

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the European Council on the Middle East

The prospect of peace must return to the Middle East.

Nobody can tolerate violence, the suffering of populations or hatred between peoples.

The negotiations must resume. The European Union considers the following essential in this connection:

- the personal commitment of the Israeli Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority;
- full and immediate compliance with the undertakings which they entered into at Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza;
- concrete gestures by both parties, with respect, inter alia, to the renunciation of violence and, as regards Israel, the settlements issue;
- the establishment of a mechanism for confidence-building measures;
- the commencement of work on the spot by the Fact-Finding Commission, in which Mr Solana, Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP, will take part;
- an agreement on the setting up of an observer mission.

The European Union has major interests in the Middle East. Its positions have been clearly defined, inter alia at the Berlin European Council meeting in March 1999 and in the European Union's Declaration of 12 September 2000. It is willing to consult with all parties on the means of achieving these objectives with a view to the resumption of negotiations for a peace agreement.

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