



Letter from M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, to Mr Wolfgang SCHUSSEL, Chancellor of Austria, President of the European Council, regarding the situation in the Palestinian Territories.

Paris, 3 May 2006

Chancellor,

[Handwritten:] Dear Wolfgang,

On 28 April I had a visit from Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority. He emphasized to me the imminence of an unprecedented humanitarian, economic and social crisis in the Palestinian Territories, largely due to the fact that, as from two months ago, the Palestinian Authority has been unable to pay the salaries of its civil servants.

Action is thus necessary, and even urgent. The international community has a political responsibility which it must not shirk.

The European Union has decided temporarily to suspend its direct budgetary aid to the government of the Palestinian Authority for the time needed to find new channels through which to deliver it. This decision, wholly in accordance with the principles agreed by the Quartet, is directly impacting on the payment of the Palestinian civil servants' salaries, and consequently on the living conditions of nearly a third of the population.

Given the risk and the consequences which could ensue, we must establish, as fast as possible, a mechanism whereby the looming crisis can be addressed while respecting international legality and the principles agreed to by the Quartet.

The Palestinian President supported the idea of a trust fund directly managed by the World Bank which could pay the salaries of the civil servants. The Bank has the means, agencies and staff required to rapidly set up such a mechanism.

I assured the Palestinian President of France's support for the implementation of this fund.

Chancellor, the European Union is the main contributor to the Palestinian Territories. For over 30 years it has played a driving role in most of the initiatives aimed at finding a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It recently affirmed both the political dimension of its action and



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its determination to act on the ground, by sending two essential missions in the security sector. Remaining true to its past, but also wishing to play in the future a more important political role in the Middle East, the EU now has a special responsibility.

It must, to my mind, wholeheartedly commit itself to making the next Quartet meeting, on 9 May, the occasion for creating a trust fund for paying the salaries of the Palestinian civil servants. Only with a decision of that type will it be possible to reaffirm, in the eyes of all, the unity of the international community, its support for the Palestinian people and its commitment to help the cause of a just and lasting peace in the region.

(complimentary close, with handwritten addition).

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