COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
EU-JORDAN ASSOCIATION COUNCIL
(Brussels, 16 November 2009)
Statement by the European Union

1. The European Union warmly welcomes this eighth Meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council. Today’s meeting provides a welcome opportunity to take stock of our dialogue and the development of our bilateral cooperation since the last meeting of the Association Council of 10 November 2008. The EU values Jordan as a very important partner in both the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean and is committed to further developing a close, constructive and mutually beneficial partnership with Jordan. The EU looks forward to holding an open and fruitful exchange on these prospects.
2. The ENP is currently implemented through ENP Action Plans agreed jointly with the neighbouring countries concerned. The EU deeply appreciates Jordan’s true commitment to the implementation of the measures agreed in the ENP Action Plan. The EU has acknowledged the efforts made and the results achieved in the three progress reports on the implementation of the Action Plan (released respectively in December 2006, April 2008 and April 2009).

3. As the Action Plan is based upon both Jordan’s reform objectives and the objective of the further integration of Jordan into European economic and social structures, it continues to be a very useful tool to guide and structure both our dialogue and our financial assistance. Progress on various aspects of our dialogue was achieved by the subcommittees of the Association Committee, which have been or will soon be meeting for the fourth time. Regular meetings of these subcommittees help move our Partnership forward.

4. The sub-committee on human rights and democracy, which held its fourth session on 18 June 2009, merits special mention not only because Jordan was the first European Neighbourhood Policy partner to set up a sub-committee on human rights, but especially because of the openness and frankness of the discussions. In the subcommittee the EU commended Jordan's recent advances in some areas such as penitentiary reform, transparency and the fight against corruption but also encouraged Jordan to make further progress in others, such as the independence of the judiciary and freedom of association. While areas of concern remain, the EU notes Jordan's recent advances in this field and wishes to encourage further such efforts.

5. Almost five years after the adoption of the EU-Jordan Action Plan, at the current stage of development of our relations, it is necessary to look at the progress achieved, to maintain the momentum and also to reflect on how to further enhance our relations. The current Action Plan is ambitious and as a result the EU feels that it still leaves ample room for further implementation and opportunity for further actions. At the same time, with the plan's five-year implementation period approaching its end, there is an opportunity for reassessment.
6. The EU remains fully committed to a successful development of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The UfM gives a new impulse by upgrading inter alia the political level of the EU’s relationship with its Mediterranean partners, providing more co-ownership to our multilateral relations and by making these relations more concrete and visible through additional regional and sub-regional projects. The EU welcomes the resumption of our UfM meetings and the efforts to finalise the Statutes of the Barcelona Secretariat. It is now essential that the UfM, building on the achievements of the Barcelona Process, will be able to deliver as soon as possible. The EU believes it is paramount to make progress in the common objectives agreed in Paris and Marseille, first and foremost in setting up the institutional architecture of the UfM and in particular its joint Secretariat. Concrete progress and joint efforts also need to be made in the area of projects aimed at fostering regional integration. In this respect the EU welcomes Jordan’s positive and constructive attitude and commitment in further developing this joint initiative. The EU looks forward to the next Senior Officials Meeting on 23 November to adopt the statutes of the UfM Secretariat.

7. In its recent Communication to the Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy, published in April 2009, the Commission underlines that upgrading relations with any ENP country would institutionalise and increase political exchanges, intensify the country’s participation in the EU economic area, and bring about a significant degree of integration in various policy areas. It further states that a formal upgrading would be appropriate when the implementation of the Action Plan in force demonstrates the ambition of the partner concerned to go further notably as concerns democratic practice, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

8. In this context, the EU Foreign Ministers at the GAERC in December 2008 welcomed and endorsed Jordan's desire to enhance relations with the EU, which Jordan had declared during the last Association Council meeting in November 2008 by presenting its "Paper on the upgrading of Jordan-EU relations". Jordan expressed therein its wish to deepen relations with the EU through an augmentation of the political dialogue, deepening of economic relations, increased integration in a non-exhaustive set of sectors, participation in EU agencies and programs, and the promotion of the human dimension of the future relationship. Jordan further specified its approach in its "Working Paper on an Advanced Status with the European Union" from June 2009 by putting forward concrete proposals in a range of areas. On this basis the EU undertook a preliminary evaluation of Jordan's proposals, which concern sectors that in part have been covered by the current ENP Action Plan but in part are innovative, particularly in the political dimension.
9. The EU looks forward to **gradually strengthening co-operation within the ENP Action Plan** framework by different means both at the political and sectoral levels in line with our common interest. Fulfilment of the commitments of the current ENP Action Plan will contribute to future deepening and broadening of EU-Jordan relations through intensified political dialogue, including on human rights and democracy, and also entail co-operation in a number of sectors. As the expiry of the current Action Plan approaches, the next Action Plan is to be negotiated with this in mind. The ENP Action Plans will thus remain essential reference tools that will guide our bilateral relations over the next years.

10. The EU recalls the importance of giving concrete substance to an advanced status. In this context the **existing structure of sub-committees** will play a key role, in examining the content and scope for enhancing relations between Jordan and the EU. The recent and upcoming sub-committee meetings are tasked to undertake the necessary analysis of Jordan’s proposals and the EU’s responses, and to develop over time, each one in its sector, the content for an enhancement of cooperation. These meetings will provide an opportunity for the EU to learn more about the concrete wishes and ambitions of Jordan—in particular about Jordan's long-term vision for its relations with the EU—as well as the opportunity for Jordan to receive comments on its proposals and to hear details about the EU’s own proposals in response. In this context the EU recalls the importance of a comprehensive approach to this process, which requires involving all stakeholders in Jordan and the EU, including the civil society, in order to ensure shared ownership and gain impetus for developing content.

11. To complement these deliberations, a senior-level **ad-hoc group** will be convened, in accordance with the EU-Jordan exchanges in October 2009. The ad-hoc group will be open to the participation of Jordan and, on the EU side, the Presidency, the Commission, the Council Secretariat as well as interested Member States. The ad-hoc group will be tasked to consider ways of enhancing relations between Jordan and the EU, to complement the technical discussions and take stock of progress, and to explore possibilities for incorporating the results of the process in the new ENP Action Plan. The outcome of these deliberations will be reviewed through the existing institutional structures under the Association Agreement. The periodicity of meetings of the ad-hoc group will be jointly decided by the parties, taking into consideration the work carried out in the sectoral sub-committees.
12. The EU welcomes that the Jordanian government remains committed to the objectives and commitments laid down in the National Agenda and the Kulluna al-Urdun initiative and that its National Social and Economic Development Programme for 2009-2011 builds upon these reform agendas. The EU hopes that macroeconomic policy in Jordan will continue to be conducive to maintaining macroeconomic stability and will not put at risk objectives of policies and sector strategies in the National Agenda.

13. The EU encourages Jordan to implement specific recommendations of the National Agenda committee and the National Centre for Human Rights, particularly in regard to reforming the electoral framework and adopting modern laws on national parliamentary elections. The EU stands ready to assist Jordan in the preparation of the next parliamentary elections in 2011. The EU also stands ready to define, together with Jordan, a comprehensive electoral assistance project.

14. Respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms constitutes an essential element of the Association Agreement with Jordan and is a priority in the ENP Action Plan. The EU welcomes positive developments including Jordan's progress on protection against domestic violence and equal treatment of women, such as the lifting of Jordan's reservation on Article 15(4) of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). At the same time, the EU stresses the need to further such efforts, particularly regarding honour crimes, where limited progress has been made so far. The EU welcomes Jordan’s efforts in the protection of the rights of the child and encourages the authorities to strengthen their efforts to combat violence against children in all settings. The EU encourages Jordan to continue to pursue efforts aimed at fighting discrimination on all grounds.

15. The EU also welcomes the work done by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the adoption of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and the related Action Plan. While acknowledging the positive effects of Jordan's existing Press and Publications Law the EU encourages Jordan to endeavour to maintain full respect for freedom of expression with regard to the application of the Penal Code.
16. The EU welcomes the **Revised Law on Societies** of 2009 as a step in the right direction. It encourages Jordan to bring the law further in line with international standards and address the remaining concerns regarding registration, dissolution and funding of associations and civil society organisations. The EU expresses its hope that the law will be implemented in a way that guarantees the freedom of association. The EU considers that civil society can play a positive role in the overall reform process and underlines the importance of fostering the latter by allowing sufficient freedoms and maintaining further consultations with civil society representatives to ensure their concerns are duly taken into account.

17. The EU hopes that the implementation of the **Public Gathering Law** strikes the right balance between the need to ensure public security and safety and the need to give the population the space to formulate and express their opinions and to participate in public life. Jordan's recent decision to establish a Gendarmerie to substitute the military for the purpose of maintaining public order is a welcome step.

18. The EU welcomes the start of activities of Jordan's first **Ombudsman**, which marks progress towards transparency and accountability of Jordanian public institutions, and encourages Jordan to undertake public information campaigns in order to raise citizens’ awareness of its role. In regard to further increasing public participation the EU welcomes the launch of the decentralisation programme in March 2009 and expresses its hope that it will be implemented across the entire country.

19. The EU encourages Jordan to make further efforts on the **fight against torture** and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. It acknowledges the fact that the definition of torture under the Jordanian legislation was brought in line with the UN Convention against Torture and encourages Jordan to ratify the Optional Protocol to this Convention. The EU welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Centre for Human Rights and the Public Security Directorate on visits to prisons by the National Centre and is prepared to continue its active support for Jordan's ongoing penitentiary reform.

20. The EU strongly encourages Jordan to fully implement the recommendations endorsed by it at the conclusion of the **Universal Periodic Review** process, to which Jordan was subject, as stated in the report of the UPR working group of 3 March 2009.
21. The EU refers to the historic trend towards the progressive abolition of the death penalty worldwide. The EU welcomes Jordan’s de facto moratorium on executions that has been in place since May 2006, appreciates its decision to abstain on the 2008 UNGA vote concerning the resolution on a worldwide moratorium, and invites Jordan to proceed further and abolish the issuing of death sentences both in practice and in law. Ratification of the 2nd Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would provide an appropriate instrument in that respect.

22. The EU welcomes Jordan’s commitment to strengthening our partnership in the Justice sector. Both Jordan’s National Agenda and the National Economic and Social Development Programme 2009-2011 emphasise the need to enhance the independence of the judiciary. In that context, decreasing the administrative dependency of courts on the Ministry of Justice would be a step in the right direction. The EU will continue supporting capacity building of the judiciary with a view to strengthen its independence and efficiency.

23. Regarding the Middle East Peace Process, the EU stresses the important role Jordan plays in promoting the stability of the region and the special role of Jordan regarding Holy Sites in Jerusalem.

24. The European Union is very concerned about the recent incidents in East Jerusalem. We have been following closely the situation around the Al Aqsa mosque and Temple Mount/Al Haram al Sharif. We urge all parties to refrain from any provocative action that could further inflame tensions or lead to violence. Everyone must take action to avoid escalation. If there is to be genuine peace, a way must be found to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states, and to urgently enter into serious peace negotiations on all other final status issues.

25. The European Union remains committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid conference, including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. The EU reiterates its commitment to the two-state solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state, comprising the West Bank and Gaza, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.
26. The EU reiterates its full support to the Lebanese institutions and remains determined to reinforce Lebanon’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, which is in the interest of all Lebanese people and key to peace and stability in the region. The EU welcomes the successful holding of parliamentary elections, which were an important step in the democratic development of the country. The EU encourages the formation of a new Lebanese government as soon as possible and calls on all the parties under the guidance of President Sleiman, whose role is to safeguard the Constitution and the independence of the country, to further engage in dialogue in order to launch a comprehensive reform programme in the interest of stability and unity of Lebanon as a whole. The EU is prepared to assist in any way it can. The EU reiterates its full support for UNIFIL and recalls its commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757.

27. The EU welcomes the enhanced relations between Jordan and Syria. It also positively notes Syria’s recent moves to engage with other neighbouring countries. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon and the exchange of Ambassadors were welcomed as encouraging developments by the EU that now looks forward to a further implementation of the commitments of the six-points communiqué agreed by the Presidents of Lebanon and Syria. The proposed signing of the Association Agreement with Syria will mark a new level of relations. The EU trusts that this will continue to encourage Syria’s constructive contribution to the stabilisation of the whole region.

28. The EU reaffirms its support to the Government of Iraq in building an independent, sovereign, secure, stable, unified, democratic and prosperous Iraq, where human rights are respected, and underlines the importance of the national elections planned for 16 January 2010. The EU is fully aware of the heavy burden put on Jordan and other neighbouring states due to the influx of displaced persons over the last six years. The EU welcomes steps towards enhanced cooperation between Iraq and its neighbours including the visits to Iraq of King Abdullah II in August 2008 and of Prime Minister Al-Dahabi in September 2009 as well as Jordan's appointment of an Ambassador to Iraq. The EU remains ready to cooperate with Iraq’s neighbouring states and the rest of the international community on issues of mutual concern, such as the spread of terrorism. It pays tribute to Jordan’s constructive role in assisting Iraq to re-establish relations with neighbouring countries.
29. The European Union remains fully committed to finding a diplomatic solution to the issue of Iran's nuclear programme and urges Iran to fully co-operate in this effort. The EU reaffirms its grave concerns over the development of Iran's nuclear programme and Iran's persistent failure to meet its international obligations. The recent disclosure of a facility intended for enrichment near Qom has further deepened its concerns. The European Union urges Iran to heed the requirements of UNSC resolutions and to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve all remaining issues and to rebuild confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The European Union also calls upon Iran to agree with IAEA to the scheme of nuclear fuel supply for the Teheran research reactor which would contribute to building confidence while responding to Iran’s need for medical radio-isotypes. Progress on the Iranian nuclear issue would pave the way for enhanced relations between the EU and Iran and open the way to mutually beneficial cooperation in the political, economic, security and technical fields. The European Union will continue to review all aspects of the Iranian nuclear issue and will decide in the context of the dual track approach on our next steps. The European Union deplores the continued violations of human rights in Iran. It is deeply concerned about the use of the death penalty, the violent suppression of dissent and the mass trials in post-electoral Iran against journalists, human rights defenders and political activists. The European Union expresses its continuing concern about the situation of staff members of European Union Missions and European citizens in Iran who recently have been on trial, and calls upon their prompt and unconditional release.

30. **Terrorism** is a threat to all States and all peoples. Both Jordan and the EU have repeatedly been victims of terrorist attacks. The EU looks forward to continuing its fruitful cooperation with Jordan to counter the terrorist threat and to fight the scourge of terrorism. The EU is committed to its counter-terrorism cooperation with Jordan in the framework of the EU-Jordan Action Plan. The EU places the utmost importance on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the fight against terrorism. Effective counter-terrorist measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals but complementary and mutually reinforcing. The EU supports the United Nations as the only worldwide forum for the fight against terrorism and remains committed to reaching an international consensus on the draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

31. On the economic side, Jordan like other countries has started to feel effects of the global economic crisis, in particular drop in investments and remittances and widened government deficit.
32. While the EU acknowledges the benefit of a temporary fiscal stimulus to support the economy during the downturn, it also emphasises the importance of fiscal consolidation over the medium-term and continued commitment to debt reduction. A more balanced fiscal stance would improve the stability and sustainability of public finances and reduce the risk of significant macroeconomic imbalances emerging as the economy recovers.

33. Better management of funds is essential to support the financial sustainability of the reform agenda and is of particular importance in times of economic crisis. The EU therefore welcomes the progress made by Jordan in Public Financial Management reform and will continue to support this reform. The EU will also continue working with Jordan to further develop an enabling environment for a vibrant private sector.

34. The EU welcomes Jordan’s efforts towards further liberalisation of trade and removal of all obstacles, including technical barriers to trade. The EU welcomes Jordan’s interest to expand trade ties with the EU through further liberalisation of trade in services and right of establishment. The EU encourages Jordan to engage as soon as possible in bilateral negotiations with the EU in this field. As a first step, the EU and Jordan explored Jordan’s potential objectives and scope of bilateral services negotiations at a technical meeting on 29 October.

35. The EU hopes for a swift conclusion to the negotiations for the establishment of a new mechanism for the settlement of bilateral trade disputes. Given the significance of the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Roadmap by the Euro-Med Trade Ministerial on 9 December 2009, we expect Jordan to take an active role in its future implementation.

36. The EU has always been and continues to be strong supporter of the Agadir Agreement. The EU very much welcomes the activities of the Agadir Technical Unit, the headquarters of which are located in Jordan. We encourage Jordan to make full use of the possibilities offered by the Agadir Agreement, including the system of Pan-Euro-Med cumulation of origin.

37. The EU commends Jordan for keeping a firm commitment to reform of the public education sector through the adoption of the second phase of the Education reform for the Knowledge Economy.
38. The EU commends Jordan’s continued commitment to good environmental governance, and acknowledges progress made by Jordan in water management, waste management and industrial pollution. The EU welcomes in particular the adoption by Jordan in June 2009 of the Water Strategy for 2009-2022 as well as Jordan’s focus on tackling climate change. The EU commends Jordan for hosting the Third Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Water in December 2008, which launched the process for the drawing up and adoption of a Mediterranean Water Strategy.

39. The EU commends the adoption by the Government of Jordan of the National Transport Strategy 2009-2011. The EU looks forward to an early conclusion of the negotiations with Jordan on the Euro-Mediterranean Air Transport Agreement, which will strengthen our relations in air transport and improve trade and tourism.

40. The EU welcomes the approval by the Government of Jordan of the draft Energy sector law awaiting the adoption by Parliament that would greatly facilitate the implementation of the Energy Sector Strategy. The EU welcomes also the planned reform measures in the electricity sector, including with respect to pricing policies. The EU commends Jordan's commitment to pursuing concrete targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency and energy savings. The EU continues to follow closely Jordan's plan to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and commends its transparent approach, including adoption of the Additional Protocol with the IAEA. The EU welcomes the entry into force in Jordan of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and confirms its readiness to cooperate with Jordan on nuclear safety.

41. The EU looks forward to an open, fruitful and constructive meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council and to further strengthening and enhancing our relations.