

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press point with Børge Brende, Minister for Foreign

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I am very glad to host today again together with Foreign Minister [Børge] Brende of Norway the annual meeting of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee, to take stock as we do regularly of the Palestinian state-building process and to discuss ways to improve and sustain the Palestinian economy. This is the focus of our meeting today.

We have 28 delegations – including the United Nations, United States, Russia and key countries in the Middle East participating in this important annual meeting. It is a collective effort for us and also the only forum where both Israeli and Palestinian ministers meet together with international partners. As such, it is a very relevant forum focused on the improvement and the support to the Palestinian economy and state-building but also providing us with good opportunities for meetings at the margins, as we just had together with minister Brende and some of the participants today.

The fact that we are hosting this meeting also underlines once again that the Middle East and the process leading to peace between Israel and Palestine remains a top priority for the European Union. The focus of our work more broadly is on how to create the conditions on the ground for a successful resumption of negotiations. Because this is our ultimate objective, an objective we share with our friends in the international community and with the parties, that the parties can re-start negotiations on a two-state solution, which in our view is the only viable way to achieve just and lasting peace.

The path to a political solution remains very clear to us: Israelis and Palestinians need to reverse the negative trends, stop settlements expansion, effectively fight incitement to violence, resolve the Palestinian divisions and urgently improve the critical humanitarian and security situation in Gaza.

Our engagement is based on the assumption that our work as donors – and as you know the European Union is the first donor – contributes to the perspective of the two states, to the political solution. The logic of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee has always been that progress on the ground and economic development cannot and should not substitute political progress, but also that political progress is very hard to achieve without a positive environment on the ground. And so by working on the positive steps on the

ground we are also trying to create a positive environment for the political process to restart.

It is no secret that the situation on the ground today is not good. The gaps are wide, not easy to bridge. There is a complexity of the conflict that everybody understands, but there are also new opportunities. I am particularly encouraged by the meeting that took place yesterday in the White House between [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas and President [of the United States, Donald] Trump.

The European Union is working very closely with the United States. We discussed this today also bilaterally with Jason Greenblatt [U.S Special Representative for International Negotiations] who is here for the United States, and with all our international partners, particularly with the Quartet, with Norway, with the region, and our partners in the region, in particular with our Arab friends on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative as we discussed, and I personally discussed last month at the Summit of the League of Arab States in Jordan. We are trying to mobilise all our resources, not only economic but also political resources, in a combined and coordinated effort to help make renewed peace efforts successful.

Q&A

Q. Hamas announced two days before that they are accepting a Palestinian State in the borders of 4 June 1967. I would like to have your comment and also of the minister. And what is the level of ambition of this meeting regarding the budget difficulties and the financial aspect?

FM: On the document that Hamas has made public a few days ago that – if I understand correctly – complements and does not substitute previous positions, we have seen some elements that are interesting ones. We will see what comes next in terms of actual political decisions. We have always insisted a lot, not only as the European Union but also with our partners in the Quartet, on the Palestinian unity and the need to make sure that all Palestinian people, be it in Gaza or in the West Bank, live decent lives and benefit from a better standard of living. So we will see what kind of political practical consequences some of the elements that are in this paper will bring.

In terms maybe of the ambition of today's meeting on financing, I might leave this more to my Norwegian friend that chairs the committee. But I would like to stress one point that he also very rightly made: there is a strong commitment from the European Union and Norway, so from a European side, as it has always been the case and will continue to be the case. But the donors' role or the donors' efforts alone will not solve the crisis, would not solve alone the issue. And the real thing is to feed into a political process that

has to restart on the basis of negotiations, direct negotiations between the two parties and in the framework of the two-state solution. And this is also why we have used this day – the convening power that Norway and the European Union can exercise together – to have a conversation bilaterally, but also together with some of the key actors that are present today not only on the financial implications and the donors' work but also on the political horizon, especially in these days when we might see some developments coming.

Link to the

video: <https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I137727>