequate follow-up mechanisms.

The Annapolis conference represents a turning point for regional and international partners to effectively support a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and, in this context the EU Presidency welcomes the wide and broad participation of key international actors, in particular the presence of the members of the Arab League follow-up Committee.

The EU Presidency reiterates the European Union's active role, notably in the framework of increased Quartet engagement, in promoting efforts to contribute to the gradual resumption of a sustainable political process aiming at successful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

A solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict is essential for the security and stability in the region and will have a far reaching positive impact.

The Presidency reaffirms the EU's determination to support the efforts of reaching comprehensive peace in the Middle East through a lasting and just settlement of the conflict, based on the principle of land for peace, relevant UNSC resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Roadmap and previous agreements reached between the parties.

Recognizing the importance to continue supporting the process set in motion by Annapolis, in particular between the parties in their ongoing negotiations and subsequent implementation, the EU stands ready to offer a wide-ranging and coherent contribution as highlighted in its "Statebuilding for Peace in the Middle East: an EU Action Strategy".

The Presidency reiterates the EU's engagement to further strengthen its ongoing programs to foster the economic and financial development of a future Palestinian State through the continuation of assistance and in close cooperation with the Quartet Representative. In this regard, it emphasizes the importance of the Paris Donors' Conference, in December, which represents an essential complement to the political process launched in Annapolis.