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Finland's EU Presidency

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The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

Statement on behalf of the European Union

**Mr. Taisto Huimasalo
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations**

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(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

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

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*) Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union would like to restate its firm commitment to enabling the Palestinian people to fulfil their unconditional right to self-determination, including the possibility of establishing a sovereign state. The European Union reiterates the goal as set forth in the Quartet Roadmap and as agreed upon by both parties, to achieve a two-state solution which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with Israel living within recognised and secure borders. It is our clear conviction that such a solution constitutes the best possible guarantee for the security of Israel and the acceptance of Israel as an integrated partner in the region.

The European Union reiterates its 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 European Union also reiterates 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 EU underlines the importance of preserving and strengthening the capacity of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. To that end, the EU underlines the work already undertaken by the union and continues in the current circumstances to help building Palestinian institutions. 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 European Union urges the Palestinians to work for national unity. A Palestinian government with a platform reflecting the Quartet principles would present a partner for the international community to support in the re-launching of the peace process.

The European Union calls on Israel to desist from any actions 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 changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.