



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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PRESS RELEASE

3048th Council meeting
Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 November 2010

President **Catherine Ashton**
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

Main results of the Council

*Ministers had a broad discussion over lunch on the **Middle East**, focusing in particular on the efforts to encourage Israel and the Palestinians to restart direct talks and on the situation in Gaza. ...*

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ITEMS DEBATED

MIDDLE EAST

Ministers held a broad discussion over lunch on the situation in the Middle East, focusing in particular on the efforts to restart the direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and on the situation in Lebanon.

Middle East Peace Process

Ministers exchanged views on the latest developments concerning the Middle East Peace Process and underlined the EU's continued support for the efforts of the United States to restart the direct negotiations, following a briefing by High Representative Catherine Ashton, after the EU-US summit. They voiced their concern at the current lack of progress and the on-going settlement activities, particularly in East Jerusalem. The High Representative pointed to the Council's December 2009 conclusions and recalled that settlements are illegal under international law, are an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. She emphasized that the EU would continue to work with the International Quartet towards the successful outcome of the negotiations if they were resumed.

Ministers also expressed their ongoing concern at the situation in Gaza, calling for the Gaza crossings to be opened and, in particular, for exports to be allowed out of Gaza.

