



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation to the United Nations

New York, 21 November 2018

Excellency,

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the European Union wishes to convey the following message.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this message.

A two-state solution based on the 1967 borders that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation and resolves all final status issues remains the only viable and realistic way to end the conflict and achieve just and lasting peace. The EU will continue to work towards that end with both parties, and its regional and international partners, starting from the Middle East Quartet. Of crucial importance is to reverse the current negative developments on the ground that lead us away from a negotiated two-state solution with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

The EU will continue to urge both parties to refrain from unilateral actions that undermine the relaunch of the negotiations or imperil the viability of the two-state solution. There is no justification for incitement and violence.

H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
United Nations

** The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

As outlined in the last Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East on 18 October 2018, the EU is deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza.

In the past months, more than 200 Palestinians have been killed and over 21,000 have been injured, most injuries coming from live ammunition and gas inhalation. As living conditions continue to worsen, the ongoing protests and violence at the Gaza border fence, fuelled by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, have intensified and expanded in nature; they have further worsened the already volatile situation in and around the Strip. The EU firmly condemns the firing of rockets against Israeli civilian areas. Launching of incendiary kites and balloons has now continued for over half a year. It has caused severe damage in Israeli communities near Gaza and must stop.

We expect the de-facto authorities in Gaza to do their utmost to prevent further escalation. The EU urges all actors concerned to act with utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life, to prevent any escalation, to not encourage resort to violence, and to not exploit peaceful demonstrations for other means. While recalling Israel's right to self-defense, we expect the Israeli authorities to respect the principle of necessity and proportionality in its use of force. Serious questions have risen about the proportionate use of force which must be addressed through independent and transparent investigations. The European Union takes note of the Fact-Finding Assessment Mechanism established by the Israel Defence Forces to review its own actions and specific incidents that have taken place on the Israeli-Gaza border since 30 March 2018. Facts must also be established regarding reports about violent attacks against Israel under the guise of the protests.

The European Union will continue its support for the work undertaken by UN Special Coordinator for the Peace process, Nickolay Mladenov. We commend his efforts to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, including the fuel-delivery deal. We call upon the parties to cooperate with the Special Coordinator as well as on the wider international community to support the Special Coordinator in the operationalisation of the proposed humanitarian and economic interventions for Gaza, in continued close coordination with the Palestinian Authority to secure and coordinate amongst others, the provision of lifesaving healthcare needs, to increase the access to clean water and energy supplies, to improve the overall economic conditions and to improve conditions that enable intra-Palestinian unity. The immediate priority must be to reduce the tensions and avoid another conflict in Gaza. The return of the PA to the Gaza strip is indispensable to improve durably the conditions and the humanitarian situation.

Continued financial efforts by the international community are needed. But to ensure lasting results, a fundamental change of the situation in Gaza is crucial. This should include an end to the closure and the full opening of crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. In this light, we welcome the continued opening of the Rafah crossing. We expect all Palestinian factions to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population in Gaza. The EU will continue to support UN and Egyptian efforts towards the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under one single and legitimate Palestinian Authority. The EU will continue to work towards that end with our partners, the Israelis and the Palestinians, with regional actors, and with our partners within the Middle East Quartet to that end. We hope that any US peace plan for the Middle East will be another contribution in this regard.

In this context, stopping UNRWA's important humanitarian activities could well cause instability across the region and create a vacuum that would only serve the extremists.

That is why the European Union and its Member States are collectively the largest contributors to UNRWA's budget. We are and will continue to be strong, reliable and predictable supporters of the Agency. The EU and its Member States were among the first to answer the Agency's call for additional funds during this year's extraordinary financial crisis. Just a few weeks ago, the European Commission increased its financial support to UNRWA by 40 million euro, whereby raising its total contribution to the Agency to 146 million euro since the beginning of this year. The EU welcomes the additional financial support from other and new donors and calls upon all partners to translate this positive step into multi-annual contributions.

In the ministerial meeting which the EU co-chaired along with two EU Member States Sweden and Germany, and other partners on 27 September 2018, participants underlined the importance of fully supporting the ability of UNRWA to implement its mandate effectively in assisting and protecting Palestine refugees and building their resilience while continuing to ensure transparency and accountability in its programmes.

The work of UNRWA to counter the shortfall and contain its impact, including through the continuation of far-reaching reforms, including internal measures to increase cost-efficiency, has been commendable. It requires recognition and has our full support.

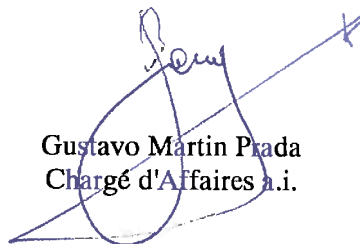
Next year will be an even tougher year for UNRWA. In this context we need to stress, once again, the crucial importance for UNRWA and donors to intensify efforts to put the agency on stable financial footing while maintaining focus on its mandate.

The international community needs to do its utmost to ensure that UNRWA and its dedicated staff continue to operate until a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the plight of Palestine refugees is finally reached, within the framework of a two-state solution.

We follow with great concern the situation on the ground, in particular the pending demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar, including its school, in a location of strategic interest for preserving the contiguity of a future Palestinian state, as well as the recent decision by the Israeli authorities to advance plans of settlement expansion in Hebron. The EU has repeatedly urged Israel not to execute its decision to demolish the community of Khan al-Ahmar or to displace its citizens and reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including demolitions, and confiscation - including of EU funded projects -, evictions, and forced transfers. Settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two State solution impossible.

Twenty five years after the signing of the Oslo Agreements, a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is still sorely missing. While Oslo has not accomplished its overall goal, one of its major achievements is that Palestinian institutions are in place. It is in the interest of both the Palestinians and the Israelis that their stability is preserved.

Yours sincerely,



Gustavo Martin Prada
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.