# Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press point ahead of the extraordinary session of the International Donor Group for Palestine (Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, AHLC)

It is a pleasure to welcome back to Brussels the Foreign Minister of Norway, my good friend Ine [Marie Eriksen Søreide] for our annual spring meeting of the International Donor Group for Palestine in support of the Palestinian economy, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is a means to an end and I want to start by stressing this. It is a tool that was created because of the Oslo agreements to pave the way towards the creation of two states in the Holy Land with a Palestinian State living in peace alongside the State of Israel.

25 years after that moment, the very possibility of two states is being dismantled. Settlement expansion continues while international mechanisms that protect the Palestinians in occupied territory are forcefully removed. Ongoing Palestinian divisions continue to harm Palestinian unity and democracy. The political dialogue between the two parties is simply non-existent at the moment, while in both societies, both in Palestine and in Israel, we see that the space for faith in the possibility of peace and security and a two-state solution is shrinking.

In this not so encouraging environment, some are suggesting to give up on the two-state solution altogether. But the two-state solution remains the only realistic way forward. In this context I would like to stress three points that are our guiding principles and priorities, as the European Union, but I believe also in this meeting today.

First of all, the urgency of the moment. We see that there is an urgent need for parties on the ground to resume dialogue in order to preserve and relaunch the Oslo framework, and this is what brings us together here.

Economic and fiscal agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, including the Paris Protocol, must be implemented in full. A solution must be found to the current fiscal crisis in order to avoid a financial collapse that would have terrible consequences for the security of the region. The Palestinian economy needs resources to grow. We, as the European Union, are and stand ready to help the parties come back to dialogue based on their agreements.

The second point I would like to make is that the European Union is and will remain the biggest and the most reliable donor to the Palestinians. European Union assistance to Palestinians has been more than €300 million every year for the last 15 years. In 2018, over €145 million went to the Gaza Strip where the humanitarian and economic crisis is the most acute. We have also contributed €153 million to UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] and several of our Member States also increased their assistance significantly.

This support will continue, because Palestinians have the right to live in dignity and because we Europeans know very well that this money is an investment in security for the Palestinians, for the Israelis, for the region and for ourselves.

This is why today the European Union announces over €22 million of additional humanitarian assistance in support of the most vulnerable people in Gaza and in the West Bank.

This brings me to my third and last point. If we are gathered here today, thanks to the work of Norway – and I would like to thank Ine [Marie Eriksen Søreide] for the good coordination and the good work, that not only she is doing, but we are trying to do it together – it is not for charity. It is for supporting a political objective together with the rest of the international community and together with the region, starting from the Arab world, united on this.

This political objective is the two-state solution. Our economic assistance to the Palestinians cannot be separated from this political objective of the two-state solution. I want to be clear about this: a political two-state solution cannot be substituted by endless technical and financial assistance and capacity building. It would simply not work.

We believe there is a solution to this conflict and it is the two-state solution. It requires our support and this is why we are here. It also requires political will. This is something that from our side is there for sure, but obviously, we also need this political will and this commitment from others.

Thank you.

**Q. Almost forty former Foreign Affairs Ministers, Prime Ministers, Presidents and EU Commissioners sent you and your European colleagues a letter saying that Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories are sliding into a one state reality of unequal rights and [according to] some reports, an apartheid system. Should the European Union governments and others like Norway scale up their efforts to protect the two-state solution by, for example, recognising the Palestinian state? I am asking this question because they asked you to anticipate the publication of the United States' administration [peace] plan.**

You know that I am not used to comment things that are not existing yet, so you will not have a comment from my side on a future plan that the US or others might present in the future.

But I think the European Union voice, and I can probably say the European voice, has been very loud, clear and consistent all over these years on our constant work for the implementation of the Oslo agreements, and the creation of a Palestinian state. We often refer to the support we give to the two-state solution. We can clearly say that an Israeli state exists. What is still to be built - and this is part of the work we are doing today - is a Palestinian state.

The issue of recognition is, as you know, a competence of single Member States, so I will not comment on that. But it is clear that the entire work of the European Union is done in coordination with our international partners, starting from Norway but I want to obviously underline the partnership and the cooperation we have with the entire UN system and the Arab world.

I had in the last couple of months the honour and the privilege to participate and address two opportunities of Summits with the League of Arab States. I see this as probably the first point of complete convergence between the European Union and the League of Arab States on the need to preserve and build the two-state perspective.

As I said, the European Union has been consistent, both with financial support with political engagement and commitment that is, I believe, recognised by all players - those that like it and those that like it a bit less - and obviously we are aware of the role we have.

We are also aware of the fact that without us, the solution to this crisis would never be found but we are also aware of the fact that without other players, starting from the two parties or the United States, a solution will not be found.

We are trying to work to realistically preserve the two-state perspective, including with this meeting today, and I am sure we will have good outcomes and a constructive cooperation with our international partners and with the region on this.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-171813