

## **Appeal by European Parliamentarians in favour of the recognition of the new Palestinian government of national unity**

Following the January 2006 Palestinian legislative elections which brought Hamas to power, the international community decided to sanction the government despite the democratic nature of these elections, which were hailed as exemplary by the European Union. The Quartet set three criteria as conditions for the resumption of direct aid to the Palestinian Authority: the renunciation of violence, respect for past agreements and recognition of Israel. These conditions were set as prerequisites and without condition of reciprocity with regard to Israel.

An international temporary mechanism was put in place with a view to guarding against the most serious consequences of the suspension of direct aid and to enable international aid to the Palestinian people to continue without passing through the government. However, this mechanism has not been able to remedy the deterioration of the economic, social and political situation. The tensions between Fatah and Hamas even gave rise to fears of a worst-case scenario: civil war.

It is in this context that the contribution and importance of the Mecca Agreement must be measured as it not only distanced the spectre of civil war, but also allowed for the creation of the Palestinian national unity government regrouping members from nearly all the political groups. In his inaugural speech, the Prime Minister has just committed himself to respecting international law and the agreements signed by the PLO. He expressed his willingness to work towards the consolidation of the ceasefire. He reaffirmed that the aim of the government is the creation of a Palestinian state "on the territories occupied in 1967" and recognised that the negotiations came under the competency of the PLO and the President of the Palestinian Authority. Finally, he committed himself to providing the necessary efforts to obtain the liberation of the Israeli soldier in the framework of an exchange of prisoners.

We consider that these - almost unexpected - commitments, which reflect the conditions laid down by the Quartet, constitute a major development which must be taken duly into account. We call therefore on the European Union to resume direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, to recognise the new government of national unity and to appeal within the Quartet in favour of this recognition.

We have the responsibility to seize this opportunity to promote a return to negotiations allowing the final resolution of the conflict on the basis of UN resolutions, notably through the creation of a Palestinian State existing in peace and security alongside the state of Israel.

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