Strengthening the European neighbourhood policy

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ISRAEL – EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY – STATE OF PLAY

This Commission working document accompanies the Commission's communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This document reports on overall progress made on the implementation of the EU-Israel Action Plan. As such, it concentrates primarily on the development of EU-Israel bilateral relations and on issues involved in implementing the Action Plan.

The EU-Israel ENP Action Plan was adopted on 11 April 2005 in the context of the conclusion of an Association Agreement, and developed relations further in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It sets out a three year programme of specific activities to which both sides are committed.

This document reports on progress made on the implementation of the priorities addressed in the first year. As such, it concentrates primarily on the development of EU-Israel bilateral relations, and on technical issues involved in implementing the Action Plan. It is not a general review of the political and economic situation in Israel. Nevertheless, it remains true that bilateral EU-Israel relations in the context of the ENP Action Plan cannot be thoroughly reported without reflecting the overall political situation in the Middle East. The period covered by this review witnessed a serious escalation of the conflict, involving military action in Lebanon, with a significant impact on the daily lives of the population in Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, and Israel.

Overall, the report highlights that implementing the Action Plan has begun to help better define the path and framework of EU-Israel relations while enabling the deepening and strengthening of co-operation in a wide spectrum of areas. In the course of implementing the Action Plan, EU-Israel cooperation has developed in the area of political dialogue; promoting trade and investment; justice and security; science and technology including space cooperation, as well as higher education.

Furthermore, technical workshops on a large number of specific subjects relating, for example, to:

- preventing terrorist financing;
- promoting judicial and police cooperation;
- protecting the environment;
- combating racism/xenophobia/anti-semitism have been organised

Despite this progress, differences remain on important questions relating to respect for international law and human rights in the context of the conflict, difficulties in respecting the principles of the Roadmap, and a number of issues affecting the potential to reach a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. These issues are the subject of continuing dialogue, including in the context of the Action Plan.