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Remarks made by High Representative Catherine Ashton after meeting Prime Minister Fayyad

Ramallah, 17 July 2010

It is a pleasure to have met Prime Minister Fayyad in Palestine today. We have had very fruitful and constructive discussions.

Fayyad's Plan and EU Support

Our meetings are a sign of the strong political and financial commitment of the European Union to the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Fayyad's leadership in building a democratic and viable Palestinian state.

Palestinian statehood is critical for any peaceful, workable and lasting solution. We discussed his state-building plan and our strong support for it.

I am also happy to announce that the EU will allocate an additional 40 million euros to the Palestinian Authority as direct financial support. And in the autumn, we will explore possibilities for further financial support.

Gaza

I will visit Gaza again tomorrow to see the situation on the ground, meet with UNRWA and launch the EU-PA Business Recovery Programme with a visit to EU funded projects to support private sector development.

We have discussed the situation in Gaza. I stressed the need for full and effective implementation of the new Israeli policy to improve the lives of the people of Gaza and meet their needs for humanitarian and commercial goods.

P R E S S

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Improving the economic situation in the Gaza Strip is not simply a matter of letting in aid - it is a matter of revitalizing the local economy. For a fundamental change, private sector development and commercial activity, including exports, will be crucial. As PM Fayyad, we also believe that the movement of persons and trade between Gaza and the West Bank should be one of the key objectives.

Capacity at the crossings must be expanded and I hope the Palestinian Authority returns to the Gaza Strip.

The Agreement on Movement and Access should remain the key framework.

The Palestinians must overcome their differences in order to build a state.

Possible EU Mission

If we can be of value and the parties agree, the EU is ready to play a role at the crossings provided that a number of conditions are met. These relate to the Agreement on Movement and Access: capacity at crossings, procedures, exports, movement of persons, security.

Peace Process

I also discussed the peace process with PM Fayyad. I have listened carefully to his positions and hope a satisfactory way for both sides can be found to proceed with the talks as soon as possible. This is now needed if we want to make further progress in the negotiations for bringing an end to the conflict.

I have and will therefore encourage both the Palestinian Authority and Israel to begin substantive discussions on all the final status issues. The outlines of a deal are well known. It is time to get engaged in serious and substantive talks.

We want to see confidence building measures and avoid measures that undermine the peace process.

In this respect, I have to express my deep concern about the latest developments in East Jerusalem, which I believe are counterproductive.

Let me again commend Prime Minister Fayyad for his work and his leadership.

The European Union will continue to work side by side with him and his government to lay the foundations for a Palestinian State.
