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معالي السيد جوزيب بوريل

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في الجلسة الافتتاحية

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أصل الكلمة باللغة الإنجليزية

League of Arab States: Opening remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the Ministerial Meeting

10.09.2024
Cairo, Egypt
EEAS Press Team

Check against delivery!

Ministers, Secretary General [Aboul Gheit], Excellencies, distinguished guests,

It is a great honour for me to be here with you today, in a moment where our shared neighbourhood lives a tragedy. This is the moment to increase cooperation among us, more than ever.

Excellencies,

80 years ago, the Alexandria protocol led to the establishment of the Arab League.

Allow me to congratulate you for the achievements of the Arab League, in particular for the Arab Peace Initiative, which is in line with the European Union's position and remains a cornerstone for building a better future for this region.

Well, some may say, "it is too old, it was 20 years ago and has not been implemented". In fact, many have forgotten about the Arab Peace Initiative. But I think that you could accelerate the slow - certainly too slow - changing perception of the Israel/Palestinian conflict by reaffirming the Arab Peace Initiative and by making it better known all over the world.

Excellencies,

We all know that, almost a year after the terrorist attack by Hamas that the European Union has strongly condemned, the situation is - strictly speaking - catastrophic both from a humanitarian and political point of view with no positive outlook in sight.

Everything has been said about the situation: facts and figures are there.

There is, nevertheless, a success of the polio vaccination campaign that proves, once again, that UNRWA has demonstrated its usefulness.

The European Union has given full support to the ongoing efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States. But the ceasefire agreement, prior to the implementation of the Biden plan, has still not been signed and does not seem likely to be signed in the near future.

Why? Quite simply, because those who are waging the war have no interest in putting an end to it. So, they are just pretending. Less and less pretending. Because, as it turns out, their intransigence is accompanied by total impunity. If acts have no consequences, if blatant violation of international law remains disregarded, if institutions such as the International Criminal Court are threatened, if the International Court of Justice rulings are totally ignored by those who promote a rules-based order, who can be trusted?

Third, [we have] to facilitate all attempts at dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, such as the one you have just taken up with [Nasser] El Kidwa [Former Foreign Affairs Minister of the Palestinian Authority] and former Prime Minister [of Israel, Ehud] Olmert.

Fourth, [we must] not give up on engaging with Israeli civil society, even in this context – and especially in this context. Everyone, not just the Europeans – Palestinians, and Arab civil society, must do it. I know how difficult it is to reconcile both narratives, but it is the only way to move forward.

Keep in mind that the Israeli society is deeply divided and traumatised by October 7. We must talk to them. Ostracising Israeli society serves no purpose. No purpose other than to reinforce the Massada complex, which is in fact the objective pursued by the extremists.

I have always-made clear that the Israeli government and the Israeli society need to be considered as two different things. As my friend Shimon Perez [Former Prime Minister of Israel] was saying many years ago, “Israel will not have permanent security without peace” – but they have to believe it.

Fifth, the Palestinians have to reach a common vision, to overcome their divisions, because the more these divisions exist, the more they undermine the legitimacy and representativeness of the Palestinians.

Sixth, the Europeans need to adopt a common approach. That is what I am working tirelessly on, – even if the success is limited, because I have never seen such a dividing issue among the Europeans, as the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Seventh, the Arab States need also to adopt a truly common approach, in coordinating and showing solidarity.

All in all, it means building a balance of power on realistic foundations for the two-state solution – before it becomes, definitely, too late.

I know, it is extremely difficult. However, we must never give up. There is a moment of total lack of empathy about the suffering and the pain of the other.

But allow me to finish, to remind the words of the Queen of Jordan. I was listening to her some days ago at Cernobbio Forum. She was saying: “Do not give up. We have to continue supporting that the law is a must – not a maybe. That human rights are not open to negotiation. That without accountability, injustice becomes the norm. That peace – real, lasting, life-affirming peace – is key to security for everybody. And that extreme voices cannot be allowed to dictate our conversation.”

Thank you.