



# EUROPEAN UNION

## *~FACTSHEET~*

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### **THE EU - COMMITTED TO THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a strategic priority for Europe. The EU will remain engaged and ready to commit resources to the problem until it is solved.

#### **Israel and the Palestinian Authority – Partners of the EU...**

Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority are partners in the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, which through its objectives of deeper integration of Euro-Mediterranean partner countries with the EU, will reinforce the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration (see also fact sheet on "Europe and the Mediterranean"). The Action Plans agreed with Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the European Neighbourhood Policy have specific commitments to progress on practical issues relevant to the Middle East Peace Process (such as reform, improvement in economic co-operation, greater mobility of movement). EU leaders regularly engage with their counterparts from the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Javier Solana, the High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, are in close contact with leaders in the region and travel there frequently.

The EU is involved on the ground, with personnel in Israel and the Palestinian Territories and through the implementation of vital aid and development projects. There is a European Commission Delegation to Israel in Tel Aviv and a European Commission Technical Assistance Office for the West Bank and Gaza based in Jerusalem. The Commission Technical Assistance Office is responsible for managing some €250 million of annual EU-funded programmes in the Palestinian Territories. The EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, Marc Otte, is charged with maintaining dialogue with the parties, regional partners and international players. The EU is a key player in the Quartet, alongside with the US, Russia and the UN. Full implementation of the "Roadmap", the internationally supported route to a peace settlement, is a key task.

The EU has backed the PA reform programme and the institution building process since its inception. Linking our support to the PA to specific performance benchmarks has encouraged reform and helped increase transparency and accountability in the administration. Improved budget procedures which resulted from these efforts helped pave the way for the US-negotiated resumption of transfers of taxes and customs revenue collected by Israel on behalf of the PA. The European Council endorsed in November 2004 a short-term program of action, proposed by the High Representative, to support the PA in the fields of security, reforms, economy and elections. The EU has supported the electoral process, and more than 250 EU election monitors were deployed to oversee the recent Palestinian Presidential elections. The EU also supports the PA in the security field through a newly established EU Co-operation Office for Palestinian Police Support. The tasks of this office are to help enhance civil police performance as well as strengthening the rule of law and accountability of the relevant institutions.

## ...with strong economic ties

The EU is the largest donor to Palestinians. The Commission provides approximately € 250 million per year in emergency and development assistance to the Palestinians, including support to **Palestinian Authority**, via the World Bank Trust Fund and support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition to this, EU Member States are also important donors in their national capacities.

The EU co-chairs meetings of the international donor mechanism, the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians (AHLC). The EU is also closely involved in local donor co-ordination, reform task force groups and the humanitarian assistance group.

The EU is **Israel's** most important trade partner, accounting for one third of Israeli exports and over 40% of Israeli imports, and a major economic, scientific and research partner. Israel was the first and only non-European country to be fully associated to the European Community's Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development. The agreement associating Israel to the 6th Framework Programme (2003-2006) was signed in Brussels on 10 June 2003, and the first results show that Israel continues to play a very active role. Israel also participates in the Galileo satellite radio navigation system; after the US and China, Israel is the third country signing such an agreement regarding Galileo with the EU.

By encouraging regional economic, social, cultural and human co-operation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership the EU is seeking to encourage integration and mutual understanding among the states and peoples of the region.

Israel and the Palestinian Territories are amongst the first wave of countries with whom the EU has agreed Action Plans in its Neighbourhood Policy. These action plans contain many economic, but also political measures apt to support the peace process:

- Broadened political dialogue, allowing for raising issues such as the Peace Process, non-proliferation, and the fight against terrorism;
- Promoting good governance and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law;
- Combating incitement;
- Further facilitation of trade;
- Encouraging co-operation in the fields of the environment, water, energy and transport.

In addition, the EU Partnership for Peace Programme aims to help create the conditions for re-launching the peace process by increasing **people-to-people contacts** and co-operation based on equality and reciprocity between Arabs and Israelis. (For examples co-operation amongst student groups and educational institutions in the fields of health, agriculture, the environment)

## The way ahead

The EU stands ready to provide additional political and economic support to underpin the peace process. This could take the form of assistance in state-building for the PA, help for refugees, reconstruction assistance and monitoring an agreement reached between the parties (including Syria and Lebanon).

Without a solution of the Arab/Israeli conflict, there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle East. Through its commitment to peace and in dialogue and co-operation with our neighbours and friends, the EU works to achieve the broader goal of a peaceful, developing region, more and more integrated with Europe.

*For more information go to:*

The EU's Middle East Peace Process website:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/mepp/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/index.htm)

The EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership website:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/euromed/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/index.htm)

The EU-Israel relations website: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/israel/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel/intro/index.htm)

The EU's website on relations with Gaza and the West Bank:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm)

The EU's Neighbourhood Policy website: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index_en.htm)

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