



Members of the European Parliament

Her Excellency Baroness Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Rue de la Loi 200
1000 Brussels

11 July 2011

Your Excellency,

We are members of the European Parliament from across the political spectrum, all united in the conviction that only a negotiated two-state solution can end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is precisely because we believe in the justness of the Palestinian cause that we urge them to refrain from seeking UN recognition of a unilaterally declared state, a counterproductive step we fear could set back the chances for peace. Instead, Palestinians and Israelis should immediately resume negotiations.

Past agreements between the parties and international mediators clearly reject unilateral actions. The Oslo Accords, the basis of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, state that “Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.”

Likewise, the Quartet’s Road Map calls for a negotiated solution. Just this February, the Quartet, which includes the EU, said that it “strongly reaffirms that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.” The European Council has also repeatedly stressed the need for a negotiated two-state solution, urging in December “all parties to refrain from provocative unilateral actions,” and reiterating in May that “negotiations are the best way forward.”

Both sides will have to make difficult compromises to reach an agreement. Palestinian unilateralism at the UN would erode the room for such compromises by committing current and future Palestinians to non-negotiated positions. A unilateral move will not bring reconciliation; it will not bring stability; it will not bring peace. Rather, it will most likely fell the peace process for good. The prospect of UN recognition also raises unrealistic expectations among Palestinians that they soon will have a sovereign state. But a UN vote will not change the reality on the ground and thus disappoint many Palestinians. Such disappointment has in the past often ignited new violence.

We, members of the European Parliament, therefore urge you, Lady Ashton, as well as the governments of the 27 EU member states, to discourage unilateral Palestinian efforts to attain UN recognition. Only an immediate return to negotiations—for which pressure must be exerted on all parties—can save the peace process.

Respectfully,

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S&D, Poland

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