



King Abdullah II of Jordan addresses the European Parliament

In an address to a formal sitting of the House on Wednesday, King Abdullah II of Jordan focused on the prospects for peace in the Middle East and relations between that region and the European Union. Introducing the King, EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering reminded the House that this was his third visit to the European Parliament. King Abdullah's address today, said Mr Pöttering, was "a clear indication of our common future in the Mediterranean region".

New horizons for Middle East

Opening his speech, the King told MEPs "A changing Europe and a changing Middle East are here today". He spoke of "A Europe of expanding membership and a vision-ary mission: for cooperation across borders and growth without barriers" and "A Middle East of new horizons and growing hope: for peace among neighbours, opportunities for its people and a future for our youth".

Annapolis talks give real hope for peace

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian talks at Annapolis, he said "a critical opportunity is before us". "For the first time in years, we see movement toward a permanent settlement and an independent, sovereign, viable Palestinian state". "Second chances are rare", said King Abdullah, "but I believe we have come to one". He added "Annapolis has created a new spark of hope. We can and must fan that spark into a blaze of confidence, action and tangible results".

He continued "As our near neighbour, Europe shares our interest in solving this, the central crisis of our age. All sides respect Europe's neutral role and model of regional progress and peace. For years you have been our partner in the search for solutions". He added "I have come here today to urge your active engagement, to seek your specific, practical skills and investment in the future, and to offer Jordan's own commitment in the days of work that lie ahead".

Security the first priority

The king then mentioned a number of areas "where action must begin now". The first was "to support the negotiations and their goal: a final settlement, creating an end to conflict, security for both Palestine and Israel, and at long last, a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state". The international community must be engaged in the process. "This includes creating a security framework that can offer assurance to both sides. European peacekeeping forces have played a constructive role in Lebanon. Your commitment can help bring great trust to a Palestinian-Israeli settlement".

Apart from a security framework, added the king, "there is a need not only for resources but for partnership – to boost economic opportunities, create confidence that the politic-

al process works, and help create the conditions that will sustain peace".

Economic benefits should follow

A second imperative is "to understand and articulate the potential of peace. We must begin now to re-envision the future: a region where conflict has given way to cooperation, where a regional economy brings together the capabilities and resources of 22 countries – more than 300 million people, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean". This, said the king, "will unleash a new scope for partnership with our European neighbours, in science, technology and trade".

Referring to last spring's widely supported Arab Peace Initiative, King Abdullah told the House that achieving such a peace "will create new strategic space, allowing the resolution of other serious issues, from poverty to proliferation". To applause from the House, he said "Aggressive forces will no longer be able to exploit the Palestinian cause to serve their own ambitions and interests".

"We in Jordan are ready to meet that future", stressed the king, pointing out that his country had pressed forward with its reform program, achieving significant economic progress as well as improvements in education. He went on: "Europe has been an important partner, through private-sector investments, as well as official assistance. Allow me to say, we deeply appreciate the support and friendship of this Parliament and the European Union".

Concluding this point, the king told the House "Today, we can think of a larger neighbourhood, one that stretches from north of the Baltic Sea to south of the Mediterranean, one that is shared by Europe and the Middle East. It is the basis of the Euro-Med Partnership, our region-to-region platform for cooperation and development."

Europe as a model for conflict resolution

Seeing Europe's resolution of its past conflicts as a sign of hope for his own region, King Abdullah said "Today, young Europeans are coming to adulthood who never knew a divided Europe. Their young counterparts, Palestinian and Israeli, have no such positive experience; they have grown up in a world of division and conflict. Now, together, we have an opportunity to remove the barriers to their future, and leave the past behind."

Winding up his speech, the king said "In the arena of the Middle East, a new olive branch has just been planted. Now the real work must begin. It is in our hands to create the process and structures that will give peace roots, help it grow, and sustain it into the future. I urge you to share in this effort. Our partnership can create an historic transformation, and a rich harvest – years of peace and prosperity, that will benefit our peoples and our world."

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