

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the European Union on the Middle East Peace Process

The European Union warmly welcomes the signature in Washington on 23 October of the Wye River Memorandum between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Chairman Yasser Arafat. The European Union congratulates Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat for their courage and sense of responsibility, and pays tribute to the important contribution of President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright to this successful outcome, as also to the personal support lent by King Hussein of Jordan. This breakthrough opens the door to the early resumption of the negotiations on Permanent Status as foreseen in the Oslo Accords, as well as to the implementation of outstanding commitments under the Interim Agreement.

The European Union welcomes this forward movement in the Peace Process and looks forward to the speedy implementation of the Agreement. It recognises that this will require a sustained political commitment by the parties and the determination to resist extremists and others wanting to frustrate progress towards peace.

The European Union now calls on the parties to complete negotiations as soon as possible on those remaining issues under the Interim Agreement still not settled, to start negotiations without delay on final status and meanwhile to avoid all unilateral acts which could prejudice the final outcome, thus building confidence which is essential for a lasting peace in the region. It attaches importance also to the early revival of the Syrian and Lebanese Tracks in order to arrive at a comprehensive settlement among all parties in the conflict.

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The European Union reiterates its firm commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the Madrid and Oslo Accords. It welcomes the continuing positive contribution being made by EU Special Envoy Ambassador Moratinos. The European Union has much to offer to the success of the Peace Process and is determined to continue playing its full part, enhancing it in all its aspects. Furthermore, recognising the importance of a sound economy to social and political stability among the Palestinian people, the European Union will continue its considerable economic and technical assistance and looks to Israel to meet its responsibilities in promoting conditions for economic development.
