Resolution on the situation in the Middle East

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The Council discussed the situation in the Middle East. It underlined that lasting peace and security in the region can only be ensured by a comprehensive settlement with a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core. The High Representative must pursue his efforts to reinvigorate the Peace Process.

The Council supported the full implementation of UNSCR 1701 including the withdrawal of Israeli troops in parallel with the deployment of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. It welcomed the early deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon and the substantial contribution by EU Member States to the reinforced UNIFIL mission, as well as the lifting of the Israeli air and sea blockade, and the instrumental role played by EU Member States. The EU reiterated its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers. The Council asked for a report on a possible European contribution to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

It emphasised its commitment to assist the Lebanese government in meeting emergency, humanitarian and environmental needs, launching the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, extending its authority throughout Lebanese territory and taking forward political, security, economic and social reforms. It was noted that the EU/Lebanon ENP Action Plan provides an agreed framework through which the EU could assist the Government in implementing its reform agenda.

The Council went on to underline its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement. It called for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions as well as to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian territories. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It further repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. All parties must respect their Roadmap obligations. The Israeli Government was called upon to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. Ministers reiterated that the EU would not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

The Council expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. In this context the Council recalled the strong EU commitment made at the Stockholm International Donor Conference on 1 September. It welcomed the expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, and agreed that its operation should be extended for a further three months. It encouraged donors and others in the region to make full use of the mechanism. The Council repeated its call on Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. It called for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and, in this regard, reiterated its continued commitment to EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. It urged that Rafah and all other border-crossings be re-opened.

It should be noted that the Council also adopted a common position imposing an arms embargo in Lebanon in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1701.