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Statement by the spokesperson of HR Catherine Ashton on the outcome of the launch of Middle East peace talks

The spokesperson of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Catherine Ashton issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative is encouraged by the positive outcome of the launch of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and reiterates her appreciation of the vision and political courage of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas.

The High Representative wants to commend the U.S. President Barack Obama, her U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Senator George Mitchell for the successful launch of the negotiations and wants to credit her Quartet partners, Quartet Envoy Tony Blair and all of the EU member states and Arab partners for their support and contribution to this process.

The High Representative believes that yesterday's talks are just the start of a long and difficult process but do represent an important step on the road towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Now the parties must engage in this process with determination to overcome the obstacles and work fast and hard on all the final status issues to meet the Quartet's call for a negotiated settlement within one year.

The High Representative has noted the comments by her fellow Commissioner Karel De Gucht and points to his statement, confident that he did not intend any offence. The HRVP reaffirms the EU's engagement and full support to the success of the negotiations and stresses the role of the Quartet in driving this process to a successful conclusion. The High Representative will discuss with Senator Mitchell and Quartet partners during the coming days how to further support the next rounds of talks."

P R E S S

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