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**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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Occupied Palestinian Territories

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Vesa Himanen
Permanent Representative of Finland
on behalf of the European Union**

Geneva, 29 September 2006

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

We would like to start by thanking Professor Dugard for his report and statement. We also welcome the announcement of the High Commissioner that she has been invited to visit both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the coming months. We have always emphasized that Governments should cooperate with all human rights mechanisms.

Mr. President,

The situation between Israel and the Palestinians has been and, unfortunately, continues to be a cause for great concern for the European Union. During the last months the Middle East has once again witnessed much violence and hatred. The EU calls on all parties to abstain from any actions that are in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. The European Union reminds all parties of their responsibility to protect civilian lives.

The EU calls for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions and to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian Territories. The EU repeats its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It also repeats its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. In this regard, we welcome the release of the Palestinian Vice-Prime Minister.

The European Union calls on Israel to desist from any action that threatens the viability of an agreed two-State solution and from acts that are contrary to international law. Of particular concern are settlement activities, the construction of the barrier on Palestinian land and activities in and around East Jerusalem as well as the Jordan Valley. The European Union will not recognize any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed to by both sides.

The EU urges the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its obligations in the framework of the roadmap, namely the dismantlement of terrorist infrastructure and capabilities. Furthermore the EU emphasises the importance that the Palestinian

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

Authority takes firm action against those Palestinians who commit acts of violence or terrorism.

The possibility of Palestinians to enjoy social and economic rights is directly connected to the question of access and movement. This is a major problem in the Palestinian Territories in general and in Gaza in particular. The European Union has stressed in its contacts with Israeli counterparts that the border crossings such as Rafah and Karni be opened and remain open. We urge the parties to urgently take concrete steps to implement their obligations under the Agreement on Movement and Access, and in this regard, the European Union reiterates its continued commitment to the EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. Of equal importance to the economy and the humanitarian situation is the resumption of transfers of Palestinian tax and customs revenues. The EU repeats its call on Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories. The EU has already contributed more this year than last year to the Palestinians. The EU recently agreed to expand the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), by which the EU and its Member States channel substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people. The EU also agreed to extend the TIM for a further three months, so that it can continue to help alleviate the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories. Through the TIM the EU supports the supply of essential public utilities, including fuel and electricity. The EU also supports vulnerable Palestinians, through social allowances to health care workers, and through allowances to the poor.

Finally I would like to remind you that the EU has underlined that lasting peace and security in the region can only be ensured by a comprehensive settlement with a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core. To achieve this, it is important to reinvigorate the Peace Process. Consequently we are committed to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the Roadmap and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The EU welcomes the efforts of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to form a government of national unity, in the hope that the platform of such a government would reflect Quartet principles and allow for early engagement.

Thank you Mr. President