



REMARKS

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press statement with Mr Ayman Al Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan

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Check against delivery!

Let me first of all welcome you, Ayman [Al Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan], again, to Brussels.

We have a very important meeting today. We often meet bilaterally and it is always a pleasure, but today we are pleased to welcome you in a format that is new for us: all the 28 Member States' Foreign Ministers together with the ministerial delegation of the League of Arab States on Jerusalem that you chair. And this is an excellent opportunity for us all to take advantage of the presence of the Ministers and I would like to thank you and the Ministers for their presence here today; it is really impressive.

We hosted recently, as the European Union both parties - Prime Minister of Israel [Benjamin] Netanyahu in December and President [of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud] Abbas in January - and recently, we held an extraordinary ministerial session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee here in Brussels. We brought also, in that opportunity,

many other essential international actors around the table. That was also a very important step we prepared together.

Today we will focus on how to bring the Middle East Peace Process forward. We will have the opportunity to listen to your views that coincides largely with our views. The European Union has been very clear in its position and very much united.

We believe that a negotiated two-State solution with Jerusalem as the future capital of both States, Israel and Palestine, is the only viable and realistic way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties and achieve long term peace. We have stressed, repeatedly, that all settlements are illegal and are an obstacle to peace. We have also called on all sides to prevent violence and incitement and take constructive steps to advance the two States reality on the ground and create the conditions for successful negotiations.

Let me say, today in particular, one word on the closure yesterday of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in protest to certain Israeli steps planned or announced. We hope that a solution can be found quickly. Jerusalem is a holy city to the three monotheistic religions. This special status and character of the city must be preserved and respected by all. And I am saying this, in particular, standing next to you, as His Majesty [Abdullah II] King of Jordan has a very special role - a very appreciated role - when it comes to the Holy Places in Jerusalem. He knows that he can always count on our full support. And I think that the developments yesterday showed that there is a special attention we need to pay to this aspect.

Today we will focus on how to work together, Europeans and Arabs, European Union and the League of Arab States, for a resumption of the political process towards this objective of two States. We believe that all partners are essential to this process, no one excluded. And we attach great importance to the role that our Arab partners play - for us, for the European Union - our key partners for advancing the peace process. We believe the whole region can benefit from solving this conflict and this is also a strategic interest of the European Union. We have always supported the Arab Peace Initiative which, we believe, offers a unique opportunity for regional cooperation, for peace, security and prosperity for all the people in the region in a shared manner.

I also expect we will discuss the critical situation in Gaza. This is even more important in light of the recent tensions which also affect Israel's legitimate security concerns. We have called and we have discussed also with [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas in January for the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza as a single legitimate authority. We have welcomed and we welcome Egypt's role as a facilitator in this respect.

And we are ready to support this process politically and through concrete actions. As a matter of example we are ready to offer the redeployment of our mission EUBAM [European Union Border Assistance Mission] Rafah. We are ready to support even more

the economic development of Gaza and, obviously, also increase our humanitarian aid with a specific focus on hospitals in Gaza.

Last but not least, I would expect that we will focus together on our support to UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East]. I would like to thank you also in this respect for the leading role that Jordan has taken in increasing the support we are giving to the UNRWA, in carrying out its mandate at a time it faces an unprecedented financial deficit, and where we see it is of strategic importance that we help UNRWA to deliver on its mandate.

Once again let me thank you very warmly in spite of the extremely cold weather. And let me thank you and all the ministers and the Secretary-General of the Arab League [Ahmed Aboul Gheit] for their presence here today. We take it as a clear sign of political recognition of our friendship and partnership in particular on this file. Thank you.

Link to the video:

Press contacts

Maja KOCIJANCIC

[Maja KOCIJANCIC](#)

Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

+32 (0)2 29 86570

+32 (0)498 984 425

www.eeas.europa.eu

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