



Middle East statement by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, during the Brussels European Council.

[Print](#)

Brussels, 15 December 2006

Once again, we face an incontrovertible fact: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only at the root of intolerable violence, but is fuelling a feeling of injustice throughout the Muslim world. A political way forward must be opened up and the momentum for peace recreated.

In this respect, advantage can be taken of some positive developments. Israel and the various Palestinian factions have accepted a ceasefire. Mr Olmert has said he is ready to work with a new Palestinian government and meet Mr Abbas. He has expressed Israel's willingness to withdraw from a large part of the territories.

So the time has come for the international community to show initiative. Building on the proposals Spain and France made in Gerona, the European Union is today morally bound to strengthen its ability to act and make proposals. Not to usurp the role of the parties or impose solutions on them, but to restore confidence between them and provide them with the guarantees they need.

In this respect, the conclusions we shall be adopting today set a framework for action. A political agreement must consolidate the ceasefire, the gestures to restore confidence be made, and a prospect of a way forward on final status opened up by working right now for an international conference. We must demonstrate that we are ready and willing to respond positively, in terms of aid and political contacts, if a Palestinian government with a programme reflecting the Quartet's principles were to be formed.

In this undertaking we must be both pragmatic and ambitious. Pragmatic, because it is important to opt for realistic solutions rather than spread false hopes through plans lacking any real chance of success. Ambitious, because a just peace in the Middle East would have a very profound impact and remove any justification or pretext from the extremists who are exploiting the present situation.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Of course, this ambition must also extend to Lebanon. At a time when the legitimate government, formed as a result of free elections, is confronted with a real destabilization offensive, we must reaffirm to it our full support, and appeal to the Lebanese to unite.

There are current Arab League mediation efforts to resolve the political crisis. I believe the solution entails satisfaction of the following three imperatives: fairness, with the establishment of the international tribunal, an efficient government and unity of the Lebanese.

Both the implementation of UNSCR 1701 and the international conference on the reconstruction, which will be held in Paris on 25 January, depend on achievement of this political solution. Lebanon has a greater need than ever of our support.

So I call on us all to commit ourselves. The Middle East is in our immediate neighbourhood. Our security and prosperity also depend on there being stability in this troubled region. We cannot show ourselves divided or inactive when a spiral of uncontrolled violence threatens.

|