



EUROPEAN UNION

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**Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
on the Middle East peace talks**

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission made the following statement:

"I have spoken with Senator George Mitchell and Quartet Envoy Tony Blair today on the latest developments regarding the Middle East peace talks and I will speak shortly to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

I regret the Israeli decision not to extend the moratorium on settlements. We are examining the consequences of this decision and consulting with the parties and our Quartet and Arab partners.

The Quartet welcomed Israel's moratorium and the positive atmosphere it created for the negotiations. Both Palestinians and Israelis have an obligation to act in accordance with previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. The position of the EU is very clear: settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.

I urge the parties to act responsibly. There is no alternative to a negotiated solution. Therefore, it is in everybody's interest to find a satisfactory way for the negotiations to continue and gather momentum. The EU stands firm on our full support to the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as part of a just and comprehensive peace. We will do whatever is possible to help both parties choose the path of peace and reach a successful outcome."

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FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu

Darren Ennis +32 498 963 293 - +32 2 296 32 93 - Darren.Ennis@ec.europa.eu

COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHION@ec.europa.eu

www.eeas.europa.eu