

Statement
on behalf of the European Union
by

H.E. Mr. Martin Palouš
Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic
to the United Nations

on
Illegal Israeli action in Occupied East Jerusalem
and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

at the Tenth Emergency Special Session
of the General Assembly on January 15, 2009

New York, January 15, 2009

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President,

The European Union remains deeply concerned over the continuing violence, the plight of civilians in and around Gaza, the suffering and anguish of all civilian population in the region. We deplore the ongoing hostilities which have led to high numbers of civilian casualties and we express our sincere condolences to the families of the Palestinian and Israeli victims. We are profoundly disturbed by the loss of civilian life at the UN school in Jabaliya that resulted from Israeli military action. The European Union is also deeply concerned that humanitarian convoys have been fired upon and humanitarian staff killed.

The European Union welcomes the adoption of the resolution 1860 by the UN Security Council as well as the continuing exercise of its functions in accordance with the UN Charter and calls for its full and immediate implementation. The current situation on the ground makes the need to reach an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire absolutely urgent. The European Union is determined to make every effort to help to stop the current violence and repeats its call for an immediate cessation of military actions on both sides. There must be an unconditional halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and an end to Israeli military action. The European Union urges the parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. The European Union recalls that no military solution can prevail in Gaza.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation is deeply disturbing. The European Union calls on the parties, in particular Israel, to grant immediate unhindered and secure passage for the delivery of the humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. The European Union welcomes periods of

three hour halt of Israeli military operations and stresses the importance that the halt is fully respected, and calls on Israel to open a humanitarian corridor in Gaza and allow humanitarian organizations free access to the territory. Food, urgent medical supplies and fuel must be delivered to the Gaza Strip, the safe evacuation of the injured must be allowed and immediate access of humanitarian workers should be made possible through the opening of crossing points. The European Union is also ready to step up its already substantial assistance for the improvement of the humanitarian situation of the people in need. The European Union dispatched a field mission to provide the most appropriate response as quickly as possible in cooperation with the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as with NGOs.

The cessation of fighting should allow lasting and normal opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The European Union is ready to re-dispatch the EUBAM to Rafah to enable its re-opening, in cooperation with Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. It is also willing to examine the possibility of extending its assistance to other crossing points, provided that the issues relating to security have found a satisfactory response.

Mr. President,

The European Union fully supports the international efforts to find an immediate solution to the actual crisis in conformity with the provisions of the UN Security Council resolution 1860 and takes an active part in these efforts. The Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the European Union met in Paris on 30 December 2008 and put forward their proposals to resolve the crisis. Subsequently, a European ministerial delegation led by the European Union Presidency, represented by the Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, traveled to the region to seek an end to the violence, to alleviate the current distressing humanitarian situation and to discuss the European Union proposals agreed in Paris. The European Union welcomes the initiative of Presidents Mubarak and Sarkozy and follows with hope the latest development of their efforts, the ongoing visit of the Secretary General in the region as well as other high-level visits.

The European Union reiterates the need to step up the peace process. In this context, it welcomed the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 1850. We are convinced there is no military solution

to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in Gaza or elsewhere. The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the process set out in Annapolis and in accordance with the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, in particular land for peace, the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Quartet's roadmap. It must lead towards the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. In order to foster a lasting settlement, the European Union, reiterates its willingness to assist in the implementation of a final peace agreement, when the time comes. The European Union calls upon the parties to desist from any actions that threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, in conformity with international law.

The European Union is fully aware of the responsibility of the international community, especially the Quartet. The European Union also reiterates the importance of the Arab partners' sustained, broad and constructive commitment. In this respect work must be carried out, notably on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive and operational manner.

The European Union also encourages the inter-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas, commends the mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League in this respect and is prepared to support any government which respects the PLO's commitments, resolutely supports the peace negotiations with Israel, and pursues policies and measures that reflect the Quartet's principles.

Finally, Mr. President, let me once again stress the European Union's continuing support for reaching an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, alleviation of the current humanitarian situation and finding a final peace agreement. The European Union will play an active role in this matter. In this context the European Union stresses that the objective of this emergency session should be to support the implementation of resolution 1860 of the UN Security Council, consistent with its provisions, as well as the ongoing diplomatic efforts on the ground, in particular the Egyptian initiative.

Thank you, Mr. President.