



REMARKS

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press statements with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

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Check against delivery!

I am very pleased to welcome [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas and his delegation today in Brussels, and I am looking forward to the discussions we will have, both bilaterally the two of us, as well as with all the 28 Foreign Ministers of the European Union's Member States.

In particular, we will discuss the perspectives for the Middle East Peace Process, now crucial more than ever, as well as bilateral relations and the situation in the region. As you know, we held a similar conversation last month also with Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu.

I want to, first of all, reassure [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas and his delegation of the firm commitment of the European Union to the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as shared capital of the two states - the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. This is and remains the EU position, based on the Oslo Accords and the international consensus embodied in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. It is also, we believe, the only realistic and viable way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties.

We continue to promote the two-state solution. We oppose the settlement activity that we consider illegal under international law. To achieve this goal we need to speak and act wisely and

consistently with a sense of responsibility. This is not the time to disengage; on the contrary. We believe Palestinians and Israelis need to show more than ever before their engagement with the international community, with key actors in this process, so that we can together work towards a negotiated outcome.

For our part, the European Union is extremely engaged with the parties and with our partners and we will continue to do so. We held a Quartet Envoys' meeting last week. We are also in constant contact with our partners in the region, such as Jordan, and beyond. We will host, as the European Union, here in Brussels, an extraordinary session of the international donor group for Palestine - the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee - with Norway on 31 January. This will be an opportunity to bring the parties and all other relevant actors together.

We have already invested a great deal in the Palestinian state-building project, and we are also looking at what options we have to strengthen our support from the European Union.

Gaza will also be a central topic of our discussions, and the unification of the West Bank and Gaza under one single, legitimate authority is critical for improving the situation of the people in Gaza. That is why the European Union is also ready to support ongoing efforts to ensure progress on this, including by redeploying EUBAM [European Union Border Assistance Mission] Rafah, if the parties invite us to do so. This would also be essential for reaching a negotiated two-state solution.

Finally, in these critical times, I want to reassure Palestinians and [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas of our continued support, including financial. The European Union and its Member States are collectively by far the largest donor, the largest supporter for the Palestinians. And our support will continue, including to UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] which is doing invaluable work, supporting the Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine, and ensuring their access to basic services such as education, health and jobs, pending resolution of their situation. This is key also for the lives of millions of people and also for the stability of countries like Jordan and Lebanon.

We count as always on President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership to continue to engage with us, as partners, and with others, in a dialogue towards the clear objective of reaching a two-state solution to which the European Union and its Member States stay completely committed.

Mr President [Mahmoud Abbas], thank you for being here today.

Link to the video:

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