

REPUBLIC OF MALTA



Excellencies,

Malta will continue to strive for a just and viable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the two-state solution, addressing all final status issues and the legitimate aspirations of both sides, thus enabling the Israeli and Palestinian People to live side by side in peace and security.

Unfortunately, current events on the ground, devoid of political momentum, are not conducive to realising such hopes. Continued settlement activity, in particular, represents the gravest of threats to the two-state solution. As confirmed by UNSCR 2334, settlements are illegal under international law, and we firmly believe that attempts to normalise such an activity not only undermine the prospects for constructive negotiations, but entrench a one-state reality.

If we are to achieve long lasting peace and security, it is absolutely fundamental to preserve the viability of two states, by addressing all final status issues for both sides. We reiterate the importance of the International Community engaging collectively on the Middle East Peace Process as a core priority in this respect. Malta wholeheartedly supports credible efforts, including those building upon other efforts, notably the Arab Peace Initiative, towards mobilising political support, and which bring both sides closer to negotiations within clear parameters towards a mutually acceptable solution.

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We perceive the mobilization of international support and assistance to the Palestinian People as a key component to the achievement of the two-state solution. In this regard, Malta continues to serve as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as it has done since the Committee was established by the UN General Assembly in 1975. We also continue to demonstrate such solidarity through the European Union, which is at the forefront of international support to the Palestinian People, including through assistance via the activities of UNRWA, and incentivising both parties to make peace.

We remain however concerned with the humanitarian, economic and security problems in Gaza and in this regard, we urge the Palestinian and Israeli sides to commit themselves to non-violence and peace as important elements for facilitating the reconstruction of Gaza. Further on the situation in Gaza, Malta remains cautiously optimistic by progress on the Palestinian national reconciliation front. Reconciliation among Palestinian factions, including the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, remains paramount; not only in terms of the

livelihoods and welfare of the Palestinians in Gaza, but also for the Palestinian people as a whole, and for the prospects of the Middle East Peace Process. To this end, we encourage the full implementation of the reconciliation deal of 12 October. Such incremental steps represent an opportunity to galvanise the peace process, and could hopefully be conducive to reducing the divide between the Israelis and the Palestinians towards negotiations.

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As we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we are compelled to re-evaluate and consider if we are any closer to achieving the aspirations of the Palestinian People, as well as peace and security in our neighbourhood. Malta calls upon all sides to constructively engage within the Middle East Peace Process, in order to achieve the aspirations of all. Only through negotiation can we achieve peace, and only through peace can we achieve the just and lasting solution to this long and arduous stalemate.