Summary of remarks by

Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for CFSP,
at the 19th Arab League Summit

Riyadh, 28 March 2007

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), participated today in the Arab League summit in Riyadh. On behalf of the European Union, he gave full support for the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia to relaunch the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

In the margins of the Arab League Summit, Mr Solana met Mahmoud ABBAS, the President of the Palestinian Authority, and Ziyad ABU-AMR, the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss the latest development in the Palestinian Territories and the European Union's support for the Palestinian people. Mr Solana met Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN, the Prime Minister of Turkey, and had further brief exchanges with Arab leaders.

Mr Solana also took part in a meeting organised by Prince Saud AL-FAISAL, the Saudi Foreign Minister, with Ban Ki-MOON, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amr MOUSSA, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ekmel Ihsan OGLU, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and Alpha Oumar KONARÉ, the President of the African Union Commission, to examine the appropriate mechanisms for holding a broad conference for national reconciliation in Somalia.

The following is the address by Mr Solana, which was submitted in writing to the Arab League Summit:

"It is a great honour to be among friends and to speak in the name of the European Union. I would like to thank the Saudi government warmly for its hospitality.

I also wish to praise our host, the Custodian of the Holy Mosques, His Royal Highness, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud for his initiatives towards stability and peace in the Middle East.

Your Highness's efforts to restore the Arab consensus and unity are essential for a just and stable solution of the conflicts that affect the stability of the region and the prosperity of all its people."
This is a priority task behind which I am sure all the members of the Arab League will rally. We have said for many years that the problems of the region can only be solved by its peoples. Failure to rise to today’s challenges would put the Middle East at risk of missing the train of human and economic development taking place elsewhere in our globalised world.

It has been a long-held European position that the Arab-Israeli conflict is at the core of the problems of the region. Therefore, we welcome the Mecca agreement as a fundamental contribution to averting intra-Palestinian strife and to solving this conflict, which calls for the end of the occupation that began in 1967, a two-state solution and a comprehensive settlement. We support President Abbas’s untiring work towards the fulfilment of the Palestinian national goals, according to the principles he has repeatedly reaffirmed, at the United Nations General Assembly last September and most recently at the inauguration of the new Palestinian government on 17 March. These are: the commitment to the previous agreements reached by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority, mutual recognition, renunciation of violence and commitment to negotiations. The European Union has never and will never let the Palestinian people down. I sincerely hope that as a new opportunity opens towards conflict resolution, all the members of the Arab League will assume their responsibilities and contribute to the success of this enterprise.

The European Union remains dedicated to protecting the sovereignty and the integrity of Lebanon, free from foreign interference and united in the pursuit of democracy. The European contribution to the security and the reconstruction of Lebanon is witness to the extent of our commitment to this goal. The EU will continue to demand the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to that effect.

The international community sent Iran a very clear signal when it unanimously adopted the new United Nations Security Council resolution on Saturday. Iran has to comply with its international obligations. The suspicions surrounding its programme are having a negative effect on the stability of the region. We should continue to work together towards a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. Iran, like every country, has the right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes according to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Finally, a word about Sudan. We cannot afford to have this country fall apart. This means two things: firstly, the North-South agreement must be fully implemented. Secondly, the violence in Darfur has to stop for good.

Neither of these things are happening at the moment. I call on all the parties in Darfur to end the violence and to consolidate the Darfur Peace Agreement. All of us have to support the African Union force until, as we have agreed, a United Nations/African Union force can take over. In this context, I call on the Sudanese authorities to work constructively with the United Nations, in the interest of Sudan and its people.

Your Royal Highness, Mr Secretary-General,

Once again we find ourselves together, the European Union and the Arab League. Once again we have an opportunity to re-affirm our joint commitment to the values of civilisation that we share. More than ever Europeans and Arabs have to face common challenges. I am confident that we will find ways to improve our cooperation. I am sure that this summit in Riyadh will make a decisive contribution to the resolution of the problems of your region."