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After Arafat and Before the Partial Israeli Withdrawal

How can the EU Help Create a New Dynamic
on the Israeli-Palestinian Track?

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After Arafat and Before the Partial Israeli Withdrawal

At the end of October 2004, the Israeli Parliament has adopted the so-called "Disengagement Plan" put forward by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Consequently, the evacuation of Israeli settlements and military installations from the Gaza Strip and the Northern West Bank is due to be completed by the end of the year 2005. Also, the end of the Arafat era not only creates an opportunity for renewed efforts at internal reform, but bears the potential for the withdrawal to no longer be conducted unilaterally by Israel (as envisaged so far), but in coordination with the Palestinian side. This would increase the chances for a tangible improvement in the security situation on both sides and could, in turn, set in motion a new dynamic within Israeli society, leading to further withdrawals and ultimately to the end of the settler movement in the occupied territories. However, the Israeli Disengagement Plan does not provide the conditions for the phased establishment of a viable Palestinian state and therefore a two-state solution. Amongst other things, the building of the separation wall in the West Bank and around Jerusalem rather prepares for a bantustan scenario. In addition, if the new Palestinian leadership were not able to assert control and reestablish law and order quickly, the downward trend of violent confrontations would not be broken.

It is therefore a challenge for the Europeans to support the partial Israeli withdrawal in such a way that it sets a positive precedent, results in further confidence building between the conflicting parties, and becomes the first concrete step towards the realisation of a two-state solution. This can only be achieved if it is coordinated with the Palestinian side. At the same time, the EU needs to urgently address the volatile situation in the Palestinian territories as well as the risks and dangers involved in the disengagement plan.

The Sharon Plan of unilateral disengagement

According to the Disengagement Plan Israel:

- will continue construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank;
- will evacuate all settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip;

○ will evacuate four settlements as well as military installations located in the northern West Bank.¹ Existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements pertaining to, amongst other things, the free movement of goods and persons, the monetary regime, taxes and customs, as well as postal and telecommunications arrangements, will in principle remain in place. Israel will also continue to supply (in return for payment, of course) electricity, gas, fuel and water. At the same time, Israel will keep control of all land and maritime borders, as well as the airspace above the Strip, and asserts its right to take preventive measures and to carry out military retaliation operations in all evacuated areas. Furthermore, Israel intends to initially keep control of the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (the so-called “Philadelphi Route”) and to widen the border strip if this is deemed necessary. The plan therefore does not provide for an end to the occupation regime over the evacuated territories. For the time being, neither the Gaza seaport nor the airport will be (re)opened. The Gaza Strip is to be a demilitarised area, and an international presence shall only be deployed with Israeli consent. The industrial, commercial and agricultural infrastructure of evacuated settlements shall be transferred to a third party for the benefit of the Palestinian population. Residential and sensitive structures, such as synagogues, shall be destroyed before the withdrawal. In return for these withdrawals, as it were, the disengagement plan announces Israel’s intention of holding on to certain areas in the West Bank even after a final status agreement has been signed. These areas include large settlement blocs and security zones as well as “other places of special interest to Israel”.

So far, cooperation with the PA regarding the withdrawal is not provided for. Rather, the plan emphasises that Israel is forced to take unilateral measures as there is no partner on the Palestinian side with whom to implement the Middle East Quartet’s (USA, EU, Russian Federation, United Nations) road map to peace. However, in a post-Arafat era, it would make much more sense for Israel to give up boycotting the Palestinian leadership and to coordinate its with-

drawal with the PA – thus allowing for an orderly, non-violent take-over of the evacuated territories.

Problems and risks involved

The withdrawal is supposed to take place in four phases starting from spring 2005; each of these phases will have to be approved separately by the Israeli government. However, it is by no means certain that the Sharon government will be in office long enough to implement the withdrawal fully or partially. Sharon has lost his right-wing partners over the disagreement about evacuating settlements, and now heads a minority government. On top of this, he cannot even count on parts of his Likud faction in crucial Knesset votes. On the other hand, there will hardly be a majority of Knesset members who are ready to topple the government before the withdrawal is implemented: in particular, Sharon can count on the left and centre left (Labour, Yahad/formerly Meretz) to support the plan. The great majority of the Israeli public also supports the disengagement plan and rejects violent resistance against it.² Hence, even if the settler movement agitates strongly against evacuating settlements and if part of the settlers is ready to wage an armed struggle to prevent it, they are not likely to succeed and such confrontations will not – as feared by some Israelis – lead to a civil war in Israel.

There is, however, a real danger of an escalation of violent confrontations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank – even more so after the death of the symbol of Palestinian unity, President and PLO Chairman, Yasir Arafat. Against the backdrop of a near-total breakdown of the PA’s capacity to govern and to provide for law and order, the reign of armed gangs in several Palestinian cities, as well as violent clashes between Fatah-linked groups and security services, the greatest challenge for the new Palestinian leadership will be to re-establish internal security. Only if this challenge is met successfully will it be possible to contain attacks against Israel, such as the firing of Qassam rockets or suicide operations. Success in this undertaking will depend mainly on three factors: *first*, the acceptance of the new leadership as legitimate by all major currents in Palestinian society, *second*, an improvement in liv-

¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Disengagement Plan. General Outline, 18.4.2004; The Government Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan, 6.6.2004, Addendum A – Revised Disengagement Plan – Main Principles, Addendum C – Format of the Preparatory Work for the Revised Disengagement Plan, all < <http://www.mfa.gov.il/> >.

² More than 60% of Jewish Israelis support the plan, more than 70% of Arab Israelis. See the October 2004 “peace index” by the Tami Steinmetz Center at Tel Aviv University, < <http://spirit.tau.ac.il/socant/peace/peaceindex/> >.

ing conditions of the Palestinian population, and *third*, a political perspective of conflict settlement. However, as long as there is no improvement in living conditions³ – and there are no provisions for seriously tackling that challenge in the disengagement plan –, and as long as the perception persists that withdrawal from Gaza and the isolated settlements in the Northern West Bank is only a means to strengthen Israeli control over the remainder of the West Bank as well as Jerusalem, the Palestinian leadership will have a hard time getting armed groups to agree to a lasting cease-fire – not to mention to handing in their weapons.

There are indications that the immediate danger of Palestinian infighting is banned, as armed groups after the death of Arafat have signalled their willingness to adhere to a cease-fire (at least a partial one ending attacks on targets within Israel) until Palestinian elections are held. This adherence will not last, however, if the questions of legitimacy and of creating a political perspective are not addressed seriously. A worst-case scenario therefore remains a realistic option in the mid-term. It could look something like the following: The new Palestinian leadership is not able to gain a foothold and to re-establish a legitimate monopoly of power in the areas to be evacuated. These areas drown in bloody Palestinian infighting over power and influence. Armed groups try to strengthen their popular standing by escalating attacks on Israeli targets. This would signal to the Israeli population that further withdrawals or even an end of the occupation are impossible because of security concerns. In such a scenario, the separation barrier built in the West Bank (albeit declared as temporary) would have an even more detrimental and lasting effect on Palestinian lives. Already today, the construction of the separation barrier with its deep incursions, carves up the Palestinian territories in a dramatic fashion, particularly in the Northern West Bank. Large sections of farmland and water resources are already inaccessible to the local Palestinian population or will become so in the near future; entire cities and villages are cut off from their surroundings. In addition, East Jerusalem as an important social, cultural-religious, economic,

³ Presently, in the Gaza Strip, 30 to 50 percent of the population is unemployed, around three-quarters live below the poverty line and a large proportion is dependent on international aid shipments. This is largely a consequence of Israeli closure policy as Gaza inhabitants depend on employment in Israel and on foreign trade in commodities.

and servicing centre, as well as *the* traffic junction between the north and south of the West Bank, will be completely isolated once construction of the separation barrier is completed.

Thus, if the first partial withdrawal fails to set a positive precedent and is not followed by further withdrawals, and if the separation barrier stays in place, the implementation of the Sharon plan will be diametrically opposed to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state and therefore to the realisation of a durable two-state solution.

Challenges for European policies

The EU should regard Israel's partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Northern West Bank as an opportunity to set in motion a new dynamic in the stalemated situation in the Middle East. This is even more true in a post-Arafat era, where there is potential to achieve a coordinated, rather than a unilateral, approach to withdrawal. The EU should therefore seize this opportunity and work to convince its partners in the Quartet, above all the United States, to actively support the Israeli withdrawal. In this, technical issues can not be separated from the political context, short-term measures have no chance of success without a long-term perspective. Partial withdrawal therefore should be embedded in a process that will not only lead to more "demographic security" on the Israeli side, but also give Palestinians a stake in it. Only then will the partial withdrawal lead to more security on both sides, and trigger the wished-for dynamic in Israeli society. At the same time, the EU should address the problematic aspects of the disengagement plan that work against the realisation of a viable final settlement: *first*, the danger to the integrity of Palestinian territory posed by the isolation of the Gaza Strip, the erection of the security barrier and the intensification of the settlement effort in the West Bank and in Jerusalem; and *second*, the lack of preconditions for economic reconstruction and development of the evacuated areas.

A European involvement in monitoring and evaluation on the ground will indeed be helpful, particularly in reviving the road map process (see further down for concrete recommendations), but it alone will not be sufficient to influence the course of events positively.⁴

⁴ I was originally asked to make a contribution titled "Monitoring and Evaluation on the Ground – Which Potential has the EU?".

If the EU wants to – and it should! – seize the opportunity for breaking out of the cycle of violence and moving towards coordination, cooperation and a negotiated settlement, it needs to get involved much more substantially. Meanwhile, in early November 2004, the European High Representative Xavier Solana has presented an action plan for reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, in which these tasks are addressed. The plan that was consequently adopted by the Council of the EU focuses on short-term practical initiatives aimed at strengthening Palestinian institutions.⁵ They are to be conducted within the framework of a broader political perspective, which in turn necessitates a strategy for revitalising the road map.

Under the current circumstances, the EU should focus its involvement on two main tasks that are most essential for addressing urgent needs and creating a new and sustainable dynamic on the Israeli-Palestinian track:

1. Preventing a further erosion (or a complete breakdown) of Palestinian institutions;
2. transforming the partial Israeli withdrawal into a success story and making it the first step towards a two-state solution.

Preventing a further erosion of Palestinian institutions

Success in the prevention of a further erosion of Palestinian governing capacity will come about much easier in an environment of renewed Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and the absence of violent confrontations. However, even if a partial withdrawal were not to take place and a new Israeli-Palestinian dynamic were not to develop, the prevention of a further erosion of Palestinian institutions and the re-establishment of law and order is essential and urgent lest the Palestinian territories slide into anarchy and complete loss of control – with the additional effect of a further increase in attacks on Israel.

Regarding European involvement, the following priorities should apply:

- Strengthening Palestinian security forces;
- continued reform of the Palestinian administration and
- supporting elections.

⁵ European Council Conclusions on the Middle East, 5.11.2004, in: Euromed Report No. 83, 8.11.2004.

1. Strengthening Palestinian security forces

It should be clear that security is not only an Israeli interest, but, first and foremost, a Palestinian one. The restoration of law and order in the Palestinian territories is a precondition not only for progress on reforms, for elections and for sustainable economic development, but also for a smooth withdrawal process.

Without re-establishing security *inside* the Palestinian territories, it will not be possible to regain security for Israeli citizens.

⇒ In order to achieve that aim, the Europeans should continue and even enhance the training they provide for the Palestinian civil police, as well as support its rehabilitation and reform – and in the future, potentially coordinate these activities with other actors such as Egypt. After the death of Arafat, there is indeed a chance that security sector reform will be implemented successfully and that security services will work more efficiently once they have been unified and placed under clear authority.

⇒ In order for these measures to lead to more security on the ground and to help in re-establishing a monopoly of power, however, the EU should also work with Israel on the diplomatic level to ensure that there is an agreement allowing Palestinian police (all over the Palestinian territories) to carry weapons, without themselves becoming a target. The reign of gangs and militias cannot be ended as long as there is an imbalance in weaponry between these armed forces and the PA security services.

But law and order, as well as the establishment of a monopoly of power are not only questions of structure, equipment and training of security services. They depend, above all, on the question of the latter's legitimacy, which basically hinges on two dimensions: the legitimacy of the PA leadership – for which elections on a parliamentary and presidential, not only on a local level will be essential – as well as the acceptance by all the armed groups of a monopoly of power or, at least, a ceasefire. This will not be achieved without an improvement in living conditions and a perspective for an end to the occupation. In the absence of a process aimed at these ends, it is unrealistic to assume that any groups could be disarmed or would agree to a lasting ceasefire.

2. Continued reform of the Palestinian administration

Democratic, transparent and efficient Palestinian institutions are another important element needed for strengthening the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority – at the same time they are essential components in building viable institutions for a future Palestinian state. The reform process that has been enacted regarding Palestinian institutions – or rather: those parts of it that have been successful so far – has mainly addressed matters of concern to the international community and its cooperation with the PA, focusing on financial transparency and clear budgetary responsibilities, as well as the setting up of the Prime Minister's office. Both of these tracks are, of course, important for Palestinian institution building. The Palestinian public, however, has not been aware of these reform efforts and has not seen an improvement in PA governance. Opinion polls show that a large part of the Palestinians perceives the PA as being tainted by corruption, favouritism and ineffectiveness.⁶

- ⇒ In order to increase the transparency and efficiency of Palestinian governance, the EU should continue to support the implementation of the Palestinian reform plan in the framework of the Task Force on Palestinian Reform. It should also see to it that reform achievements are more effectively communicated to the Palestinian public.
- ⇒ In the short term, two areas of reform should have special relevance with regard to increasing the legitimacy of PA institutions and securing the rule of law: *first*, the establishment of an independent and efficient judiciary that acts as a safeguard for personal security and the rule of law, and that can effectively end a situation in which everybody takes the law into their own hands;
- ⇒ and *second*, institutional clarifications – which need to be made before parliamentary and/or presidential elections take place – about the office of the President and the Prime Minister: What are the competencies of each of the two offices and what is their relation to one another? What is the meaning of an “empowered” Prime Minister? How are candidates for each of the two offices selected

⁶ See for example Jerusalem Center for Media and Communication (JMCC), Poll Results on Palestinian Attitudes towards the Palestinian Political Issues and the Intifada, Poll No. 51, June 2004, < <http://www.jmcc.org> >.

and whom are they responsible to?

3. Elections

According to the Solana Plan, the EU should focus on supporting the local elections that have been scheduled to take place in four stages, to be completed within one year, starting from December 2004. This makes sense as these elections are not only long overdue, but would also provide a first step towards legitimising governance and allowing for popular participation in local affairs. Under the current situation of re-occupation, they would also be more easily feasible than national elections.

However, after the death of Palestinian President Yasir Arafat, presidential and parliamentary elections will have to take precedence. Based on the provision in the Palestinian Basic Law that presidential elections are to take place within a period of 60 days after the death of the incumbent, presidential elections have been announced for January 9, 2005. Europeans therefore can no longer ask themselves whether the current circumstances are suitable for an electoral contest, but should contribute everything in their power in order to make them suitable. Now that Israel has signalled its intention to make Palestinian elections possible, practical arrangements need to be made. Thus, Europeans – with the support of the other Quartet members – should become involved as follows:

- ⇒ The EU should support the PA in coordinating with Israel in such a way that universal, nationwide elections can take place, i.e., that Israel grants the freedom of movement for campaigning, voting and observing elections. On a practical level, this means the Israeli military will have to withdraw from Palestinian city centres and villages, and lift the so-called “internal closures” that isolate Palestinians from each other.
- ⇒ There also need to be arrangements for elections in East Jerusalem, where voter registration has to be resumed after registration centres were shut down by the Israeli authorities earlier this year. Elections could then, without prejudicing the status of the city, take place as in 1996, i.e., by voting via mail in post offices. At the same time, precautions have to be taken that a situation in which East Jerusalem Palestinians are under massive pressure from the Israeli government or individuals not to actively or passively participate in the elections (as was the case in 1996) does not re-

cur.

- ⇒ Europe should also help arrange for those Palestinians living in the so-called seam zone, i.e. between the Green Line and the security barrier, to participate in the elections.

In order for elections to yield a leadership possessing broad-based legitimacy, the EU should support a process that guarantees wide acceptance of the elections' results.⁷

- ⇒ The EU should therefore concentrate on insisting on the institutional safeguards of a fair process: a non-partisan (or: representative) election commission as well as international election observers.⁸
- ⇒ Europeans should build on the 1996 experience in the Palestinian elections – preparation of, technical assistance for, observation of elections as well as coordination of the monitoring process – and get involved. At the same time, they should be much more rigorous about the process than in 1996, work for equal chances of success of all forces participating and signal clearly to the population that the international community will accept any outcome of the electoral process.

Islamist factions have signalled that they will not present presidential candidates, but will not boycott the presidential elections either. However, a lasting stabilisation of the situation in the Palestinian territories will not be achieved by presidential elections only. It is therefore important that elections on the parliamentary and local level take place in due time. This is crucial for integrating the more radical factions as well as the young guard of Fatah into the political system, and for giving them responsibility in a broad-based government and a stake in a functioning authority.

⁷ Of course, it is up to the Palestinians themselves to engage in a serious dialogue to get to a national consensus on the elections. For the time being, it seems that all factions are willing to play the democratic game, either by participating or at least by not sabotaging the process.

⁸ See also the recommendations of the European Commission's exploratory mission of September 2004 that advise the EU against deploying an observer mission for the local Palestinian elections under circumstances that do not meet minimum standards for democratic elections. The main points of criticism are: the partisan composition of the Higher Election Commission, the legal framework, the decision to stagger the elections over a period of a year as well as the question as to whether an observer mission would be feasible in the short term in logistical terms.

- ⇒ The EU should see to it that dates for local and parliamentary elections are fixed soon – even though neither the interim PA leadership, nor Israel or the US will be enthusiastic about that prospect.⁹ One of the major problems this involves for the Europeans will be that organizations that we have added to our list of terrorist organizations will (probably) take part in the elections. The Council of the EU will have to take a political decision as to how to deal with that fact and the problems ensuing from it.¹⁰

The Partial Withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Northern West Bank

The EU definitely should support the partial Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Northern West Bank envisaged by the so-called "Disengagement Plan" – not only because from a normative point of view the EU cannot be against evacuating settlements and military installations from the occupied territories, but also because the withdrawal indeed presents an opportunity for a new dynamic on the Israeli-Palestinian track by serving as a precedent, thus enabling further evacuations of settlements in the future and leading to an end of the occupation. After the passing away of Arafat, there is a chance that Israeli disengagement will not be conducted unilaterally, but in co-ordination with the Palestinian Authority. This creates the prospect that the withdrawal can take place much more smoothly than if carried out unilaterally and that it will lead to an increase in security for both sides. Should this happen, the withdrawal could also serve as an opportunity for rebuilding confidence between the two parties to the conflict and for re-entering into a process of coordination, cooperation and, last but not least, negotiations – ultimately lead-

⁹ Abu Mazen has made it clear that it would be difficult for logistical and legal reasons to hold parliamentary elections soon. However, he also has an interest in preserving the current status quo within Fatah and to maintain the Fatah monopoly over the national decision-making process. Indeed, in order to renew legitimacy of Fatah's leadership, to integrate the young guard of Fatah, and to transform the movement into a political party, internal elections are essential. The process should therefore be resumed where it was broken off earlier in 2004.

¹⁰ Among these problems are: how to guarantee observers' security, how to distribute campaign funding (if applicable) to all parties and how to deal with Hamas candidates and elected Hamas representatives.

ing to a negotiated, mutually acceptable two-state solution.

The EU has made it clear that it will support Israeli disengagement if five conditions – laid out by the Council in March 2004 – are met, i.e., the withdrawal takes place in the context of the road map; it is a step towards a two-state-solution; it does not involve a transfer of settlement activity to the West Bank; there is an organised and negotiated handover of responsibility to the Palestinian Authority; and Israel facilitates the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Gaza.¹¹ These are indeed important points. But rather than stipulating conditions, the EU – again, together with the partners in the Quartet – will have to work diplomatically to ensure that these conditions are fulfilled. Particularly with regards to reviving the road map process, there is need for an intensive international involvement based on a common and coherent approach that should be worked out by the Quartet. Also, Arab political and financial support would be most helpful.

Regarding European involvement, the following priorities should apply:

- Coordination of and planning for the withdrawal and an orderly take-over of assets, infrastructure and responsibilities by the PA;
- economic reconstruction and development of the evacuated areas;
- providing for a conducive context and a political perspective.

1. Coordination and planning

Planning for the withdrawal has started on the Palestinian side, albeit with a clear lack of enthusiasm – a wait-and-see attitude continues to be widespread. It will be of utmost importance to convince the Palestinian leadership that they have a stake in making the withdrawal and hand-over work by preparing thoroughly for next spring.

- ⇒ The EU should help in formulating a Palestinian master plan detailing humanitarian needs, development priorities, infrastructural needs and investment opportunities after four years of Intifada.
- ⇒ More specifically, one of the planning priorities should be setting a timetable that spells out the four phases of withdrawal and the tasks involved

¹¹ European Council Conclusions on the Middle East, 25./26.3. 2004, in: Euromed Report No. 74, 29.3.2004.

for the PA – securing law and order, the take-over and redistribution of assets, rehabilitation of infrastructure and economic reconstruction –; the available capacities to fulfil these tasks; as well as the international support needed for a smooth, non-violent take-over.

- ⇒ This, however, will not be possible without Israeli coordination and cooperation. The EU should thus build on the first cautious signs given by the Israeli government that it is willing to assist in a smooth hand-over; if asked by the two sides to do so, the Union could act as a mediator or go-between in the coordination. The Quartet should also think about sending observers to monitor the withdrawal and take-over process.

2. Supporting economic reconstruction and sustainable development

Moreover, the EU can contribute to making the partial withdrawal a tangible success for the local population by generously supporting reconstruction of the evacuated areas, and kicking off economic development by way of substantial investments. This, however, can only succeed if the Gaza Strip is no longer economically isolated from the rest of the world – as a recent World Bank study has impressively illustrated.¹²

- ⇒ Therefore, it should be a European priority to convince the Israeli government of the need to assume its responsibility – which it still has as the occupying power – to create the necessary conditions for economic rehabilitation: above all, access to international markets overland as well as via a seaport and an airport must be assured, and the number of work permits for Gaza residents in Israel – at least in the short to medium term – needs to be drastically increased. In the medium to long term, jobs should also be created from within the Palestinian market and by setting up joint ventures in the Gaza Strip or on the Egyptian border.

Ultimately, European support for economic reconstruction aims at building a viable Palestinian state. It is therefore important that in giving its support, it continues treating the different Palestinian areas as one territorial unit.

- ⇒ This implies focussing reconstruction efforts not

¹² The World Bank, Disengagement, The Palestinian Economy and the Settlements, Washington DC, 23. Juni 2004.

just on the Gaza Strip, but also engaging in economic reconstruction of the Northern West Bank. One point of departure could be bringing to life the Jenin Industrial Park.

- ⇒ It also means to push for the (long overdue) opening of the safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank in order to allow for intra-Palestinian trade and exchange.

Based on the judicial opinion of the International Court of Justice, the EU has condemned the course of the separation barrier as illegal under international law. A principled position on the issue, however, is not enough.

- ⇒ The EU should also address the practical problems arising from the separation barrier for the Palestinian population, in order to prevent the silent transfer of population from the so-called “seam zone” area. That might entail getting involved in such nitty-gritty details as negotiating the technicalities of the olive harvest, or the opening hours of the barrier’s gates. Moreover, Europe should support people living in the area by means of job creation schemes, thus replacing lost sources of livelihood and income.

3. A conducive context and a political perspective

Support for withdrawal will also mean creating a conducive context. Only then will such support be perceived by the respective populations as a step towards confidence building and a more cooperative future. However, the large-scale demolition of houses aimed at enlarging the border strip between Gaza and Egypt, the recently enhanced settlement effort in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the ongoing military operations and targeted killings, as well as the shutting-down of the Erez Industrial Zone clearly do not support such an environment in the eyes of the Palestinian population and will therefore make it difficult to break out of the cycle of violence and to get to a more durable cease fire.

- ⇒ The Quartet should therefore exert pressure on Israel to stop these actions immediately and to replace them with measures aimed at tangibly improving Palestinians’ living conditions, such as easing closures and ending targeted killings, house demolitions and military operations.

However, conflict management and a lasting reduction of violence will not be possible without at least

the perspective of conflict resolution and an end to the occupation. The perspective of a “disengagement two”-phase formulated unilaterally by the Israeli side will not do the job, i.e., will not serve as a prospect the Palestinians can build trust on. It will rather be perceived as being a result of the imbalance of power, being dictated by Israeli interests and depending solely on negotiations between the Israeli centre and the Israeli right – but not taking into account Palestinian needs and interests, such as the access to resources.

Therefore, the Europeans should seize the current window of opportunity to reinvigorate the road map process¹³ – in an adapted form that includes the partial withdrawal in phase I, as well as a new and binding timetable. In the current phase, serious commitment by Quartet members to getting the road map process up and running again is much more important than new photo opportunities or large-scale conferences. Thus, the EU and its representatives should urge the Quartet members to make a new start and to signal this to the conflicting parties. Reinvigoration of the road map-process would include three main elements:

- ⇒ **Kick-starting the process:** A process of coordination and cooperation could begin with the issue of partial withdrawal. The international community should see to it that it does not stop there, but leads to the speedy resumption of political negotiations on other bilateral issues, on the “day after” the partial withdrawal, as well as on the end game.
- ⇒ The deployment to the region of a high-level Middle East envoy by the US and/or a joint high-level mission of the Quartet representatives could be an important signal of renewed commitment on the part of the international community, and could help kick-starting the process.
- ⇒ **Oversight committees:** The Quartet should revive the oversight committees set up during the road map process in order to monitor and evaluate progress made by both parties in four main areas: security, special operations, civil reform and humanitarian affairs.
- ⇒ In order to make their work more effective, the Quartet should spell out the concrete steps (for

¹³ A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by the Quartet (EU, USA, Russian Federation, UN), 30. April 2003, < <http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/declarations/> >.

each of the requirements mentioned in the road map) to be taken by both sides, responding to a clear, realistic and binding timetable, as well as set down benchmarks for each requirement. Progress reports on both sides should be taken much more seriously, and might be more effective when published. This would help getting back to the road map's parallel and simultaneous approach.

- ⇒ Quartet members should also send permanent monitors back to the region in order to monitor and assist in implementation of the requirements in the respective fields.
- ⇒ **The end game or phase III:** Working in the framework of the Quartet, Europeans should capitalise on the opportunity and build on the commitments made by the US president - in which he has put final-status issues on the agenda by outlining his vision of a two-state-solution in June 2002 and detailing his understanding of a final settlement in April 2004¹⁴ - by spelling out the road map's third phase and giving it a clear direction. Today, we all know what a two-state settlement will basically look like: it will be based on the principles that former US President Clinton has laid out in December 2000, and on the state of negotiations reached at Taba in January 2001.¹⁵ It will certainly also take into account the principles formulated by Nusseibeh and Ayalon, as well as the blueprint for a peace agreement put forward in the so-called Geneva Accords.¹⁶ The EU should therefore work with its partners in the Quartet and lay down the principles for a solution to the conflict, which would then serve as the basis for negotiations on the details of a two-state arrangement between Israel and the PA.
- ⇒ At the same time, the EU should go on supporting

second-track expert meetings between the two sides that draw up possible solutions to controversial issues. They can also work out the details of a final settlement of such questions as economic relations between the two states, Jerusalem as an open city, the management and sharing of water and other resources, etc.

¹⁴ President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership, 24.6.2002, <

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/> >; President George W. Bush's Letter to PM Ariel Sharon, 14.4.2004, < <http://www.pmo.gov.il/> >.

¹⁵ President Clinton's Proposals, 23.12.2000, in: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, < <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/> >; „Moratinos Document“ – The Peace that nearly was in Taba, first published by Akiva Eldar, in: *Haaretz*, 14.2.2002, < <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/> >.

¹⁶ For the Nusseibeh-Ayalon Agreement see *The Peoples' Voice*, < <http://www.mifkad.org.il/> >; for the English text of the Geneva Accords, < <http://www.heskem.org.il/> >.