

Division for Palestinian Rights

**DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST
PEACE PROCESS**

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European Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

Brussels, 18 January 2016

**Press Release by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office on the Israeli
Government's decision to declare 385 acres of land in the West Bank as 'state land'**

London, 22 January 2016

**Statement by EU Missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah on Palestinian
prisoners in administrative detention**

Jerusalem, 27 January 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the latest developments in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territory**

Brussels, 6 February 2016

Joint Press Statement by Quartet Envoys

Oslo, 10 February 2016

**Statement by local EU missions on recent demolitions in Area C
of the occupied Palestinian territory**

Jerusalem, 24 February 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the U.S. Department of State
on a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv**

Washington, D.C., 8 March 2016

**Statement by the U.K. Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood
on violence in the occupied Palestinian Territories**

London, 9 March 2016

**Readout of Vice President Biden's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister
Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas**

Washington, D.C., 9 March 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Development on Israeli settlement activities**

Paris, 16 March 2016

**Press Release by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office
on Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank**
London, 16 March 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on Israel's decision to declare 234 hectares near
Area C of the West Bank as state land**
Brussels, 17 March 2016

Joint Press Statement by Quartet Envoys
Jerusalem, 30 March 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Development on the Israeli Government's
resumption of construction work on the security wall**
Paris, 8 April 2016

**Statement by local EU missions on recent construction work
of the Israeli Government on the separation barrier at Cremisan**
Jerusalem, 15 April 2016

**Statement by French President Hollande following his meeting with
Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority**
Paris, 15 April 2016

Remarks by EU Representative Ralph Tarraf on the occasion of Europe Day
Jerusalem, 9 May 2016

**Statement by the U.K. Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood
on a shooting attack in Tel Aviv**
London, 9 June 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on an attack in Tel Aviv**
Brussels, 9 June 2016

**Statement by M. Jean-Marc Ayrault,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development**
Paris, 9 June 2016

European Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process
Brussels, 20 June 2016

**Statement by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office
on Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem**

London, 22 June 2016

**Remarks by European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini
following her meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas**

Brussels, 22 June 2016

**Remarks by European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini
following her meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin**

Brussels, 23 June 2016

Statement by the Middle East Quartet on the release of its Report

Jerusalem, 1 July 2016

**Statement by Jean-Marc Ayrault, French Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Development on the publication of the Middle East Quartet Report**

Paris, 1 July

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank**

London, 5 July

Readout of US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby's briefing to the press

Washington, DC, 5 July 2016

**Press release on the meeting between President Hollande
and Palestinian President Abbas**

Paris, 22 July 2016

Statement by the Spokesperson of the US State Department John Kirby

Washington, D.C., 27 July 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem**

London, 27 July

**Readout of US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner's
briefing to the press**

Washington, DC, 23 August 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service on the Israeli
Government's approval of new settlements units in the occupied West Bank**

Brussels, 1 September 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements in the West Bank**
London, 2 September 2016

Chair's Summary of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC)
New York, 19 September 2016

Statement by Palestinian President Abbas at the 71st session of the General Assembly
New York, 22 September 2016

**Statement by US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner on Israel's
announcement to build new settlements in the West Bank**
Washington D.C., 5 October 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements in the West Bank**
London, 5 October 2016

**Statement by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda,
ahead of the Office's visit to Israel and Palestine from 5 to 10 October 2016**
The Hague, 5 October 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank**
Brussels, 7 October 2016

**Statement by US State Department Deputy Spokesperson
Mark C. Toner on a terrorist attack in Jerusalem**
Washington D.C., 9 October 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank**
Brussels, 9 October 2016

**Statement by Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, UK Permanent Representative to
the UN, at the UNSC Arria Formula meeting on Israeli settlements**
New York, 14 October 2016

**Statement by UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson on his meeting
with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al Malki**
London, 31 October 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements in East Jerusalem**
London, 3 November 2016

Press Release by the Office of the European Union Representative
Jerusalem, 8 November 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on the Knesset's announcement to 'legalise' settlements in the West Bank**
London, 16 November 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank**
Brussels, 25 November 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on settlement activities in the East Jerusalem**
London, 28 November 2016

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill"**
Brussels, 8 December 2016

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill"**
London, 8 December 2016

**Statement by the European Union Representative and the EU Heads
of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah on Israeli demolitions in Area C**
Jerusalem, 13 December 2016

Statement by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on the situation in the Middle East
Washington, D.C., 28 December 2016

**Press release by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Federation
on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**
Moscow, 29 December 2016

**Press statement by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on
Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**
Paris, 29 December 2016

**Press statement by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**
Jeddah, 30 December 2016



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European Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

Brussels, 18 January 2016

On 18 January 2016, the Council of the European Union issued the following [press release](#):

1. The Council is deeply concerned that the continuing cycle of violence has led to a serious loss of human life in Israel and the Palestinian territory in recent months. The EU firmly condemns the terror attacks and violence from all sides and in any circumstances, including the death of children. The EU calls on political leaders to work together through visible actions to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites, and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.
2. The EU urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement or provocation and calls on the parties to condemn attacks when they occur and adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force. It commends both sides for upholding security coordination in the light of an extremely challenging situation. The EU welcomes progress on the Duma investigation and calls for Israel to hold all perpetrators of settler violence to account. The EU also calls on both sides to jointly and resolutely fight incitement and hate speech, for instance by establishing a mechanism to consult on incitement along the lines of their previous commitments.
3. The EU is convinced that only the reestablishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed. The EU reaffirms its support to the Quartet calls for significant transformative steps to be taken, consistent with the transition envisaged by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and rebuild trust. The EU urges both sides to implement these measures at the earliest juncture possible. A fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, will significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.
4. The EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-state solution - based on parameters set out in the Council Conclusions of July 2014 - that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. It strongly opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two state solution and urges both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations. To this end, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and will consider further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution, which is constantly eroded by new facts on the ground.
5. Securing a just and lasting peace, ending all claims, will require an increased common international effort. The EU, including through the action of its Special Representative, will work actively with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the United States, in the region and in the United Nations Security Council, towards a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process. Recalling the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that presided over the Madrid Conference 25 years ago, the establishment of an International Support Group and a further international conference are both possible ways to contribute to this end. The EU recalls its willingness to engage further with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace

Initiative which provides key elements for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the opportunity for building a regional security framework.

6. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region. The EU calls for the protection of children, including ensuring the right to education in a safe and secure school environment. The Council highlights the importance of unhindered work of civil society both in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and follows recent developments in this regard with concern.

7. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. It urges Israel to end all settlement activity and to dismantle the outposts erected since March 2001, in line with prior obligations. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

8. The EU and its Member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This does not constitute a boycott of Israel which the EU strongly opposes.

9. The EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process which is an important element for reaching the two state solution. The EU will continue its support to Palestinian aspirations for Statehood. It is of the utmost importance that the positive results of the past are not lost and Palestinian institutions must continue to grow stronger, more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. The EU calls upon the government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians. Strong, inclusive and democratic institutions, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights, are crucial in view of the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, the EU calls on all Palestinian factions to find common ground and to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population.

10. The EU calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Recent rocket fire by militant groups is unacceptable and underlines again the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must commit to non-violence and peace. The EU urges the Palestinian sides to make the reconstruction of Gaza an overarching national priority especially as regards to health, energy and access to water. The Palestinian Authority must fully resume its governmental functions in Gaza, as it is an integral part of a future Palestinian state. The EU welcomes the steps that Israel has taken to ease some restrictions on Gaza. However the lifting of restriction on movement of people, services and goods - particularly those designated as 'dual-use items' - is needed to allow reconstruction efforts and basic service delivery. The EU calls all parties, state and non-state actors to guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza, as foreseen by international humanitarian law, for national, local and international humanitarian organizations, including EU bodies and Member States. The EU remains ready to engage with the parties and relevant stakeholders towards resolving the situation and calls on the international community to swiftly honour its pledges.

11. 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, which offers substantial benefits to both parties,

in the event of a final peace agreement. 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.

Press release by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office on the Israeli Government's decision to declare 385 acres of land in the West Bank as 'state land'

London, 22 January 2016

On 22 January 2016, the U.K. Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued the following [press release](#):

Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond expresses concern about Israel's recent decision and underlines the UK's position on Israeli settlements.

Mr Hammond said: I'm concerned that the Israeli Government intends to declare 385 acres of land in the West Bank as 'state land', which would be the largest declaration of this kind since August 2014.

The UK's long-held position on Israeli settlements, and that of our international partners, is clear: they are illegal under international law, are an obstacle to peace and undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. The UK strongly opposes any moves which take us further away from an enduring peace settlement.

Statement by EU Missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah on Palestinian prisoners in administrative detention

Jerusalem, 27 January 2016

On 27 January 2017, EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued the following [statement](#) on Palestinian prisoners in administrative detention:

The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah express their longstanding concern about the extensive use by Israel of administrative detention without formal charge.

Beyond the well-known cases of Etraf Rimawi of the Palestinian Bisan Center for Research and Development, and Mohammed Abu Sakha, a trainer at the Palestinian Circus School, there are over 500 Palestinians, amongst them at least 4 minors, who are currently being held in administrative detention.

The EU missions are especially concerned about the deteriorating health condition of the Palestinian journalist Mohammed Al-Qiq, held in administrative detention in Israel for more than two months now, and on hunger strike since 25 November 2015.

The EU calls for the full respect of international human rights obligations towards all prisoners. Detainees have the right to be informed about the charges underlying

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the latest developments in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territory**

Brussels, 6 February 2016

On 6 February 2016, the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service in Brussels issued the following [statement](#):

In the past weeks there have been a number of developments in Area C of the West Bank, which risk undermining the viability of a future Palestinian state and driving the parties yet further apart.

On 25 January Israel decided to declare 154 hectares of land near Jericho in the West Bank as state land, and according to the latest reports, decisions have been taken to permit further settlement expansion, involving more than 150 new residential units. On 3 February several Palestinian residential structures in the south Hebron hills were demolished. This is particularly concerning both because of the extent of the demolitions and also the number of vulnerable individuals affected, including children who need support.

Demolitions included EU funded structures. EU humanitarian activities are carried out in full accordance with international humanitarian law, with the sole aim of providing humanitarian support to most vulnerable people. We call on the Israeli authorities to reverse the decisions taken and to halt further demolitions.

On 18 January Foreign Ministers in the Council conclusions confirmed the EU's firm opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including demolitions and confiscation, evictions, forced transfers or restrictions of movement and access.

Joint Press Statement by Quartet Envoys

Oslo, 10 February 2016

On 10 February 2016, the Envoys of the Quartet issued the following [joint statement](#):

On 8 and 9 February, Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met in Oslo as part of their continued engagement with key regional and international stakeholders.

The Envoys from the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Nations met with Norwegian Foreign Minister Brende and the Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, Ambassador Tor Wennesland.

The Quartet Envoys highlighted the vital contributions Norway has made over the years to the pursuit of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on a two-state solution.

The Quartet Envoys condemned in the strongest possible terms all acts of terror and violence against civilians. They also expressed concern about current trends on the ground that pose a threat to the two-state solution and reiterated the call for concrete steps that resume the transition contemplated by the Oslo Accords.

The Envoys look forward to the upcoming Principals meeting in Munich.

**Statement by local EU missions on recent demolitions in Area C
of the occupied Palestinian territory**

Jerusalem, 24 February 2016

On 24 February 2016, the local EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued the following [statement](#) on recent demolitions in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territory:

The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah express deep concern at an unprecedented number of demolitions and confiscations of Palestinian structures in Area C in recent weeks, including of EU donor-funded humanitarian aid delivered consistent with international humanitarian law. These include the dismantlement and confiscation of the school in Abu Nwar on 21st February, which was funded by France and is the only school in a Bedouin community severely threatened in its existence, and the virtual complete destruction on 15th February of the community of Ain Rashash, where 60 people including 38 children lost their homes and livelihood structures. Moreover, on 9th -11th February, a demolition campaign took place in various locations in the Jordan Valley, displacing 59 people including 28 minors. Since the beginning of the year, over 480 people have been displaced as a result of demolitions.

The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah recall the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of May 2012, July 2015 and January 2016, in which the EU called upon Israel to meet its obligations regarding the living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C as well as its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including demolitions and confiscation, evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins and restrictions of movement and access.

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the U.S. Department
of State on a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv**

Washington, D.C., 8 March 2016

On 8 March 2016, the Spokesperson of the U.S. Department of State released the following [press statement](#):

The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms today's outrageous terrorist attacks in Jaffa, Petah Tikvah, and Jerusalem, which tragically claimed the life of U.S. citizen Taylor Allen Force and left many others severely injured. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Taylor and all those affected by these senseless attacks, and we wish a speedy recovery for the injured. As we have said many times, there is absolutely no justification for terrorism. We continue to encourage all parties to take affirmative steps to reduce tensions and restore calm.

**Statement by the U.K. Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood
on violence in the occupied Palestinian Territories**

London, 9 March 2016

On 9 March 2016, the Spokesperson of the U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued the following [press statement](#) on behalf of the Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood:

I condemn the appalling attacks against civilians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories this week. There can be no justification for terrorism. I am deeply concerned by the ongoing violence. This tragic situation only underlines the need to improve the situation on the ground and reach a long term resolution to the conflict.

Readout of Vice President Biden's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas

Washington, D.C., 9 March 2016

On 9 March 2016 the White House released two readouts, namely a [readout](#) on Vice President Biden's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and a separate [readout](#) on the Vice President's meeting with President Abbas:

The Vice President met today with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem. The two leaders discussed a range of shared security concerns across the region, including the threat of ISIL and other terrorist organizations, the ongoing crisis in Syria, and Iran's destabilizing activities. The Vice President reaffirmed the enduring and unshakable U.S. commitment to Israel's security, noting unprecedented levels of security assistance provided by the Obama administration. The Vice President and the Prime Minister also discussed opportunities for Israel to strengthen its relationships with its neighbors, including through new energy partnerships. Finally, the Vice President and the Prime Minister discussed ongoing violence and tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Vice President reiterated his condemnation for yesterday's brutal terrorist attacks, including the murder of U.S. citizen, Taylor Force.

The Vice President met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas tonight in Ramallah. The two leaders discussed the ongoing violence between Israelis and Palestinians, including the tragic terrorist attack yesterday in Jaffa that killed U.S. citizen Taylor Force, which the Vice President strongly condemned. The Vice President reiterated the United States' enduring support for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and urged all parties to take steps to de-escalate tensions, uphold obligations, and prevent inflammatory rhetoric.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development on Israeli settlement activities

Paris, 16 March 2016

On 16 March 2016 the Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development issued the following [statement](#) on Israeli settlement activities:

France is highly concerned by the Israeli authorities' decision to proceed with the appropriation of an additional 234 hectares of land in the West Bank for settlement purposes. A similar measure affecting 150 hectares had already been decided on in the same part of the Jordan Valley near Jericho this past January.

The settlements represent a violation of international law and are inconsistent with the Israeli authorities' commitments to a two-State solution. Promoting this solution is the goal that guides France's diplomatic efforts.

**Press Release by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office on
Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank**

London, 16 March 2016

On 16 March 2016 the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued the following [statement](#) on Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank:

We condemn the Israeli Government's decision to take over 585 acres of land in the West Bank as 'state land'. Such steps clearly damage the diminishing prospects for a two state solution. The UK and our international partners have consistently called for an end to settlement expansion, which is illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. If the Israeli Government is truly committed to a two-state solution then it will reverse its decision.

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service on Israel's
decision to declare 234 hectares near Area C of the West Bank as "state land"**

Brussels, 17 March 2016

On 17 March 2016, the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service in Brussels issued the following [statement](#):

Israel's decision to declare 234 hectares near Jericho in Area C of the West Bank as state land is a further step that risks undermining the viability of a future Palestinian state and therefore calls into question Israel's commitment to a two-state solution. While this decision had already been announced on 25 January, it now appears that the land being seized has been considerably expanded. Any decision that could enable further settlement expansion, which is illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace, will only drive the parties to the conflict even further apart.

The European Union remains firmly opposed to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including demolitions and confiscations, evictions, forced transfers or restrictions on movement and access, as stated in conclusions of the Council and repeated to the press on 6 February 2016.

Joint Press Statement by Quartet Envoys

Jerusalem, 30 March 2016

On 28 March 2016, the Envoys of the Quartet issued the following [joint press statement](#):

On 28 March, Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met in Jerusalem and held discussions with Israeli and Palestinian counterparts.

The Envoys from the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations met to discuss preparations for the Middle East Quartet's forthcoming report. During their visit they also took the opportunity to meet officials from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as officials from the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian Authority.

Statement by Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development on the Israel Government's resumption of construction work on the security wall

Paris, 8 April 2016

On 8 April 2016 the Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development on Israeli settlement activities issued the following [statement](#):

France is concerned by the Israeli authorities' resumption of construction of the separation wall in the West Bank's Cremisan Valley, which will affect several dozen Palestinian families in Beit Jala. This wall is a new obstacle to economic and social development in the town of Bethlehem.

According to the opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on July 9, 2004, building the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is illegal under international law.

We consequently ask Israel to reverse this decision.

Statement by local EU missions on recent construction work of the Israeli Government on the separation barrier at Cremisan

Jerusalem, 15 April 2016

On 15 April 2016, the local EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued the following [statement](#) on the Israeli government's construction work on the separation barrier at Cremisan:

The EU Missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah are deeply concerned at the relaunch of works for the construction of the separation barrier in the Cremisan valley. Once built, the barrier will severely restrict access of almost 60 Palestinian families to their agricultural land and profoundly affect their livelihoods.

EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah recall the EU's strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access, as most recently stated in the Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 January 2016. EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah have on several occasions visited the site of the planned construction, and repeatedly expressed concern over the planned route of the barrier and reiterated that the barrier is illegal under international law wherever built on occupied land.

**Statement by French President Hollande following his meeting with
Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority**

Paris, 15 April 2016

On 15 April 2016, French President Hollande met with Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. After the meeting President Hollande made the following [statement](#):

Ladies and gentlemen,

I had a meeting this evening with President Mahmoud Abbas, in the presence of Manuel Valls and Jean-Marc Ayrault, because we have trustful relations and both because France is concerned about the situation in the Middle East today - and particularly what's happening in Israel and Palestine - and because France is taking the initiative.

Together with President Mahmoud Abbas we wanted, first of all, to exchange the information we have about what's happening - that is, the security situation. President Mahmoud Abbas has also made sure he can guarantee security cooperation with Israel. But at the same time there's violence, there are tragedies. We can see what effects and consequences the deadlock in the situation can have.

So we must take initiatives. France's initiative consists in bringing the international community together around the process that must lead to peace. However, this process presupposes a certain order and timeframe.

First of all, bringing all the partners together: the Quartet of course, but also other countries which are aware of the situation too and want to help resolve it. We'll make sure to bring together, first of all, the foreign ministers of those countries, then see together how we can work with those involved.

This peace initiative is aimed at preventing no *démarches*; but at the same time we believe it's the best path and the one that can lead to the resumption of negotiations in the known framework.

We also discussed the cooperation that exists. Prime Minister Manuel Valls will go to the Palestinian Authority, and therefore the territories, at the end of May to ensure that what we've already built together can materialize further in many fields.

Remarks by EU Representative, Ralph Tarraf on the occasion of Europe Day

Jerusalem, 9 May 2016

On 9 May EU Representative, Ralph Tarraf made [remarks](#) in Jerusalem on the occasion of Europe Day. The following are excerpts of those remarks:

...

Ordinary Palestinians are ever increasingly subject to fragmented political and security regimes imposed on ever smaller and disconnected parcels of territory - Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and within the West Bank Areas A, B, C.

As far as I can see, this fragmentation has devastating consequences for the social fabric and the sense of national unity amongst the Palestinians. Palestinians are ever more disconnected from each other, politically, socially, economically. Their lives are ever more determined by the need to cope with very real problems existing in smaller and smaller enclaves of land. Housing, schooling, job opportunities, the access to electricity and water and basic social services are challenges for all Palestinians. But it makes a difference, and this difference is becoming bigger and bigger, whether you are, as a Palestinian, boxed in Jerusalem, in Gaza City, or in Ramallah or other parts of the West Bank, separated by walls and a distinct set of rules you have to play along with.

It should not come as a surprise that this territorial fragmentation of Palestine goes hand in hand with a growing fragmentation of the political system in Palestine. Factional politics, local politics, normal in any kind of open political system, are becoming increasingly entrenched, while the sense of common purpose and destiny is eroding.

It is my firm belief that we need to address this territorial and political fragmentation of Palestine as a matter of urgency. We need to do more to work towards reclaiming the integrity of the territorial and political space in Palestine.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends,

Reclaiming the integrity of a common political space in Palestine is essential.

But the most important task currently is to re-establish a political horizon for a final resolution of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict.

The position of the European Union is clear.

The Foreign Affairs Council reiterated in January this year that the EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-state solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. We want to see, and have reiterated that numerous times, 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. We want to see an agreement on the borders of the two states based on 4 June 1967 lines. We will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders only when agreed by the parties. We want to see negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states. And we want to see a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question.

The European Union has invested a great deal to help implement this vision during the last decades.

We have spared no effort to build up Palestinian institutions for statehood. We have worked with others to build a sustainable Palestinian economy. And we have gone a long way to achieve that goal. “Ready for Statehood” was the slogan already a couple of years ago. “Ready for Statehood” -in principle, it must be said.

Because the political context for statehood, a negotiated solution for the main contentious issues, is still lacking.

On this, on bringing about a negotiated solution for the main contentious issues, we have failed. We have failed collectively. Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs, Americans and Europeans. We have failed the Palestinian people. We have failed all the people of this region who deserve and who have the right to live in peace, security and prosperity.

But we will continue trying. And we shall never give up hope that we will succeed one day.

...

**Statement by the U.K. Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood
on a shooting attack in Tel Aviv**

London, 9 June 2016

On 9 June 2016, the Spokesperson of the U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued the following [press statement](#) on behalf of the UK Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood:

I am appalled by the senseless attack in central Tel Aviv, which has left four dead and several wounded. My thoughts are with the victims and their families.

There can be absolutely no justification for terrorism anywhere. The UK condemns it in the strongest terms. We will continue to strive for peace in this troubled region and urge others to do the same.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service on an attack in Tel Aviv

Brussels, 9 June 2016

On 9 June 2016, the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service in Brussels issued the following [statement](#):

Wednesday night's terror attack in the Sarona complex in Tel Aviv exposed scores of innocent civilians and families to indiscriminate fire. Four people were killed and more seriously injured. Our thoughts are with the families of the dead and injured.

Those responsible for these murders must be brought to justice. Those who praise this attack must be condemned.

**Statement by M. Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Development**

Paris, 9 June 2016

On 9 June 2016, the Spokesperson of the French Foreign Ministry issued the following [statement](#) on behalf of Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development:

I condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attack committed in Tel Aviv this evening.

I extend all my condolences to the victims' families over this appalling act, and express my solidarity to the injured and their loved ones. I reiterate France's full support to Israel in the fight against terrorism.

European Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process

Brussels, 20 June 2016

On 20 June 2016, the Council of the European Union issued the following [statement](#):

1. In line with previous Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, and in close coordination with the Quartet - in anticipation of its forthcoming report and recommendations, the EU continues to work with its Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, all other relevant stakeholders in the region and beyond, towards a two-state solution. Both parties to the conflict need to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a peaceful solution in order to rebuild mutual trust and create conditions for direct and meaningful negotiations aiming at ending the occupation that began in 1967, and resolving all permanent status issues.
2. In that context, the Council welcomes the Joint Communiqué on the Middle East peace initiative adopted at the Ministerial meeting in Paris on 3 June 2016. The Council reiterates its support for a just, sustainable and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and peace and stability in the region.
3. The EU is determined, alongside other international and regional partners, to bring a concrete and substantial contribution to a global set of incentives for the parties to make peace with a view to an international conference planned to be held before the end of the year. To that end, the Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to present proposals, including on economic incentives, without delay. The Council also reaffirms the European proposal, as endorsed in the Council Conclusions of December 2013, of an unprecedented package of political, economic and security support to be offered to and developed with both parties in the context of a final status agreement.

**Statement by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office on
Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem**

London, 22 June 2016

On 22 June 2016, the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued the following [statement](#) expressing concern about Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem:

We are concerned by the Jerusalem municipality's decision to issue a permit for a new four storey building in Silwan, East Jerusalem. This is part of a worrying trend in the area, where the settler population is growing while Palestinian residents are being displaced by evictions and demolitions.

We are also concerned by the recent Israeli Government approval of an additional £12m of funding for settlements, which sends a worrying message. Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and take us further away from a two-state solution.

**Remarks by European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini
following her meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas**

Brussels, 22 June 2016

On 22 June 2016, the European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini delivered the following [remarks](#) after a meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas:

First of all let me say that it is a pleasure to welcome you, Mr President, again in Brussels and let me say that the meeting we had today has been very important.

Our main point for discussion was the need to restore the conditions for a peace perspective between Palestine and Israel. We are, in Europe, extremely worried about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East - just yesterday we saw the killing of a young Palestinian boy - and we believe that the deterioration of the situation on the ground is against the interest of the Palestinians, of the Israelis and also of the international community, including the Europeans.

As you know, the European Union is very much engaged, in coordination with the international community and with our regional partners and friends, in particular in the framework of the Quartet that is finalising these days a report. We have invested as the European Union a lot in the work on the report in the last months and we expect the report to come out in the coming days; including with some substantial recommendations to the parties on how to overcome the trends that are making the perspective of the two states fading away.

The European Union is strongly committed and constantly engaged for the two states solution. The EU Foreign Ministers restated collectively this consolidated position - that has never changed over years and which is very clear - just last Monday. Our work is going in that direction and is consistent with the relevant UN Security Council's resolutions.

We are working closely with our Arab friends as well to see how the Arab Peace Initiative can be operationalised. We work with the parties because we know very well that the international community and Europe have a responsibility to create an international and regional framework that can facilitate the two state solution, but the ultimate responsibility stands with the Palestinians and the Israelis, their leaderships and their people.

My friend, President Abbas, knows very well that he can count always on the European Union's support. The Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people can count on the European support. We are working day-by-

day to ensure that our support is as effective as it can be for all the Palestinians. What counts for us is that the lives of Palestinian people, be that in West Bank, in Gaza, elsewhere, gets better. I know that this can sound strange, especially to the younger Palestinians who have lived only in difficult conditions in their young age, but this is what the Europeans are trying to work for.

We will also encourage different Palestinian factions to bring the ongoing reconciliation efforts to positive results on the basis of democracy and PLO principles and I know that President Abbas is personally very much committed to that. We know this is also important for the two state solution because we need a viable Palestinian entity for that to take place.

Sorry again. Before giving the floor Mr President, let me reiterate that fact that the current situation on the ground is extremely dangerous for all – Palestinians, Israelis, for Europeans, for all the international community. We want to see settlements expansion to stop, we want to see demolitions to stop, we want to see violence and also incitement to violence to stop. We are trying to work to find a solution and I know you are committed to that. I hope that we will find the way of getting to the two states. Thank you very much for your work and for your visit here.

**Remarks by European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini
following her meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin**

Brussels, 23 June 2016

On 23 June 2016, the European High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini delivered the following [remarks](#) after a meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin:

Let me thank President Rivlin and share with him the fact that the regional situation and the security situation that Israel is facing is indeed a new one. Threats are increasing, some of these threats are the same that Europe is facing. But this new situation is posing also some new opportunities that were not there before, decades ago.

For the first time cooperation with some key Arab countries in the field of security is there and it is in the interest of Israel and the Israeli people, first of all their security, to use this window of opportunity before it is too late for the security of Israeli people; and let me say also for the region and Europe as well as part of the region – we share the Mediterranean.

It is because we know that Israeli people deserve and want to live in peace and security and that peace is the best opportunity for security and as we learnt from wise Israelis and as we heard from your words, Mr President, yesterday in the European Parliament.

The European Union is working day and night, first of all within the Quartet with our international partners - United States of America, the UN, Russia. The Quartet report that will be published soon will indicate, we hope, common grounds, the way forward to overcome some of the obstacles that the international community identifies on peace and security.

Second, we are working day and night with the regional players, Egypt, Jordan, our Arab friends to operationalise the Arab Peace Initiative to the benefit of security, because we know very well that the issue is not only between Israel and Palestine, it is also with the rest of the Arab World and this is the opportunity that Israel has in front of itself.

Thirdly, we are working day and night with the parties. I will not comment on what President Rivlin mentioned about the presence at the same time here in Brussels of himself and President Abbas, but the European Union is constantly, daily working with both parties with a sense of friendship.

We are convinced that we can be friends of Israel and friends of Palestine and this allows us to be bridge builders. We will continue to do so because nobody can replace the willingness of the parties to engage in direct negotiations to restart the perspective of achieving two-state solution.

As the President Rivlin wisely pointed out yesterday, there is the need to rebuild some degree of confidence. There are things that can be done immediately: steps on the ground that would improve the lives of the people of both Israelis and Palestinians. And the European Union would be ready to facilitate and support.

I am looking forward to continue our conversation. President Rivlin and I will continue with a meeting between ourselves and then also a working lunch with a certain number of Commissioners who will join us to discuss our bilateral cooperation, but also perspectives in the region. Thank you.

Statement by the Middle East Quartet on the release of its Report

Jerusalem, 1 July 2016

On 1 July 2016 the Middle East Quartet issued the following [statement](#) on the release of its [report](#):

In line with their decision announced in Munich on 12 February 2016 and underlining their commitment to support a comprehensive, just, and lasting resolution to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, the representatives of the Middle East Quartet – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry, European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – present a report on the situation on the ground focusing on major threats to achieving a negotiated peace and offering recommendations to advance the two-state solution.

The Quartet invites both parties to engage with it on implementing its recommendations and creating the conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations that resolve all final status issues.

Statement by Jean-Marc Ayrault, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development on the publication of the Middle East Quartet Report

Paris, 1 July 2016

On 1 July 2016 Jean-Marc Ayrault, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development issued the following [statement](#) on the publication of the Middle East Quartet Report:

I welcome today's publication of the report by the Middle East Quartet.

France shares its conclusions. This report emphasizes in particular the destructive effects of settlement activity and of the violence jeopardizing the two-state solution. For France, as for the entire international community, the two-state solution is the only one possible.

This report's conclusions validate the French initiative to bring the international community together to work on peace in the Middle East; their first meeting was held on 3 June and attended by nearly 30 international partners.

To this end, France will continue to work closely with the Quartet's members and with all its partners to help implement the report's recommendations and prepare for the peace conference slated for the end of the year.

Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood on Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank.

London, 5 July

On 5 July 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#), expressing concern about Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

I am deeply concerned by the announcement of new settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Settlements are illegal under international law. As noted in the report issued by the Middle East Quartet on 1 July, steps like this also make a two state solution more difficult to achieve.

Readout of US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby's briefing to the press

Washington, DC, 5 July 2016

The following are excerpts of a [readout](#) of a briefing US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby gave to the press on 5 July 2016:

...

We're aware of reports that the Government of Israel intends to advance plans for hundreds of housing units in Israeli settlements in the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem. If it's true, this report would be the latest step in what seems to be a systematic process of land seizures, settlement expansions, and legalizations of outposts that is fundamentally undermining the prospects for a two-state solution. We oppose steps like these, which we believe are counterproductive to the cause of peace. In general, we're deeply concerned about settlement construction and expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the design – and the – I'm sorry, the designation of land throughout the West Bank for exclusive Israeli use.

As the Quartet report highlights, since the beginning of the Oslo process in 1993, the population of settlements has more than doubled, with a threefold increase in Area C alone. Currently, there is at least 570,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Moreover, approximately 100 settlement outposts in Area C have been built without formal Israeli Government approval, making them illegal even under Israeli law. Again, as the Quartet report makes clear, these actions risk entrenching a one-state reality and raise serious questions about Israel's long-term intentions. ...

Press release on the meeting between President Hollande and Palestinian President Abbas

Paris, 22 July 2016

On 22 July 2016 the Élysée Palace issued the following [press release](#) after a meeting between Presidents Hollande and Abbas in Paris:

The French President had a meeting with Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr Abbas extended his condolences and expressed his support to France in response to the “unspeakable, abominable” crime in Nice.

The Head of State expressed his concern about the fragility of the situation in the Middle East and the escalation in violence. With the Quartet's latest report showing that the two-state solution is threatened by continued settlement activity, creating a political way forward is a matter of urgency.

The French President confirmed France's commitment to continuing the process created by the Paris ministerial meeting of 3 June and its approach vis-à-vis the next stages, which should lead to the holding of an international conference.

France will spare no effort to galvanize the international community into restarting the peace process.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the US State Department John Kirby

Washington, D.C., 27 July 2016

On 27 July 2016 the Spokesperson of the US State Department John Kirby issued the following [statement](#), expressing concern about Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

We are deeply concerned by reports today that the Government of Israel has published tenders for 323 units in East Jerusalem settlements. This follows Monday's announcement of plans for 770 units in the settlement of Gilo.

We strongly oppose settlement activity, which is corrosive to the cause of peace. These steps by Israeli authorities are the latest examples of what appears to be a steady acceleration of settlement activity that is systematically undermining the prospects for a two- state solution.

In just the past few weeks, we have seen reports of the advancement of plans for 531 units in Ma'ale Adumim, 19 in Har Homa, 120 in Ramot, and 30 in Pisgat Ze'ev; the advancement of a plan to retroactively legalize an outpost near Ramallah; and the issuance of tenders for 42 units in Kiryat Arba.

We are also concerned about recent increased demolitions of Palestinian structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which reportedly have left dozens of Palestinians homeless, including children. More than 650 Palestinian structures have been demolished this year, with more Palestinian structures demolished in the West Bank and East Jerusalem thus far than in all of 2015.

As the recent Quartet Report highlighted, this is part of an ongoing process of land seizures, settlement expansion, legalizations of outposts, and denial of Palestinian development that risk entrenching a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. We remain troubled that Israel continues this pattern of provocative and counterproductive action, which raises serious questions about Israel's ultimate commitment to a peaceful, negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood on Israel's announcement to build settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem

London, 27 July

On 27 July 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#), expressing concern about Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

The UK is concerned to see plans for 770 settlement units between Jerusalem and Bethlehem progressing. As we have previously made clear, all settlement activity is illegal under international law, and damages prospects for a two-state solution.

The UK is particularly concerned about the impact such settlements may have on Palestinian Christian minorities in the area, who are already affected by renewed construction of the Separation Barrier on Palestinian land in the Cremisan Valley.

Readout of US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner' briefing to the press

Washington, DC, 23 August 2016

The following are excerpts of a [readout](#) of a briefing US State Department deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner gave to the press on 23 August 2016:

... Well, we have seen those reports, said, that the Israelis are considering – plan to build homes for Israeli settlers in a military compound in Hebron. Certainly if these reports are true, it would appear to be an effort to expand civilian Israeli settlement in the city of Hebron, and that would represent a deeply concerning step of settlement expansions – settlement expansion, rather, on land that is at least partially owned by the Palestinians. As you know, we strongly oppose all settlement activity, which is corrosive to the cause of peace. And we've said repeatedly such moves are not consistent with Israel's stated desire to achieve a two-state solution.

... We're concerned by the accelerated rate of demolitions undertaken by Israeli authorities that continue, not just specifically in Hebron hills, but, frankly, throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem. And we raise those concerns with Israeli authorities.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service on the Israeli Government's approval of new settlements units in the occupied West Bank

Brussels, 1 September 2016

On 1 September 2016 the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service issued the following [statement](#) expressing concern about Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

The Israeli decision yesterday to endorse an additional 463 housing units in the occupied West Bank and to retroactively approve 179 existing units is a serious concern. Since January 2016, Israeli authorities have promoted or retroactively legalised 2,706 units in West Bank settlements.

The Quartet report published last July identified such action as undermining the prospects for peace and steadily eroding the viability of the two-state solution and recommended that any expansion of settlements be frozen. The EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and all actions taken in this context.

Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood on Israel's announcement to build settlements in the West Bank

London, 2 September 2016

On 2 September 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) expressing concern about Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

The UK is deeply concerned by reports that plans for over 450 new settlement units are being progressed in the northern West Bank.

The increased pace of settlement advancement, including moves to retroactively approve unauthorised settlement units and outposts, fundamentally calls into question Israel's commitment to the two-state solution.

The Quartet Report laid out the damaging impact of Israel's systematic policy of settlement construction and expansion in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the parallel obstruction of Palestinian development. Once again, we urge Israel to cease its policy of settlement expansion, which is a barrier to peace.

Chair's Summary of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC)

New York, 19 September 2016

Following a meeting of members of the AHLC in New York on 19 September 2016 to take stock of the Palestinian state building process and to discuss ways to improve and sustain the Palestinian economy in its effort to maintain the viability of the two-state solution, the Committee issued the following [Chair's summary](#):

The members of the AHLC met today in New York, to take stock of the Palestinian state building process, and to discuss ways to improve and sustain the Palestinian economy in its effort to maintain the viability of the two-state solution.

The AHLC welcomed the parties for their cooperative spirit, and the reports provided by the UN, the World Bank, IMF and the Office of the Quartet to the meeting.

The AHLC commended the Palestinian government for its serious efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit in a very precarious financial situation that have emerged from a sharp decline in budget support by the donors, and stressed the importance of reducing the fiscal risks to safeguard the two-state solution.

The AHLC congratulated the Palestinian and Israeli authorities for their leadership in reaching an agreement that rationalizes the financial relationship between the parties on electricity debts, and transfers authority to the Palestinian government for the management of energy infrastructure. It welcomed too, the decision by Israel to transfer health stamps and equalization levy tax to the Palestinian government. Once implemented, these agreements will have the potential to generate new sources of revenues, and are important achievements with respect to economic cooperation between the parties.

The AHLC expressed hope that the agreement on electricity debts will lead to even stronger cooperation between the parties. In this respect, the AHLC encouraged both sides to close other remaining fiscal files of importance, and to agree on infrastructural projects that are critical to the viability of a future Palestinian state. It noted that Israel has given its approval, in principle, for a series of such projects, including increased delivery of water, electricity, and trade facilitation.

The AHLC called on the parties to make significant progress on these issues before the next AHLC meeting, and, cognizant of the Palestinian national development priorities and budget constraints, emphasized that these projects will require swift support by the donors in order to advance implementation.

The AHLC welcomed the deepening economic dialogue between the two Finance Ministries, and encouraged both sides to continue their constructive cooperation to resolve outstanding fiscal issues in order to increase revenues.

To help addressing the critical fiscal situation of the Palestinian government, with the financing gap likely to reach USD 600 million for 2016, the AHLC emphasized the critical importance of increased budget support by the donors in the short term, and the need for further easing of restrictions. In this regard, as mentioned by the Report of the Middle East Quartet of 1 July, Israel should take all necessary steps to enable the process of developing a sustainable Palestinian economy.

The AHLC welcomed the progress made by the Palestinian government in developing a longer-term policy vision through its National Policy Agenda (NPA) for 2017-22, complemented the consultative nature of the process, and expressed support for its implementation.

In its efforts to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to sustain the viability of a future Palestinian state, the AHLC agreed on the following set of action points, and emphasized the importance of implementation before the next AHLC-meeting in Brussels, 2017:

1. Reaffirms its support to the two-state solution, and stresses that economic development cannot be a substitute for an agreed resolution of the conflict, while reaffirming its support in developing a sustainable Palestinian economy as a crucial step for becoming a viable, independent, contiguous and sovereign state;
2. Emphasizes the strategic importance of economic cooperation between the parties to resolve outstanding issues through effective implementation of the Paris Protocol and the Interim Agreement, and in this respect, calls on the parties to resolve other outstanding files, including closing fiscal leakages;
3. Urges the parties to reach agreements on priority measures that can sustain the viability of the Palestinian economy, such as major infrastructure projects, including energy and water supply to Gaza and the West Bank, and calls on the donors to provide necessary support in this regard;
4. Warns that donor support, in particular budget support, is crucial to address the precarious financing gap in the short term, and to avoid a fiscal crisis leading to wider economic problems, and calls on donors to contribute as alternative options are limited;

Fiscal sustainability

5. Encourages the Palestinian government to continue its effort to increase revenue collection and resist spending pressures, particularly on the wage bill;
6. Underscores the need to work towards a more sustainable and growth-friendly fiscal position of the PA over the medium term, and the importance of supporting this goal through deeper fiscal structural reforms, including the finalization of the new Public Financial Management Strategy by the year-end, and enhanced focus on the delivery of quality services to citizens;
7. Notes the importance of integrating the National Policy Agenda with the 2017 budget to ensure that the NPA achieves its objectives;

Economic development

8. Stresses that restrictions in Area C are an obstacle to economic growth, and detrimental to the two-state solution, calls on Israel to open Area C for more Palestinian economic activity, in order to enable economic development;
9. Calls on Israel to establish a planning regime for Area C, which will enable Palestinians to develop their industrial base;
10. Emphasizes the need for further reforms by the Palestinian government to improve the economic conditions, with particular attention to competitiveness and business climate;
11. With regard to financial sector development and stability, welcomes efforts to bring the Anti Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime in line with international standards, supports their continuation and emphasizes the need for effective implementation;

Gaza reconstruction and recovery

12. Calls for increased efforts to accelerate reconstruction and recovery in Gaza, particularly with respect to infrastructure, energy, water and housing, while urging donors to fast-track disbursement of pledges made in Cairo 2014, and to make funding available for priority areas without further delay;
13. Urges an increase in the transmission of construction materials to Gaza through the GRM to facilitate much needed reconstruction, recovery and development and to reinvigorate the private sector in Gaza;
14. Expresses concerns about the diversion and abuse of construction material and other goods entering Gaza, stressing that these actions are harmful to the reconstruction efforts in Gaza, and calls on Israel to publish official guidelines for the import of dual use materials, and outlines procedures for application and approval, in order to ensure consistent, predictable access to importing these materials in a transparent way.

Statement by Palestinian President Abbas at the 71st session of the General Assembly

New York, 22 September 2016

On 22 September 2016, at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly, President Abbas made the following [statement](#):

I had hoped that I would not have been compelled to make this statement today, hoping that the cause of my people would have been justly resolved, would have been genuinely heard, and that hearts and consciences would have acted to lift them from oppression.

As you all are aware, we have accepted the primacy and judgment of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, and made a historic and immense sacrifice, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, accepted to establish the State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

What more can be asked of us?

We remain committed to the agreements reached with Israel since 1993. However, Israel must reciprocate this commitment and must act forthwith to resolve all of the final status issues. It must cease all of its settlement colonization activities and aggressions against our cities, villages and refugee camps. It must cease its policies of collective punishment and its demolition of Palestinian homes. It must cease its extrajudicial executions and cease the arrest of our people, and must release the thousands of our prisoners and detainees. It must cease its aggression and provocations against the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. For all of these policies and practices prevent an environment in which peace can be realized in our region.

How can anyone seeking peace perpetrate such actions?

In this regard, we reaffirm that we can never accept the continuation of the prevailing situation. We will never accept the humiliation of the dignity of our people. We will never accept temporary or interim solutions. And, our people will never accept to forgo their national institutions and achievements, which they attained through great sacrifice, suffering and pain. We will preserve the independence of Palestinian decision-making and will act to fulfill the aspirations of our people via political and diplomatic means and international law and the legitimacy of international resolutions via the United Nations and all international forums, and we will seek to mobilize Arab and international efforts towards this end.

We will not accept the continuation of the prevailing situation.

The 1993 Oslo Accords were intended to the end of the occupation and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine within five years. Yet, Israel reneged on the agreements it signed and, to this moment, persists with its occupation and continues to expand its illegal settlement enterprise, which undermines realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Does Israel want one State?

Despite the Security Council's adoption of 12 resolutions condemning Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 1967, none of these resolutions has been implemented, encouraging Israel to continue pursuing its plans for the seizure of more Palestinian land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with impunity. The violent actions of Israeli settlers have reached the extent of the formation of terrorist groups that burn and kill entire families, destroy properties, and uproot the trees that are the livelihoods of Palestinian families.

Israel's disrespect and contemptuous policies have even lead to attempts to "legalize" the settlements and the settlers colonizing our occupied land since 1967. It even led to the point of the Israeli Prime Minister claiming that the call for cessation of settlements and their dismantlement and evacuating settlers constitutes "ethnic cleansing". All such attempts are null and void and constitute clear grave breaches under international law.

So, who then is perpetrating ethnic cleansing?

In this regard, I am compelled to again warn that what the Israeli Government is doing in pursuit of its expansionist settlement plans will destroy whatever possibility and hopes are left for the two-State solution on the 1967 borders.

The settlements are illegal in every aspect and any manifestation.

We will therefore continue to exert all efforts for a Security Council resolution on the settlements and the terror of the settlers, and we are undertaking extensive consultations with the Arab countries and other friendly countries on this matter.

We hope no one will cast a veto.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel's racial discrimination against the Palestinian people has become a daily reality as it continues to privilege the Israeli settlers on our occupied land, including by granting them permits for residential construction as well as for factories, economic projects and infrastructure such as for road, electricity and water networks. This is happening at the very same time that they are preventing the Palestinian owners of the land from the use of their land and prohibiting them from developing their economy, which is a right of international priority in this era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which no country should be left behind. Military orders continue to be issued to prohibit their use of the majority of their lands in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the Palestinian shores on the Dead Sea. And it continues with its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. And it continues to illegally alter identity and status of Occupied East Jerusalem and to commit aggressions and provocations against our Christian and Muslim holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The continuation of the Israeli aggressions against our Muslim and Christian holy sites is playing with fire.

All of these Israeli policies, actions and measures are the reasons for the failure of all international efforts, particularly that of the international Quartet for the past 13 years, just as Israel has sabotaged the efforts of successive American administrations over the decades.

Here, I must once again appeal to you to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, suffering under occupation since 1967 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. I extend my appreciation in this regard to the Security Council members who convened an Arria meeting of the Council to explore the possibilities of international protection for our people, and I urge that these efforts continue.

If you do not ensure for us protection, then who will? Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel today also continues its attempts to evade an international conference for peace, which has been proposed by France and which has received the support of the majority of the world's countries. In June of this year a ministerial meeting was held in Paris to prepare for the convening of such a conference and 28 countries, along with three inter-governmental organizations, participated in that meeting. It remains our hope that such a conference will lead to the establishment of a mechanism and defined timeframe for an end to the occupation in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative; which calls, inter alia, for a just and agreed solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194.

We hope that all States of the world will support the convening of this international peace conference before the end of this year.

If there will be no international peace conference and no direct negotiations, then how can peace be made?

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Instead of Israel acknowledging the atrocities that it has committed and continues to commit against our people, the Israeli Prime Minister has the audacity to criticize Palestine's statement at the Arab League Summit in Nouakchott because we referred to the Balfour Declaration. I say to him today that our 1993 recognition of the existence of the State of Israel, a recognition which remains valid to this moment, is not a gratuitous recognition. Israel must reciprocate with recognition of the State of Palestine and an end to its

occupation of the land, so that the State of Palestine can coexist alongside the State of Israel in peace and security and as good neighbors, each within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no conflict between us and the Jewish religion and its people. Our conflict is with the Israeli occupation of our land. We respect the Jewish religion and condemn the catastrophe that befell the Jewish people in World War II in Europe, and view it as one of the most heinous crimes perpetrated against humanity.

Realization of a historic reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples requires that Israel acknowledge its responsibility for the Nakba inflicted on our people to this very day. This will open a new era of coexistence and will serve to build bridges rather than walls. I believe that the Arab Peace Initiatives presents a reasonable, serious solution. Yet Israel continues to insist on being selective, choosing only what it wishes from this Initiative, such as establishment of relations with the Arab countries first without ending its occupation of Palestine. This is definitely a recipe for the continuation of the conflict in our region, and we will not accept this and no one else can accept it.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the end of this coming year, 100 years will have passed since the Balfour Declaration, and 70 years since AI-Nakba of the Palestinian people, and 50 years since Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Yes, 100 years have passed since the notorious Balfour Declaration, by which Britain gave, without any right, authority or consent from anyone, the land of Palestine to another people. This paved the road for the Nakba of Palestinian people and their dispossession and displacement from their land. As if this were not enough, the British Mandate interpreted this Declaration into policies and measures that contributed to the perpetration of the most heinous crimes against a peaceful people in their own land, a people that never attacked anyone or partook in a war against anyone.

Therefore, we ask Britain, as we approach 100 years since this notorious Declaration, to draw the necessary lessons and to bear its historic, legal, political, material and moral responsibilities for the consequences of this Declaration, including an apology to the Palestinian people for the catastrophes, miseries and injustices that it created, and to act to rectify this historic catastrophe and remedy its consequences, including by recognition of the State of Palestine.

In addition, Israel, since 1948, has persisted with its contempt for international legitimacy by violating United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the partition resolution, which called for the establishment of two States on the historic land of Palestine according to a specific partition plan. Israeli forces seized more land than that allotted to Israel, constituting a grave breach of Articles 39, 41 and 42 of the United Nations Charter. In the preamble of resolution 181 (II), paragraph (c) clearly states: "The Security Council determine as a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, in accordance with Article 39 of the Charter, any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this resolution".

Regrettably, however, the Security Council is not upholding its responsibilities to hold Israel accountable for its seizure of the territory allotted to the Palestinian State according to the partition resolution. I appeal to you read this resolution once again.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We continue our efforts to build the foundations of a culture of peace among our people. We stand against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we condemn it by whomever and wherever. Our region has been the largest victim of terrorism and has endured its wrath over many years. We support the unity of people and land and the achievement of political solutions for all of the conflicts in Syria, Libya, Iraq and elsewhere, and we support the efforts of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to strengthen the foundations of legitimacy in brotherly Yemen. We support the efforts to confront terrorism, extremism, sectarianism and violence, and appeal to stand united against terrorism, which knows no religion.

In this context, I wish to reaffirm once again that there is no way to defeat terrorism and extremism and achieve security and stability in our region without ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ensuring the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We continue our genuine efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation with the formation of a national unity government in accordance with the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and with the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections. We also continue our efforts to reconstruct Gaza, to alleviate the hardships of our people, and to lift the illegal blockade imposed on them.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our hand remains outstretched for making peace. But the question that keeps presenting itself over and over again: is there any leadership in Israel, the occupying Power, that desires to make a true peace and that will abandon the mentality of hegemony, expansionism and colonization, and that will recognize the rights of our people and will end the historic injustice inflicted upon them? It is Israel's breach of the agreements it has signed and its failure to comply with its obligations that has led us to the deadlock and stalemate that we remain in.

The State of Palestine, an Observer State in the United Nations, is a State under occupation. The Executive Committee of the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they may be, acts on behalf of our people and as their government and the Palestine National Council is the parliament of the State of Palestine, as reflected in UN General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012.

We continue to rely on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities, and we call on those countries in particular that have harmed the rights of our people to rectify this injustice. Moreover, we appeal to countries that have not recognized the State of Palestine to do so.

Those who believe in the two-State solution should recognize both States, and not just one of them.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, I call on you to declare 2017 as the international year to end the Israeli occupation of our land and our people, as we approach in June 2017 a half century of this abhorrent Israeli occupation. I also appeal to you, in follow-up the adoption of resolution 67/19 with the adoption of a resolution to enable Palestine to present and cosponsor resolutions beyond the question of Palestine and to support our efforts to enhance Palestine's legal and political status, including by granting it additional responsibilities to chair committees and international groups, while at the same time we will continue our efforts for full membership in international organizations.

Based on all of the above, the international community is called upon to exert all efforts, more than any other time in the past, to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, which, as you all

know, is the longest and last occupation in contemporary history. The international community's ability to advance the rights of our people and ensure their exercise of those rights and to end the oppression and injustice imposed on them for seven decades would surely constitute a unique opportunity for peace, stability and coexistence to prevail in our region and between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. This will create a better future for the current generation and generations to follow, and will be the beginning and the basis of ending extremism and violence in our region and the world.

I thank you for your attention and hope from the depths of my heart that the Israeli occupation of our land will end and that we can defeat terrorism and that the conflicts will end and peace will reign in our region and all around the world. We and our people will continue to open the doors for peace and will do all that we can to realize the freedom and independence of our people. We will remain steadfast on our land to serve and ensure the future of our next generations.

It is my hope that I will not have to make such a statement again as there is a collective responsibility upon you to ensure that 2017 is the year of ending the occupation. Will you uphold this responsibility? It is my hope.

**Statement by US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner
on Israel's announcement to build new settlements in the West Bank**

Washington D.C., 5 October 2016

On 5 October 2016 the Deputy Spokesperson of the US State Department, Mark C. Toner issued the following [statement](#) strongly condemning Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

We strongly condemn the Israeli government's recent decision to advance a plan that would create a significant new settlement deep in the West Bank.

Proceeding with this new settlement, which could include up to 300 units, would further damage the prospects for a two state solution. The retroactive authorization of nearby illegal outposts, or redrawing of local settlement boundaries, does not change the fact that this approval contradicts previous public statements by the Government of Israel that it had no intention of creating new settlements. And this settlement's location deep in the West Bank, far closer to Jordan than Israel, would link a string of outposts that effectively divide the West Bank and make the possibility of a viable Palestinian state more remote.

It is deeply troubling, in the wake of Israel and the U.S. concluding an unprecedented agreement on military assistance designed to further strengthen Israel's security, that Israel would take a decision so contrary to its long term security interest in a peaceful resolution of its conflict with the Palestinians. Furthermore, it is disheartening that while Israel and the world mourned the passing of President Shimon Peres, and leaders from the U.S. and other nations prepared to honor one of the great champions of peace, plans were advanced that would seriously undermine the prospects for the two state solution that he so passionately supported.

Israelis must ultimately decide between expanding settlements and preserving the possibility of a peaceful two state solution. Since the recent Quartet report called on both sides to take affirmative steps to reverse current trends and advance the two state solution on the ground, we have unfortunately seen just the opposite. Proceeding with this new settlement is another step towards cementing a one-state reality of perpetual occupation that is fundamentally inconsistent with Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. Such moves will only draw condemnation from the international community, distance Israel from many of its partners, and further call into question Israel's commitment to achieving a negotiated peace.

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements in the West Bank**

London, 5 October 2016

On 5 October 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) condemning Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

We condemn the recent announcement of plans to construct a new settlement near Shilo. This is the latest example of a series of worrying new settlement announcements in recent months.

Settlements are illegal under international law. As underlined in the July report of the Middle East Quartet, settlement activity undermines trust and makes a two state solution much harder to achieve.

**Statement by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda,
ahead of the Office's visit to Israel and Palestine from 5 to 10 October 2016**

The Hague, 5 October 2016

On 5 October 2016 the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, issued the following [statement](#) ahead of the Office's visit to Israel and Palestine from 5 to 10 October 2016:

As part of its commitment to promote a better understanding of the work of the Office of the Prosecutor (the "Office") of the International Criminal Court ("ICC"), a delegation from the Office will visit Israel and Palestine from 5 to 10 October 2016.

The purpose of this visit will be to undertake outreach and education activities with a view to raising awareness about the ICC and in particular, about the work of the Office; to address any misperceptions about the ICC and to explain the preliminary examination process. Such visits are standard practice, even in countries that are not State Parties to the Rome Statute.

In accordance with its usual practice at this stage of its work, the delegation will not engage in evidence collection in relation to any alleged crimes; neither will the delegation undertake site visits, or assess the adequacy of the respective legal systems to deal with crimes that fall within ICC jurisdiction.

The delegation is scheduled to travel to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ramallah and will hold meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials at the working levels. The delegation will also participate in two events at academic institutions and engage in television and newspaper interviews in both Israel and Palestine. In addition, the delegation will hold a courtesy meeting with United Nations agencies under the auspices of the United

Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (“UNSCO”). Given the limited duration of the visit, the delegation will not engage in unscheduled events or meetings.

The Office is grateful to both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities for facilitating the visit and to UNSCO for providing logistical support.

The preliminary examination of the situation in Palestine is on-going and is following its normal course as with any other preliminary examination. The visit is not linked to any findings regarding any issue, nor will any announcement be made in that regard.

This process involves an analysis of a number of complex legal issues and a review of large volumes of documents. It is a thorough process during which the Office must be given the necessary space and time to conduct its activities, which it does in all instances independently and impartially. In this context, the Office has engaged with both Israel and Palestine and is examining all information on crimes alleged to have been committed by all parties. In the course of the visit, the Office will continue to uphold its independence and to protect the integrity of the visit and of the preliminary examination process against any attempt at politicization.

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank**

Brussels, 7 October 2016

On 7 October 2016 the Spokesperson of EU External Action Service issued the following [statement](#) expressing concern about Israel’s announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

The Israeli authorities have recently approved plans to construct 98 new housing units in what is effectively a new settlement in the northern West Bank, near the existing settlement of Shiloh. This decision continues the accelerating trend of new settlement announcements since the start of 2016 and risks further separating Ramallah from Nablus and thus further undermining the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

The retroactive authorisation of nearby illegal outposts or redrawing of local settlement boundaries contradicts previous public statements by the Government of Israel that it had no intention of creating new settlements. The decision to continue settlement building and expansion goes directly against the recommendations of the Quartet Report, weakens rather than strengthens the prospects for a two-state solution to the Middle East peace process, and makes the possibility of a viable Palestinian state more remote. Settlements are illegal under international law. Continued settlement expansion also calls into question Israel's commitment towards reaching a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians.

Statement by US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark C. Toner

on a terrorist attack in Jerusalem

Washington D.C., 9 October 2016

On 9 October 2016 the Deputy Spokesperson of the US State Department, Mark C. Toner issued the following [statement](#) condemning a terrorist attack in Jerusalem:

The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attack that took place today in Jerusalem, which resulted in the death of two Israelis and injured several others. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those killed and our hopes for a quick and full recovery for those wounded. There is absolutely no justification for the taking of innocent lives. We also condemn the statements glorifying this reprehensible and cowardly attack.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service On the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank

Brussels, 9 October 2016

On 9 October 2016 the Spokesperson of EU External Action Service issued the following [statement](#) condemning a terrorist attack in Jerusalem:

The death of two Israelis and injury of several others in a terrorist shooting incident in Jerusalem today illustrate once more the urgent need to bring new impetus to the peace process, as proposed in the recent report from the Quartet.

The EU condemns all such acts of violence, as well as any praise or incitement for terrorist acts, and extends its sincere condolences to the bereaved families.

Statement by Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, UK Permanent Representative to the UN at the UNSC Arria Formula meeting on Israeli settlements

New York, 14 October 2016

On 14 October 2016 Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, UK Permanent Representative to the UN made the following [statement](#) at the UNSC Arria Formula meeting on Israeli settlements:

Thank you, and thank you to our co-hosts for convening this important meeting. And I want to thank our briefers from B'Tselem and Americans for Peace Now.

Look, this is a long running issue on the Security Council's agenda. And I think what the briefers have done today is to confirm what is I hope a strong and shared conviction of the whole of the Security Council which is that every Israeli and every Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security, free from fear, free from violence. And it's a shared conviction that the two-state solution is the best hope for a sustained, peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And yet, as we have heard so clearly from the briefers, those aspirations remain distant, unrealised, and unfulfilled.

And there are clear obstacles to those aspirations being fulfilled. One is continuing violence. I'd like to reiterate at the start the British Government's condemnation of the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem last weekend. We're appalled by this wave of attacks against innocent Israeli civilians, as well as the praise shown by Hamas, among others, for those carrying out the attacks. Our thoughts and prayers are with victims and their families.

And this violence is directly undermining the prospects of a two-state solution. And it's undermining what little trust remains between the two sides. And it simply cannot continue.

And a second sadly recurring obstacle to peace is the continued expansion of settlements. As the Quartet Report made clear in July, continuing Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank is eroding the viability of the two-state solution.

Even since that report was issued, Israel has made several new settlement announcements, with over 1,000 new units proposed. As the British Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood, said, these policies "fundamentally call into question Israel's commitment to the two-state solution".

So we need to speak clearly and honestly today. Too many times we hear that "settlements are not the issue" and that is simply not the case. The expansion of settlements is illegal under international law. And settlements are also fundamentally detrimental to a future peace agreement, creating facts on the ground in advance of that agreement. Since the Oslo process began in 1993, the population of settlements has more than doubled, and the Quartet report estimated that the current settler population is now 570,000 people.

The continued growth of this population and the continued expansion of settlements only complicates the basis for any future agreement and undermines the geographical contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

But it also undermines Palestinian communities' ability to develop socially and economically. In the West Bank, Area C comprises the majority of agricultural lands, natural resources, and land reserves. 70 percent of this area has been unilaterally taken for exclusive Israeli use. Of the area that remains, there are severe restrictions on the ability of Palestinian communities to develop their land: less than one per cent of building permits for Palestinians in Area C have been approved over the last five years.

Peace and prosperity so often go hand in hand; denying Palestinian communities their right to develop will only damage the prospects of both.

But this is only part of the problem. A lack of development is being further exacerbated by demolitions of Palestinian structures. This year it's estimated that nearly 800 buildings have been demolished, displacing 1000 people, including 500 children. What hope then is there for the two-state solution when communities are simply removed from the map, when futures are literally bulldozed to the ground?

This is most clearly seen in the concerning demolition orders issued against the Palestinian village of Susiya and the Khan Al Ahmar School, East of Jerusalem. If these orders are carried out, they will have a terrible human cost on the 350 inhabitants of Susiya and the children of Khan Al Ahmar. Such orders could lead to the forcible transfer of these people, in violation of international humanitarian law.

So we again call on the Israeli government to stop the demolitions. Instead, let them provide a transparent, effective and legal route to construction. Let them allow Palestinians to build their schools, their houses; their places of worship – and in doing so - allow Palestinians to build a future that will restore faith and trust in the two-state solution.

**Statement by UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson on his meeting with
Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al Malki**

London, 31 October 2016

On 31 October 2016 UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson issued the following [statement](#) on his meeting with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al Malki:

It was a pleasure to meet the Palestinian Foreign Minister Dr Riyad al Malki. We discussed the persistent challenges of achieving lasting peace in the Middle East and I reiterated the UK's firm commitment to a two state solution with a Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel.

We agreed that the anniversaries of 2017 serve as a stark reminder that all parties must redouble efforts to reach a negotiated solution which delivers dignity and prosperity to all the people in the region.

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on Israel's announcement to build settlements in East Jerusalem**

London, 3 November 2016

On 3 November 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) on Israel's announcement to build new settlement units in the West Bank:

We condemn the recent announcement by the Israeli authorities to approve permits for constructing 181 new homes in the illegal settlement of Gilo in East Jerusalem. We are extremely disappointed that Israel has proceeded with approving permits despite the serious international concern and condemnation when these plans were first announced in 2012.

All settlements are illegal under international law. This announcement is the latest example of an accelerating systematic policy of illegal settlement expansion. It takes us further away from a two-state solution and raises serious questions about the Israeli government's commitment to achieving the shared vision of Israel living side-by-side a viable, independent, and contiguous Palestine state.

Press Release by the Office of the European Union Representative

Jerusalem, 8 November 2016

On 8 November 2016 the Office of the European Union Representative issued the following [press release](#) on the visit of European Union Heads of Mission to Gaza where they met with Ministers of the Palestinian Authority and representatives of Palestinian civil society:

The EU and its Member States are providing significant support for Palestinians in Gaza in partnership with the Palestinian Authority, international organizations (notably UNRWA) and civil society.

As confirmed by the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs in their conclusions of 18 January 2016, the EU is committed to facilitating the social and economic development of the Gaza Strip. The EU calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

In the meantime, unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza, as foreseen by international humanitarian law, for national, local and international humanitarian organizations, including EU bodies and Member States is essential to address Gaza's pressing humanitarian needs.

EU Heads of Mission, during today's visit, obtained a first-hand impression of the state of play of reconstruction efforts in Gaza. The Heads of Mission met with Ministers of the Palestinian Authority and discussed prospects for the PA to fully resume its governmental functions in Gaza, as it is an integral part of a future Palestinian state.

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on the Knesset's announcement to 'legalise' settlements in the West Bank**

London, 16 November 2016

On 16 November 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) on the Knesset's announcement to 'legalise' settlements in the West Bank:

We are deeply concerned by the land regulation bill in the Israeli Knesset to 'legalise' settlement outposts across the West Bank. Such outposts are currently illegal under both Israeli domestic law and international humanitarian law. Should this proposal go ahead, it would seriously undermine prospects for a two-state solution. I urge the Israeli government to reconsider the land regulation bill at the earliest opportunity.

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank**

Brussels, 25 November 2016

On 25 November 2016 the Spokesperson of EU External Action Service issued the following [statement](#) on Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem:

The Jerusalem Municipality has announced that it will advance plans for 500 new housing units in Ramat Shlomo, East Jerusalem. It would affect land privately owned by Palestinians, and extend the settlement

northeast, further encroaching on Palestinian inhabited areas, while linking to expansion of a neighbouring Israeli settlement to the west.

The policy of settlement construction and expansion, illegal under international law, continues to undermine the contiguity of a future Palestinian state and therefore raises questions about Israel's stated commitment to the two-state solution.

As stated in the Quartet report of July 2016, the settlement policy, designation of land for exclusive Israeli use and the denial of Palestinian development are steadily eroding the viability of the two-state solution and represent a threat to achieving a negotiated peace.

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on settlement activities in the East Jerusalem**

London, 28 November 2016

On 28 November 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) on Israel's settlement activities in East Jerusalem:

We are deeply concerned by reports that the Jerusalem Municipality has revived a plan for constructing 500 new units in the illegal settlement of Ramat Shlomo in East Jerusalem. The planned expansion of Ramat Shlomo includes construction on privately owned Palestinian land and further cuts off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

It is disappointing that Israel has proceeded with this plan despite serious international criticism when these plans were announced in 2014. Israel's policy of continuing to expand settlements is illegal under international law and systematically undermines the prospects for a two-state solution.

**Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service
on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill"**

Brussels, 8 December 2016

On 8 December 2016 the Spokesperson of the EU External Action Service issued the following [statement](#) on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill":

The Israeli Knesset is in the process of adopting the so-called "Regularisation Bill" which could lead to legalisation of numerous illegal settlements and outposts, built on private Palestinian land in violation of Israeli and international law, by confiscating property rights of Palestinians for settler use.

If it passes, this would be a law adopted by the Knesset on the status of land in the West Bank, an occupied territory not under its jurisdiction. Senior members of the Israeli government have called this a step towards annexation of the West Bank.

Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make the two-state solution impossible, the European Union reiterates its strong opposition, in line with the position of the Middle East Quartet, to Israel's settlement policy and all actions taken in this context.

**Statement by UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood
on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill"**

London, 8 December 2016

On 8 December 2016 the UK Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood issued the following [statement](#) on the Knesset's "Regularisation Bill":

I'm extremely concerned that the Knesset has passed the first reading of a bill which would expropriate privately owned Palestinian land and pave the way for a significant further expansion of settlements in the West Bank. This would be illegal under international law, and once again calls into question the Israeli government's commitment to a two state solution.

I am also concerned that settlement planning around Jerusalem has continued and increased in pace, with 770 units in Gilo receiving final approval on 7 December.

**Statement by the European Union Representative and the EU Heads of Mission
in Jerusalem and Ramallah on Israeli demolitions in Area C**

Jerusalem, 13 December 2016

On 13 December 2016 the European Union Representative and the EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued the following [statement](#) on Israeli demolitions in Area C:

The EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah deplore the demolitions of Palestinian structures undertaken by Israel in the occupied West Bank.

On December 6, Israel demolished three residential structures in Fasayil al Wusta that had been provided as humanitarian aid by the EU and EU Member States, and confiscated solar panels and electrical equipment from the community of Susiya. The day after, two livelihood structures were demolished in Al Khalayleh and An Nabi Samwil. These incidents affected 257 Palestinians.

These incidents bring the number of structures demolished by Israel in Area C during 2016 to 866. 5,704 Palestinians have been affected, of whom 1,221 have been rendered homeless (including 586 children), and humanitarian structures provided by the EU and EU Member States worth approximately EUR 536,000 have been either destroyed or confiscated.

EU humanitarian activities are carried out in full accordance with International Humanitarian Law, with the sole aim of providing humanitarian support to the most vulnerable population.

In line with its long standing position on this issue, the EU calls upon the Israeli authorities to halt demolitions of Palestinian houses and property, in accordance with its obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law, and to cease the policy of settlement construction and expansion, of designating land for exclusive Israeli use and of denying Palestinian development.

Statement by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on the situation in the Middle East

Washington, D.C., 28 December 2016

On 28 December 2016, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made a [statement](#) on the situation in the Middle East, extracts of which are reproduced below:

...

It is in that spirit that we offer the following principles – not to prejudge or impose an outcome, but to provide a possible basis for serious negotiations when the parties are ready. Now, individual countries may have more detailed policies on these issues – as we do, by the way – but I believe there is a broad consensus that a final status agreement that could meet the needs of both sides would do the following.

Principle number one: Provide for secure and recognized international borders between Israel and a viable and contiguous Palestine, negotiated based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed equivalent swaps.

Resolution 242, which has been enshrined in international law for 50 years, provides for the withdrawal of Israel from territory it occupied in 1967 in return for peace with its neighbors and secure and recognized borders. It has long been accepted by both sides, and it remains the basis for an agreement today.

As Secretary, one of the first issues that I worked out with the Arab League was their agreement that the reference in the Arab Peace Initiative to the 1967 lines would from now on include the concept of land swaps, which the Palestinians have acknowledged. And this is necessary to reflect practical realities on the ground, and mutually agreed equivalent swaps that will ensure that the agreement is fair to both sides.

There is also broad recognition of Israel's need to ensure that the borders are secure and defensible, and that the territory of Palestine is viable and contiguous. Virtually everyone that I have spoken to has been clear on this principle as well: No changes by Israel to the 1967 lines will be recognized by the international community unless agreed to by both sides.

Principle two: Fulfill the vision of the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of two states for two peoples, one Jewish and one Arab, with mutual recognition and full equal rights for all their respective citizens.

This has been the fundamental – the foundational principle of the two-state solution from the beginning: creating a state for the Jewish people and a state for the Palestinian people, where each can achieve their national aspirations. And Resolution 181 is incorporated into the foundational documents of both the Israelis and Palestinians. Recognition of Israel as a Jewish state has been the U.S. position for years, and based on my conversations in these last months, I am absolutely convinced that many others are now prepared to accept it as well – provided the need for a Palestinian state is also addressed.

We also know that there are some 1.7 million Arab citizens who call Israel their home and must now and always be able to live as equal citizens, which makes this a difficult issue for Palestinians and others in the

Arab world. That's why it is so important that in recognizing each other's homeland – Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people – both sides reaffirm their commitment to upholding full equal rights for all of their respective citizens.

Principle number three: Provide for a just, agreed, fair, and realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, with international assistance, that includes compensation, options and assistance in finding permanent homes, acknowledgment of suffering, and other measures necessary for a comprehensive resolution consistent with two states for two peoples.

The plight of many Palestinian refugees is heartbreaking, and all agree that their needs have to be addressed. As part of a comprehensive resolution, they must be provided with compensation, their suffering must be acknowledged, and there will be a need to have options and assistance in finding permanent homes. The international community can provide significant support and assistance. I know we are prepared to do that, including in raising money to help ensure the compensation and other needs of the refugees are met, and many have expressed a willingness to contribute to that effort, particularly if it brings peace. But there is a general recognition that the solution must be consistent with two states for two peoples, and cannot affect the fundamental character of Israel.

Principle four: Provide an agreed resolution for Jerusalem as the internationally recognized capital of the two states, and protect and assure freedom of access to the holy sites consistent with the established status quo.

Now, Jerusalem is the most sensitive issue for both sides, and the solution will have to meet the needs not only of the parties, but of all three monotheistic faiths. That is why the holy sites that are sacred to billions of people around the world must be protected and remain accessible and the established status quo maintained. Most acknowledge that Jerusalem should not be divided again like it was in 1967, and we believe that. At the same time, there is broad recognition that there will be no peace agreement without reconciling the basic aspirations of both sides to have capitals there.

Principle five: Satisfy Israel's security needs and bring a full end, ultimately, to the occupation, while ensuring that Israel can defend itself effectively and that Palestine can provide security for its people in a sovereign and non-militarized state.

Security is the fundamental issue for Israel together with a couple of others I've mentioned, but security is critical. Everyone understands that no Israeli Government can ever accept an agreement that does not satisfy its security needs or that risk creating an enduring security threat like Gaza transferred to the West Bank. And Israel must be able to defend itself effectively, including against terrorism and other regional threats. In fact, there is a real willingness by Egypt, Jordan, and others to work together with Israel on meeting key security challenges. And I believe that those collective efforts, including close coordination on border security, intelligence-sharing, joint cooperations – joint operation, can all play a critical role in securing the peace.

At the same time, fully ending the occupation is the fundamental issue for the Palestinians. They need to know that the military occupation itself will really end after an agreed transitional process. They need to know they can live in freedom and dignity in a sovereign state while providing security for their population even without a military of their own. This is widely accepted as well. And it is important to understand there are many different ways without occupation for Israel and Palestine and Jordan and Egypt and the United States and others to cooperate in providing that security.

Now, balancing those requirements was among the most important challenges that we faced in the negotiations, but it was one where the United States has the ability to provide the most assistance. And that is why a team that was led by General John Allen, who is here, for whom I am very grateful for his many hours of effort, along with – he is one of our foremost military minds, and dozens of experts from the Department of

Defense and other agencies, all of them engaged extensively with the Israeli Defense Force on trying to find solutions that could help Israel address its legitimate security needs.

They developed innovative approaches to creating unprecedented, multi-layered border security; enhancing Palestinian capacity; enabling Israel to retain the ability to address threats by itself even when the occupation had ended. General Allen and his team were not suggesting one particular outcome or one particular timeline, nor were they suggesting that technology alone would resolve these problems. They were simply working on ways to support whatever the negotiators agreed to. And they did some very impressive work that gives me total confidence that Israel's security requirements can be met.

Principle six: End the conflict and all outstanding claims, enabling normalized relations and enhanced regional security for all as envisaged by the Arab Peace Initiative. It is essential for both sides that the final status agreement resolves all the outstanding issues and finally brings closure to this conflict, so that everyone can move ahead to a new era of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. For Israel, this must also bring broader peace with all of its Arab neighbours. That is the fundamental promise of the Arab Peace Initiative, which key Arab leaders have affirmed in these most recent days.

The Arab Peace Initiative also envisions enhanced security for all of the region. It envisages Israel being a partner in those efforts when peace is made. This is the area where Israel and the Arab world are looking at perhaps the greatest moment of potential transformation in the Middle East since Israel's creation in 1948. The Arab world faces its own set of security challenges. With Israeli-Palestinian peace, Israel, the United States, Jordan, Egypt – together with the GCC countries – would be ready and willing to define a new security partnership for the region that would be absolutely ground-breaking.

...

We can only encourage them to take this path; we cannot walk down it for them. But if they take these steps, peace would bring extraordinary benefits in enhancing the security and the stability and the prosperity of Israelis, Palestinians, all of the nations of the region. The Palestinian economy has amazing potential in the context of independence, with major private sector investment possibilities and a talented, hungry, eager-to-work young workforce. Israel's economy could enjoy unprecedented growth as it becomes a regional economic powerhouse, taking advantage of the unparalleled culture of innovation and trading opportunities with new Arab partners. Meanwhile, security challenges could be addressed by an entirely new security arrangement, in which Israel cooperates openly with key Arab states. That is the future that everybody should be working for.

...

**Press release by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Federation
on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**

Moscow, 29 December 2016

On 29 December 2016, the Information and Press Department of the Russian Federation issued the following [press release](#) on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process:

On December 28, US Secretary of State John Kerry made an address on the Middle East peace, in which he set out Washington's views on conditions for the successful peace talks between Palestine and Israel.

We have carefully analysed this statement. It is a fact that the absolute majority of the world's nations support the international legal elements for the Middle East peace, which Mr Kerry reaffirmed in his speech, as well as the many aspects of the fundamental approach to the two-state solution he highlighted. This has been put on paper in various statements by the Middle East quartet of international mediators.

At the same time, we pointed out more than once that what matters is not a repetition of the stated principles for a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, even if these principles are perfectly fair, but practical efforts towards their implementation. This brings up the question why the US administration, which will leave office in less than a month, has decided to make its views on the Middle East peace public at this point, and why it did not do so in 2014, when the Washington-inspired Palestinian-Israeli talks reached a deadlock and the US administration had more time to implement its initiative.

Unfortunately, we have to state that it is not the first time that partisan interests have prevailed in Washington. The addition of internal US political considerations to the Middle East agenda will hardly help achieve the noble objective of resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as evidenced by the conflicting parties' directly opposite reaction to this statement by the US Secretary of State.

**Press statement by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**

Paris, 29 December 2016

On 29 December 2016, M. Jean-Marc Ayrault, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development issued the following [statement](#) on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process:

I welcome John Kerry's dear, courageous, and engaged speech in support of peace in the Middle East and the two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security.

France shares the US Secretary of State's conviction that it is necessary and urgent to implement the two-state solution. It was because France, too, saw that this solution was in jeopardy that it took the initiative of hosting an initial international conference in June 2016 and will again host its partners in Paris on 15 January 2017.

Many of the ideas expressed by John Kerry are useful and necessary reminders that will help advance the cause of peace in that region, which has experienced so much suffering. As always, France stands ready to contribute to this effort.

**Press statement by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process**

Jeddah, 30 December 2016

On 30 December 2016, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued the following [statement](#) on Secretary Kerry's remarks on the Middle East Peace Process:

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the statement of the US Secretary of State John Kerry in which he outlined his vision for the achievement of peace.

The Secretary General of the OIC, Yousef A. Al-Othaimen, commended the content of the statement on the positions and principles which underlined the threat posed by the illegal settlement policy which threatens the two-state policy, and the insistent need to end Israeli occupation and establish the independent Palestinian State on the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharquia as its capital, and the settlement of the refugee issue.

The Secretary General stated that the suggestions are in line with most international legitimacy resolutions and the elements of the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002 and the Islamic Summit in 2005. They also represent a proper platform for finding a definitive resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.