



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 1 October 2010  
A 194/10

**Statement by  
EU High Representative Catherine Ashton  
following her visit to the Middle East**

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made the following statement:

*"I am pleased to be here in Jerusalem. I came here directly from the United States to express my personal commitment and that of the European Union and its 27 Member States to the continuation of the peace talks – talks that should lead to a viable two state solution within one year.*

*Yesterday and today I have had a positive and constructive dialogue with President Abbas, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Prime Minister Fayyad and Senator Mitchell.*

*Those of us engaged in the process have been very concerned that the ending of the moratorium puts at risk the possibility of long term peace. I have urged Israel to continue the moratorium in order to allow the talks more time to make progress.*

*I regret that so far they have chosen not to.*

*I also came to discuss with the Palestinian Authority the work they are doing to build the machinery for statehood. All of us who are supporting this – the EU is the biggest donor and partner – are very encouraged to see the progress that is being made.*

*We wish PM Fayyad every success in his work. Palestinian statehood is critical for any peaceful, workable and lasting solution. Political and financial support from the international community is essential. I urge those who have made financial commitments to deliver on their promises.*

*Gaza is never far from my mind, having visited twice this year, and I continue to call for the crossings to be opened to enable trade – especially the chance for businesses to export. My discussions with the Palestinian Authority have also focused on how we can support exports to allow the people of Gaza to gain a greater stake in their economy and their future.*

*These are the elements of the future – strong economies, security, and investment – and they need to be nurtured. But nurtured in the context of serious ongoing talks which lead to a solution on all final status issues. We will continue to offer whatever support we can so the talks continue and a comprehensive and sustainable solution is found, with the state of Israel and the state of Palestine living side by side in peace and security."*

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