

Motion

tabled by Members of the Bundestag Günter Gloser, Dr Rolf Mützenich, Rainer Arnold, Gernot Eler, Kerstin Griese, Christian Lange, Ulla Schmidt, Franz Thönnies, Thomas Oppermann, Uta Zapf, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the parliamentary group of the SPD

Imparting fresh impetus to the Middle East peace efforts

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:

I. The Bundestag notes:

The abandonment of direct peace negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian Governments in September 2009 was yet another failure to find a political solution to the conflict. All subsequent attempts to initiate new talks on a just and lasting peace have proved fruitless. It is impossible to tell at the present time whether and when negotiations in good faith between the two parties to the conflict will be resumed.

Against this backdrop, the Palestinian side announced that it would apply to the United Nations in the autumn of this year for recognition of a Palestinian state and its admission to the United Nations. In contrast to previous occasions, the Palestinian leaders have gone beyond mere criticism of the Israeli Government's Middle East policy and have been making constructive efforts for the last two years, under the Fayyad Plan, to create the institutional conditions for the founding of a state. The plan has received significant international support, reflected, for example, in the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 8 December 2009 and the statement issued by the Middle East Quartet on 19 March 2010. In the meantime, undoubted successes have been achieved in the creation of the institutional framework. At a donors' conference in April 2011, reports from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations unanimously concluded that the Palestinian Authority was already operating above the threshold for a functioning state.

The Bundestag welcomes the call made by President Barack Obama to the Israelis and Palestinians to take bold steps towards the resumption of the peace process. Like the European Council's conclusions of 8 December 2009, he reaffirmed the goal of peaceful and secure coexistence between the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, cohesive and viable Palestinian state. Israel's right to exist and the Palestinians right to statehood must never be called into question.

At the present time there is a groundswell of international recognition for a Palestinian state. In the light of the signing of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement and of the planned Palestinian démarche, the debate on the Middle East peace process is focusing on the gradual closure of the window of opportunity for direct negotiations. From day to day the

need to reignite the stalled peace process is becoming increasingly urgent.

It is up to the international community now to make use of the time that remains before the start of the next session of the UN General Assembly to exert the necessary diplomatic pressure on the parties to the conflict to resume negotiations without delay. The Federal Government must also exercise its responsibility in the field of foreign policy and press in the EU, the UN and the Middle East Quartet for fresh initiatives targeting the rapid resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The Federal Government must make it clear to Palestinians and Israelis that they will not come any closer to resolving the ultimate status issue by bringing their dispute to a head at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The Federal Government has not been doing everything it could to shape a uniform position within the European Union on the recognition issue. It has also neglected to assist in averting the imminent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation in the United Nations. By criticising the unilaterality of the Palestinian move, it has nailed its colours to the mast with undue haste and has squandered the opportunity to press Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a long-overdue renunciation of further settlement activity and to convince him that UN recognition of Palestinian statehood will not be delayed by stonewalling on the Palestinian goal but only by making a realistic and fair negotiating proposal. By deciding from the outset to reject a Palestinian approach to the United Nations, the Federal Government is squandering the opportunity to bring influence to bear on both the Palestinian Authority and the countries that intend to support its bid for recognition and is playing into the hands of those elements in Israel who are showing no interest in the resumption of negotiations.

The Bundestag believes that the immediate resumption of peace talks is the top priority, because it is the only way in which the issues concerning the final status of the parties to the Middle East conflict can be resolved amicably and durably. The Israeli Government must exercise its responsibility for peace and stability in the region and halt the construction of settlements. The Palestinian Government, for its part, must commit itself unequivocally to the criteria laid down by the Quartet as well as arranging without delay for the unconditional release of Gilad Shalit. President Abbas has stated on several occasions that he would prefer direct negotiations on final-status issues to a UN démarche. Israel should hold him to his word. This is made all the more important by the new dynamism generated by the pro-democracy movements in Arab countries. One prerequisite for the resumption of direct talks is an understanding on clear parameters as defined by the United Kingdom, with the support of France and Germany, in an explanation of vote delivered in the Security Council on 18 February 2011. These parameters are as follows: (a) an agreement on the borders of the two states, based on the 1967 lines with equivalent land swaps, (b) security arrangements which respect Palestinian sovereignty and show that the occupation is over and protect Israel's security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with new and emerging threats, (c) a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question and (d) fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem; a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states. The Bundestag wishes to emphasise that the resolution of the refugee problem must not jeopardise the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

If peace talks are not resumed before the next session of the General Assembly begins, it would appear that nothing could stop the Palestinians' approach to the United Nations. In view of the constant postponements of direct peace talks and the two parties' mutual distrust, a declaration on Palestinian independence in the UN framework is conceivable. Scarcely anyone in the world doubts that the Palestinian Authority can secure a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly,

which is a clear sign that most members of the global organisation support its démarche. It is certainly improbable that Palestine will obtain full membership of the United Nations if the United States carries out its announced intention of vetoing the indispensable accession recommendation of the Security Council. By securing the expected two-thirds majority, however, the Palestinian Authority would have received the symbolic recognition of a large part of the international community. At the same time, the process of bilateral recognition of the Palestinian territories as a sovereign state would continue apace, not least in the European Union.

In these circumstances, it is a matter of the utmost priority to strive now for a common EU position. The aforementioned premature decision to oppose the Palestinian efforts in the United Nations is entirely the wrong way to pursue this goal.

Instead, the Federal Government should be prepared to consider any route that might lead to a common European position. This includes the option of lending EU support to the Palestinian move if peace talks have not started by that time and if the future Palestinian Government acknowledges that it recognises Israel's right to exist, guarantees that it will refrain from the threat or use of force and affirms the validity of the existing agreements.

II. The Bundestag calls on the Federal Government to:

- press for the early resumption of direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians on the basis of the parameters listed above and, to this end, launch initiatives in the frameworks of the United Nations and the European Union;
- abandon its premature decision to oppose the Palestinian efforts in the United Nations and be prepared instead to consider the option of lending EU support to the Palestinian move if peace talks have not started by that time and if the future Palestinian Government acknowledges that it recognises Israel's right to exist, guarantees that it will refrain from the threat or use of force and affirms the validity of the existing agreements;
- press for an immediate end to the construction of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories;
- urge the Palestinian leaders and any new Palestinian Government to make an unequivocal commitment to the Quartet criteria on the basis of the reconciliation agreement;
- continue to press for the immediate and unconditional release of Gilad Shalit;
- send a major political signal by upgrading the Palestinian diplomatic mission in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Berlin, 28 June 2011

Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and parliamentary group