



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the humanitarian situation in Gaza**

The European Union remains gravely concerned by the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Calls for urgent measures have not been sufficiently answered.

The European Union continues to urge that prompt and concrete measures be taken to solve the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and to allow for reconstruction and economic recovery.

P R E S S

The European Union notes with concern that the situation on the ground has not improved since January 2009. The continued policy of closure, which has been in place since 2007, has devastated the private sector economy and further damaged the natural environment. The poor water quality is particularly worrying. The essential reconstruction of homes, schools and health facilities to which the international community, including the European Union committed itself at the Donors Conference in Sharm el Sheikh, is still prevented. While extremists stand to gain from the current situation, the plight becomes worse for the civilian population, half of which are children.

The European Union reiterates its calls for an immediate and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. The Agreement of Movement and Access of 2005 should be implemented. The EU urges Israel to facilitate the transfer of material and financial resources into Gaza for the implementation of the UN Pilot Projects. The EU calls for the full implementation of UNSCR 1860.

Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the European Union continues to call for a complete stop to all violence, including a sustained halt of rocket attacks at Israel and an effective mechanism to prevent arms and ammunition smuggling into the Gaza strip. The European Union also continues to call on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.