
**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 5 November 2004

Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council

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Middle East

1. The European Council expresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people in this difficult moment. It encourages the Palestinian leadership to demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility in ensuring the regular functioning of Palestinian institutions. The European Council considers that it is essential that a legitimate leadership continues to resolutely pursue the path towards peace in the Middle East.
2. The European Council, recalling the established EU positions, remains committed to the two-State solution as laid out in the Roadmap and agreed between the parties, which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with an Israel living within recognised and secure borders.
3. The European Council welcomes the Knesset vote on 26 October to support an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip and part of the northern West Bank. The European Council expresses its willingness to support such a withdrawal as a first step in the overall process, in accordance with the conditions laid out by the European Council in March 2004, amongst which, that it takes place in the context of the Roadmap. The European Council also recalls the Quartet statement of 22 September.
4. The European Council endorses the short-term programme of action in the fields of security, reforms, elections and economy proposed by the High Representative. It underlines in particular its readiness to support the electoral process in the Palestinian Territories. The European Council calls on the Palestinian Authority to organise elections in accordance with international standards under the authority of an independent electoral commission and calls upon Israel to facilitate these elections.
5. The European Council stresses that these initiatives will need full cooperation from and between the parties, as well as coordination with other partners involved, especially in the region - in particular with Egypt - and within the Quartet. The European Council reiterates its readiness to support the Palestinian Authority in taking responsibility for law and order. The European Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to present regular progress reports on the implementation of these initiatives.
6. At the same time, with a view to relaunching a meaningful political process of negotiations, the European Council considers that support for these short-term proposals would be enhanced if they could be placed within a broader political perspective. It invites the High Representative to conduct consultations to that effect, with the parties, the international community, and, especially, the other members of the Quartet.
7. The European Council reiterates its condemnation of violence and terrorism, and urges the resumption of a ceasefire embracing all parties and groups.

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