

European Union – Position paper

The credibility of the Middle East Peace Process, MEPP, needs to be restored by a renewed, concerted and sustained effort by the whole international community. We believe therefore that the EU, which has many interests at stake in this region, should participate actively and forcefully in such an effort.

The EU's consistent support since 1980 for a negotiated two-state solution as the basis for a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has subsequently gained the adherence of the majority of the international community and, above all, since 2002, of the US. This is one of the major successes of EU diplomacy in the MEPP, particularly in influencing the evolution of US policy. The seriousness of the current situation is a major test for the EU, which again needs to put its full weight behind the search for a comprehensive solution. For 20 years extremists have been allowed to dictate the agenda. Any resumed peace process now needs to be proofed against their acts.

We are not convinced that the Road Map, as originally conceived in 2003, is the only vehicle for progress, and consider that the interim steps it describes should no longer be pursued to the exclusion of the consideration of final status issues such as the territorial limits of the two states, the fate of refugees and the status of Jerusalem. Therefore, we believe that the time has come for the EU and the Quartet to focus more directly on resolving the issues which are at the heart of the conflict.

In order to achieve our goals it is necessary to explore more imaginative ways of reengaging the Israelis in the search for peace. EU policy contains a clearly stated position calling on the Israeli government to take “further steps, including the freezing of settlement activities and dismantling of settlement outposts and Israeli abstention from measures which are not in accordance with international law, including extra-judicial killings and collective punishment.”

The European Union's support for a Palestinian coalition government, including Hamas, could not have been unconditional. To require that a Hamas-led government not only renounce attacks on Israel but use its governmental authority to prevent such attacks by others was entirely justified. However, the EU should not allow the peace process to be held hostage by any faction, individual, or state. The history of the Middle East is scarred by peace initiatives that have been derailed by extremists on both sides.

It is clear that the EU's objective should be to attempt to maintain a peace process that is as inclusive as possible, while firmly rejecting attempts by outsiders and extremists to derail it. Dialogue with the key parties is an essential aspect of the peace process, and channels of communication should as far as possible be kept open.

We do not believe the international community can afford yet again to repeat previous errors and should recognize an even greater urgency in seeking a solution.