



EU Presidency Statement - United Nations Security: Debate on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Summary: 14 October 2009, New York - Statement on behalf of the European Union by H.E. Mr. Anders Lidén, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden, at the Security Council Debate on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, United Nations

Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Developments over the past year have clearly shown that we must move swiftly towards a renewal of the peace process in the Middle East.

The European Union urges the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel to enter into serious peace negotiations as soon as possible, respecting international law and previous agreements, including implementing their Roadmap obligations. We hereby reiterate the need for a political solution, with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

We welcome the US Administration's commitment to pursue vigorously a two-state solution and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The EU is ready to work with the parties to the conflict as well as the United States, other Quartet members and Arab partners to achieve this goal. The EU welcomes the initial step announced by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of commitment to a peace that would include a Palestinian state.

Mr President,

A durable solution to the Gaza crisis has to be achieved through the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860. The EU remains gravely concerned at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for the immediate and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. Reconstruction and economic recovery have to be allowed. An effective mechanism to prevent ammunitions smuggling into the Gaza strip must also be established. The European Union calls for a complete stop to all violence, including a sustained halt to rocket attacks at Israel. We reiterate our call on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

Mr President,

The declared readiness of the government of Israel to promote Palestinian economic development is a positive sign. We look forward to further and sustained improvements of movement and access in all of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Agreement on Movement and Access of 2005 must be fully implemented.

The European Union remains deeply concerned at the continued settlement activities, house demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including in East Jerusalem. We urge

the Government of Israel to end settlement activities immediately, including so called natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001. The EU reiterates that the settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. The EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

The European Union is also very concerned about the recent incidents in East Jerusalem. We have been following closely the situation around the Al Aqsa mosque and Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif in recent days. We urge all parties to refrain from any provocative actions that could further inflame tensions or lead to violence. Everyone must take action to avoid escalation. If there is to be genuine peace, a way must be found to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.

The EU expresses its continued encouragement for inter-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas and support for the mediation efforts by Egypt and the Arab League. Overcoming divisions among Palestinians would help prevent a deeper separation between the West Bank and Gaza and preserve the chances of restoring the unity of a future Palestinian state. The EU calls on all Palestinians to find common ground, based on non-violence, in order to facilitate reconstruction in Gaza and the organisation of elections.

EU urges Arab countries and other partners to be forthcoming, both politically and financially, in assisting the Palestinian Authority. Underlining the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, the EU reiterates its call on Israel and all Arab countries to take confidence building measures in order to stimulate mutual trust and to create an atmosphere conducive to conflict resolution.

A lasting settlement of the conflicts between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon should be pursued in parallel, creating mutually reinforcing processes. In this regard the EU expects Syria and Israel to resume peace negotiations. The EU welcomes the formation of a new Lebanese government as soon as possible.

Mr President,

The Report of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict includes allegations regarding grave violations of international humanitarian law. As expressed in the Human Rights Council, the EU is committed to assess the report and its recommendations seriously. We will do so based on the clear positions expressed by the EU on the conduct of the conflict and the importance the EU attaches to a durable peace. The EU deeply deplores the loss of life during the Gaza conflict, particularly the civilian casualties. The EU has consistently reminded all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

One of the European Union's overarching human rights priorities is combating impunity. On this basis, we call upon both parties to fully adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. The EU emphasises the importance of appropriate and credible investigations into possible violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict in accordance with international standards, noting in this regard that the Mission directs its recommendations to both Israel and Palestinian actors. The Human Rights Council should ensure appropriate follow up, in particular by assessing whether credible investigations have been conducted by both sides. We will, during the continued consideration in the Human Rights Council, engage constructively in the search of a consensual resolution.

Thank you, Mr President.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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