

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the election in Israel**

The Presidency of the European Union congratulates Mr Ariel Sharon on his victory in the election for Prime Minister of the State of Israel and looks forward to continue contributing to the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region.

It is the hope of the Union that Mr Sharon as Prime Minister will keep the momentum of the peace process and the peace dialogue according to the wish of all parties concerned. Reflecting its strong commitment as a neighbour to building stability and prosperity throughout the region, the European Union stands ready to assist the parties in their endeavours to reach a peace agreement as well as in its subsequent implementation.

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, the European Union understands that much ground already has been covered in open and frank negotiations between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. The European Union is convinced that the progress made on all major issues during the last negotiations should form the basis for future talks on the permanent status. The Union also looks forward to a prompt resumption of the negotiations between Israel on the one hand, Syria and Lebanon on the other hand.

The European Union reaffirms its view that the basis of negotiations, and of a just and lasting peace, must be Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and other relevant UN resolutions,

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including the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war, the need for every State in the area to be able to live in security, and the principle of land for peace.

The European Union calls upon the Parties to reaffirm their commitments to the basic principles established within the framework of Madrid, Oslo and subsequent agreements, in accordance with the Resolutions 242 and 338.

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