

Bearing in mind the conflict resolution in the Middle East as a top priority and as one of its main concerns, Egypt sees itself as capable to lead the region to an era of peace that will put an end to hostility and violence. Egypt's unique position in the Middle East and unique relations with the parties in the conflict, are highly essential and a great deal due to the regional character of the conflict. Restructuring the negotiating process could have a positive impact on disconnected and limited individual negotiations between different states in the region, which hardly made any progress so far. Hence, it may be time to pursue a spirited initiative that combines interests of all parties involved. The delegation of Egypt is therefore deeply convinced that the conflict should be solved within a regional context which is doubtlessly offered in the API. In addition, other than its relations with the parties in the conflict, Egypt is capable to work along with the United States, while the first will play the leading position the regional level, and the latter – n the international one. Egypt believes that it has the abilities to bring the parties involved in the conflict, to a profound agreement that will eventually create stability and cooperation in region. Yet, Egypt is asking for the support and back up of other key regional states, international bodies and other international authorities. Egypt strongly urges the international community to remain actively seized on the matter to find a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In order for Egypt to play the role of the mediator, it is necessary for the parties in the conflict to accept it as one. Once Egypt will receive its legitimate authority as a mediator, it will put all its efforts in promoting the interaction between the parties and in reaching a solution. If Egypt won't regain confidence and support from both sides, there is only mere hope to establish peace among them. Egypt sees its role as responsible to supply protection to both sides and for the prevention of political stagnation, while using opportunities to progress the peace process. One of the first goals of this process should be the immediate achievement of a lasting cease fire – the long lasting violence and bloodshed in both sides has proven that there is no military solution to this conflict. It is of vital importance to enhance confidence between Israel and Palestine in order to reach the two-state solution, which Egypt puts its trust in it.

Egypt sees the Arab Peace Initiative as a true gesture and honest will to form comprehensive peace, and as an underpinning in a creation of an agreement that will be accepted on all parties. Constituting the opposite of the three “No’s” from 1967,

API is a remarkable and historic document which will provide future generations with security, stability and prosperity. Being signatory to this document, Egypt is convinced that API is an essential framework for a comprehensive peace agreement to end this conflict. Yet, it is to stress that Egypt does not see the API as a fixed or rigid document that fulfils the strategic interests of both, Israel and Palestine.

Borders and security - Egypt sees in solving the question of borders and security, the path towards reaching a permanent agreement and in establishing relations of trust and true intention between the parties. The first steps in this path should be the immediate stop in building Jewish settlements outside Israel, and an immediate end to all violent actions and terror threats.

Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 should be implemented and executed as a way to establish the existence of rightful peace. The resolutions will be the framework to the discussions and negotiation between the parties. Decision 242 refers to the evacuation of armed forces and to the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. Fulfilling the resolutions will also guarantee the freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area and the establishment of demilitarized zones. Once such treaties are signed, there will be no need for further demand to deploy international forces along Egypt's side of the border. The restoration of normal commerce in food and other essential goods through Rafah would also relieve pressure for smuggling. With the recent implementation of technical assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of engineers to detect tunneling and underground movements, Egypt should be able to improve significantly Egypt's performance in preventing arms trafficking into Gaza.

The resolutions progress immediate cease-fire, call to diminish all military actions, and to start negotiating under appropriate sponsorship in order to constitute just peace in the Middle East. Egypt sees itself as the appropriate character to play in the role of the sponsorship.

Jerusalem – The Jerusalem question is emotionally and politically tied to, and could not be resolved in complete isolation from, other major Arab-Israeli issues. Jerusalem stands in the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and acts as a spiritual and

religious center for Jews, Moslems and Christians, it is the capital city of Israel and the designated capital of the future state of Palestine. Its tremendous sentimental value for both sides should be acknowledged and the approach towards it should be outlined in such a matter.

Unless the Jerusalem question will be resolved in a way, it is hard to see how peace between Israel and the Palestinians, or the Arab population in the region can be attained in a stable manner, if attained at all. The common belief regarding Jerusalem is that it differs from the other issues of the conflict and that the gap between the two peoples is too wide to negotiate. A successful negotiation of the Jerusalem question can be reached only if both the Israeli and the Palestinian governing leadership seek to achieve a compromise settlement.

Refugees – the API offers an agreed upon solution to the refugee problem, which Egypt sees eye to eye with - the establishment of a Palestinian state, under the control of the Palestinian authority will accommodate the refugee population without demanding Israel to do so. Understanding the importance of a united authority to handle the refugee question, Egypt underlines the relevance of the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah as this is equally fundamental to settle peace in the region. Egypt is interested in creating an agreement that would cover power sharing, a joint political program, and elections.

The Egyptian delegation assures its role as a regional mediator in the Middle East will derive from interaction and partnership in order to overcome misunderstandings and misperceptions aiming to unite all parties in a stable, just and comprehensive peace agreement.