

**International Day of Solidarity with the
Palestinian People
(29th November 2017)
Vienna International Centre**

Statement by the Austria

Distuinguished Guests,

Mr. Keith Azzopardi, *[Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Malta to the United Nations]*

Mr. Dennis Thatchaichawalit, *[Deputy Director-
General of UNOV]*

Ambassador Salahaldin Abdalshafi, *[Permanent
Observer of the State of Palestine to the United
Nations]*

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In spite of the clear message from the Middle East
Peace Conference in Paris at the beginning of this
year,

to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to the two-state solution and refrain from unilateral steps that prejudice the outcome of negotiations on final state issues,

the situation in the Middle East has remained in painful deadlock and living conditions for Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, have continuously worsened.

The deadlock does not stem from the lack of options for a solution but from the lack of political will to take the risks necessarily attached to the “*peace of the brave*” – a phrase coined in a different context but containing all that is required to lay the foundations of a new Middle East.

There is no alternative to a sincere and comprehensive negotiating process led in good

faith and accompanied by confidence building measures. We all know that the outline of a sustainable solution is already on the table. It would be high time to take the necessary political decisions.

We, therefore, reiterate our call on Israel

- to end occupation and closure policies in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip that continue to restrict people's freedom of movement and their social and economic activities, including the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip as called for by Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009),
- to stop settlement construction in the West Bank as well as in East Jerusalem as called for in Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) and

- to cease designating land in the West Bank for exclusive Israeli use, thus denying Palestinian development.

While calling for such policy changes, we fully recognize Israel's security concerns. The Israeli civilian population must be allowed to live free from any terrorist threat, be it attacks on Israeli civilians, attacks on Israeli territory or rockets being launched from within the Gaza Strip.

The successful implementation of a two-state-solution requires not only a change of Israeli policies, it is equally threatened by the Palestinian lack of unity. Therefore, we welcome the agreement signed in Cairo on October 12 and call on the Palestinian leadership

- to increase reconciliation efforts

- to agree on the basics of a democratically legitimized and unified Palestine governed by the rule of law and
- to return to the negotiating table in the interest of peace.

Meeting here at the Vienna International Center, we all are aware of the United Nations' unique role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. We remember the 67th General Assembly's strong support of Palestine being accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations and its call for

a peaceful settlement in the Middle East that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and

fulfils the vision of two States:

an independent, sovereign, democratic,

contiguous and viable State of Palestine

living side by side in peace and security with

Israel on the basis of the pre-1967 borders
(A/RES/67/19)

Austria and the European Union will continue to support the peace process on the political level - bilaterally and the EU as a driving force within the Middle East Quartet. Regarding assistance to Palestinian state-building and assistance in humanitarian and economic terms, the European Union and its member states have proven to be reliable partners and will continue to stand by the Palestinian people, including through comprehensive support to UNRWA.

Let me assure you that the Middle East will remain a constant focus of the foreign policy agenda of Austria and the European Union up until the fulfilment of the legitimate expectations of either side, namely

- the full establishment of an independent, democratic and viable state, on the Palestinian side, and
- guarantees to the right of living in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, on the Israeli side.

Today, I want to reassure the Palestinian people of the wholehearted support of the Austrian government on its path towards self-determination, prosperity and the peace they deserve.

