

Your Excellencies,

Allow me to start by thanking France and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their leadership and for organizing this Conference.

Greece has from the first moment unequivocally condemned the terrorist acts of Hamas and other radical groups that have led the region into a downward spiral of turmoil. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still being kept by Hamas. Greece maintains a very strong stance against anti-semitism and we should continue united in combatting antisemitism and hate rhetoric.

At the same time, we are faced with the direst humanitarian situation in Gaza. Safe, sustainable and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid at scale, as well as unhindered access to water and electricity must be guaranteed.

To this end, we deem that the recent decision of the Israeli Government to implement humanitarian pauses in order to deliver humanitarian aid through designated humanitarian corridors as well as the provision of ample potable water supplies, point to the right direction, proving that constructive dialogue can bring tangible results.

Humanitarian aid must not become politicized. Equally, any model of humanitarian aid delivery should be impartial, neutral, effective and in accordance with the provisions of International Humanitarian Law. The UN and its agencies network have the know-how and can play the central role in this regard.

Greece has consistently contributed to UNRWA, to WHO and to UNICEF for the children of Palestine, while also receiving injured children from Gaza, for treatment at Greek hospitals.

In this context it remains very important to support the prospects of a two-state solution, as key for the long-term stability and peace in the entire Middle East, especially against the current volatile international environment.

However, paving the way for the revitalization of the political process will need a conducive set of conditions.

In this regard I would like to focus on 3 elements:

First, we need the complete dismantling of Hamas, which should no longer have any role in governance, nor in the discussions for the day after. In cooperation with international and regional partners we should assist the role and capabilities of the Palestinian Security Forces so that they will be in a position to ensure the safety of all parties, while also effectively overseeing the enforcement of a permanent ceasefire.

Second, we need an empowered, reformed Palestinian Authority (P.A.) ,which will have the monopoly over the use of force, unified law, transparency and accountability, capable of exerting good and effective governance over the West Bank and eventually over Gaza as well.

During the First High-Level Dialogue between the EU and the P.A. the European Commission allocated 1.6 billion Euros to the PA, helping it address its immediate financial needs. A fiscal collapse of the PA should be avoided at all costs. To this end, more engagement from international and regional partners is needed, while the PA should be allowed access to its tax revenues improving the liquidity of the Palestinian economy. The P.A. has conveyed so far positive messages regarding its intentions to implement difficult reforms, such as the suspension of the prisoner payment scheme. While there is definitely room for more to be done, we should continue assisting the PA to reform, considering the difficult circumstances under which it is called to operate.

The Arab Plan for Gaza, is a good basis to elaborate upon. Greece firmly opposes any displacement of Palestinians. The Arab plan for Gaza outlines a framework of reconstruction and recovery so that Palestinians will be able to remain in their land and live with dignity. Greece is ready to participate in this plan, given however the precondition that the issue of Hamas's disarmament will be addressed effectively and permanently. There can be no role for Hamas in the discussions and plans for the day after in Gaza.

Allow me at this point to briefly refer to the importance of upholding and protecting the Status Quo of Jerusalem and its Holy Sites. We must not forget

that during all this time of suffering the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's Monastery of Saint Porphyrios in Gaza has offered invaluable services to the affected population, regardless of race or religion.

Finally, we need a regional security architecture, which will fully and effectively guarantee the security of both the Israelis and the Palestinians, leading eventually to sustainable peace in the region and allowing moderate forces to prevail, countering radicalization, paving thus the way toward a political horizon for a two-state solution and sustainable peace.