WORKING GROUP MIDDLE EAST

Mandate and Objectives

The mandate as fixed by the Conference of Presidents is to monitor developments closely in the region in general, and in respect of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute in particular, in order:

1. to deepen analysis and understanding of Middle Eastern issues within the Parliament;
2. to participate in the elaboration of a European contribution to the Middle East peace and development processes;
3. to enhance the parliamentary dimension of these processes, and to offer input into the European Parliament's activities in relation to the Middle East, including the conference foreseen for the spring of 2008;

Contribution to the European Parliament's Middle East activities

- Act as a clearing-house and centralise information on all EP Middle East activities (EP committees and delegations, political groups, individual members, President);
- Discuss and fine-tune the political purpose and messages to be delivered on the occasion of upcoming trips to the region: Mashrek Delegation to Jordan (28 April - 2 May), PLC Delegation to Palestine (21 - 26 July) and the Ad hoc Delegation to Israel and Palestine (to be determined);
- Give its input on the formula and timing for the planned conference in spring 2008.

Contributing to a truly European strategy

The Working Group could take a proactive role in analysing and discussing in depth the following issues:

Follow-up on the EU’s financial commitments

- While Annapolis formalises the US preeminence on the political arbitrage of the ongoing negotiations, the EU concentrates on its donor role. The Working Group could monitor how the new “PEGASE” mechanism implements the aid committed at the Paris Donors conference according to PM Fayyad’s Three-Years-Plan. This monitoring should include the follow-up of the progress of the “economic projects” announced by the Representative of the Quartet, Mr Tony Blair.

The EU’s profile within the Quartet

- Has the policy of three criteria (renouncing violence, respect former agreements, recognise the State of Israel) for working with the Palestinian government been
successful? Which criteria would enable Europe to stick to its principles while maximising its political leverage?

Dealing with Hamas and a new Palestinian Unity Government

- Any agreement between Israel and the Palestinians will need broad popular and political support. Ongoing efforts to reconcile Fatah and Hamas show that the issue of dealing with Hamas remains highly topical. What should be the EP stance toward a new Palestinian Unity Government? Where are the red lines?

Preparing for early Palestinian elections

- Early Palestinian elections could drive the EU again into the dilemma which followed Hamas’ victory in January 2006. What is the EP position on future election observation? Should criteria be set for participating parties? Should the EP formulate ex-ante conditions or announce that it will respect any democratic outcome?

An international/European peace-keeping force

- In case of a successful peace deal the question of an international/European peace keeping force could come up again. Even before, the issue of international forces securing the Gaza-Israeli border could rise. What would be the EP’s position?

Integrating Syria and Lebanon

- How could the EP sensibly combine its commitment towards the Israeli-Palestinian issue with initiatives to integrate both Syria and Lebanon in a comprehensive peace solution for the region?

Cooperation with the Arab League

- How could the EP and the Arab League join ongoing efforts to reach a comprehensive peace settlement?