



**COUNCIL OF
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Subject: Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) as adopted by the Council on 10 December 2012.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE
MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS (MEPP)**

1. In light of recent developments and taking into account previous Council Conclusions, the European Union firmly believes that now is the time to take bold and concrete steps towards peace. The parties must engage in direct and substantial negotiations without pre-conditions in order to achieve a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ending all claims.

2. The European Union reaffirms its position that clear parameters outlining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. All parties must avoid acts which undermine confidence and the viability of a two-state solution. The European Union underlines the urgency of renewed, structured and substantial peace efforts in 2013 and, towards this end, it is ready to work with the US and other international partners, including within the Quartet. There will be no sustainable peace until the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and those of Israelis for security are fulfilled through a comprehensive negotiated peace based on the two-state solution. The European Union recalls that the Arab Peace Initiative provides regional support for a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The European Union will work with those who are willing to join in such a quest for peace, stability and prosperity.

3. The European Union is deeply dismayed by and strongly opposes Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in particular plans to develop the E1 area. The E1 plan, if implemented, would seriously undermine the prospects of a negotiated resolution of the conflict by jeopardizing the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state and of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. It could also entail forced transfer of civilian population. In the light of its core objective of achieving the two-state solution, the EU will closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and act accordingly. The European Union reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace.

4. Recalling its parameters for the resumption of negotiations between the parties, as set out in previous Council Conclusions, including in December 2009, December 2010 and May 2011, the European Union reiterates that it will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The European Union expresses its commitment to ensure that – in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Recalling its Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions adopted in May 2012, the European Union and its Member States reiterate their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products.
5. The European Union calls on Israel to avoid any step undermining the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority. Any such action by Israel would undermine existing cooperation mechanisms between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and thus negatively affect the prospects of negotiations. Contractual obligations, notably under the Paris Protocol, regarding full, timely, predictable and transparent transfer of tax and custom revenues have to be respected.
6. On 29 November, the UN General Assembly voted in favour of resolution A/RES/67/19 on the granting of non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine. The European Union calls on the Palestinian leadership to use constructively this new status and not to undertake steps which would deepen the lack of trust and lead further away from a negotiated solution.
7. The European Union welcomes the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Israel which followed several days of intense violence and commends the efforts of Egypt and all those who engaged in mediation. This tragic escalation of hostilities underlined very clearly the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip.

Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the European Union reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, the situation of which is unsustainable as long as it remains politically and economically separated from the West Bank. It is vital that all parts of the ceasefire agreement are implemented. The European Union is committed to facilitating the social and economic development of the Gaza Strip. Equally, the issue of illegal weapons' transfer into the Gaza Strip has to be effectively addressed as a matter of urgency. The European Union expresses its readiness to make use of its instruments in support of the parties' efforts, including the possible reactivation, in the appropriate way, of the EUBAM Rafah mission. The European Union underlines its readiness to explore further ways to address the situation in the Gaza Strip, including with concerned parties in the region , in line with UNSC Resolution 1860 (2009).

8. The European Union reiterates its call for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind the strong leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, in line with the principles set out in his speech of 4 May 2011, as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two-state solution.
9. The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to vital threats in the region. The European Union will never stop opposing those who embrace and promote violence as a way to achieve political goals. The EU finds inflammatory statements by Hamas leaders that deny Israel's right to exist unacceptable. The European Union will never cease its efforts to combat terrorism which seeks to undermine the openness and tolerance of societies through indiscriminate acts of violence against civilians.
10. It is in the fundamental interest of the European Union to support peace and democracy in the entire region and a strategic priority to see an end to this conflict which will continue to undermine peace and security along the EU southern borders, as long as it remains unresolved.