



European Security and Defence Assembly
Assembly of Western European Union

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15 June 2010

FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Iran and the Middle East

REPORT

submitted on behalf of the Political Committee by Lord Anderson, Rapporteur
(United Kingdom, Socialist Group)

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Report transmitted to: the President of the Council of WEU; the Secretary-General of the WEU; the President of the Council of the European Union; the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the President of the European Commission; the EU Commissioner for institutional relations and communication strategy; the Presidents/Speakers and the Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and European Affairs Committees of the 39 national parliaments represented in the Assembly; the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the CIS Parliamentary Assembly; the President of the European Parliament; the Secretaries General of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, NATO and the OSCE.

Iran and the Middle East

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*submitted on behalf of the Political Committee by Lord Anderson, Rapporteur
(United Kingdom, Socialist Group)*

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¹ Adopted by the Committee on 18 May 2010.

RECOMMENDATION 854²
on Iran and the Middle East

The Assembly,

- (i) Considering that the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a prerequisite for the establishment of peace and stability in the Middle East and that under no circumstances should it be made contingent upon a solution first being found to the Iranian nuclear question;
- (ii) Considering that it is urgent to stabilise this region as it is a breeding ground for religious fundamentalism and terrorism which is being exported to other regions of the world;
- (iii) Considering, however, that a secure future for the state of Israel depends on the creation of a viable Palestinian state and that no other outcome would lead to lasting peace;
- (iv) Considering that the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state requires first and foremost the cessation of all violence, including guarantees for the security of Israel, the release of prisoners on both sides – in particular Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit – a lasting ceasefire, a lifting of the Gaza blockade and a freeze on settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem;
- (v) Considering that there can be no prospect of a Palestinian state unless there is reconciliation of the different political factions of the Palestinian people;
- (vi) Considering that it will be necessary to engage all the protagonists in this conflict and that this dialogue must therefore include all relevant parties on the Israeli and Palestinian sides, Lebanon, Syria and the Arab League;
- (vii) Considering the Quartet roadmap and the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted by the Arab League at its 2002 Beirut summit and reaffirmed in 2007, constitute the most constructive proposals available as they have the support of all the Arab states and remain relevant and worthy of implementation; but considering also that there is a need for this peace initiative to include a roadmap with specific details for its eventual, step-by-step implementation and considering further that if the parties fail to agree, an imposed solution should not be ruled out;
- (viii) Taking the view that Syria has the potential to be a major player for peace in the region provided that the protection of its interests is guaranteed, but the question remains as to whether it has the will to take the necessary positive action;
- (ix) Considering that, in agreement with the parties involved, the blockade on Gaza should progressively be lifted and that the southern border of the territory where so much arms trafficking goes on should be brought under international control, with adequate guarantees of Israel's security, and that at the same time Hamas must halt all violent action against the civilian population, the firing of rockets on Israel and the importation of armaments;
- (x) Considering that, as a further confidence-building measure, Israel must now stop all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem, and be ready to negotiate substantial withdrawal of its existing settlements in the framework of a peace agreement;
- (xi) Considering that Hezbollah should stop acquiring weapons whose purpose it is to threaten or commit aggressive acts against Israel;
- (xii) Considering that the current situation is a threat to the stability of the entire region, and hence to global peace; and considering also that, if the parties concerned cannot make further headway, the international community should bring its own solution to the table as a basis for negotiation between all parties involved;
- (xiii) Deeply regretting that the interception of a convoy of six ships in international waters by Israeli military forces has led to the deaths of at least nine persons;

² Adopted by the Assembly on 15 June 2010 at the 1st sitting.

- (xiv) Considering that the investigation now decided by Israel will not be considered by the international community as credible and impartial despite the participation of two non-voting foreign observers;
- (xv) Regretting that the policy of isolating Gaza harms the civilian population whilst failing to achieve the isolation of Hamas;
- (xvi) Believing that Israel has legitimate security interests, but that the consequences of the current blockade, despite minor modifications, further isolate Israel and fail to achieve its key objectives;
- (xvii) Considering that, in the present standoff over Iran's nuclear programme, misjudgements by any of the parties involved could have the most adverse consequences worldwide;
- (xviii) Considering that the Iranian Government's political and diplomatic manoeuvring and history of deception fail to inspire the confidence needed for an urgent improvement in its relations with the international community;
- (xix) Considering that the Iranian Government's main objectives appear to be to continue to maintain its power internally and buy time in its relations with the international community;
- (xx) Considering, however, that the opposition has no programme for change, no structure and no credible leaders and therefore, since the demonstrations of last summer, has been increasingly on the defensive;
- (xxi) Considering that any nuclear programme undertaken by Iran as a signatory state to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) should be exclusively for civilian purposes and subject to the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) control regime;
- (xxii) Considering that in order to address the IAEA's concerns about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed activities relating to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, Iran should now be prepared to give further information and generally to cooperate fully with the Agency;
- (xxiii) Considering the desirability of achieving a solution to the Iranian nuclear problem by peaceful and diplomatic means, so as to avoid a military attack against that country's nuclear facilities leading to a regional crisis; considering also that tough economic sanctions must be strictly applied unless and until Iran cooperates fully with the international community;
- (xxiv) Considering that the Joint Declaration signed by Turkey, Iran and Brazil in Tehran on 17 May 2010 could be a first step both for confidence building and the peaceful resolution of the issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme; but recognising that this falls far short of the international demands on Iran;
- (xxv) Considering, on the other hand, that there is a need, as a confidence-building measure, to widen the dialogue with Iran on other concerns of mutual interest, such as the stabilisation of Afghanistan and the fight against drugs and drug-trafficking,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES, AS MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, TO:

1. Give priority to a settlement of the central Israeli-Palestinian conflict which should not be made contingent upon a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue;
2. Encourage the Israeli Government to continue dismantling checkpoints in the West Bank and to confirm the freeze on new settlements, including in East Jerusalem;
3. Urge the Palestinians to end all violence, observe a lasting cease-fire and come to an agreement on the release of Gilad Shalit and political prisoners on both sides;
4. Continue to use all possible means to encourage the necessary reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas;

5. Press for a progressive lifting of the blockade of Gaza by both Israel and Egypt, subject to appropriate guarantees for Israel, and for the border and all cross-border traffic to be placed under international control;
6. Encourage Egypt and Turkey to pursue their role as mediators for the various protagonists in the Middle East conflict;
7. Encourage the Arab League to persevere in its efforts to keep the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, as confirmed in 2007, on the table, to bring forward proposals for making progress to a settlement and to work towards a detailed roadmap for its implementation;
8. Encourage Syria to act constructively in a region where it has considerable influence;
9. Envisage the option of the international community putting a solution on the table if Israel and the Palestinians cannot make progress bilaterally;
10. Make clear the EU's readiness to help monitor the border with the aim of assisting the people of Gaza whilst protecting legitimate Israeli security interests;
11. Urge the Government of Israel to replace the limited list of goods which are currently allowed into Gaza by a list of goods which can reasonably be prohibited for security reasons;
12. Urge the Government of Israel to cooperate with the UN in ensuring that the materials needed for the construction and reconstruction of houses, schools, and medical facilities are delivered to Gaza;
13. Encourage all efforts to ensure that the Iranian nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes and subject to the IAEA control regime;
14. Ensure that the Iranian nuclear issue is resolved within a reasonable timeframe solely by peaceful and diplomatic means and that should negotiations fail economic sanctions are strictly applied, mainly but not necessarily exclusively through the UN Security Council, but that a wider confidence-building dialogue is pursued simultaneously;
15. Urge the international community after the UN Security Council Resolution 1929 (2010) to support efforts to ensure that the engagement track remains alive;
16. Call on the Iranian authorities to respect human rights and guarantee freedom of political expression.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

submitted by Lord Anderson, Rapporteur (United Kingdom, Socialist Group)

I. Introduction

1. Since the Assembly adopted the Political Committee's last report on European security and the Middle East,³ the situation in the Middle East has not developed in a positive direction.
2. The current position may best be described in the words of one expert who stated: "In the 17 years since it was first launched, the peace process has gone through times that were better and through times that were worse, but none that were more complex, confusing or contradictory as today".⁴
3. Overall, the picture is bleak and gloomy. The Palestinian national movement is in deep crisis, fragmented and without clear direction. Fatah is divided. Hamas has grown and taken power in Gaza but is disliked by most Arab states. There is little prospect for Palestinian reconciliation. There are doubts as to whether under these circumstances the PLO can effectively conduct negotiations for a final peace agreement.
4. In Israel, the political landscape has changed profoundly in recent years. Settlers and fundamentalist religious movements have grown more powerful and the state may not be able to move settlers from the West Bank to Israel. More than ever, Israelis see themselves threatened by Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah, which are acquiring more effective weaponry. They are preoccupied with security and are seeking to have security guarantees against these broader threats included in any future agreement.
5. Syria, which according to many could help bring about peace, continues to use its relations with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran as a means of leverage and deterrence. Apparently it does not wish to take risks and seems to prefer the status quo to a shift in alliances offering no guarantee of its future position in the region.
6. Finally, in the wider region, the United States has lost some of its influence, after the high hopes generated by President Obama in his June 2009 address to the Muslim world in Cairo and what appears now a weak US response to the refusal by Israel to include East Jerusalem in its freeze on settlement activity.
7. Altogether, these different factors do not bode well for an imminent comprehensive peace agreement.
8. In the present report, your Rapporteur will attempt to draw conclusions from missions he has undertaken to the Middle East, the United States and Brussels. As indicated, the situation is not encouraging. However, there are some positive signs and all the foreign powers involved are determined that the Middle East cannot be left to solve its manifold problems on its own. Moreover, the conflict in the Middle East has an impact on the security interests of the rest of the world – not least those of the European Union and the United States.
9. In the stand-off over the Iranian nuclear programme, not much has happened since the Geneva talks last autumn, other than that new Iranian nuclear facilities have been uncovered and the country seems to have stepped up uranium enrichment. A number of experts have noted, however, that the Iranians are facing technical problems and some even suggest acts of sabotage may be occurring, hindering rapid progress on developing that nuclear capability. Moreover, the internal opposition has lost its strength and direction.

³ See Document 2060 adopted on 2 December 2009: "European security and the Middle East", report submitted on behalf of the Political Committee by Josette Durrieu (France, Socialist Group), Rapporteur.

⁴ Robert Malley, International Crisis Group: at a hearing of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 4 March 2010. <http://foreign.senate.gov/>

10. At the same time, some kind of consensus over UN sanctions seems to be building, with more willingness on the part of Russia, and possibly also of China, to agree a new sanctions regime. Questions remain, however, on the timing and strength of the sanctions being decided by the UN Security Council, which currently also includes four Muslim countries. The timetable is being delayed in particular by Brazilian President Lula's initiative, on 17-18 May 2010, to negotiate with the Iranian leadership. Ultimately, the result of a weak Security Council resolution on sanctions will be that both the US and the EU will proceed with their own additional and more stringent package of sanctions.

II. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

(a) Israel

11. Although many of the foreign states closely involved with the negotiations insist on the importance of their resumption, Israel's Deputy Prime Minister recently declared after a meeting of the seven-member Israeli inner cabinet that not one of them believes "that we can reach an agreement with the Palestinians".

12. In this framework, it is interesting to note that more details have been released of a peace offer which Israel's former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, just before he left office, submitted to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas late in 2008.⁵

13. According to Mr Olmert, this was an unprecedented offer, based on the agreements reached at the 2007 summit in Annapolis and to be implemented in accordance with the roadmap for peace. Peace was to be based on a return to the 1967 borders. Israel would pull out of nearly all of the West Bank, 97% of which would be in the hands of the Palestinians.⁶ Mr Olmert accepted the principle of the right of return and agreed to absorb 25 000 Palestinian refugees into Israel, as Mahmoud Abbas later confirmed. Israel would pull out of nearly all the West Bank and compensate the Palestinians for the large settlement blocs that would remain intact with land inside a sovereign Israel. In Jerusalem, the Jewish part would remain under Israeli authority and the Arab sections would be given over to the jurisdiction of a Palestinian state. The Old City area or Holy Basin would be administered jointly by Israel, the Palestinians, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United States. This last proposal has been confirmed by the Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat. Altogether it was a remarkable offer, instilling confidence in the possibility of serious negotiations if both sides were sufficiently committed to it.

14. It is not completely clear what happened next. According to Ehud Olmert, the Palestinians promised to respond the next day but failed to do so and gave no further reaction. Mahmoud Abbas claims he turned it down, adding that "the gaps were wide".

15. According to Palestinian former Prime Minister and negotiator Ahmed Qurei, it was unfair to demand that the Palestinians recognise Israel as a state of the Jewish people as this would mean determining the future of the refugees in advance, before talks had been scheduled. He described this refusal to recognise Israel as a Jewish state as "adamant". Yet it should be noted that the notion of Islam is comprised in many countries' constitutional name, and this is accepted by their minorities.

16. This, together with the knowledge of the earlier rejection by Yasser Arafat of Ehud Barak's far-reaching proposal in 2000, makes a growing number of Israelis think that Palestinians are aiming for a Palestinian state – but not through a peace agreement.

17. For many Israelis, including a majority in the current Knesset, the establishment of a Palestinian state has become a vital element for the preservation of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

18. However, they are also aware of the fact that the Palestinians hope that in the longer term demography will turn the tables in their favour and ultimately lead to national liberation.

⁵ See Haaretz, 15 February 2010 <http://www.haaretz-com> and The Washington Post, 29 May 2009 <http://washingtonpost.com>

⁶ Experts have pointed out that in terms of borders, it might be possible to reach a solution on land swaps somewhere between the 1.9% which the Palestinian Authority is prepared to concede and the 6.4% which Israel would like. The "magic" solution might be for 4% of West Bank territory to go to Israel, which would cover 80% of settlers.

19. The question remains as to what policy Israel should follow if it wishes to preserve its position in the region as a Jewish and democratic state. It appears that the current policy of the government under Prime Minister Netanyahu is leading to the growing alienation of Israel from its friends and allies and undermining the legitimacy of its position.

20. Neither the United States nor the EU would want there to be any doubt over their commitment to Israel's security, but they increasingly insist that there should at the same time be justice, freedom and dignity for the Palestinians.

21. The solution to the current impasse may be for Prime Minister Netanyahu to form a more centrist Israeli Government, which could include Kadima and other parties; this could free him from the current coalition in which he is dependent on support from religious and extreme nationalist parties. There are some indications that he is contemplating establishing such a coalition in the autumn of 2010.

(b) The settlement freeze

22. Recently, a good deal of attention has been focused on Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

23. This issue was discussed in the last report of the Political Committee,⁷ which noted that in order to get the peace process back on track, the United States asked Israel to agree to a freeze of all settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, reminding Israel that according to international law, such activities in occupied territory were illegal. The PLO declared a complete freeze on settlement an essential condition for the resumption of negotiations. The Prime Minister finally agreed to a 10-month freeze on settlement activities, but which would not apply to East Jerusalem.

24. At the beginning of March 2010, the Israeli Government created a major crisis in its relations with the US by announcing a project for the construction of 1 600 new housing units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement in East Jerusalem during US Vice-President Joseph Biden's visit to Israel. The visit of the Vice-President, a long-term supporter of Israel, was intended to underline the unremitting support of the United States for that country. Vice-President Biden condemned the declaration immediately and unequivocally, but Israel refused to give in, maintained its decision and announced that it would continue such activities in East Jerusalem. An Israeli Interior Ministry spokesman has recently confirmed that there is no freeze.⁸

25. It is well known that these activities are part of a consistent policy which has created a number of Jewish quarters in East Jerusalem since 1967 with the objective of making division of the city as part of any future peace agreement impossible and, as a consequence, preventing East Jerusalem from becoming the capital of a future Palestinian State.

26. The current president of the EU's General Affairs Council, Spanish Foreign Minister and former EU Special Representative for the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos, while expressing concern over the growing number of Israeli settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank, which continues to grow, remarked that: "If we wait for more than two years, it will be too late, because there will be no object to negotiate, because there will be no land, and there will be no subject with whom to negotiate, because the Palestinian moderate leadership will not be able to maintain itself".⁹

27. In its 8 December 2009 Declaration on the Middle East, the Council of the European Union had already clearly stated that "settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible".¹⁰

⁷ Document 2060, pages 20-21.

⁸ International Herald Tribune, 29 April 2010.

⁹ Bulletin Quotidien Europe 10098, 16 March 2010.

¹⁰ See Appendix I.

(c) The Arab League

28. The foreign ministers of the Arab League member states had agreed at their 27-28 March 2010 meeting in Syrte (Libya), that negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians could only be resumed if all settlement activity were to stop.¹¹

29. At their meeting on 1 May 2010 in Cairo, however, they endorsed the indirect negotiations promoted by the United States, which was a precondition for President Abbas. But they insisted that these indirect talks would not become face-to-face negotiations unless Israel stopped all settlement building beyond the 1967 borders.

(d) Syria

30. Syria's relations with a number of different countries and the opportunities for it to play an enhanced and constructive role in the region were highlighted in the Political Committee's earlier report.¹²

31. Hopes were entertained about the contribution Syria – which recently started indicating that it wanted improved relations with western countries – might make. (Relations have greatly deteriorated since the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in Beirut, in February 2005). However, there has been little or no evidence of any positive action to that end.

32. Potentially, Syria could play a crucial role in helping to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because of the influence it has on its allies, Hamas and Hezbollah.

33. Despite US and EU efforts to engage with it more closely, Syria has not responded positively and has deepened its ties with rejectionist parties. Syria is also opposed to indirect Israeli-Palestinian talks which the Arab League now endorses.

34. Clearly, Syria is not prepared to abandon or modify its existing relationships in the region and considers that there are insufficient advantages at present in so doing.

35. Furthermore, Israeli and other sources report that Syria is providing Hezbollah with even more sophisticated weapon systems, including portable ground-air missiles and ballistic missiles with ranges between 70 and 250 km able to target practically all Israeli cities.¹³

(e) New peace efforts by the Obama Administration

36. However since the failure of the Annapolis process, Washington has worked hard on the Palestinian question in an effort to put the Bush era behind it. In January 2009, newly elected President Barack Obama confirmed his electoral promise to address this issue immediately, appointing George Mitchell as his Middle East envoy. On 18 May 2009 he hosted a meeting in Washington with the new Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and called for a halt to the construction of settlements in the West Bank.

37. In a speech given in Cairo on 4 June 2009, President Obama set out clearly his conditions for a resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict.¹⁴

38. President Obama attempted to relaunch the peace process when he met both the Israeli and Palestinian leaders in New York on 23 September 2009. After intensive efforts, a mini-tripartite summit with MM Obama, Netanyahu and Abbas took place in the margins of the UN General Assembly.¹⁵ Described as a photo opportunity, the value of that meeting was above all symbolic, in that it brought the Israeli and Palestinian leaders together for the first time since the previous March.

39. In the months that followed, relations between the US Administration and the Israeli Government deteriorated. Israel was only prepared to agree to a temporary freeze on settlement which would not apply to settlement activities in East Jerusalem. There was also disagreement between the

¹¹ Le Monde, 30 March 2010.

¹² Document 2060, pages 28-33.

¹³ Foreign Policy, Andrew J. Tabler, Jane's Defence Weekly, October 2009.

¹⁴ These are discussed in Document 2060.

¹⁵ Article in Le Monde, 20 September 2009: "Barack Obama à l'ONU pour faire oublier l'ère Bush".

two governments about other issues; particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement being the essential priority for stabilising the entire region and on the ability of the Palestinian Authority to assert its authority over the entire Palestinian territory.

40. In an address delivered in January 2010, General David Petraeus, the senior US military commander for the Middle East and central Asia, stated clearly that the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, is undermining the United States' strategic interests in that region, where Arab leaders are losing faith in US commitment to an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal, and where the lives of US troops, in particular in Iraq and Afghanistan, are at stake. The Israeli Government does not agree with this assessment.

(f) The EU and the Middle East

41. At its 8 December 2009 summit, the Council of the European Union gave its most comprehensive statement on its policy regarding the situation in the Middle East.¹⁶

42. This statement was a significant achievement, not least because all the EU member states were able to agree unanimously on the text. In the past, the EU has always had very limited room for manoeuvre in its action in the Middle East because of major differences between the member states' governments on this issue. The vote on the Goldstone report in the UN Human Rights Council on 16 October 2009, when two EU member states abstained, four voted against and two decided not to take part in the vote, illustrated the divisions among the EU member states. Similarly, when a vote was taken on the same subject in the UN General Assembly on 5 November 2009, seven EU member states voted against and 15 abstained.

43. In her speech at the League of Arab States meeting on 15 March 2010, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, summarised the essential elements of the EU's policy, which aims for a comprehensive peace, encompassing Syria and Lebanon, and implementation of the terms of the Arab Peace Initiative, in a deal that would provide sustainable security for everyone.

44. The European Union, she said, had a firm commitment to Israel's security and a deal that delivered justice, freedom and dignity to the Palestinians. A negotiated settlement should lead to a two-state solution with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security. There should be a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank that included East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, on the basis of the 1967 borders. A way should be found to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of Israel and Palestine, and a just solution to the refugee issue was needed. The settlements were illegal. They constituted an obstacle to peace and threatened to make a two-state solution impossible.

45. Israel's decision to list cultural and religious sites in the occupied Palestinian territories as Israeli was counter-productive. The blockade of Gaza was unacceptable. Palestinian reconciliation was more crucial than ever and the political and physical separation between the West Bank and Gaza was dangerous. The EU was a strong supporter of the Arab Peace Initiative.

46. Finally, High Representative Ashton stated that the EU was ready to step up its involvement by offering support in four areas:

- Firstly, the EU was ready to support the parties in their negotiations on the basis of the principles set out in the 8 December declaration;
- Secondly, it was ready to extend its package of assistance if there was rapid progress towards the creation of a Palestinian State;
- Thirdly, it was ready to consider providing further political, financial and security guarantees to facilitate the peace process; and
- Fourthly, it wanted to develop a closer partnership with those parties that were key to the talks, including the United States and the reinvigorated Quartet.

¹⁶ See Appendix I.

47. It is thought in Brussels that following the European Council's 8 December 2009 declaration, on which there was little division, the EU may be ready to play a political role in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Because of its suspicions of the EU which date back at least to the 1980 Venice Declaration, Israel states that there is no seat at the negotiating table for the EU, and there are suggestions in some quarters that the EU could help by providing the United States, which will remain the main player, with useful advice.

48. On 17 September 2009, the then EU High Representative Javier Solana had said that "If the parties are not able to stick to it [the timetable], then a solution backed by the international community should be put on the table".

49. Mr Solana proposed that after a "fixed deadline", a UN Security Council resolution should proclaim the adoption of the two-state solution which should include the following parameters: borders based on those of 1967, the fate of refugees, the status of Jerusalem and security arrangements. The UN would then accept the Palestinian state as a full member. It should give a mandate for the resolution of other territorial disputes (the Golan, for which talks between Syria and Israel should be launched, perhaps under the auspices of Turkey). The final aim would be to legitimise the final borders of the states of the region. He stressed the importance of actively involving the Arab countries, through the Arab Peace Initiative.

50. This suggestion was not regarded as a feasible option. It should be remembered that a number of EU initiatives which were rejected when initially made – such as the two-state concept – were later accepted.

51. As regards European aid to the Palestinian Territories, your Rapporteur notes that the European Union – i.e. the European Commission and the EU member states – is the biggest multilateral donor of financial assistance to the Palestinians as well as of aid to Palestinian refugees through UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East).

52. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is a fully-fledged partner within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The agenda for the Palestinian Authority's economic and political cooperation with the EU was set in a joint EU-PA Action Plan agreed in 2005. The legal basis for the EU's relations with the Palestinian Authority is the Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation signed in 1997.

53. In 2008 the EU launched the PEGASE mechanism to support the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to achieve the goals of the three-year Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). Financial aid is focused on governance, social development, economic and private sector development and public infrastructure development. Through PEGASE, the EU provides support for the Palestinian Authorities's recurrent expenditure and the delivery of public services, as well as for long-term sustainable Palestinian development. The EU also provides funding for infrastructure projects, judicial and financial reform initiatives and security, health and education programmes.

54. Through its Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) with 53 EU and 27 local staff, the EU aims to contribute to the establishment of sustainable and effective policing arrangements and to advise the Palestinian counterparts on criminal justice and rule of law-related aspects.

55. The EU Border Assistance Mission at the Rafah crossing-point (EU BAM Rafah), currently at a reduced strength of 14 EU and 11 local staff, monitored operations at this border crossing-point from November 2005 until its closure in June 2007. Since then the mission has remained on standby. On 12 May 2010, the EU Council extended the mission until 24 May 2011.

(g) The Quartet and the roadmap

56. In December 2002 the Quartet, composed of the United States, the United Nations, Russia and the European Union agreed on a new peace plan known as the roadmap, which was officially published at the beginning of 2003.

57. The roadmap is a three-phase programme whose "destination is a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by 2005 (...) [resulting in] the emergence of an

independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours”.

58. The Palestinians accepted it without restriction; Israel also accepted it but several months later and with 14 reservations.

59. The roadmap has remained a dead letter despite the good intentions of the international community.

60. Since 2007, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been the Quartet’s representative in the Middle East.

61. The representative’s remit has four objectives: mobilising international assistance to the Palestinians; coordinating international support in addressing the institutional governance needs of the Palestinian State, focusing as a matter of urgency on the rule of law; developing plans to promote Palestinian economic development; and liaising with other countries.

62. One can simply note that those aims have been only partially achieved.

63. Nonetheless, the Quartet still meets regularly, most recently on 26 June 2009 in Trieste, on 24 September 2009 in New York and on 10 March 2010 in Moscow.

64. In its Trieste declaration the Quartet stated that the negotiations being conducted by the United States with all the parties in the region “must result in an end to all claims. It [the Quartet] agreed that Arab-Israeli peace and the establishment of a state of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza in which the Palestinian people can determine their own destiny is in the fundamental interests of the international community. The Quartet called on all parties concerned to take meaningful steps to support this objective”. After its meeting in Moscow on 10 March 2010, the Quartet issued a statement on the Middle East.¹⁷

(h) Palestinian reconciliation

65. It is well known that Fatah and Hamas have been at loggerheads since Hamas took power in Gaza and chased all Fatah representatives out of positions of government.

66. Successive attempts by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt to mediate in favour of reconciliation have failed.

67. It appears that reconciliation also depends on an improvement in relations between the respective sponsors of Fatah (Egypt and the United States) on the one hand and of Hamas (Iran and Syria) on the other.

68. Israel is clearly of the view that a divided Palestine cannot provide a reliable negotiating partner which can deliver a lasting solution.

69. The United States does not wish to complicate its present peace efforts by trying to include Hamas in the process.

70. In the end, however, a final peace agreement will have to include Gaza, but at present none of the parties involved knows how to get there.

(i) Progress towards a peace agreement

71. Sadly no real progress towards an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians has been made since the Political Committee’s last report on this subject in December 2009.

72. The Palestinians have maintained that all settlement activity should cease before the resumption of any talks. Prime Minister Netanyahu, on the other hand, confirmed on 22 April 2010 that “there will be no freeze of settlement activity in East Jerusalem”.

73. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s last visit to Washington on 25 March took place in an icy atmosphere. The US Administration maintains its demand that any freeze on settlement activity must

¹⁷ See Appendix II.

include East Jerusalem. At the same time, the United States has confirmed its “indestructible links” with Israel, and more than 75% of the US Senate wants to see a lull in the public disagreements between the two countries.

74. While there are rumours of a US peace plan for the Middle East, Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated bluntly that if an agreement is imposed on Israel “that will not be acceptable, and it will not work”.

75. Government circles in Israel are mooting the possibility of an interim agreement based on temporary borders, an idea that has always been rejected by the Palestinians. However, the Israelis have up to now not given a formal reply to US demands for them to take confidence-building measures that might persuade the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

76. On 23 April 2010, the US envoy, George Mitchell, started a new round of meetings with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, but there was no sign that the repeatedly postponed proximity talks would start in the near future, despite Mr Mitchell’s telling both parties that President Obama wanted a global solution “soon, and not in a vague and distant future”.

77. This was Mr Mitchell’s first visit to the Middle East since the visit by Vice-President Joseph Biden referred to above.

78. Rumour now has it that Prime Minister Netanyahu has been prevailed upon to change his mind and accept that the “core issues” – the status of Jerusalem, the redrawing of borders and the rights of Palestinian refugees – be put on the agenda for the talks right from the start. Serious negotiation over the biggest issues can only take place, says Mr Netanyahu, face to face between Israelis and Palestinians.

79. It is also thought that Israel, as a sign of its willingness to make an effort towards confidence-building, will lift a number of road blocks in the West Bank and release a few hundred Palestinian prisoners.

80. On the Palestinian side, President Abbas has stopped saying that all Jewish settlement-building in East Jerusalem should be halted as a condition for the talks to resume. The Palestinians state that Mr Mitchell has given them assurances that the proximity talks will not last longer than four months. Indirect talks were expected to start in the week of 3 May 2010.

81. Although the United States may have given the Israeli Prime Minister assurances that it will not impose a peace agreement, it is possible that it will bring its own proposals to the table if the proximity talks stall. Therefore the launch of a full peace proposal cannot be ruled out.

82. Top political and military authorities in the United States are increasingly giving public expression to their concern that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is negative influencing on US foreign policy and military objectives in the wider Middle East region and that resolving this conflict is in the United States’ strategic interest.

83. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that as 2010 is an election year in the United States President Obama will calculate whether he is generating sufficiently serious and tangible responses from Arabs and Israelis to continue with a peace initiative that could expose his administration to charges of diplomatic incompetence, naivety or irresolution.

III. Iran

(a) The military dimension of Iran’s nuclear programme

84. There is much speculation on the question of whether Iran’s nuclear programme has a military dimension, and if so, how far away Iran is from developing a military nuclear capability. Having signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Additional Protocol, Iran is subject to the control mechanisms of the IAEA, which regularly publishes reports on the status of Iran’s nuclear programme.

85. In his 16 November 2009 report, the IAEA Director General notes: “(...) there remain a number of outstanding issues which give rise to concerns, and which need to be clarified to exclude the existence of possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear programme”; and “The Agency is still

awaiting a reply from Iran to its request to meet relevant Iranian authorities in connection with these issues”.

86. He concludes: “Unless Iran implements the Additional Protocol and, through substantive dialogue, clarifies the outstanding issues to the satisfaction of the Agency, the Agency will not be in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran”.

87. In his 18 February 2010 report, the Director General again refers to a number of outstanding issues and to the actions required of Iran. He then mentions the extensive information available to the IAEA in connection with these issues, which he describes as broadly consistent and credible and concludes that:

“Altogether, this raises concerns about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile. These alleged activities consist of a number of projects and sub-projects, covering nuclear and missile related aspects, run by military related organisations.”

88. Specifying a number of those activities, the Director General notes that since August 2008, Iran has declined to discuss them, or to provide any further information and access to address these concerns, “(...) asserting that the allegations relating to possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme are baseless and that the information to which the Agency is referring is based on forgeries”.

89. Reacting to the publication of this latest IAEA report, Iran’s envoy to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, rather incredibly declared that: “The IAEA’s new report confirmed Iran’s peaceful nuclear activities and the country’s non-deviation towards military purposes”.

(b) An Iranian nuclear weapons capability?

90. If it is true that Iran has a military nuclear programme, despite consistent denial of the fact by Iranian authorities at all levels, when is it likely to be within reach of a nuclear weapon?

91. Since 2007, at least, US intelligence agencies have argued that Iran is seeking nuclear weapon capability but has not made a final decision as to whether to develop a bomb. US officials take the view that Iran could reach such capability at a few months’ notice if it were able to construct a bomb. They believe that Iran is not yet at that stage, but that it is coming closer to it despite some recent technical problems with its programme.

92. If Iran were to attain the threshold capability, there may be no system to verify whether it has moved to the next stage of assembling a nuclear weapon.

93. Many experts believe that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon by the middle of 2011, and a nuclear armed missile within five years or less.

(c) Iran and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

94. With the increasing probability of new UN sanctions, Iran has recently strongly criticised the Non-Proliferation Treaty which will be the subject of a five-year review in May 2010.

95. Iran claims that the US, the UK and other governments, while trying to block Iran’s legal rights under the treaty, are not respecting their own treaty obligations. It insists that under the terms of the NPT it is entitled to a full fuel-cycle nuclear programme for civilian purposes.

96. Iran’s Foreign Minister, Manoucher Mottaki, referring to the fact that the NPT was built on three pillars – nuclear disarmament, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons – has argued that through the discriminatory and selective attitude of some nuclear armed states, the balance between these three pillars has been ignored.

97. He said that the failure of certain governments to comply with key treaty articles has generated some 35 000 new warheads, introduced the illegal concept of nuclear sharing and deprived other states of their inalienable rights.

98. Mr Mottaki maintains that the UK decision to renew and develop the Trident programme is in complete contravention of Article VI of the treaty.

99. He asserts that the unconditional backing of Israel by some nuclear armed states allows a situation to exist which is beyond international law, while Israel's clandestine development of nuclear weapons and its refusal to join the NPT pose a serious problem to the security of the Middle East and beyond.

100. In his view, the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme has been confirmed by various IAEA reports (although the text of these does not support this claim). Therefore there is no justification for the UN Security Council to act further on this issue and adopt illegal resolutions.

101. Finally, he proposes that the treaty provisions be implemented fully and in a non-discriminatory way. Nuclear armed states must formally renounce nuclear weapons and agree on a fixed timetable for their total elimination. Nothing in the treaty provisions should affect the rights of all parties to develop research and make use of the fuel cycle and uranium enrichment for nuclear power plants.

(d) The international disarmament conference "Nuclear Energy for All, Nuclear Weapons for No-one", Tehran, 17-18 April 2010

102. Iran did not attend the Nuclear Security Summit convened by US President Obama in Washington on 12-13 April 2010 and attended by 47 heads of government, including those of the declared nuclear states, as well as representatives of the EU. A few days later, Iran held an international disarmament conference.

103. The foreign ministers of Armenia, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Swaziland, Syria and Turkmenistan and deputy ministers from a number of other countries participated in the conference which discussed nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. No western states attended.

104. In his address to the conference on 17 April, President Ahmadinejad called for the creation of an "independent international body" to control nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and asked for those states possessing nuclear weapons, having used them or having threatened to use them to be suspended from the IAEA. He proposed that the NPT review should be conducted by independent countries which did not have nuclear weapons. The presence of nuclear states, in particular the United States, would stand in the way of the outcome of a balanced treaty.

(e) Sanctions against Iran

105. Having come to the view that Iran is apparently not prepared to react constructively to President Obama's extended hand policy, the US Administration has now decided to actively pursue a drive for UN sanctions against Iran.

106. Initially, there were hopes for a positive breakthrough when Iran agreed to negotiations with the E3+3 in Geneva in October 2009, but after having created the impression that it agreed to a deal concerning enrichment of Iranian nuclear fuel abroad, Iran soon started backtracking. Although the proposal remained valid, to date Iran has not accepted it and Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki's recent charm offensive in Vienna on 22-23 April 2010 did not offer any new or encouraging prospects.

107. Earlier on, on 8 February 2009, Iran notified the IAEA that it planned to enrich uranium to a level of 20% to refuel the Tehran Research Reactor and continue production of medical isotopes for which, it insisted, there was a major need.

108. Iran's interlocutors in the Geneva negotiations pointed out that 20% uranium enrichment would not of itself provide the fuel needed for the Tehran Research Reactor; the construction of fuel assemblies would also be required and they did not believe that Iran had either the technical knowledge or the intellectual property rights to undertake this.

109. On the basis of the IAEA reports, most if not all members of the UN Security Council entertain serious doubts as to whether Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

110. According to US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, ignoring the threat posed by Iran will put the world in a more precarious position within six months to a year. Permitting Iran to continue attempting to acquire nuclear weapons would trigger an arms race among its neighbours, putting one of the most volatile regions in the world at risk and could even ignite a conflict. Mrs Clinton argues that the sanctions are intended to convince Iran to begin genuine negotiations “in good faith” on its nuclear programme.

111. Many states take the view that economic sanctions, which clearly avoid the disadvantages of a military strike, have more potential to exert pressure than does diplomatic engagement. Indeed, such sanctions, if properly implemented, are at present the only means of bringing any significant influence to bear on Iran and the way it conducts its nuclear programme.

112. The Brookings Institution has argued that influencing Iran effectively depends on setting clear, realistic and limited objectives that target the economic power base of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and other aspects of the power structure in such a way as to achieve the goal of halting the nuclear weapons programme, not the overthrow of the regime itself.

113. Others have argued that regime change is the only possible means of preventing Iran from acquiring either a nuclear weapons capability or an actual nuclear weapon and that the United States and its allies should concentrate their efforts on galvanising political change. However, no one has suggested an effective method of securing that objective and, in general, western states are reluctant to take any such action.

114. At present, most experts agree that specific sanctions directed at the Revolutionary Guard and its financial holdings are necessary in order to cripple the nuclear programme.

115. The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, has admitted that developing a strategy on Iran remains a complicated and vexing challenge. He stated that all the options were on the table, military action being the last of those options.

116. Israel has warned openly that it cannot rule out a possible military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities. It has referred to its own exposure to the ballistic missiles in Iran’s arsenal and to President Ahmedinejad’s repeated statements about the need to “wipe Israel off the map”. However, the US Administration has urged Israel not to strike Iran militarily, not only because of the possibility that such behaviour could trigger a wider regional conflict, but also because the United States might be drawn into it.

(f) The negotiations on new UN sanctions

117. All the countries participating in the negotiations for a new resolution on sanctions continue to argue that they remain in favour of the dual-track approach: namely, engaging in dialogue and negotiation while considering the possibility of applying sanctions if talks fail.

118. The E3+3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom, China, Russia and the United States) are now working on a draft for a Security Council resolution for submission to the 15 members of the Security Council for discussion and vote. Although the intention on the part of some is to draft tough sanctions, there may not be general agreement with that objective.

119. After the adoption of a Security Council resolution, individual UN member states could decide on taking additional measures against Iran.

120. The sanctions resolution as first drafted by the United States before the E3+3 negotiations included a complete arms embargo, further restrictions on Iranian banks, curbs on international shipping insurance for Iranian freight, asset freezing and travel restrictions on members of the Revolutionary Guard, and a ban on new investment in Iran’s oil and gas industry. Since then, the US has been persuaded to drop several of the harshest provisions of its first draft to make it more palatable to all members of the Security Council.

(g) Russia

121. Russia has long resisted coercive measures that would put a strain on its strategic and trade relations with Iran, where both Lukoil and Gazprom have interests. Russia, for a long time Iran’s most

important arms provider, also built the Bushehr nuclear power plant. In the period 1995-2005, over 70% of Iran's arms imports came from Russia. Currently, Russia's trade with Iran stands at US\$3 billion and is still increasing.

122. Although Russia has agreed to participate in negotiations to draft a fourth set of UN Security Council sanctions, it has made it known that it would consider sanctions tailored to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but is against paralysing sanctions aimed at other objectives, such as punishing Iran or regime change.

123. Russia has made no secret of the fact that it has a definite security interest in monitoring the nuclear programmes of all countries along or near its borders. It does not expect a nuclear attack from Iran, if that country had a nuclear capability, but thinks that any conflict would have "shattering negative consequences"¹⁸ for its own security interests and those of its neighbouring territories.

124. In a debate in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 29 April 2010, your Rapporteur asked Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov how committed the Russian Federation was to new UN sanctions aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and how important it was for the Russian Federation that Iran did not attain a military nuclear capability.

125. Foreign Minister Lavrov replied that he had spoken on this issue on a number of occasions, as had the Russian President and the Prime Minister. There should be no violation of the non-proliferation regime. Full information was required from Iran to ensure that its nuclear programme was peaceful. When that was clear, Iran could acquire the same rights as the other states party to the non-proliferation regime. He expressed his disappointment that Iran had not responded to requests for information and called for increased dialogue between the International Atomic Energy Agency and Iran. History had shown that sanctions were not always effective and indeed could be counter-productive. Cooperation with Iran might make sanctions unnecessary. Sanctions should have the sole objective of inciting Iran to resolve this issue and to strengthen its compliance with non-proliferation requirements. On that basis, the Council of Europe could continue to work with Iran.

(h) China

126. At the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington DC on 12-13 April 2010, China disclosed that it had decided to join the negotiations to draft a new resolution for a fourth set of UN Security Council sanctions. For seven months, China had refused to participate in such negotiations. Analysts have said that this change of heart could be seen as evidence of China's wish to improve relations with the United States and of its unwillingness to sacrifice those relations to its economic and political ties with Iran. However, China's traditional position is one of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

127. It is still unclear, however, what type of sanctions China would ultimately agree to.

128. Trade between China and Iran has more than doubled to some 30 billion euros over the past decade and recently China again started sending direct shipments of refined oil products to Iran.¹⁹ In a number of years, China has become a very important supplier of weapons to Iran and is also sharing its defence equipment know-how with it.

129. China is opposed to a ban on energy investment in Iran.

(i) Brazil, Lebanon and Turkey

130. Three of the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council – Brazil, Lebanon and Turkey – are not in favour of new sanctions.

131. President Lula of Brazil, acting on the assumption that there is still scope for negotiations, will be going to Iran soon to use his best endeavours there.

132. Lebanon is concerned that any support for initiatives against Iran would reinforce the position of Hezbollah in that country.

¹⁸ International Herald Tribune, 25 March 2010.

¹⁹ The Guardian, 15 April 2010.

133. Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Erdogan, has said publicly that imposing sanctions is not the best way to a solution, and he would prefer negotiations.

134. Turkey is against isolating Iran, a neighbour with which it has forged strategic links. The two countries have recently intensified economic and energy cooperation with one another. Iran is Turkey's second largest energy provider after Russia, and Turkey is considering major investment (of up to four billion euros) in Iranian natural gas production.

(j) The EU

135. EU High Representative Catherine Ashton has stated that the EU would like to have normal relations with Iran, adding that negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme would be a part of that process. She regrets Iran's refusal to continue talks on the nuclear issue, feeling that its decision to build new nuclear facilities and its hostility to cooperating fully with the IAEA is undermining confidence. Iran's failure to respect human rights and the arrests of and violence against demonstrators after the presidential elections are not acceptable.

136. There are many good reasons in her view for relaunching negotiations with Iran, but the EU acknowledges that after six years of indefatigable dialogue conducted by Javier Solana, no concrete results were achieved. The EU therefore has little choice but to agree to smart sanctions if Iran continues to reject any form of dialogue.

(k) A military strike?

137. Due to growing concern over the direction being taken by Iran's nuclear programme and its possible military dimension, attention has recently again turned to the question of military strikes against Iran's nuclear installations. In March 2009 a serious and detailed study of all the different options was published.²⁰ It came to the clear-cut conclusion that the destruction once and for all of Iran's nuclear programme had been ruled out by military experts. The best such action could achieve would be to delay the programme by several years, while the price to pay in terms of human lives and of the geopolitical consequences would be extremely high. Most experts agree that a military attack would be extremely counterproductive, both in terms of setting back Iran's nuclear programme and of weakening the central government or encouraging regime change.

138. Israel has more than once publicly declared that it does not rule out a military strike, but this would be a complicated operation. Although it would not need US approval for action, it would need the United States' most sophisticated bunker-buster bombs. It would also need to deploy a fleet of some 100 fighter bombers with in-flight refuelling tanker aircraft. A strike would have extremely unpredictable results, but it would most certainly have destabilising effects on the Middle East and the global economy. Whatever the truth about US approval or otherwise of an Israeli military strike, some would conclude that it had been done with US approval and the consequences would also implicate the United States.

139. A possible Iranian response could be to launch long-range missiles against Israel from Iran, as well as shorter-range missiles through Iran's regional allies, Hezbollah and Hamas. This rocket barrage would force Israel to launch further air strikes against targets in Lebanon and possibly Iran as well. Iran could mine the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40% of the world's maritime oil shipments pass, causing the price of oil to spike and forcing the United States to intervene. De-escalating the conflict would be difficult and costly.

140. Iran may also use its influence in Iraq and Afghanistan to mobilise political or militant groups against American targets in those countries. Military strikes could also contribute to the further marginalisation of internal opposition movements by the central government and cause a wave of nationalism that would serve to mask domestic disputes.

²⁰ Abdullah Tonkan and Anthony Cordesman: "Study on a possible Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear development facilities", Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 March 2009. See also Kenneth Pollack, Director of the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution on <http://www.npr.org>

(l) The consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran, or “what if?”

141. At the very beginning, even under the regime of the Shah, Iran’s nuclear programme was considered important as a defining element of the country’s national identity. Successive presidents of the Islamic Republic later saw nuclear weapons as instruments of deterrence against enemies such as the United States and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. The current elite, in particular President Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guard, see these weapons as vital tools for ensuring Iran’s pre-eminence in the region. Apparently, the regime in Tehran wishes to establish itself as the dominant power in its neighbourhood while preserving political control at home.

142. However, some experts argue that nuclear weapons may be a means of deterrence, but that they are not necessarily effective for diplomatic leverage or power projection. A nuclear-armed Iran would profoundly change the situation in the Middle East. It would be an important setback for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and encourage other states in the region and beyond to acquire nuclear weapons.

143. Israel would consider an Iran with nuclear capabilities even more of an urgent and serious threat, to be countered by any means possible, but most likely in close coordination with the United States. Naturally, this would also depend on Israel’s confidence in the US security guarantees and on the United States’ response to Iran’s newly acquired position.

144. Although other countries in the region might consider acquiring nuclear weapons, this may not happen readily. The development of indigenous nuclear weapons is not only costly, it also takes many years, requires an important infrastructure and the acquisition or development of delivery systems. The United States’ most important allies – Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – might give up the idea as they would lose their security guarantees and, in Egypt’s case, important economic and military aid.

145. The off-the-shelf acquisition of a complete nuclear weapons system from an existing nuclear power is an option, in which case North Korea would be the obvious supplier.

146. If Iran finally came to possess a nuclear capability, it is important for the other nuclear powers, in particular the United States, to define the limits which Iran must not overstep. Experts have suggested three important red lines which should not be infringed and which if need be should be enforced by deterrence or other appropriate action.²¹

147. Iran should be deterred from initiating a conventional attack against other countries. At present, there are enough US troops in the region to counter such a move. Iran could be deterred from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons provided that the deterrent nation was beyond the reach of Iranian nuclear weapons. Were that not the case, then anti-ballistic missile systems would be the only solution. An Iran with nuclear capability would in any event call for the development of highly effective multilayered ballistic missile defence systems, and the United States would feel it was its responsibility to bring its Arab allies and Israel under its missile defence umbrella.

148. Iran should be deterred from transferring nuclear weapons, materials and technologies to state and non-state actors. This could be done by strengthening the Proliferation Security Initiative (a multinational effort which seeks to stop trafficking in weapons of mass destruction), other specific action, and through UN resolutions to impose additional sanctions on Iran and its potential business partners.

149. Iran should be deterred from supporting terrorist and subversive groups. This would appear to be a most difficult task, not least of all because of the competing elements within Iran’s power structures. Here, in particular, much would depend on the exchange of intelligence on an international level.

150. Clearly there is no question but that a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement taking in both Syria and Lebanon would be another effective action to limit Iran’s influence in the region. The strengthening of both Iraq’s and Afghanistan’s institutional and military capabilities would be

²¹ James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh “After Iran Gets the Bomb” in *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2010.

another desirable objective for those wishing to set limits to Iran's influence on neighbouring countries.

151. Finally, Iran might decide to follow the path of diplomatic cooperation if it could be convinced that the West was trying to help in the creation of a peaceful and self-sustaining order in the Middle East.

IV. Epilogue

152. Since the adoption of the draft report on 18 May, your Rapporteur considers that it is proper to bring the text up to date in order to take account of the latest developments on the different issues discussed therein. It may be too early for an appropriate evaluation of the different events which have taken place recently, but your Rapporteur considers that some comments can usefully be made, and these have been included in the present text. This text carries the events up to 4 June 2010 and your Rapporteur trusts that you will understand that this is a rapidly evolving picture.

(a) Proximity talks

153. A first round of Israeli-Palestinian proximity talks began on 9 May, with the US Middle East Special Envoy George Mitchell shuttling between the two delegations. The first round of talks focused on borders and security.

154. The Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, declared on 27 May 2010 that no second round would be initiated until mediators had successfully set down borders for a Palestinian state.

155. The Arab League has set a four-month deadline for this first round.

156. After the incident at sea between Israeli military forces and an aid flotilla in the early morning of 31 May 2010, the majority of factions within the Palestinian Authority were opposed to the continuation of proximity talks with Israel. This showed again how difficult it may be to negotiate peace with the Palestinians without taking account of the situation in Gaza, which is under Hamas' rule.

(b) Latest IAEA report on Iran's nuclear activities

157. On 31 May 2010, the IAEA published a report on Iran's nuclear activities since 18 February 2010.

158. According to this report, Iran has now produced a total of 2 427 kg low-enriched uranium. Experts have stated that this quantity, if further enriched, is enough to make two nuclear weapons. On 9 February 2010, Iran started to enrich uranium to 20%.

159. Regarding possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear activities, the IAEA report states, among other things, the following:

“Based on an overall analysis undertaken by the Agency of all the information available to it, the Agency remains concerned about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed nuclear related activities, involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile. There are indications that certain of these activities may have continued beyond 2004.

With the passage of time and the possible deterioration in the availability of information, it is essential that Iran engage with the Agency on these issues, and that the Agency be permitted to visit all relevant sites, have access to all relevant equipment and documentation, and be allowed to interview all relevant persons, without further delay. Iran's substantive and proactive engagement is essential to enable the Agency to make progress in its verification of the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations.

While the Agency continues to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran, Iran has not provided the necessary cooperation to permit the Agency to confirm that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.

More specifically, Iran is not implementing the requirements contained in the relevant resolutions of the Board of Governors and the Security Council, including implementation of the Additional Protocol, which are essential to building confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of Iran's nuclear programme and to resolving outstanding questions. In particular, Iran needs to cooperate in clarifying outstanding issues which give rise to concerns about possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme. Iran also needs to implement the modified Code 3.1 on the early provision of design information."

(c) The trilateral deal between Brazil, Iran and Turkey

160. On 17 May, Brazil and Turkey concluded an agreement with Iran which stipulated that Iran has one month to deposit 1 200 kg of its light enriched uranium in Turkey. In turn, the so-called Vienna Group (the US, France, Russia and the IAEA) has one year to provide Iran with 120 kg of 20% enriched uranium for the Tehran research reactor which produces isotopes for medical treatments. On the other hand, Iran has stipulated that it will continue its own uranium enrichment activities, including the enrichment to 20%. If the Vienna Group does not approve the deal, Iran will retrieve its low-enriched uranium from Turkey.

161. It is noted that the abovementioned deal does not address the most persistent demands of the UN Security Council: better cooperation with the IAEA and a cessation of enrichment activity until international confidence is restored in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

162. Although the deal is based on the proposals which the Vienna Group and Iran discussed in October 2009, there are important differences. The October proposal stipulated that some 75% of Iran's low-enriched uranium would be turned over to Russia and returned in the form of fuel rods manufactured in France for the research reactor in Tehran. In the recent deal with Brazil and Turkey, the same amount of low-enriched uranium would be handed over by Iran, but that would only represent some 50% of its present stocks of low-enriched uranium, and leave enough in the country for further enrichment towards possible nuclear weapon production.

163. In view of their earlier experience in various negotiations with Iran on this issue, the Vienna Group and a number of members of the UN Security Council have reacted to the recent deal with great scepticism.

164. On 18 May, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was able to announce an agreement among the five permanent Security Council members on a fourth round of sanctions against Iran, which would expand an existing arms embargo, impose restrictions against Iran's banking sector, and ban the country from mining uranium and developing ballistic missiles.

165. The US is said to be "seriously concerned by a number of issues missing" in the deal, and also by the "amorphous timeline"²² and the prospect of protracted negotiations.

166. The Russian deputy Prime Minister, Sergei Ivanov, suggested that sanctions and the exchange agreement need not be linked and that both could proceed at the same time.

167. The foreign ministers of Brazil and Turkey have recognised that the Tehran Declaration, as they call it, does not treat all the problems surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, but they argue that this was never the purpose of the agreement. They believe that the declaration helps to address the entire issue by providing essential confidence building, the key missing component thus far. They say that it creates the long-sought opportunity to address the issues through dialogue and engagement, and that it must be given the opportunity to work. Finally, they recognise that fulfilment of all pledges and commitments is essential for the continued engagement of all parties involved.²³

168. Finally, the question remains whether any of the actions, either sanctions or an agreement, will be effective means to convince Iran that it should reverse or shut down its nuclear programme. Many analysts have suggested that this goal is unrealistic regardless of the means employed to achieve it.

²² Financial Times, 19 May 2010.

²³ International Herald Tribune, 27 May 2010.

169. Many of the actors still seem to be too reluctant to think about what to do if the actions taken turn out to be as ineffective as the previous ones.²⁴

(d) The 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT Review Conference)

170. The 2010 NPT Review Conference, which ended on 28 May 2010, adopted a final document in which it reaffirmed the resolve of the five member states with nuclear weapons to eliminate their arsenals and called for a United Nations-sponsored conference in 2012 to establish a nuclear-free Middle East.

171. It is noted that in 1995, Arab states accepted the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in exchange for a commitment to a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Since then, no initiative had been taken on this issue, and Arab states and the non-aligned movement had asked for clear steps at the 2010 NPT review conference.

172. The final document also reaffirmed “the importance of Israel’s accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards”.

173. The Israeli Government has stated that because of the “distorted nature” of the document, it would not take part in its implementation.

174. After the adoption of the final document, the US national security adviser, General James Jones, stated that the US had “serious reservations” about the 2012 conference and believed that Middle East peace and full compliance by all countries in the region to their arms control and non-proliferation obligations were “essential precursors” of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.²⁵

(e) The Israeli military operation against a convoy sailing to Gaza

175. In the early morning of Monday 31 May, the Israeli military forces, acting in international waters, stopped by force a convoy of six cargo ships and passenger boats which intended to bring aid to Gaza, accompanied by more than 600 supporters from a variety of countries. Clearly, if the aim was wholly or mainly to carry material for humanitarian purposes, it is difficult to see the reason for such a large body of supporters. In that operation nine people were killed and a number of activists and Israeli soldiers were wounded. The aim of the convoy was to highlight the three-year Israeli and Egyptian blockade of Gaza, which was imposed after Hamas had taken power in Gaza by force in the summer of 2007.

176. The key organiser of the convoy was Insani Yardim Vakfi (IHH), an Islamic organisation founded in 1992 to collect aid for the Bosniaks and now active in 120 countries all over the world. It has relations with Hamas which they say are necessary to carry out their activities in Gaza. The six ships were taken to the Israeli port of Ashdod. Israel said that the aid would be transported to Gaza over land.

177. Each of the parties involved in the incident has given a different reading of the events.

178. Egypt reopened its border with Gaza for an undetermined period in order to allow aid to flow into that territory.

179. Under mounting pressure from all sides, Israel decided on 2 June that all of the approximately 680 humanitarian activists who were captured at sea in the military operation will be liberated and deported without legal proceedings.

²⁴ Rouzbeh Parsi: The trilateral Iranian nuclear agreement: shell games, international style, European Union Institute for Security Studies, May 2010.

²⁵ International Herald Tribune, 31 May 2010.

180. In a Presidential Statement of 2 June,²⁶ the UN Security Council condemned “those acts which resulted in the loss of at least 10 civilians²⁷ and many wounded” and it called for a “prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards”.

181. Israel is opposing any investigation other than carried out by its own authorities but it should understand that, however independent are the Israeli judiciary, no such investigation will be considered as independent by outside opinion.

182. The Security Council also reiterated its grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and stressed the need for sustained and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza, as well as unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza.

183. Turkey recalled its Ambassador in Israel and cancelled planned military exercises with Israel.

184. Prime Minister Netanyahu cancelled a meeting with President Obama.

185. The operation was met with a chorus of national and international disapproval, It brought further damage to Israel’s ties with Turkey, raised new questions about Israel’s policy towards Gaza, complicated the proximity talks which had only just started and threatened to derail the US efforts to introduce new UN sanctions on Iran.

186. One Israeli analyst, Yossi Alpher, said that the incident would contribute to the considerable decline of Israel’s standing internationally and to its growing isolation. He added that Israel clearly did not have a workable strategy for dealing with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.²⁸ True to the Israeli tradition of democratic debate and a free press, the newspaper Haaretz on 1 June carried the headlines “A price of flawed policy” and “a failure anyway you slice it”.

187. Both governments and public opinion in Europe and around the world have urged Israel to ease its blockade and allow the passage of a wider range of goods, especially construction materials.

188. In a declaration of 31 May 2010 by High Representative Catherine Ashton, the EU condemned “the use of violence ... and demanded an immediate, full and impartial inquiry into the events and the circumstances surrounding them”. It also called for “an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza”.

189. The International Crisis Group said that the incident was an indictment of a much broader policy towards Gaza for which Israel did not bear sole responsibility. Many in the international community have been complicit in a policy that aimed at isolating Gaza in the hope of weakening Hamas. Although it harmed the people of Gaza without loosening Hamas’ control, this policy persisted regardless of evident failure.

190. The International Crisis Group called for a thorough re-examination of the policy towards Gaza. Relaxing the blockade would not be enough. It said that Gaza should instead be open to normal commercial traffic with adequate international end-use monitoring.²⁹ In short, this botched operation played into the hands of the unsavoury regime in Gaza and was a public relations disaster for Israel. Turkey, its key strategic ally in the Muslim world, has been further alienated, the US has had again to pay a price internationally to defend Israel at the United Nations. The peace process has been damaged. The policy of blockading Gaza has been heavily criticised worldwide and it should be ended. Thus the cost to Israel of enforcing an ineffective blockade is high. Of course, Israel has legitimate security interests to protect. Surely these could be adequately safeguarded by a system of agreed border monitoring of imports, perhaps by the EU. That would however probably be too reasonable a solution – after all, this is the Middle East.

²⁶ Document S/PRST/2010/9

²⁷ Later it became known that there were nine victims.

²⁸ See <http://peacenow.org/>

²⁹ International Crisis Group, media release 31 may 2010, www.crisisgroup.org.

APPENDIX I***Council of the European Union Declaration on the Middle East******Press Release, 2985th Council meeting******Foreign Affairs******Brussels, 8 December 2009***

The Council discussed the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the current impasse in the peace process.

It adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council of the European Union is seriously concerned about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. The European Union calls for the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed time-frame, to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. A comprehensive peace, which is a fundamental interest of the parties in the region and the EU, must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.
2. The Council reconfirms its support for the United States' efforts to resume negotiations on all final status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and water, respecting previous agreements and understandings. The European Union will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The Council reiterates the EU's readiness to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements, aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, and will continue the work undertaken on EU contributions on state-building, regional issues, refugees, security and Jerusalem. The Council underlines the need for a reinvigorated Quartet engagement and notes the crucial importance of an active Arab contribution building on the Arab Peace Initiative.
3. The EU stands ready to further develop its bilateral relations with the Palestinian Authority reflecting shared interests, including in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Recalling the Berlin declaration, the Council also reiterates its support for negotiations leading to Palestinian statehood, all efforts and steps to that end and its readiness, when appropriate, to recognise a Palestinian state. It will continue to assist Palestinian state-building, including through its CSDP missions and within the Quartet. The EU fully supports the implementation of the Palestinian Authority's Government Plan "Palestine, Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State" as an important contribution to this end and will work for enhanced international support for this plan.
4. Recalling the EU's position as expressed at the Association Council in June 2009, the Council reaffirms its readiness to further develop its bilateral relations with Israel within the framework of the ENP. The EU reiterates its commitment towards the security of Israel and its full integration into the region, which is best guaranteed through peace between Israel and its neighbours.
5. Encouraging further concrete confidence building measures, the Council takes positive note of the recent decision of the Government of Israel on a partial and temporary settlement freeze as a first step in the right direction and hopes that it will contribute towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations.
6. Developments on the ground play a crucial part in creating the context for successful negotiations. The Council reiterates that settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. The Council urges the government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities, in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.
7. The EU welcomes Israel's steps to ease restrictions of movement in the West Bank which have made a contribution to economic growth. The Council calls for further and sustained improvements of

movement and access, noting that many checkpoints and road blocks remain in place. The Council also calls on the Palestinian Authority to build on its efforts to improve law and order.

8. The Council is deeply concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem. In view of recent incidents, it calls on all parties to refrain from provocative actions. The Council recalls that it has never recognised the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. The Council calls for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem in accordance with the Roadmap. It also calls on the Israeli government to cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

9. Gravely concerned about the situation in Gaza, the Council urges the full implementation of UNSCR 1860 and the full respect of international humanitarian law. In this context, the continued policy of closure is unacceptable and politically counterproductive. It has devastated the private sector economy and damaged the natural environment, notably water and other natural resources. The EU again reiterates its calls for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. In this context, the Council calls for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. While extremists stand to gain from the current situation, the civilian population, half of which are under the age of 18, suffers. Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the Council continues to call for a complete stop to all violence and arms smuggling into Gaza. The Council calls on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

10. The Council calls on all Palestinians to promote reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas, support for the mediation efforts by Egypt and the Arab League and the prevention of a permanent division between the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The Council would welcome the organisation of free and fair Palestinian elections when conditions permit.

11. A comprehensive peace must include a settlement between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon. Concerning the Syrian track, the EU welcomes recent statements by Israel and Syria confirming their willingness to advance towards peace and supports all efforts aimed at the reactivation of the talks between the two countries.

12. The EU recalls that a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a regional approach and will continue its work on this in line with the June 2009 Council Conclusions using all its instruments to this effect. The EU also calls on all regional actors to take confidence building measures in order to stimulate mutual trust and encourages Arab countries to be forthcoming, both politically and financially, in assisting the Palestinian Authority and to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA.

APPENDIX II***Moscow – Statement by the Quartet on the Middle East******19 March, 2010***

The Quartet – U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell, and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union Catherine Ashton – met in Moscow on March 19, 2010. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

Reaffirming the fundamental principles laid down in its statement in Trieste on June 26, 2009, the Quartet welcomes the readiness to launch proximity talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The Quartet emphasizes that the circumstances which made it possible to agree to launch the proximity talks be respected. The proximity talks are an important step toward the resumption, without preconditions, of direct, bilateral negotiations that resolve all final status issues as previously agreed by the parties. The Quartet believes these negotiations should lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties within 24 months, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors. The Quartet reiterates that Arab-Israeli peace and the establishment of a peaceful state of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza is in the fundamental interests of the parties, of all states in the region, and of the international community. In this regard, the Quartet calls on all states to support dialogue between the parties.

The Quartet reiterates its call on Israel and the Palestinians to act on the basis of international law and on their previous agreements and obligations – in particular adherence to the Roadmap, irrespective of reciprocity – to promote an environment conducive to successful negotiations and re-affirms that unilateral actions taken by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. The Quartet urges the government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, dismantle outposts erected since March 2001; and to refrain from demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem. The Quartet also calls on both sides to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric especially in areas of cultural and religious sensitivity. Noting the significant progress on security achieved by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank the Quartet calls on the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order, to fight violent extremism, and to end incitement. The Quartet emphasizes the need to assist the Palestinian Authority in building its law enforcement capacity.

Recalling that the annexation of East Jerusalem is not recognized by the international community, the Quartet underscores that the status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties and condemns the decision by the government of Israel to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem. The Quartet re-affirms its intention to closely monitor developments in Jerusalem and to keep under consideration additional steps that may be required to address the situation on the ground. The Quartet recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, and for Jews, Muslims, and Christians and believes that through good faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem, and safeguards its status for people around the world.

Recalling that transformative change on the ground is integral to peace, the Quartet continues to support the Palestinian Authority's plan of August 2009 for building the Palestinian state within 24 months as a demonstration of Palestinians' serious commitment to an independent state that provides good governance, opportunity, justice, and security for the Palestinian people from the first day that it is established and is a responsible neighbor to all states in the region. The Quartet takes positive note of Israel's steps to ease restrictions of movement in the West Bank and calls for further and sustained steps to facilitate the state building efforts of the Palestinian Authority. The Quartet endorses fully the efforts of the Quartet Representative in support of Prime Minister Fayyad's state-building and economic development program which has seen significant improvement in the Palestinian

Authority's performance with respect to security and law and order and improved economic growth. The Quartet supports the Quartet Representative in his vital efforts to promote change on the ground in aid of the political negotiations.

The Quartet further calls on all states in the region and in the wider international community to match the Palestinian commitment to state-building by contributing immediate, concrete, and sustained support for the Palestinian Authority and, in this regard, looks forward to the upcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) to coordinate international support for the Palestinian state building effort.

The Quartet is deeply concerned by the continuing deterioration in Gaza, including the humanitarian and human rights situation of the civilian population, and stresses the urgency of a durable resolution to the Gaza crisis. The Quartet calls for a solution that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns, including an end to weapons smuggling into Gaza; promotes Palestinian unity based on the PLO commitments and the re-unification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority; and ensures the opening of the crossings to allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods, and persons to and from Gaza, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1860. The Quartet takes positive note that the Israeli government has just communicated its approval of a number of the UN Secretary General's civilian recovery projects, including a stalled housing project in Khan Younis and looks forward to their early implementation. The Quartet condemns yesterday's rocket fire from Gaza and calls for an immediate end to violence and terror and for calm to be respected. The Quartet reiterates its call for the immediate release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Recognizing the significance of the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet looks forward to closer cooperation with the parties and the Arab League and urges regional governments to support publicly the resumption of bilateral negotiations, enter into a structured regional dialogue on issues of common concern, and take steps to foster positive relations throughout the region in the context of progress towards comprehensive peace on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, and 1850 and the Madrid principles, including through the conclusion of peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon.

The Quartet commits to remain actively involved on all tracks and to encourage and review progress. The Quartet commits to meet regularly and tasks the envoys to intensify their cooperation, to maintain contacts with the Arab League Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative, and to formulate recommendations for Quartet action.

The Quartet re-affirms its previous statements and supports, in consultation with the parties, an international conference in Moscow at the appropriate time concurrent with direct negotiations.

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