Peace and dignity in the Middle East

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Emilio MENÉNDEZ DEL VALLÉ (PES, E) on peace and dignity in the Middle East. The report urgently called on both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority not to declare the peace process dead and to commit themselves to the implementation of the "road map" set out for reaching a peace agreement. Should the road map break down in the immediate future, an international mandate in Palestine should be established under the authority of the Quartet (the UN, the EU, the US and Russia), including an international force on the ground. MEPs said that the Palestinian Authority should clearly and firmly come out in support of the new Palestinian government. This government should continue reorganising the Palestinian security forces, re-establish public order and make concrete and visible efforts to dismantle terrorist organisations. It should pursue the reforms it had set in motion and hold free, fair and transparent elections as soon as possible. For its part, the Israeli government should withdraw its military forces from the autonomous Palestinian territories, put a stop to the targeted killings and freeze all settlement activities as well as the construction of the security wall. As an immediate step, Israel should end the sealing off of the Palestinian territories and withdraw to the pre-September 2000 borders. MEPs utterly condemned Palestinian terrorism, saying that the Palestinian Authority should spare no effort to combat it. But they also said the peace process must not be suspended or broken off, as that would be the greatest possible success for the terrorists. They called on the Israeli government to refrain from practices which also result in civilian casualties among the Palestinians. The committee expressed solidarity with all victims of violence. It also called on Palestinian president Yasser Arafat to come out in favour of the road map and to participate actively in its implementation. It opposed any attempt to deport or banish him and condemned any suggestion that he should be physically eliminated, pointing out that he had been democratically elected. MEPs said that a new and final peace treaty should include a precise demarcation of the borders of the two new states on the basis of the 1967 UN Resolution 242. The city of Jerusalem should be declared a cultural and religious heritage of mankind and dual capital of the state of Israel and the future new Palestinian state. It should have an international legal status without division, with the administration of areas originally having a Jewish majority assigned to the authorities of the state of Israel and the administration of areas originally having a Palestinian majority assigned to the authorities of the new Palestinian state. The right of return for Palestinian refugees should be confined to the Palestinian state, with exceptions that may be freely negotiated. MEPs called on all Arab states concerned, especially Lebanon, to enable those refugees who so desire to acquire the nationality of the countries where they have taken refuge. MEPs advocated an increased international presence in the area to help the two parties implement the road map and to identify any instances of non-compliance. To this end, an international force should be sent to the region, subject to the agreement of both parties, under the auspices of the UN and with sufficient and credible resources. As soon as a firm and final peace treaty had been signed, the EU should conclude a close partnership with both Israel and the Palestinian State, including a single market, approximation of laws and use of the euro.