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Subject:	Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), as adopted by the Council on 17 November 2014.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS (MEPP)**Foreign Affairs Council, 17 November 2014**

1. The EU is gravely concerned at the growing tension and increasing violence on the ground. It condemns all recent terrorist attacks and expresses its condolences for the loss of life. It urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement, provocation, excessive use of force or retaliation. The EU calls on political leaders from all sides to work together through visible actions to de-escalate the situation. In this regard, the EU is particularly concerned at worrying developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Haram al- Sharif / Temple Mount. The EU appeals for full respect of the Holy Sites. Any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. The EU fully acknowledges the role of Jordan as Custodian to the Muslim Holy Shrines in Jerusalem and welcomes the tripartite meeting in Amman on 13 November between King Abdullah, Secretary of State John Kerry and Prime Minister Netanyahu where concrete steps towards a calming down of the situation were agreed upon. The EU looks forward to a swift and effective implementation of such measures.

2. Actions which call into question stated commitments to a negotiated solution must be avoided. The EU deeply deplores and strongly opposes the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, in particular in Givat Hamatos, Ramat Shlomo, Har Homa and Ramot, as well as plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank and the continued demolitions, including of EU and Member States funded projects. It urges Israel to reverse these decisions which run counter to international law and directly threaten the two state solution. Recent settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, the EU and its Member States remain committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. The EU closely monitors the situation and its broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two state solution.

3. The EU underlines its concern at the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which still remains to be adequately addressed, by urgently restoring basic infrastructures and services. It welcomes the international community pledges towards the reconstruction of Gaza. In light of the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, all these pledges should be swiftly honoured. The EU urges the parties to fully implement the temporary mechanism for monitoring and verification of reconstruction materials negotiated by the United Nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as an important step towards the necessary urgent opening of all crossing points. Whilst taking positive note of the recent one-off transfers of agricultural products and fish from Gaza to the West Bank, the EU stressed the importance of a change of the Israeli policy allowing Gaza to trade normally and on a permanent basis.

4. The EU calls for a fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure. The parties should urgently make progress towards a durable ceasefire, based on their agreement in Cairo on 26 August, to reach an agreement that ends the Gaza closure and addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns. A return to the status quo prior to the latest conflict is not an option. The EU stands ready to play a key role in international efforts to support a durable ceasefire, including through the rapid reactivation and possible extension in scope and mandate of its EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS missions. The EU urges all the relevant parties to create the conditions to allow it to play such a role.
5. The EU supports the efforts of the Palestinian national consensus government and President Abbas and strongly encourages the Palestinian Authority to progressively assume its government function in the Gaza Strip, including in the field of security, civil administration and through its presence at the Gaza crossing points. The EU welcomes the convening of the first cabinet meeting in Gaza as a positive step and urges all Palestinian factions to end internal divisions. The EU is concerned by the recent bomb attacks against leading Fatah figures in Gaza.

6. The unsustainable situation in Gaza, the recent increase of violence in Jerusalem, and the deteriorating regional context underline the need for a comprehensive peace, ending all claims and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood. The EU welcomes Secretary of State Kerry's renewed efforts to help the parties return to the table and calls on the parties and on all major stakeholders, including the Quartet, the League of Arab States and the UNSC, to take the necessary steps to that end. In this regard, the EU reaffirms its strategic interest to see an end to the conflict and is willing to play a major role and actively contribute to a negotiated solution of all final status issues; it recalls parameters agreed in July 2014 Council conclusions. The EU welcomes the early visit to the region of the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Federica Mogherini, underlining her engagement and that of the EU on this priority issue.

The EU recalls that the future development of the relations with both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two state solution.