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**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP,
supports unity amongst the Palestinians
in meetings with President ABBAS and Prime Minister FAYYAD**

Javier SOLANA, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), met President ABBAS and Prime Minister FAYYAD during the final leg of his trip to the Middle East, which also included Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman and Ramallah. He confirmed the total commitment of the European Union towards the Palestinian people in the current desperate situation in Gaza and voiced the EU's support for the efforts to restore unity amongst the Palestinians, under the Authority of President ABBAS, Chairman of the PLO, in order to overcome the current divisions. Following his talks in Ramallah with President Mahmoud ABBAS and Prime Minister Salam FAYYAD, Mr SOLANA made a plea for full unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to Gaza as the most urgent need to be addressed in Gaza. The current flow of trucks as well as the number of items selected to enter into Gaza is totally inadequate..

The following is an edited summary of Mr SOLANA's remarks to the press at various press briefings with his hosts:

"The EU is the group of countries that has never left the Palestinian people. You can count on us in this dramatic situation. We are here to show solidarity and to confirm that we are helping in Gaza on a daily basis. We are putting as much pressure as we can to ensure the quick and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid to the strip. The passages have to be open for goods and people. Our observers are ready to return to monitor the Rafah border crossing as soon as there is an agreement. We also consider that the humanitarian aid allowed in has to include items needed for the reconstruction of houses, hospitals, schools and many other basic infrastructures. Normalisation of living conditions is our objective.

We are also wholeheartedly supporting the efforts towards Palestinian unity. Reconciliation is fundamental and everything has to be done to see it happening. Gaza and the West Bank constitute the body of the same state. They cannot be separated."

Prior to his visit to Ramallah, Mr SOLANA had meetings in Jerusalem with President Shimon PERES of Israel, Prime Minister Ehud OLMERT, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tzipi LIVNI and the minister for Social Affairs, responsible for the coordination of humanitarian relief for Gaza, Mr Isaak HERZOG. He called on them to ensure that the humanitarian efforts for Gaza could be carried out unhindered and to allow the number of items that can cross the border to be increased.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Spokesperson of the Secretary General, High Representative for CFSP
■ +32 (0)2 281 6467 / 5150 / 5151 / ☎ +32 (0)2 281 5694
internet: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/solana>
e-mail: presse.cabinet@consilium.europa.eu

At the moment an average of 120 trucks cross the Israeli-Gaza border each day. This is nowhere near enough to meet the needs. The total figure of trucks allowed in under the Access and Movement Agreement of 2005 is 500. *"We are very far from covering the needs. It is not possible to continue like this"*, Mr SOLANA said. *"It is also fundamental to enlarge the list of items allowed in, beyond basic food, to ensure that the reconstruction can start"*.

The High Representative emphasised to the Israeli leaders once more the readiness of the European Union to deploy its observers at the border with Rafah and to ensure the safe passage in and out of the strip. A team of EU observers remains on stand-by in Ashkelon, ready to move to Gaza and make all the necessary preparations to increase the size of the mission as soon as agreement is reached. The team is lead by Colonel Alain FOUGERAS.
