

Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

Foreign Affairs Council meeting

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is extremely concerned at the continued escalation of violence in Gaza and calls for an immediate cessation of the hostilities based on a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement. In this regard the EU welcomes on-going efforts by regional partners, and in particular by Egypt, and reiterates its readiness to provide the necessary support to this end.

The EU strongly condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, directly harming civilians. These are criminal and unjustifiable acts. The EU calls on Hamas to immediately put an end to these acts and to renounce violence. All terrorist groups in Gaza must disarm. The EU strongly condemns calls on the civilian population of Gaza to provide themselves as human shields.

The EU condemns the loss of hundreds of civilian lives, among them many women and children. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, the EU underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. The EU stresses the need for protection of civilians at all times. The EU is particularly appalled by the human cost of the Israeli military operation in Shuja'iyya, and is deeply concerned at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. All sides must meet their obligations and immediately allow safe and full humanitarian access in Gaza for the urgent distribution of assistance. The EU calls on all sides to implement in good faith an immediate cease fire.

2. This tragic escalation of hostilities confirms again the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. While fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security needs, the EU underlines that the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in Gaza must be addressed. It reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, in line with UNSC resolution 1860 (2009).

The EU stands ready, including through the reactivation of the EUBAM Rafah mission, if conditions allow, to contribute to a comprehensive and sustainable solution meeting the legitimate security, economic and humanitarian needs of Israelis and Palestinians.

3. The EU strongly condemns the abduction and brutal murder of teenagers from both sides. The perpetrators of these barbaric acts must be brought to justice. The EU commends Israeli and Palestinian leaders for their condemnation of the killings of the abducted teenagers and it deplors all irresponsible statements made in this context on either side. The EU believes that the tragic events of the past weeks reinforce the need for Israelis and Palestinians to work together to fight all forms of terror and violence and to combat incitement.
4. Recent events in the wider Middle East pose serious threats to the EU as well as to its immediate neighbours. The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region.
5. The EU has fully supported US-led peace efforts and underlines that these efforts must not go to waste. The EU is convinced that the regional context and the current crisis make a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more necessary than ever. The EU urges the parties to resume meaningful negotiations with the aim of achieving a comprehensive peace agreement based on a two-state solution. The only way to resolve the conflict is through an agreement that ends the occupation which began in 1967, that ends all claims and that fulfils the aspirations of both parties. A one state reality would not be compatible with these aspirations.
6. The EU recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and of the Arab Peace Initiative, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU believes that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. The EU has set out and will continue to actively promote its position with regard to parameters in Council Conclusions of December 2009 and December 2010, and as expressed by the EU in the UN Security Council on 21 April 2011. On this basis, the EU is willing to work with the US and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following parameters:
 - An agreement on the borders of the two states, based on 4 June 1967 lines with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The EU will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties.
 - Security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over; and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including with new and vital threats in the region.
 - A just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question.
 - Fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

7. The preservation of the viability of the two-state solution must remain a priority . The developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-state solution increasingly unattainable. Reaffirming its commitment to implement the Council Conclusions of May and December 2012 as well as the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, the EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, including East Jerusalem, especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E1, which severely threatens the two state solution; to put an end to settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions - including of EU funded projects -, evictions and forced transfers, and to increasing tensions and challenges to the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

A fundamental change of policy on these negative developments is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two state solution.

8. The EU has welcomed the appointment of a Palestinian government of independent personalities and the declaration by President Abbas that this new government was committed to the principle of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, to the recognition of Israel's legitimate right to exist, to upholding non-violence and to the respect of previous agreements. The EU's engagement with the new Palestinian government is based on its continued adherence, in words and actions, to these policies and commitments. The EU underlines the need for the Palestinian government to take charge of the Gaza Strip and end the internal division. The EU calls on the new Palestinian government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians.

The European Union reiterates its call upon the Palestinian leadership to use constructively its UN status and not to undertake steps which would lead further away from a negotiated solution.

9. The EU underlines that the future development of the relations between the EU and both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-state solution.

The EU's continued support to Palestinian state-building requires a credible prospect for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights.

10. The EU will do all it can to support the achievement of a lasting and just solution to the conflict. In this regard, the EU reiterates its offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a Special Privileged Partnership with the EU in the event of a final peace agreement. The EU is convinced that this support and partnership, by anchoring both the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine in an ever closer relationship with Europe, will provide a strategic framework for their stable, secure and prosperous development."