



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 13 November 2006

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**COMEP 46
PESC 1122**

NOTE

Subject : GAERC of 13 November 2006
- Council conclusions on Middle East (Middle East Peace Process, Lebanon)

At its meeting on 13 November 2006, the General Affairs and External Relations Council adopted the conclusions on Middle East annexed hereto.

**GAERC CONCLUSIONS ON
MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

(Brussels, 13 November 2006)

The Council expressed its deep concern at the escalating violence in Gaza and in the West Bank. The Council strongly deplores the Israeli military action in Gaza resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties, including women and children, and deplores the unacceptable military operation in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006. While recognising Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the Council urged Israel to exercise utmost restraint and underlined that action should not be disproportionate or in contradiction to international humanitarian law. The Council called on Israel to cease its military operations that endanger the Palestinian civilian population in the Palestinian Territory. The Council also strongly deplores the firing of rockets on Israeli territory and called on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to such acts. The deterioration of the situation will only aggravate the already grave circumstances in the region where a return to a comprehensive peace process with a clear political perspective is urgently needed. To achieve this, an immediate cessation of violence is needed.

The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commended efforts including by partners in the region to that effect. It repeated its call for immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel.

The Council urged the Palestinians to work for national unity and to form a government with a platform reflecting the Quartet principles and allowing for early engagement. Such a government of national unity would also be a partner for the international community to support the re-launching of the peace process.

The Council reiterated the EU's intention to actively contribute to the work within the Quartet to get the Middle East Peace Process urgently back on track in order to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement on the basis of the Roadmap, relevant UNSC resolutions and the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2005. This should be done in close cooperation with Arab partners.

The Council reiterated the necessity of a political perspective and reinvigorating the peace process through re-launching negotiations. To support the objective of a future independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state based on the rule of law, the Council underlined the importance of preserving and strengthening the capacity of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. To that end, the Council underlined the work already undertaken by the EU and continued in the current circumstances to help building Palestinian institutions and expressed its readiness to provide enhanced support to a Palestinian Government that the EU can engage with. Further efforts in this respect will take into account useful experiences of the EU missions in this area, EU BAM Rafah and EU POL COPPS as well as the results of technical assistance provided to Palestinian institutions.

The Council emphasised the importance of the implementation of the Agreement of Movement and Access of November 2005. It called on Israel to also respect previous agreements and to fulfil its obligations under them. It insisted on the particular importance of regular operations at Gaza crossings, notably Rafah and called on Israel to do its utmost to ensure that the crossings be opened and remain open. The Council decided to extend the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point for a further six months.

The Council called on Israel to desist from any action that threatens the viability of an agreed two-State solution. Of particular concern are settlement activities in and around East Jerusalem as well as in the Jordan Valley. The European Union will not recognise any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank, as also highlighted in recent reports by UN agencies. The Council recalled its commitment to help the Palestinian people and noted that the EU's combined assistance in 2006 exceeds € 650 million. The Council reiterated its call on Israel for the immediate resumption of transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. The Council encouraged donors and others to make full use of the Temporary International Mechanism.

**GAERC CONCLUSIONS ON
LEBANON**

(Brussels, 13 November 2006)

The Council encouraged all Lebanese parties to reach consensus and to resume the process of national dialogue. The EU continues to be committed to supporting the legitimate and democratically elected Lebanese government and its efforts to stabilise the situation in the country, and to maintain its unity. In this regard, the EU fully supports the reconstruction process in the perspective of the Paris Conference in January 2007.

The Council renewed its determination to support the full implementation of UNSCR 1701. The Council called on all parties in the region to comply with the resolution, notably the arms embargo. Lebanon's sovereignty over its land, sea and airspace must be respected by all. The Council urged Israel to stop violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli Air Force. The Council welcomed the deployment of UNIFIL troops and the Lebanese armed forces which is progressing well.

The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.

The Council called on countries in the region to refrain from any interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, in accordance with UNSC resolutions and to provide firm support to Lebanon's Government in reconstruction efforts.