

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini following the Quartet Principals' meeting in Vienna

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Vienna, 23 October 2015

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I know you have been standing or sitting here all day so I'll be brief. I know that the main focus of the day has been Syria and I will say a few words about that as well, but let me say that we had a very good Quartet meeting on the situation in the Middle East.

First of all, you know that the European Union was very much insisting on revitalising the format using the Quartet as the framework for the Europeans to come together with our friends in the United States, in Russia and in the whole UN. To pass a united message to our Israeli and Palestinian friends in these moments of tension and violence on the ground, it has been extremely important to gather and unite the international community behind a strong message - an invitation to calm down the situation, to show restraint in leadership, to contain the rhetoric that could inflame easily not only the situation on the ground, but also in the whole region. Today we have a Joint Statement from the Quartet that as I have understood you have not seen yet, I can read it out for you: Quartet Principals' Statement, Vienna, October 23, 2015

In my talks yesterday with Prime Minister Netanyahu I have had from him the confirmation of his willingness to engage with our envoys and to receive them. I will pass the same message to President Abbas on Monday in Brussels. He will come and visit me and we will discuss the possibility of the visit of the Quartet envoys and also an agenda of concrete steps on the ground that can be implemented in the coming future, both in the West Bank and in Gaza.

Now let me also say that I had the chance of speaking with Secretary Kerry and with Minister Lavrov on Syria. We have all tried to coordinate and work in the same direction which is that of opening a political process, a political transition in Syria that can allow an inclusive process, a Syrian led-process, bringing an end to the conflict.

If you have questions I can take a couple of them.

Q: Will Iran be at the next meeting?

A: You know the European Union position, also stated officially in the European Union Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions - all relevant actors, regionally and internationally, should be involved. This is our commitment, this is our engagement. I have had personally long talks with Iranian delegations, high level Iranian delegations, especially

after the deal we have negotiated here in Vienna. Our open channel with Iran is something we are using very actively in these days, and I hope that Iran can be part of this common end.

Q: On the situation on the ground in the Middle East?

A: I believe in the efforts that we are making together – and this is somehow new in this last year, you have not often seen Quartet meetings, Quartet Principals' meeting so often, the last meeting was just in New York a few weeks ago. The fact that the international community is first - united, second - clear in the messages, passing the same messages, coordinating and very actively engaged. I believe it is something that could give us hope, not optimism at this moment, because there is little optimism seeing the situation on the ground. Hope that the parties would listen to the needs to calm down and contain the situation, and to engage concretely and consistently with steps on the ground that instead of fuelling the violence would bring positive steps for the population. This is what the population needs, both in Israel and in Palestine. Concrete improvements for their security and their daily life. Not only in economic terms, but also in political terms. This is the collective, united coordinated engagement of the international community. As we have shown with the Iranian deal, even if it is a completely different story, when the international community is determined and united, normally it is not impossible to reach results. So I hope that this is one of these cases.

Link to video: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I110947>