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**Declaration by the European Union on the Middle East Peace Process**

The European Union welcomes the decision by the Central Council of the PLO which is testimony to the sense of responsibility of the Palestinian leaders. As the Presidency recalled on behalf of the European Union on September 2 at Evian, the right of the Palestinian people to build a sovereign, democratic, viable and peaceful State may not be brought into question. This right is established. There remains the choice of timing which belongs to the Palestinian people.

There is still a chance for peace in order to achieve, in the weeks ahead, a mutually satisfactory agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. The European Union continues to place itself in this perspective. The European Union renews its support to President Arafat and Prime Minister Barak and calls on the parties, at this decisive moment in time, to have the political courage to make the final effort that will enable them to reach an historic agreement.

It welcomes the role and personal commitment of Presidency Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. It encourages them to remain mobilized and to continue unremittingly their mediation efforts.

It reiterates its determination to facilitate an agreement and to make a political and economic contribution to building peace.

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