

Thank you, Chairs, for your kind invitation

COVID has taught us many lessons, including in the MEPP context. I have been very impressed by the efficient and close cooperation between the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority to counter the spread of the pandemic.

It shows that the inter-connexion of Israeli and Palestinian societies goes far beyond physical borders and that they can cooperate effectively in the promotion of their collective human security.

This cooperation for the benefit of the peoples has been possible, let us not forget it, thanks to the framework set up by the Oslo Accords, which were conceived as preliminary to a comprehensive peace agreement.

Today, so many years after Oslo, and before that Madrid, we are still convinced that there is no alternative to the two-state solution with Jerusalem as the future capital for both States. This will allow for an independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian state and Israel to live side by side in peace within secure and recognised borders.

We also believe it should be the result of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians on the basis of the internationally agreed parameters.

Peace will only last if the parties agree on all final status issues, namely security, borders, Jerusalem, settlements and refugees.

We have welcomed the formation of a new government in Israel, a friend and a partner for Spain. It may be the opportunity to launch these meaningful negotiations for the benefit of the peoples of the region and beyond.

Indeed, sustainable peace will also have a positive impact on the EU. Both Israel and Palestine belong to our Southern Neighbourhood, that Spain would wish to reinforce in these troubled times 25 years after the launch of the Barcelona Process.

That is why I would like to seize this opportunity to plead for prudence and for the avoidance of any unilateral move, such as the annexation of Palestinian territories.

International law is a fundamental pillar of the international rules-based order. To be recognized, any changes to the 1967 borders should be agreed by Israeli and Palestinians.

In economic terms, the pandemic makes immediate prospects for the Palestinian people very difficult adding the constraints on movement, access and trade, that remain as we all know a significant impediment to growth in the Palestinian territories.

That is why Palestine will remain a priority for the Spanish Cooperation. In the coming days, we will sign a new development cooperation plan for the next four years. We will commit 80 M€ to support projects in the fields of institutional reform, economic growth, gender issues and humanitarian aid. We will continue to pay special attention to the situation of the Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is a crucial partner for Spain and our support to the organization is part of our political and commitment with Palestine. We will devote 12M€ to Palestine and UNRWA in 2020.

Dear colleagues: we are facing a moment of truth. There are high risks ahead of us but also positive lessons stemming from the past few weeks. We hope to see in the next weeks efforts by both parties to reengage in a dialogue. Spain would certainly be by your side.