



General Assembly

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Background release

URGENCY OF ADDRESSING PERMANENT STATUS ISSUES TO FORM THEME FOR INTERNATIONAL

MEETING IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE, IN MALTA, 12-13 FEBRUARY

Discussions to Focus on Borders, Jerusalem, Settlements, Refugees, Water

(Received from a UN Information Officer.)

QAWRA, Malta, 8 February -- The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean will convene the International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace at the Dolmen Hotel in Qawra, Malta, on 12 and 13 February.

Under the theme "The urgency of addressing the permanent status issues -- borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, water", the Meeting is aimed at providing a forum for the exchange of views on the current state of the peace process and encouraging a constructive dialogue among the stakeholders on how to create a political climate conducive to the resumption of the peace negotiations on permanent status issues.

The Meeting, among other things, will discuss the terms of reference for all permanent status issues, including in the context of peace initiatives. It will also look into modalities for bridging gaps and building trust between the parties; international approaches to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and the role of parliamentarians and inter-parliamentary organizations in supporting Israeli-Palestinian peace and stability in the region.

Invited to participate in the Meeting are member delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, other parliamentarians, Government officials and experts, including Israeli and Palestinian ones, on the issues under discussion. United Nations Member States and Observer Missions, as well as intergovernmental and civil society organizations, have been invited as observers. The Meeting will be open to the media.

The opening session will take place at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, 12 February, in the Oracle Conference Centre of the Dolmen Hotel. Louis Galea, Speaker of Malta's House of Representatives, will welcome participants before the official opening by Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, will deliver a message on behalf of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Rudy Salles, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, and Pedro Núñez Mosquera, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will speak on behalf of the Meeting's organizers.

High-level speakers from the Mediterranean region will include Ahmed Fathi Sorour, President of the Egyptian People's Assembly, and Cemil Çiçek, State Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey. Tayseer Quba'a, Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian National Council, and Yuli Tamir, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, will also address the Meeting. Sa'eb Erakat, Head of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiations Affairs Department, will speak as the representative of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

All sessions of the Meeting will be held in the Oracle Conference Centre and will be open to the media. Access is from the ground floor of the hotel (main lobby). The meeting hours are from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Arabic, English and French will be the official languages of the Meeting.

The following two plenary sessions will address a variety of issues and feature discussion periods:

Plenary I, entitled "The state of the peace process", will begin at 12 noon on Friday, 12 February, and continue in the afternoon. The sub-themes of the session

are "The current overall situation" and "Terms of reference for the permanent status issues – borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, water". The session's panellists include Mr. Erakat, Alon Liel, Lecturer, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Michael Kingsley-Nyirah, Director of the Executive Office, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Amman; Peter Gubser, President (retired), American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), Maryland; Geoffrey Aronson, Director of Research and Publications, Foundation for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C.; and Helena Cobban, Executive Director, Council for the National Interest Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Plenary II, entitled "Breaking the status quo: creating a political climate conducive to the advancement of the peace process", will start at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, 13 February. The session will suspend at 1 p.m. and resume at 3 p.m. It will focus on "International and regional approaches to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", "Modalities for bridging gaps and building trust between the parties", and "Role of parliamentarians and inter-parliamentary organizations in supporting Israeli-Palestinian peace and stability in the region". Addressing this session will be Azzam Al-Ahmad, Head of the Fatah Caucus, Palestinian Legislative Council, Ramallah; Hesham Youssef, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary General, League of Arab States, Cairo; Mohamed Abou El-Enein, Member of the Egyptian People's Assembly, Roving Ambassador, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, Cairo; Robert Rydberg, Head of Middle East and North Africa Department, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm; Mohammad Barakeh, Member of the Knesset, Secretary-General of Hadash Party, Tel Aviv; Yossi Beilin, President, Beilink – Business Foreign Affairs, Former Member of the Knesset, Tel Aviv; Ibrahim Khraishi, Permanent Observer of Palestine, United Nations Office at Geneva; Yuli Tamir, Member of the Knesset; George Vella, Member of the Parliament of Malta, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Middle East, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, Valletta; Suleiman Ghneimat, Member of the Parliament of Jordan, Vice-President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, Amman; and Bill Casey, Senior Representative and Agent General for the Province of Nova Scotia, Ottawa, Canada.

The closing session for the Meeting will take place from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, 13 February. Addressing it will be Saviour Borg (Malta), Rapporteur, Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, who will introduce the concluding remarks by the organizers; Mr. Vella; Mr. Barakeh; Tayseer Quba'a, Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian National Council; Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations; and Speaker Galea.

Two press conferences are scheduled, one on 12 February at 12 noon, the other on 13 February at 6 p.m. More information about the venues and participants will be provided on the ground. Interested journalists will also have the opportunity to arrange individual interviews with members of the Committee's delegation and participating speakers.

Participants and observers, including the media, are kindly requested to register with the United Nations Secretariat upon arrival and obtain their colour-coded badges. Registration will take place in the foyer to the conference room on the first floor of the Conference Centre and will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on 11 February. On 12 February, registration for media representatives starts at 10 a.m. in the foyer to the conference room on the first floor. If you arrive at any other time, please contact the Secretariat. The Secretariat is operating on the first floor of the Conference Centre, Room "Ammon", tel.: +356 2355 2540 (direct line) or +356 2355 2355 (hotel operator), fax: +356 2355 2529, e-mail: dpr-meeting@un.org.

The media registration form should be e-mailed in advance by 11 February to dpr-meeting@un.org. Updated versions of the programme, as well as information on previous Meetings, will be available on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights, United Nations Secretariat, at <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/calendar.htm>.

The report on the Meeting will be issued, in due course, as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

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