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STATEMENT

On behalf of the European Union

by

**H.E. Mr. Anders Lidén
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Sweden**

at the General Assembly debate on the Question of Palestine

**United Nations
New York**

30 November 2009

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is concerned about the current lack of movement in the Middle East peace process. The combination of negative developments on the ground and limited achievements in the diplomatic efforts is dangerous. At this juncture re-launched negotiations and positive movement on the ground is urgently needed to create hope and strengthen the hand of those working for peace. If we fail, the responsibility will be for all of us to bear and the consequences will also be felt widely.

The EU remains committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of international law, 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, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative. We reiterate the need to ensure a political solution, with two states - Israel and an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state - living side by side in peace and security.

We welcome the US Administration's commitment to pursue vigorously a two-state solution and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The EU is ready to work with the parties to the conflict as well as the United States, other Quartet members and Arab partners to achieve this goal. The two-state solution is the road to future security for both peoples.

Mr. President,

Both parties must now take concrete measures to resume peace negotiations, respecting previous agreements and understandings.

The continued settlement activities, house demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including in East Jerusalem remain a serious concern for the EU. We urge the government of Israel to end immediately these settlement activities, including so called natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001. The EU reiterates that the settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. The EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

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

A durable solution to the Gaza crisis has to be achieved through the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860. The EU remains gravely concerned at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for the immediate and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. Reconstruction and economic recovery have to be allowed. An effective mechanism to prevent ammunitions smuggling into the Gaza strip must also be established. The European Union calls for a complete stop to all violence, including a sustained halt to rocket attacks at Israel. We reiterate our call on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

The European Union is also very concerned about the recent incidents in East Jerusalem. We have been following closely the situation around the Al Aqsa mosque and Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. We urge all parties to refrain from any provocative actions 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.

In 2009, as we commemorate the 60 anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions, the EU reiterates the importance it attaches to the Geneva Conventions, which, together with their Additional Protocols, form the heart of international humanitarian law. We call on all parties to stop incitement and violence against civilians. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law must be ensured. The EU emphasises the importance of appropriate and credible investigations into possible violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

The EU calls upon the Palestinians to step up the inter-Palestinian reconciliation efforts behind President Mahmoud Abbas. We support the mediation by Egypt and the Arab League.

The EU will continue promoting Palestinian state-building and will intensify work in partnership with the Palestinian Authority on reforms. The efforts of the Palestinian Authority to develop an effective and reformed security sector are positive. We will cooperate towards additional improvement. Civilian police and the judicial sector will continue to be a focus of EU support.

The declared readiness of the government of Israel to promote Palestinian economic development is a positive sign. This should be carried out within the framework of the broader perspective of the two-state solution. The EU welcomes the positive steps taken by the Israeli authorities regarding the easing of restrictions on the West Bank. The ongoing limitations of freedom of movement in the West Bank negatively affect the human rights situation. We therefore look forward to further and sustained improvements of movement and access in all of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Agreement on Movement and Access of 2005 must be fully implemented. The EU is ready to work closely with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and international donors in order to achieve sustainable development of the Palestinian economy.

Mr. President

The EU will contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, addressing also the regional economic and security dimensions. We call on all partners in the international community to contribute actively to the achievement of a comprehensive settlement.

In light of further developments at the political level and on the ground, the EU stands ready to support concrete and early results on the path to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

Mr. President, thank you.
