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**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP,
delivered the keynote speech at the EPP-ED conference on
EU-US cooperation after the elections**

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Javier SOLANA, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), delivered the keynote speech today at the EPP-ED Group's seminar on EU-US cooperation following the US presidential election. Mr Solana, who had just returned from the Middle East, focused on the efforts to achieve a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and the wider Middle East peace process as one of the key issues for which close cooperation with the new US administration was vital. He also pointed to Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Africa, non-proliferation and disarmament, climate change and the global economic crisis as crucial areas for cooperation in the coming year.

Mr SOLANA said 2009 would be a very important year both from the point of view of the global economic crisis - he hoped we would begin to see some light at the end of the tunnel - and in terms of finding solutions to some of the international problems that had been with us for years.

The EU was a major player in the international arena and the EU's relationship with its key ally, the US, was fundamental. The new administration was already very active and this was very important for the key issues on which we had to move forward quickly.

Amongst the issues on which the EU and the US must cooperate and that are most in need of urgent attention, Mr SOLANA focused on the Middle East. He had just landed in Brussels after touring the Middle East since Monday and he felt that the EU and the US must together place much more emphasis on how to tackle the problems in that region.

Despite this morning's rocket attack, Mr Solana hoped that the ceasefire in Gaza could still hold. It was very shaky and was not a real ceasefire but two unilateral statements suspending hostilities on each side. Now, the intention of the parties was to seek, with our help and the help of others, a proper ceasefire that would last for over a year. If that were achieved, humanitarian relief and reconstruction could get under way. The crossings were not fully open yet but about 150 trucks were crossing into Gaza with about 15 or 20 items of humanitarian aid. *"Two things have to take place in a very short period of time. First, the number of items that cross the crossing points must increase from 15, which is a very reduced level of humanitarian aid and it must go beyond the most*

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basic elements, and secondly, to meet the agreement that we have, the number of trucks crossing should go up to at least 600. Unless that happens the volume of humanitarian aid is not what is needed at this point. We have to keep on pushing for this." Mr Solana hoped that the situation would now improve following his meeting with the Israeli minister in charge of humanitarian coordination. The second question, after humanitarian aid, was reconstruction aid - how this could be done on the ground and who would be in charge of distributing money and conducting the reconstruction process.

The EU was supporting the efforts of the Egyptian government to broker firstly an agreement between the Palestinian factions and then, in parallel, an agreement with Israel on a permanent ceasefire. He hoped that that would lead to the full opening of the border crossing points and then to a second round of discussions between Palestinians and Egyptians on starting reconciliation between the Palestinian factions: *"I hope that by around the 4th or 5th of February a ceasefire can be established - I hope so - it is not guaranteed - and then by 24th or 25th February an inter-Palestinian agreement of a more political nature."* If a ceasefire and the outline of an inter-Palestinian agreement were secured, the Rafah border crossing point between Gaza and Egypt could be opened. The EUBAM Rafah mission had been there, with monitors in the ground, since 2005 and was ready to redeploy as soon as it was needed.

The EU supported the idea of a Palestinian "government of consensus" or "government of technocrats", as proposed by President Abbas at the Kuwait summit, which would have the objectives of conducting the reconstruction of Gaza and of preparing the ground for Palestinian elections in 2009. It was very important to talk of *"two states and not three"*, Mr SOLANA stressed. Reconciliation between the West Bank and Gaza, support for President Abbas, as President of the PLO, representing all the Palestinians, and efforts to achieve a peace agreement between the two states of Palestine and Israel, within the parameters of the Arab Peace Initiative, were fundamental,

Mr SOLANA welcomed the appointment, of Senator George Mitchell as US envoy to the Middle East. This, he said, was one of the three very important decisions concerning the Middle East already taken by President Obama. The President's messages concerning the Middle East and his interview with Al Arabiya TV were also very significant. Senator Mitchell was well known to the EU and this was an important factor in the relations between the EU and the US on this issue, which were fundamental. George Mitchell was the author of the Mitchell report of 2001 on the second intifada, which later fed into the road map, and was someone of tremendous stature who had been heavily engaged in the Middle East and also in the Northern Ireland peace process. He would be *"an important player in the peace process in the Middle East"* and Mr SOLANA had already had lengthy discussions with him during his trip to the region.

On the negative side, Mr SOLANA pointed to the divisions within the Arab League and underlined the need for its members to coordinate their position. The Arab League was a very important partner in the peace process and Mr Solana stressed that *"The Arab League initiative is a fundamental ingredient in the package to find a final settlement. We have to make every effort to keep the Arab League peace initiative on the table."*

Another important issue in the EU's bilateral relations with the US was, Mr SOLANA said, the very welcome and courageous decision of President Obama to close Guantanamo. This was the responsibility of the US but we in the EU should be open to helping our American friends, if asked, and if it there was any way in which we could do so, notwithstanding the different legal systems in the different EU Member States. By way of example of what could be done, EU Member States had helped some years ago to resolve the crisis at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem by taking some individuals from the West Bank.

Mr SOLANA welcomed President Obama's position on energy and climate change, a question linked to the economy, and his appointment of a renowned scientist and Nobel prize winner as US energy coordinator. Mr SOLANA said that, in the EU, it was important to develop the political will to tackle the issues of energy security.

Afghanistan and Pakistan was another crucial area that must be high on the agenda for two-way cooperation between the EU and the US and here too we should be ready to help where possible. The credibility of the international community would depend on the successful organisation of the presidential elections scheduled for 20 August.

The coming years would be extremely important for non-proliferation and disarmament, Mr SOLANA said. Greater use would be made of nuclear energy in the coming years and the non-proliferation treaty was to be reformed and revised in 2010. This revision must be more successful than previous ones, and must be done in cooperation with the US as well as with Russia and China. We must maintain credibility among other members of the international community and take account of the perception by some of double standards. The issue of disarmament must be addressed. We had, said Mr SOLANA, a very serious challenge with Iran in the area of proliferation and he hoped very much in 2009-2010 for cooperation on revision of the non-proliferation treaty. It was important, he said, to retain the present format of six countries (China, France, Russia, the UK, the US plus Germany) for the international diplomacy on the Iranian nuclear file. Mr SOLANA signalled non-proliferation, climate change and poverty as three horizontal issues that posed a fundamental risk and must be tackled by the EU, in cooperation with others and in particular the US.

Turning to Africa, Mr SOLANA pointed to the EU's engagement with the US in the Horn of Africa. The EU was conducting its first-ever maritime operation to combat international piracy off the coast of Somalia. Cooperation with the US on this was very important as the risk of instability and the actions of non-state actors affected not only Somalia but the security of the Sahel and of Europe. On a more optimistic note, we had recently seen moves in the right direction in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
