

Foreign Affairs

Conclusion of Buzek's visit to the Palestinian Territories and Israel

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http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/transform/thumb-view/ep_president/static/images/press-release/41325.jpg

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Concluding his trip to the Palestinian Territories and Israel, the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek made the following remarks:

"Over the last three days, I have had meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I encouraged both sides to return to the negotiating table. I stressed that the Arab Spring creates a new context in the region and makes a historic peace deal ever more urgent.

In my personal opinion, both sides made it clear that they are committed to negotiations as their preferred option, regardless of the remaining gaps between their positions.

The message I understood from the talks is that the international community can now play a decisive role in getting the negotiations started without delay. Trust is missing in the Middle East. The international community should help to ensure that the dreams of peace do not turn once again into fanciful illusions.

I told Prime Minister Netanyahu on Tuesday evening that the EU discourages unilateral action on both sides, as it undermines confidence and makes negotiations more difficult. I urged him to show true leadership and start negotiations with the Palestinians with the aim of achieving a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps."

In his speech to the Knesset on Wednesday, President Buzek said:

"The need for progress on the Middle East peace process is more urgent than ever. Nobody can afford the status quo. For Israel, continuing to live with the fear of Kassam rockets fired on its population is not sustainable, not to mention the constant insecurity of being surrounded by hostile neighbours. For Palestinians, the 'Arab spring' could increase their frustration not only against the occupation, but also against a divided Palestinian leadership."

President Buzek later met Israeli President Shimon Peres. After the meeting Buzek said:

"Your immense wisdom and experience, Mr President Peres, will be fundamental to restarting the negotiations. Peacemakers will live forever in history. Israel is a key partner for the EU.

In Gaza on Monday, I called on Israel to end immediately the blockade. The blockade on Gaza causes human suffering, breeding frustration and radicalism."