



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Middle East Peace Process

(2723rd EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting - Luxembourg, 10 April 2006)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council discussed the situation of the Middle East Peace Process following the swearing in of the new Palestinian government and the result of general elections in Israel.

The Council noted with grave concern that the new Palestinian government has not committed itself to the three principles laid out by the Council and the Quartet in their statements of 30 January: non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of existing agreements. It urged the new Palestinian government to meet and implement these three principles and to commit to President Abbas' platform of peace. This would further the Palestinian people's aspirations to peace and statehood.

Consistent with the Quartet statement of 30 March, the EU is reviewing its assistance to the Palestinians against the new government's commitment to the aforementioned principles. The Council recalled that the absence of such commitment will inevitably have an effect on direct assistance to that government. The EU will continue to provide necessary assistance to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian population. In this context, it also underlined the importance of improved access and movement and called on both parties to implement the 15 November 2005 Movement and Access Agreement.

The Council notes with concern the recent violent incidents in the Palestinian Territories and calls on all parties to refrain from violence and exercise self-restraint. The Council urged the Palestinian Authority to ensure security in the areas it controls, and ensure the safety of international personnel.

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The Council reiterated its aim to preserve and pursue the democratic functioning and development of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. In this context, it emphasized the central role of President Abbas as the highest representative of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO and reiterated its support for him.

The Council noted the result of the Israeli general elections. The Council underlined the importance of a strong commitment by the new Israeli government to work towards a negotiated solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on existing agreements, the relevant UNSC Resolutions and the principles laid down in the Road Map. The Council called on Israel to desist from any action, such as settlement activities and the construction of the separation barrier on Palestinian land, that is contrary to international law and threatens the viability of an agreed two-state solution. The Council urged Israel to take steps to improve the humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinians including by resuming transfers of the withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues.

The Council welcomed the recent statement of Acting Prime Minister Olmert to seek negotiations with the Palestinians and the positive response to it by President Abbas. In this context, the Council looked forward to an early engagement between the new Israeli government and the Palestinians in order to advance a just, viable and lasting solution which would bring peace to both the Israeli and the Palestinian people."

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