

The Elders support Palestinian appeal to the United Nations

European Union should adopt a strong common position

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The Elders warmly welcome the Palestinian leadership's efforts to seek support for recognition of Palestinian statehood by the United Nations and believe that such a move is capable of changing the dynamics in the stalled Middle East peace process in a positive direction.

With the US and Israeli governments publicly opposed to the principle of seeking UN endorsement of Palestinian statehood, the position of the European Union will be key to the prospects of a resolution, whether it is introduced in the UN Security Council or General Assembly, or possibly both bodies.

The Elders have written to the Foreign Ministers of the 27 member states of the EU urging them to adopt a strong common position in favour of a resolution that would endorse the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to statehood. Such a move would in fact be in line with European Council Conclusions of December 2009 which call for "a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security" and the EU's "readiness, when appropriate, to recognise a Palestinian state."

Mary Robinson, former Irish President and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said: "We urge the EU to assume its responsibilities on a subject of vital importance for the Middle East and for the EU's future relations with its neighbours in the Mediterranean region. This move has added importance in light of the dramatic changes underway in much of the Arab world, in favour of dignity, democracy and freedom."

Only 12 months ago US President Barack Obama used his annual address to the UN to declare that he looked forward to welcoming Palestine to the ranks of the world body's members by the start of this next Session. Unfortunately, the bilateral negotiations that might have produced this desired result have not been possible, due in large part to the continued expansion of Israeli settlements on the occupied territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Former US President Jimmy Carter said: "Any future peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians must start on a fresh basis, one based firmly on international law and universal human rights. All settlements on occupied territories have repeatedly been declared by the international

community to be illegal under international law. To give peace in the Holy Land a chance, all construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem intended solely for Jewish occupants must halt immediately.”

Former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi said: “The occupation must end. And the way the negotiations have been conducted until now cannot continue. Any return to business-as-usual is unacceptable and doomed to failure. When they resume, future peace negotiations should be meaningful and serious, with clear parameters and an agreed deadline for their conclusion.”

The Elders believe that any negotiations that resume following action at the UN should aim to define the boundaries of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Such an accord could entail equal land swaps to allow for minor adjustments.

Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari said: “Fair and robust external mediation will be an essential ingredient as under present circumstances, the parties are unlikely to be able to reach an agreement on their own. In this regard, a positive and united stand over the anticipated UN resolution by the European Union, Israel’s largest trading partner, would give it leverage to play a bigger political role to help resolve the conflict.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders said: “For over two decades, negotiations have been more about process than real substance, leading to understandable disillusionment and frustration among Palestinians and all those who seek a just and lasting peace agreement. It has been almost 65 years since the UN agreed to the creation of two states – this solution has been delayed for far too long.”

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About The Elders

The Elders is an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who work together for peace and human rights.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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