

**DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST
PEACE PROCESS**

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**Excerpts of the speech by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas
at the opening session of the Palestinian Legislative Council**

Ramallah, 18 February 2006

On 18 February 2006, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas delivered a speech in Ramallah during the opening session of the second Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) following the January Palestinian elections. The following excerpts are from an unofficial translation of his speech:

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The results of our elections have led to the creation of a new political reality, in which Hamas won the majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Therefore, it will be tasked with the formation of the new Government. I expect the person forming the Government to be designated, and the usual consultations regarding this issue to start. All of this will be accompanied with the election of the PLC presiding body and the establishment of its various committees so as to be ready to receive the new Government and its programme, leading to granting it confidence.

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From my position as elected President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and as President of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and based on my programme on which I was elected, I would like to emphasize the following:

First, we, as presidency and Government, will continue our commitment to the negotiation process as the sole political, pragmatic and strategic choice through which we reap the fruit of our struggle and sacrifices over the long decades. We will find practical opportunities as we wisely manage the negotiations so as to achieve our national aims that are supported by international resolutions.

As we depend on the negotiation process as a political choice, we should continue to develop other forms of peaceful popular struggle.

We are all required to continue activating and strengthening the role of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of our people, to lead and oversee all matters relating to its destiny including the negotiations with the Israeli side.

Second, the obstruction of the negotiation process and its replacement with the iron fist policy, unilateral adventures and the continuation of the separation wall, settlement expansion and assassinations will only lead to further deterioration, leaving peace and stability behind.

Anybody who thinks that these kinds of policies would force our people to hoist the white flag and to give up is mistaken. He does not know the reality of this people, its faith, determination and perseverance towards obtaining its full rights.

Here, I would like to emphasize our full rejection of unilateralism. I urge the world, eager as it is to see peace and stability in the Middle East, and especially the Quartet and the US Administration, to immediately start serious efforts towards reactivating the negotiation process. This in turn should be conducted on the basis of international legitimacy and President Bush's

vision; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the agreements and understandings signed since Oslo to the Road Map.

Third, the internal changes – which occurred in the aftermath of the second PLC elections and which led to Hamas members having the majority in the PLC – should not be used to justify further aggression against our people, or as a pretext for blackmailing it. The Palestinian people should not be punished for its democratic choice that was expressed through the ballot box. The leadership of this people and I personally refuse this blackmail. I ask everyone to abandon it.

Fourth, the process of reform within the PNA should not stop. I will continue to sponsor all reform initiatives, whether carried out by the Palestinian judiciary, as an implementation of a decision from our part, or any new initiatives in the same direction. I am determined to carry out my programme, on which I was elected and mandated, and to apply the main tenets that I have hoisted to reach a stable, unified, strong, effective Authority that provides security and safety to all its citizens; an Authority which has the ability to keep its commitments and protect the interests of its people; an Authority that respects the law and commits to implementing it; an Authority whose institutions are committed to the separation of powers, particularly in terms of strengthening the judiciary, imposing the rule of law for all, with one legitimate arm, with a pluralistic system; an Authority that lays the foundations for the establishment of our independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. We hope to see this State as a qualitative addition to the list of countries in the region; an addition that carries out its commitments in a credible manner and which enjoys its rights based on justice. We do not want more than what we are entitled to by international law.

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I would like to stress in particular that the era of unilateral solutions is over. Attempting to determine the future of our people through cantonization, reservations, the tearing up of the West Bank, land grab in the Jordan Valley, the separation of Jerusalem and the consolidation of settlement blocks will close the window for a solution between us.

There is a Palestinian partner who is ready to sit at the negotiation table with an Israeli partner so as to reach a solution that is based on international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map – a solution that is based on respecting all previous agreements and commitments.

We want a just solution that guarantees the fulfilment of peace, not a unilateral, partial, or temporary solution that will kill the chance for peace, nor a State with provisional borders. We are waiting for the Israeli Government to determine its direction and make its decision in this regard. Our decision is to be completely ready to start permanent status negotiations immediately.

I assure the world that we strongly believe that justice prevails over force. We will have the same perseverance in attaining our rights and desire for peace. The entire world should bear its responsibility to make this dream come true... peace in the Holy Land...

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Communiqué by Israel on the result of the Palestinian elections

19 February 2006

Following the Palestinian elections, the Government of Israel decided to implement a series of measures vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli Cabinet's announcement follows:

Upon the conclusion of the Palestinian Authority (PA) transitional Government, the PA will become a terrorist authority unless Hamas, which controls the PA, fully accepts the threshold conditions as determined by Israel and approved by the Quartet.

The Cabinet has decided to immediately implement series of measures vis-à-vis the PA.

1. Ministers were briefed on Palestinian affairs following the PA elections and determined policy in light of the swearing-in of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

Acting Prime Minister Olmert made the following remarks:

"From Israel's point-of-view, a new situation has been created. Israel has defined threshold conditions for holding contacts with Palestinians in the Hamas Administration and it will continue to act accordingly. Israel has proven that it is interested in acting on behalf of regional peace and stability. The disengagement is a main example of this, at the base of which lies the desire to have here two States for two peoples living side-by-side in stability, security and peace. Of course, Israel will continue to see to the personal security of Israeli citizens and will not compromise on this issue now or in the future.

"It is clear that in light of the Hamas majority in the PLC and the instructions to form a new government that were given to the head of Hamas, the PA is – in practice – becoming a terrorist authority. The State of Israel will not agree to this. Israel will not compromise with terrorism and will continue to fight it with full force. However, there is no intention of harming the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population. Israel will not hold contacts with the Administration in which Hamas plays any part – small, large, or permanent.

"From our point of view, the swearing-in of the PLC means that Hamas has – in effect – taken control of the PA. Israel views the rise of Hamas as a dangerous milestone that turns the PA into a terrorist authority. This new situation will influence the future of Israeli-PA relations and will begin a period in which ties with the PA are downgraded, unless Hamas fully accepts the principles that the international community has presented to it: recognition of the State of Israel and abrogation of the Hamas Covenant, the renunciation of terrorism and the dismantling of terrorist infrastructures (by adopting the Road Map and accepting its principles) and recognizing all understandings and agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

"It must be pointed out that the international community's point of reference is the day on which a Palestinian Government is formed. Until then, the international community will continue to see it as the main address, including that regarding the continued transfer of financial assistance. The US and the EU include Hamas on their lists of terrorist organizations and are refraining – at this stage – from any contacts with it. We will continue to demand that the PA fully honour the three conditions that the international community has set before it.

"Until this happens, we will take a series of steps, some of which we will decide on today. In any case, Israel has no intention of bringing about the collapse of civil frameworks and creating a humanitarian crisis in the PA. Israel will continue to act determinedly against terrorism and against terrorists. The new situation, in which Hamas members have been elected to the PLC, does not change this."

OC Intelligence Maj.-Gen. Amos Yedlin, Israel Security Agency Director Yuval Diskin, National Security Council Chairman Giora Eiland and Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Maj.-Gen. Yosef Mishlav briefed ministers on the results of the recent PA elections.

The Cabinet decided as follows:

It is decided that, upon the swearing-in of the Hamas-dominated PLC yesterday (Saturday, 18 February 2006) and upon the upcoming conclusion of the PA transitional Government, the PA will become a terrorist authority unless Hamas, which controls the PA, fully accepts the following threshold conditions as determined by Israel and approved by the Quartet:

- Recognition of the State of Israel and the abrogation of the Hamas Covenant;
- Renunciation of terrorism and the dismantling of terrorism infrastructures;
- Recognition of agreements and understandings between Israel and the Palestinians.

A. Therefore, the Cabinet immediately decides – at this stage – to implement a series of measures vis-à-vis the PA:

i. Upon the conclusion of the transitional Government, no funds will be transferred from Israel to the PA;

ii. Israel will appeal to the international community so that, upon the formation of the transitional Government, the international community will refrain from all financial assistance to the PA except for humanitarian aid given directly to the Palestinian population;

iii. Transfers of means and assistance to the Palestinian security services will be prevented;

iv. The movement of VIPs connected to Hamas, including members of the PLC, will continue to be restricted in all areas under Israeli control;

v. Given the heightened security risks, security checks at crossings – especially Karni and Erez – will be increased, regarding both people and goods. Activities to upgrade the Gaza Strip crossings will continue in order to enable more effective security oversight.

B. All measures necessary to thwart acts of terrorism against Israel will continue both in Gaza, Judea and Samaria and in the Gaza Strip; construction of the security fence will be accelerated.

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**Press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council
at its ninety-eighth session
Riyadh, 1 March 2006**

After its meeting in Riyadh, the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council issued a press release calling on the international community to respect the outcome of the Palestinian election. Excerpts of the press release are reproduced below.

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The Ministerial Council reviewed developments in the Palestinian situation and recent developments in the Middle East peace process and emphasized the following:

It congratulated His Excellency, President Mahmoud Abbas, on his success in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, whose results constituted a choice by the people that must be respected, and called on the international community to respect the desire of the Palestinian people to determine its future and exercise its choices.

It expected the international community to adjust to these developments and pressure Israel to travel the path of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

It called on all Palestinian forces to close ranks and harmonize their positions to face the upcoming stage, which would lead to the realization of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. This should be accomplished through negotiations to implement the road map and the adherence of both sides to signed pledges, agreements and internationally recognized resolutions, in order to overcome obstacles on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides to mutual acceptance and resumption of negotiations.

It demanded that the Israeli Government cease its continued aggression against the Palestinian people and its use of the techniques of economic siege.

It called on the international community to continue to supply financial assistance to the Palestinians and not to punish the Palestinian people for exercising their democratic choice.

It reaffirmed its support for efforts to bring together different points of view within the Palestinian political spectrum to prevent political differences from overwhelming the interests of the Palestinian people and its conviction that stability in the region required the support of the international community for Palestinian national institutions and the respect of all parties for all internationally recognized resolutions.

It welcomed the European Union's decision to resume its assistance in the amount of €120 million to help meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people.

It demanded that the international community, and in particular the United States Administration, the European Union and the Quartet, should not pass hasty pre-emptive judgement on the new Palestinian Government; rather, they should support it.

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Press release issued by the Quartet on the new Palestinian Government
30 March 2006

Following consultations, the Quartet issued the following press release on 30 March 2006 expressing "grave concern" that the new Palestinian Government had not committed to previous obligations or principles under the Road Map:

The Quartet recalled its statement of 30 January and its call for the new Palestinian Government to commit to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map.

The Quartet welcomed President Abbas' call for the new Palestinian Government to commit to a platform of peace and, having carefully assessed the programme of the new Government approved on 28 March, noted with grave concern that the new Government had not committed to the principles spelled out on 30 January.

The Quartet recalled its view that future assistance to any new Government would be reviewed by donors against that Government's commitment to the principles outlined above. The Quartet concurred that there inevitably will be an effect on direct assistance to that Government and its ministries.

The Quartet encouraged continued humanitarian assistance to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people. The Quartet noted in that context the importance of improved movement and access.

The Quartet reiterated its commitment to the principles outlined in the Road Map and previous statements and reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict leading to two democratic States living side by side in peace and security.

**Press release issued by the European Council on suspension of aid
to the Palestinian Authority**
Luxembourg, 10-11 April 2006

The European Council issued the following press release on the conclusions adopted at its meeting on aid to the Palestinian Authority following the formation of a new Government.

The Council discussed the situation of the Middle East peace process following the swearing in of the new Palestinian Government and the result of general elections in Israel.

The Council noted with grave concern that the new Palestinian Government has not committed itself to the three principles laid out by the Council and the Quartet in their statements of 30 January: non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of existing agreements. It urged the new Palestinian Government to meet and implement these three principles and to commit to President Abbas' platform of peace. This would further the Palestinian people's aspirations to peace and Statehood.

Consistent with the Quartet statement of 30 March, the EU is reviewing its assistance to the Palestinians against the new Government's commitment to the aforementioned principles. The Council recalled that the absence of such commitment will inevitably have an effect on direct assistance to that Government. The EU will continue to provide necessary assistance to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian population. In this context, it also underlined the importance of improved access and movement and called on both parties to implement the 15 November 2005 Movement and Access Agreement.

The Council notes with concern the recent violent incidents in the Palestinian territories and calls on all parties to refrain from violence and exercise self-restraint. The Council urged the Palestinian Authority to ensure security in the areas it controls and ensure the safety of international personnel.

The Council reiterated its aim to preserve and pursue the democratic functioning and development of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. In this context, it emphasized the central role of President Abbas as the highest representative of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO and reiterated its support for him.

**Press release issued by the Quartet expressing concern with the
Palestinian Government**

9 May 2006

The following press release was issued on 9 May 2006 by the Quartet after a meeting held in New York with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelelah al-Khatib and Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal:

The Quartet expressed its appreciation for the service of James Wolfensohn as Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement and noted his central role in the conclusion of the Agreement on Movement and Access and the promulgation of an agenda for Palestinian economic recovery.

The Quartet underscored its continued commitment to the principles of partnership and negotiation leading to a two-State solution, as embodied in the Road Map. A lack of action by the parties in certain key areas has stalled progress on the Road Map. The Quartet underscored the need for both parties to avoid actions which could prejudice final status issues or undermine progress towards this goal.

The Quartet reiterated its grave concern that the Palestinian Authority Government had so far failed to commit itself to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. The Quartet noted that the absence of a commitment to these principles had inevitably impacted direct assistance to that Government and expressed its deep concern about the consequences for the Palestinian people. The donor members noted their willingness to work towards the restoration of international assistance to the Palestinian Authority Government once it has committed to these principles.

The Quartet discussed the current situation in Israel and the West Bank, and Gaza. It condemned the Palestinian Authority Government's failure to take action against terrorism and the justification of the 17 April suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. The Quartet urged it to act decisively against terrorism and bring an end to violence. The Quartet noted that President Abbas condemned the 17 April attack as he has consistently condemned all acts of terrorism in the past.

The Quartet expressed its concern over Israeli military operations that result in the loss of innocent life. The Quartet calls for restraint and asks Israel to bear in mind the potential

consequences of its actions for the population. The Quartet expressed its concern about settlement expansion. It continues to note with concern the route of the barrier, particularly as it results in the confiscation of Palestinian land and cuts off the movement of people and goods. The Quartet reiterated the importance of both parties avoiding unilateral measures, which prejudice final status issues.

The Quartet discussed the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. It expressed serious concern about deteriorating conditions, particularly in Gaza. The Quartet expressed concern about delivery of humanitarian assistance, economic life, social cohesion and Palestinian institutions. The Quartet reiterated its support for assistance directed to help meet the basic human needs of the Palestinian people and promotion of Palestinian democracy and civil society, and called upon the international community to respond urgently to assistance requests by international organizations, especially UN agencies, active in the West Bank and Gaza. The Quartet urged both parties to take concrete steps to implement their obligations under the Agreement on Movement and Access.

Recalling its commitment of 30 January that it is mindful of the needs of the Palestinian people, the Quartet expressed its willingness to endorse a temporary international mechanism that is limited in scope and duration, operates with full transparency and accountability, and ensures direct delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. If these criteria can be met, the operation of the temporary international mechanism should begin as soon as possible and be reviewed after three months to determine whether it should continue. The Quartet welcomed the offer of the European Union to develop and propose such a mechanism. It invites other donors and international organizations to consider participation in such a mechanism. It urged Israel in parallel to take steps to improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. The Quartet reiterates that the Palestinian Authority Government must fulfil its responsibilities with respect to basic human needs, including health services, as well as for proper fiscal management and provision of services.

The Quartet welcomed Prime Minister Olmert's call for negotiations with a Palestinian partner committed to the principles of the Road Map, as the most stable and desired basis for the political process. The Quartet welcomed President Abbas' continued commitment to a platform of peace. The Quartet is encouraged by these statements of intent.

Finally, the Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to its previous statements and to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the conflict based upon UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). The Quartet will remain seized of the matter.

Excerpts from the International Crisis Group report entitled "Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet: pulling back from the brink"

Jerusalem/Amman/Brussels, 13 June 2006

On 13 June 2006, the International Crisis Group published its Middle East Report N° 54 entitled "Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet: pulling back from the brink". The executive summary and the Group's recommendations are reproduced below.

Executive summary

Throughout years of uprising and Israeli military actions, siege of West Bank cities and President Arafat's de facto house arrest, it was hard to imagine the situation getting worse for Palestinians. It has. On all fronts – Palestinian/Palestinian, Palestinian/Israeli and Palestinian/international – prevailing dynamics are leading to a dangerous breakdown. Subjected to the cumulative effects of a military occupation in its 40th year and now what is effectively an international sanctions regime, the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA) Government cannot pay salaries or deliver basic services. Diplomacy is frozen, with scant prospect of thaw – and none at all of breakthrough. And Hamas's electoral victory and the reactions it provoked among Fatah loyalists have intensified chaos and brought the nation near civil war. There is an urgent need for all relevant players to pragmatically reassess their positions, with the immediate objectives of:

- Avoiding inter-Palestinian violence and the PA's collapse
- Encouraging Hamas to adopt more pragmatic policies rather than merely punishing it for not doing so
- Achieving a mutual and sustained Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire to prevent a resumption of full-scale hostilities
- Preventing activity that jeopardizes the possibility of a two-State solution

Of all the dangers threatening the Palestinians, the most acute may well be internal strife. Facing one of the most hostile external environments in its history, the national movement also confronts one of its most acute domestic crises. Even as Hamas and Fatah leaders repeatedly profess their determination to avoid violent conflict, they act in ways that promote it. Fatah, unable to digest its electoral loss, is behaving as if still in power. It treats the new Government as a usurper, blatantly subverting its ability to govern, relying on its partisans' overwhelming presence throughout the civil service and, especially, the security forces. Hamas, unprepared for its triumph, is behaving as if it remains in opposition. It invokes steadfastness as a substitute for policy and has proved incapable so far of adjusting to its new status, while introducing provocative measures of its own.

In this increasingly bloody power struggle, both camps (as well as the myriad camps within camps) are mobilizing armed militias, stockpiling weapons, resorting to killings and spreading bedlam. The latest move was political. Mahmoud Abbas, PA President, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee and Fatah Deputy Chairman, on 25 May 2006 threatened that if Hamas did not accept within 10 days a proposal signed by a number of Israel's most prominent Palestinian detainees – the Prisoners' Initiative – which implicitly endorses a negotiated two-State solution, he would submit it to a popular referendum. Making good on his ultimatum after a short extension, he issued a presidential decree on 10 June calling for a referendum on 26 July.

The result has been an increasingly bitter, and perilously violent, relationship, bringing the Palestinians to the brink of internecine conflict. The National Dialogue that was launched in late May to forge a political consensus appears to be as much about partisan posturing as about strategic compromise. While Abbas understandably is averse to interminable negotiations, his determination to hold a referendum opposed by Hamas carries a serious risk of further polarization and violence – the very outcome that, by seeking to bring the Islamists into the political arena, he had tried to avoid. Today, the situation is but one tragic step – the assassination of a senior Fatah or Hamas leader, for example – from all-out chaos.

Faced with the intensifying inter-Palestinian struggle, the calculus of the Quartet – the US, EU, Russian Federation and the UN, which have been in charge of the disappearing peace process –

and other outside actors has been simple: pressure the Government, count on popular dissatisfaction with its (non-) performance and find ways to strengthen Abbas and ensure the Hamas experience in power comes to a rapid and unsuccessful end. The approach comes in different variants, from the more confrontational (seeking to subvert the Hamas-led Government through political and economic isolation), to the more subtle (hoping to circumvent the Government through Abbas' empowerment). Yet in both cases outside actors, by openly bolstering one faction against the other, exacerbate internal strife.

Of late, limited signs of pragmatism have come from Washington regarding the need to prevent collapse within the occupied territories. However, the US still appears reluctant to endorse a European proposal to fund priority social sectors while bypassing the Government or at least wishes to postpone implementation of such a mechanism until after a referendum is held and the political context altered. The tightness of the grip aside, all, including Israel and even Arab States, appear convinced that squeezing the Government unless it meets the Quartet's three demands (recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence and acceptance of past agreements) is the best way to end its tenure and accelerate the restoration of its more pragmatic predecessors.

There are important elements of Hamas's ideology and charter, including its refusal to recognize Israel and the call for its destruction, that are incompatible with the international community's principles for a resolution of this conflict as well as the views of most Palestinians; pressure certainly needs to be brought upon it to change these. Without this necessary evolution, it cannot expect international recognition, nor can the Government it leads expect genuine international support. But the approaches currently being applied or contemplated – to deprive it of resources, isolate or bypass it, force a referendum, or even stage early elections – suffer from the same fundamental flaws: the absence of a day-after strategy and an almost total disregard for Hamas's very recent democratic mandate as well as the longer-term consequences of short-term success.

Feeling cheated of its right to govern, Hamas would be unlikely to go quietly. Having reached the conclusion that its experiment in the mainstream has failed and political integration is no longer a viable option, and with its back against the wall, Hamas almost certainly would revert to internal violence or violence targeting Israel, causing maximum chaos, possibly bringing down the PA and allowing the Islamists to re-emerge as a resistance movement. The recent mutual escalation of violence with Israel shows how perilous this situation quickly can become. Nor should one expect poverty and despair to encourage the Palestinians towards greater moderation; those are the very conditions that helped propel Hamas to power in the first place, and it is difficult to imagine how they could assist Fatah in the near future. Regionally as well, the engineered failure of the first elected Sunni Islamist Government could have unwelcome repercussions, buttressing jihadi Islamists at the expense of their more political counterparts.

Starved of resources, confronting an increasingly hostile population and unable to realize its agenda, Hamas may well fail. But with widespread violence, chaos and a collapse in Palestinian institutions, it quickly would become hard to chalk up its failure as anybody's success. Instead, what is required today is a more sophisticated, nuanced approach, pursuing the priority objectives described above with the specific policies summarized below.

Recommendations

To the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Palestinian National Resistance Movement (Fatah):

1. Reach and implement agreement on the composition and role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), including the integration of Hamas and recognition of the PLO's responsibility for political negotiations with Israel.

2. Form, with the participation of other Palestinian political movements and independents as appropriate, a national coalition government whose programme includes: endorsement of the 2002 Arab League's Beirut Initiative and/or the 2006 Prisoners' Initiative; designation of the PLO as responsible for political negotiations with Israel; ratification by national institutions and/or a national referendum of any agreement reached with Israel; and recognition of existing Palestinian commitments.

3. Reactivate the National Security Council, under the Palestinian president and including the prime minister, interior minister and heads of security agencies, to ensure the coordination of all security agencies and phased integration or demobilization of all militias.

To the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas):

4. Reinstate the truce and extend it for the duration of the current Government's lifespan and declare a permanent moratorium on attacks against civilian targets, to enable Egypt and other mediators to achieve a reciprocal and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian cessation of hostilities.

To the Government of Israel:

5. Cease offensive operations, particularly assassinations and incursions, which cannot be justified by imminent military necessity, refraining in particular from unprovoked acts of escalation and operations that harm civilians and damage civilian installations, and support third-party efforts to achieve a reciprocal and comprehensive cessation of Israeli-Palestinian hostilities.

6. Release all Palestinians in Israeli detention who have not been charged with an offence and respond to Palestinian initiatives to maintain quiet with timely and substantive prisoner releases.

7. Channel all withheld tax revenues to the Temporary International Mechanism proposed by the EU and maintain utility supplies and banking services for the Palestinian population.

To the members of the diplomatic Quartet (US, EU, Russian Federation, UN):

8. Subject to the PA abiding by existing Palestinian commitments and Hamas reinstating a truce, assign a UN-appointed mediator as its representative for contacts with the PLO, PA, Hamas and other Palestinian organizations to obtain commitments from the PA Government on the following matters:

(a) Support for a reciprocal and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian cessation of hostilities;

(b) Recognition of applicable UN resolutions and the 2002 Arab League Beirut Initiative as the terms of reference for an Israeli-Palestinian political settlement;

(c) Approval of contacts between Israeli and Palestinian counterparts to improve delivery of services and mutual security, and on other matters of common interest.

9. Ensure that Israel fulfils its humanitarian obligations under international law towards the civilian population of the occupied Palestinian territories, specifically by:

(a) Providing unrestricted access to humanitarian agencies operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that have been certified as such by the UN mediator;

(b) Halting restrictions on the free movement of persons, goods and services within, between, to and from the occupied territories that cannot be justified by legitimate security interests.

10. Issue a declaration that, while any Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory is welcome, it will not recognize boundaries situated within occupied territory established through unilateral measures nor the legitimacy of any settlements established in contravention of international law.

11. Present at an appropriate time a more detailed vision of a viable final status agreement.

To the European Union and its member States:

12. Subject to agreement between the UN mediator and the Palestinian Government as described above:

(a) Suspend the prohibition on contacts with the PA Government and Hamas leadership to expedite discussions on core EU concerns relating to the Government's political programme, donor relations, the demobilization and integration of armed factions and terms for the removal of Hamas from the EU blacklist of terrorist organizations;

(b) Restore 2005 levels and forms of donor support to the PA, including budgetary support.

13. In the absence of agreement between the UN mediator and the Palestinian Government as described above, and subject to the PA Government abiding by existing agreements and Hamas reinstating a truce:

(a) Expand the proposed Temporary International Mechanism in order to fund basic services in the occupied territories, including PA personnel, recurrent and where necessary other costs, without distinction between civilian and security sectors, and wherever practicable through direct disbursements to personnel, suppliers, and contractors;

(b) Modify the proposed Temporary International Mechanism so that UN agencies and the World Bank rather than the PA presidency serve as intermediaries between donors and the PA Administration, and proceed with implementation without additional delay.

To the Government of the United States:

14. Refrain from threats against Palestinian political organizations and individual politicians that obstruct inter-Palestinian dialogue and the formation of a PA coalition Government.

15. Revise the Office of Foreign Assets Control directives with respect to Hamas to state specifically that the standing exemption from penalty for dealing with a proscribed organization provided to select international organizations, including the United Nations and the World Bank, will apply to third parties, such as banks and other institutions and entities, implementing programmes for or handling funds received on behalf of those international organizations.

To the Chairman of the Arab League and member States:

16. Engage with the PA Government and Hamas leadership to seek endorsement of the Arab League's Beirut Initiative.

Declaration by the EU Council endorsing the Temporary International Mechanism
Brussels, 16 June 2006

On 16 June 2006, following its meeting in Brussels, the EU Council issued the following declaration reiterating its call for the new Palestinian Government to accept all previous obligations and supported the plan for a financial mechanism to direct aid to the Palestinian people:

The European Union remains committed to working within the Quartet towards the goal of a just, viable and lasting solution based on existing agreements, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles laid down in the Road Map.

In view of the urgent need to relaunch the process towards a negotiated two-State solution which would bring peace to both the Israeli and the Palestinian people, the European Council calls for an early engagement between the Israeli Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority, who was elected on a platform of peace. It reiterates its expectations from both parties to respect existing agreements and obligations, including the Road Map.

As set out by the Quartet, the Hamas-led Palestinian Government needs to meet and implement the three principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of existing agreements and obligations.

The European Council remains concerned by the security situation in Gaza and the West Bank. It condemns the violence against Palestinian civilians. It condemns the launching of Qassem rockets against population centres in Israel. It reminds both parties of their responsibility to protect civilian lives. It calls on the Palestinian Authority to take action to improve security and prevent terrorist attacks on Israel. It reiterates its condemnation of extrajudicial killings. It calls on all parties to refrain from violence and to exercise restraint.

The European Council calls on all Palestinian political forces to engage in a national dialogue aimed primarily at putting an end to inter-Palestinian confrontation and establishing law and order. It calls on the Palestinian Government to cooperate with the President of the Palestinian Authority to achieve this, including through the disarmament of groups engaged in violence and terror.

The European Council takes note of the announcement by President Abbas to hold a referendum. It calls on all Palestinian political forces to work towards the widest possible consensus in support of the objectives of the Road Map.

The European Council calls on Israel to desist from any action that threatens the viability of an agreed two-State solution and from acts that are contrary to international law. Of particular concern are settlement activities, the construction of the barrier on Palestinian land and activities in and around East Jerusalem as well as in the Jordan Valley. The European Union will not recognize any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed to by both sides.

The European Council urges Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues which are essential in averting a crisis in the Palestinian territories.

The European Council stresses the need for a coordinated international response to the deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and financial situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The European Council endorses the proposed Temporary International Mechanism to channel assistance directly to the Palestinian people, which has been drawn up by the Commission following consultations within the EU as well as with Quartet members, major donors, international financial institutions and partners in the region. The European Council appreciates the Commission's work so far and requests it to continue urgently establishing the Mechanism, in conjunction with Quartet members, other key international partners and the PA President's Office.

The European Council agrees that, in order to achieve an immediate impact, the Mechanism will focus on essential supplies and running costs for social services and health, supply of utilities, including fuel, and social allowances. Other donors, including Arab States, are invited to provide funding and to consider early and substantial contributions. The Community stands ready to contribute a substantial amount to the International Mechanism.

The European Council furthermore underlines the importance of freedom of movement and urges both parties to take concrete steps to implement their obligations under the Agreement on Movement and Access, in order to alleviate the worsening situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The European Council reiterates the importance of preserving and pursuing the democratic functioning of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority whose continuity is crucial for a future independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State based on the rule of law.

**Excerpts of the EU-US Vienna Summit Declaration on the
situation in the Middle East**
Brussels, 21 June 2006

The one-day summit in Vienna resulted in renewed calls for commitment to previous agreements and obligations. Excerpts of the statement are reproduced below.

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We will continue to closely cooperate in the Middle East, notably through the Quartet. We welcome the Temporary International Mechanism to deliver assistance directly to the Palestinian

people. We will continue to deliver humanitarian assistance and promote Palestinian democracy and civil society. While recalling President Abbas' commitment to a platform of peace, we will continue to urge the new Palestinian Government to commit to non-violence, recognize Israel's right to exist and accept existing agreements and obligations.

We will continue to call on Israel to ease restrictions on access and movement and to take additional steps, including with respect to the Palestinian tax and customs revenues, to improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. We remind both sides of their obligations under the 15 November 2005 Agreement.

We will continue to promote a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the Road Map in order to advance a just, viable and lasting two-State solution and we call on both parties to avoid unilateral measures that prejudice final status issues. We call on the Palestinian Authority Government to implement policies that will permit the international community to provide greater support to and review its policies on contact with the Palestinian Authority.

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**Statement by the G-8 leaders at the thirty-second summit
on the situation in the Middle East**

St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 16 July 2006

Following their meeting, the G-8 leaders issued a statement in which they expressed deepening concern about the situation in the Middle East and presented a list of conditions for a permanent solution to the conflict:

Today, we the G-8 leaders express our deepening concern about the situation in the Middle East, in particular the rising civilian casualties on all sides and the damage to infrastructure. We are united in our determination to pursue efforts to restore peace. We offer our full support for the UN Secretary-General's mission presently in the region.

The root cause of the problems in the region is the absence of a comprehensive Middle East peace.

The immediate crisis results from efforts by extremist forces to destabilize the region and to frustrate the aspirations of the Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese people for democracy and peace. In Gaza, elements of Hamas launched rocket attacks against Israeli territory and abducted an Israeli soldier. In Lebanon, Hizbollah, in violation of the Blue Line, attacked Israel from Lebanese territory and killed and captured Israeli soldiers, reversing the positive trends that began with the Syrian withdrawal in 2005 and undermining the democratically elected Government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

These extremist elements and those that support them cannot be allowed to plunge the Middle East into chaos and provoke a wider conflict. The extremists must immediately halt their attacks.

It is also critical that Israel, while exercising the right to defend itself, be mindful of the strategic and humanitarian consequences of its actions. We call upon Israel to exercise utmost restraint, seeking to avoid casualties among innocent civilians and damage to civilian infrastructure and to refrain from acts that would destabilize the Lebanese Government.

The most urgent priority is to create conditions for a cessation of violence that will be sustainable and lay the foundation for a more permanent solution. This, in our judgment, requires:

- The return of the Israeli soldiers in Gaza and Lebanon unharmed
- An end to the shelling of Israeli territory
- An end to Israeli military operations and the early withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza
- The release of the arrested Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians

The framework for resolving these disputes is already established by international consensus.

In Lebanon, UN Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) address the underlying conditions that gave rise to this crisis. We urge the UN Security Council to develop a plan for the full implementation of these resolutions.

We extend to the Government of Lebanon our full support in asserting its sovereign authority over all its territory in fulfilment of resolution 1559 (2004). This includes the deployment of Lebanese Armed Forces to all parts of the country, in particular the South, and the disarming of militias. We would welcome an examination by the UN Security Council of the possibility of an international security/monitoring presence.

We also support the initiation of a political dialogue between Lebanese and Israeli officials on all issues of concern to both parties. In addition, we will support the economic and humanitarian needs of the Lebanese people, including the convening at the right time of a donors' conference.

In Gaza, the disengagement of Israel provided an opportunity to move a further step towards a two-State solution under the Road Map. All Palestinian parties should accept the existence of Israel, reject violence and accept all previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. For its part, Israel needs to refrain from unilateral acts that could prejudice a final settlement and agree to negotiate in good faith.

Our goal is an immediate end to the current violence, resumption of security cooperation and of a political engagement both among Palestinians and with Israel. This requires:

- An end to terrorist attacks against Israel
- A resumption of the efforts of President Abbas to ensure that the Palestinian Government complies with the Quartet principles
- Immediate expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism for donors established under the direction of the Quartet
- Israeli compliance with the Agreement on Movement and Access of November 2005 and action on other steps to ease the humanitarian plight of the people of Gaza and the West Bank

- Resumption of security cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis
- Action to ensure that the Palestinian security forces comply with Palestinian law and with the Road Map, so that they are unified and effective in providing security for the Palestinian people
- Resumption of dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli political officials

These proposals are our contribution to the international effort under way to restore calm to the Middle East and provide a basis for progress towards a sustainable peace, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Quartet will continue to play a central role. The G-8 welcomes the positive efforts of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, as well as other responsible regional actors to return the region to peace. We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General's mission to the Security Council later this week, which we believe could provide a framework for achieving our common objectives.

**Statement by the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)
on the situation in the Middle East
19 July 2006**

After meeting to consider the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, the Foreign Ministers of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement issued the following statement condemning Israel's actions and calling for an immediate ceasefire:

Malaysia, in its capacity as Chair and on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, expresses its serious concern at the continued deterioration of the situation in the Middle East in recent weeks, particularly in Gaza and Lebanon. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel has caused extensive damage to properties, serious injuries and loss of civilian lives, including children. It is regrettable that the calls made by the international community for Israel to halt its military offensive and withdraw its troops have fallen on deaf ears.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns the disproportionate use of force by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon and the detention of Palestinian Ministers, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and other Palestinian officials. NAM firmly rejects the collective punishment of the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. Israel's unilateral military actions have undermined the efforts made by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas vis-à-vis Palestinian political parties, aimed at promoting a final political settlement on the basis of the two-State solution.

Israel's brutal military actions in Gaza and Beirut, including attacks upon Palestinian governmental institutions – which ignore the principles of international law – have not only weakened efforts towards peace but also reflect its lack of seriousness to be a genuine “Partner for Peace”. It is deeply regrettable that, at a time when efforts should be made to resuscitate the peace process, the Israeli Government has chosen to undermine them, clearly demonstrating Israel's cynical attitude towards the peace process.

The international community, particularly the United Nations Security Council and the Quartet, should make every effort to ensure that these aggressive military actions by Israel do not lead to a widening of the conflict involving other countries in the region. They must exert efforts for an immediate ceasefire and the deployment of an international force, so as to de-escalate the conflict and stabilize the situation, and take other confidence-building measures between the parties, with the objective of resuming the peace process.

Summary by the Chair of the Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Stockholm, 1 September 2006

The following statement was issued at the conclusion of the Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories which was hosted by the Government of Sweden and co-hosted by Norway and Spain on 1 September 2006:

The Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was hosted by the Swedish Government on 1 September 2006. The conference was co-hosted by Norway and Spain, and was a follow-up to the technical meeting held in Geneva on 14 July 2006. It was prepared and carried out with the active participation of the Office of the President of the Palestinian Authority, and addressed immediate funding needs under the revised United Nations consolidated appeal, as well as underlying policy concerns, including movement and access issues.

The conference was attended by 35 countries, more than 10 UN agencies, the EC, the Red Cross Movement and a number of international organizations, making the conference truly global.

During the conference, the Office of the Palestinian President and the United Nations presented assessments of the most immediate needs and policy concerns in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In Gaza in particular, some 1.4 million people, half of them children, live under extremely difficult conditions as a result of the current closure regime, military operations and violence, virtually no payments of civil servant salaries, rampant unemployment, reduced electricity and water supply. The conference also agreed that the international community should address the grave environmental situation at the Gaza Strip without delay.

The conference recognized that the difficult humanitarian situation in Gaza is man-made and caused by continued conflict, violence and occupation. Several delegations stressed the need for both parties of the conflict to respect international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and to ensure the protection of civilians. In this context it is important to emphasize that a negotiated settlement of the conflict, based upon the demands of the Quartet, the road map and international law, is the single most important factor for an improvement of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The conference reiterated that unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance to the affected population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is an obligation under international humanitarian law and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The participants further noted that the right to receive humanitarian assistance is a fundamental humanitarian principle, which should be enjoyed by all who are in need.

The need for rehabilitation and reinvigoration of the Palestinian economy was stressed, and particularly the need to ease the movement and access restrictions imposed on the civilian population.

There is an urgent need to ensure free access and movement for relief and recovery operations into and out of Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The most pressing need currently is the restoration of civilian infrastructure, including for electricity, water and sanitation. Other areas of great concern are health, agriculture and education for Palestinian children.

The conference noted the complementary aspects of the UN Consolidated Appeals Process and the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) as important multilateral instruments to deal with the current situation. The meeting commended the progress reported by the EC in implementing the TIM and stressed the need to fully implement the mechanism. Reaffirming the principles agreed upon by the Quartet, the meeting underscored the importance of maintaining effective structures within the Palestinian Authority to provide for the Palestinian people. A further deterioration of the Authority's institutional capacity risks causing severe long-term effects on the Palestinian society.

Many delegates stressed the importance that Israel release the Palestinian VAT and tax funds of approximately \$500 million without delay. This would meet the most urgent Palestinian needs.

The financial, economic and political requirements for early recovery and reconstruction were discussed, and the delegations stressed the need for flexible funding in this regard. Even in this respect the issue of access was raised as a major concern.

This conference resulted in a total amount pledged in the order of \$200 million. Approximately \$110 million was announced to meet humanitarian needs and of that amount \$55 million covers the request of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). This means that the coverage of the CAP has increased from 43 per cent to 58 per cent. In addition to this, Saudi Arabia also pledged \$250 million. Most of the assistance to the Palestinian Territories will at this point of time be directed to meet the humanitarian needs.

**Excerpts of the EU Council conclusions welcoming agreement
on Palestinian Unity Government
Brussels, 15 September 2006**

Excerpts of the statement issued by the EU Council on the conclusions adopted after its external relations meeting on the Middle East peace process are set below.

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The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement.

The Council welcomed the prospect of a meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas in the near future with a view to relaunching negotiations. It called for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions as well as to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian territories. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It further repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody.

The Council reiterated the need for all parties to respect their Road Map obligations. It renewed its call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. Ministers reiterated that the EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

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**Statement by Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the
Security Council ministerial meeting on the Middle East**

New York, 21 September 2006

On 21 December 2006, the Security Council held a meeting at the ministerial level on the situation in the Middle East. The meeting emphasized the importance of the Road Map and affirmed the statement made by the Quartet the previous day. Russian Federation Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov issued the following statement:

We responded attentively to the initiative of the League of Arab States to request the Security Council to examine the situation evolving in the Middle East comprehensively. We believe that, at a time when the Middle East peace process has been dealt a serious blow, collective efforts would be timely and useful in restoring political dialogue between Arabs and Israel.

The war in Lebanon has confirmed once again that force not only fails to solve existing problems, but also delays progress towards a lasting and just peace in the region. A serious new impetus for resumption of the peace process on all tracks is needed based on a comprehensive settlement. Concrete steps of a humanitarian character would be helpful in creating necessary conditions for that – in the first place the release of Israeli war prisoners and Palestinian and Lebanese detainees.

Despite all the difficulties, however, the situation is not hopeless.

As before, we regard the Palestine-Israel conflict as pivotal to the region's destinies. It is obvious that its unsettledness remains a breeding ground for extremism and the origination of ever new hot spots in the Middle East, and not only there.

There are opportunities to find a political solution between Israel and the PNA, and it is necessary to take advantage of them. Especially as the basis for action in this direction is well known: the Road Map, adopted by both parties in conflict, and the Quartet must play the leading role.

Yesterday, the Quartet made a decision to reinvigorate contacts between the Special Representatives and Quartet ministers with Israel, the Palestinians and leading Arab countries.

We also welcomed Kofi Annan's initiative in returning James Wolfensohn to his Middle East team. The serious experience that he has will help solve the economic and social problems of the Palestinians, we believe.

We are convinced that it is necessary to continue providing vigorous support to Mahmoud Abbas in his efforts to establish a government of national unity on a platform that would move towards the principles of the Quartet. It was also important to make clear to the Palestinians the links between their steps towards Israel and movement towards a settlement.

Hopefully, the international community will support the PNA Head as Palestinian leader, particularly by providing economic support to the Palestinians and releasing their sources of financing. This, in view of the extremely grave humanitarian situation in the PNA territories, is now extremely important.

Regarding the Lebanese track, things there go, on the whole, in the right direction. Although the situation remains fragile, the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) is continuing, and it has to be fulfilled in full. This is only possible if all Lebanese political forces are involved, including Hezbollah. We note the lifting of Israel's air and sea blockade of Lebanon as an important step. We welcome the deployment of units of the regular Lebanese army and the continued deployment of the strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon contingent in the south of Lebanon. It is important that the evacuation of the Israeli army should be completed soon, as planned.

We are very concerned over the humanitarian situation in Lebanon. We will provide assistance to Lebanon by sending engineer-sapper units of the Russian army to restore the country's infrastructure. Preparation for their dispatch to the region has already begun.

The Syrian track, in a frozen state for a long time now, must also be resuscitated. Our contacts with the Syrian leadership gave the impression that Damascus is sincerely interested in establishing firm peace in the region.

And lastly, I would like to stress that we view favourably the initiative of the League of Arab States to begin preparations for an international conference on the Middle East. By and large, the Russian Federation stood at its origins. President Putin spoke of this in 2005 during his visit to the region.

While it is not going to be easy to implement that initiative, it is necessary to embark on a collective search for a solution of one of today's most complicated problems as soon as possible.

In our view, the forum must be well-prepared and can't be reduced to a one-day exchange of statements. It should become the beginning of a negotiation process on all interrelated tracks in the Middle East.

Let us not forget that it was the Security Council that approved a series of resolutions which form the basis of a comprehensive Middle East settlement. It is our straightforward duty to facilitate the start of practical realization of this objective.

**Address by EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
Javier Solana to the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee
Brussels, 4 October 2006**

A summary of the remarks made by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, follows:

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Israeli-Palestinian question

There have been dramatic developments over the past few days. The situation in Gaza and in the West Bank is explosive. Violent armed clashes erupted between Fatah and Hamas last Sunday. Several people have been killed. One Hamas leader was killed today by Palestinians in the West Bank.

Efforts to calm the situation are continuing, by various parties – including parties in the region and us – to consolidate the calm. The potential for further deterioration of the situation still exists in spite of the efforts exerted.

Qatar yesterday proposed a six-point plan aimed at reducing the tension. It proposes a new government with a different prime minister. This will probably not fly but it is a good attempt from an active Arab country.

President Abbas is expected to take decisive decisions to overcome the current crisis. There has been no agreement so far between him and Hamas on the formation of a unity government. But there is serious talk of a unity government formed of qualified nationals. If this is not possible, there is the possibility that President Abbas will call early elections. I think this would complicate things.

The Quartet met the week before last in New York and it issued a good, clear statement, welcomed by the parties, using European language, welcoming the Palestinian efforts to form a government of national unity. Let us hope that, from now on, the Quartet can play a more active role. We must give momentum to the efforts to make the Israel-Palestine conflict the centre of gravity because if this is not solved the rest of the conflicts in the Middle East cannot be solved.

I intend to go myself to the Middle East soon, after my two trips to Lebanon during the summer conflict.

The EU has been helping Palestine both politically and economically. Without external political and economic support, the situation in the Palestinian Territories may deteriorate beyond recovery.

So far this year, the EU's support for the Palestinians already exceeds the total amount for 2005 despite Hamas' ascent to power. But we should do more. We are determined to do more.

The Rafah crossing point, on the border between Palestine and Egypt, has been closed for most of the time since the abduction of the Israeli soldier. We have tried very hard to have it open at least for a few hours in the day. We are also looking at the possibility of setting up a similar operation to the EUBAM Rafah mission on the border between Palestine and Israel.

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Israeli-Palestinian joint statement on the Geneva Initiative meeting

8 December 2006

After the joint Israeli-Palestinian meeting on the Geneva Initiative, the following statement was released by both sides:

The only way to resolve the conflict between the two peoples is through political and agreed-upon means. As has been proven in the past, limited, unilateral, or violent actions will not bring about the end of the conflict.

Only a political solution will serve the real interests of the two sides, and the only way to achieve a political solution is through negotiations.

We call upon the leadership of both sides to take practical steps to ensure the continuation of the cease-fire and its expansion to include the West Bank. Both sides must seek to bring about a significant improvement in the daily life of ordinary citizens, including their freedom of movement.

We urge all relevant parties to do their utmost in order to bring about the immediate release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit as well as the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, including ministers and members of the Legislative Council.

We expect from the leadership of both sides, in parallel to ensuring the tranquillity, to commence negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement. In order to ensure the success of the negotiations, both sides should agree in advance on the agenda for discussions and on the parameters of the future agreement.

We welcome the recommendations contained in the Iraq Study Group report and support the immediate opening of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians along the lines outlined in the report. We call upon the international community, and first and foremost on the members of the Quartet, to adopt the recommendations and work towards their implementation.

We reiterate that the goals of negotiations between the two sides must include the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders as stipulated by the Arab Peace Initiative, President Bush's vision and the Geneva Initiative.

Excerpts of the EU Council Presidency conclusions on the Middle East

Brussels, 15 December 2006

Excerpts of the declaration issued on 15 December following the Council's meeting on the situation in the Middle East (16879/06, CONCL 3) are set out below.

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The European Council noted with concern that the Middle East is faced with one of the worst crises in years. The Israeli-Arab conflict is at the heart of this crisis. The EU is committed to overcoming the current impasse in the peace process and to easing tensions in the broader region.

The ceasefire in Gaza is an important first step. Violations of the ceasefire must end and it should be extended to the West Bank. For the ceasefire to be meaningful and sustainable it must be consolidated through a political process. In this respect the European Council noted Prime Minister Olmert's address of 27 November. The EU welcomed the readiness of President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert to resume dialogue, and urged them to meet soon. The European Council also invited the other members of the Quartet and the regional partners to intensify common efforts aimed at reinvigorating the peace process.

The European Council commended the efforts of President Abbas over the last six months to form a government of national unity. The EU stands ready to work with a legitimate Palestinian Government that adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles. If such a Government is formed, the EU undertakes: to resume partnership with the Palestinian Government and encourage Quartet partners to do likewise; to continue, with other donors, providing financial support; and to prepare, in cooperation with the new Government, a long-term plan on capacity-building, border management and unified and effective security forces, as well as a functioning Administration.

The European Council called for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commended efforts, including by partners in the region to that effect. The European Council also called for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel.

The European Council noted the vital role played by the Temporary International Mechanism in providing essential relief to a large part of the Palestinian population since its launch in June 2006.

The increased assistance provided by the Community's budget and by member States bilaterally this year, and the contributions by other donors to the Mechanism are deeply valued. In view of the protracted deterioration of the socio-economic situation of the Palestinians, the European Council endorsed a further three-month extension of the Mechanism until March 2007.

The European Council calls for the release of Palestinian customs and tax revenues withheld by Israel.

The European Council reiterated the need for full and speedy implementation of the Road Map. As a first step, the following priorities should be pursued, following a calendar agreed between the parties and monitored by the Quartet: full and speedy implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access; full implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings, including the release of prisoners and resumption of security cooperation between the parties; parallel implementation by the parties of the obligations they have committed to under the first phase of the Road Map.

These, though important, are only initial steps, and must lead to meaningful negotiations on the final status, the ultimate goal of which is an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security. In that context the parties have to take concrete and immediate measures to put an end to all acts of violence and to all activities which are contrary to international law, including settlement activities and the construction of the barrier on Palestinian land, that constitute an obstacle to the achievement of that goal. The EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

The European Council invited the Quartet to stand ready to lead an effort by the international community to build on the outcome of successful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in order to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, including peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon and full normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab countries.

This will require an inclusive approach involving all relevant actors; all need to engage constructively in the region to support these efforts. In accordance with the Road Map, the Quartet, in consultation with the parties, should in due course convene an international conference to realize these goals.

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**Three-point agreement between Hamas and Fatah proposed by the
Organization of the Islamic Conference**

Jeddah, 19 December 2006

The Organization of the Islamic Conference sent out the following press release announcing a three-point agreement between Hamas and Fatah:

An Organization of the Islamic Conference-sponsored three-point agreement between the Fatah movement and the Hamas movement was announced last night, following the visit by the OIC Secretary-General, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, to the Palestinian territories, where he met President Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen in Ramallah and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza.

The three points are: that comprehensive calm should return in the Palestinian territories through the withdrawal of all weapons and the ending of all marches; that an independent judicial committee made up of five judges (one judge each to be appointed by Hamas and Fatah and three judges to be appointed by the OIC) be constituted to investigate all past incidents; and that

national dialogue among all factions, particularly between Fatah and Hamas, should be resumed without any preconditions.

President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh have both agreed that the OIC and its Secretary-General should play a pivotal role in the implementation of this agreement and the realization of the three objectives mentioned.

**Statement by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority
President Mahmoud Abbas following their meeting in Jerusalem**
Jerusalem, 23 December 2006

After their meeting held in 23 December 2006 at the residence of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas released the following joint statement:

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met at his Jerusalem residence with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas. During the meeting, which was conducted in a good and friendly atmosphere, the two men expressed their willingness to cooperate – as genuine partners – in an effort to advance the peace process between Israel and the PA and to reach a solution of two States living side by side in peace and security, according to the Road Map.

The two leaders agreed that the Israeli and Palestinian peoples had suffered enough and that the time had come to advance the peace process via concrete steps and to refrain from taking any measures that could predetermine the number of issues that would be resolved in negotiations. The two leaders believe that this meeting was a first step towards rebuilding the sides' confidence and in establishing a fruitful partnership.

The two leaders emphasized the importance of direct and serious contact between them and decided to meet frequently, thus continuing the ongoing link between them, in order to advance current issues on the agenda.

Prime Minister Olmert expressed his concern over the continued firing of Qassam rockets from the Gaza Strip and said that Israel could not show restraint for long if the violations of the ceasefire continued. The two leaders agreed to reconsider expanding the ceasefire to the West Bank, in keeping with the February 2005 Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings.

They agreed to immediately resume the joint committees, as they were determined prior to Sharm el-Sheikh, under the authority of the Palestinian Authority President in order to deal with current issues: maintaining the cessation of violence; advancing the future transfer of security responsibility over the Palestinian areas; and implementation of the arrangements that were previously agreed upon regarding Palestinian fugitives and deportees.

It was also decided to resume the work of the quadripartite security committee between Israel, the PA (via the Presidential Guard), Egypt and the US, including the deployment of the Presidential Guard along the Philadelphi Corridor and in the northern Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Olmert told PA President Abbas that he understood his and Palestinian society's sensitivity on the prisoner issue and said that he would be prepared to release to the PA President after the release of Gilad Shalit. It was also decided to resume the work of the joint community responsible for formulating new arrangements and parameters on the release of Palestinian prisoners. This committee will begin work immediately and will submit its conclusions to the two leaders as soon as possible.

Prime Minister Olmert said that Israel would take immediate and concrete steps in order to ease humanitarian conditions for the Palestinian people. To this end, the Prime Minister decided to transfer a portion of the Palestinian tax funds being held by Israel in order to enable supplies for – and assist in the current operations of – several Palestinian hospitals and in order to deal with the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population. It was agreed that this arrangement would be expanded in the future to deal with additional humanitarian needs. It was made clear that the funds that would be unfrozen would not be transferred to the PA.

The two men also agreed to make a genuine effort to upgrade the crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel in order to facilitate better passage for goods and people. To this end, it was decided to improve security checks at these crossings in order to reach a target of 400 trucks a day between the Gaza Strip and Israel and to promote the possibilities of trade between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel. The two leaders said that they intended to resume the work of the joint economic committee. Prime Minister Olmert told PA President Abbas that, in coordination with Defense Minister Amir Peretz, he had instructed the IDF to remove several checkpoints and to submit a plan for the removal of additional checkpoints in the West Bank in order to facilitate easier passage for the Palestinian population that is not engaged in terrorism.