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A2. MIDDLE EAST QUARTET, STATEMENT URGING THE RESUMPTION OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE TALKS, NEW YORK, 23 SEPTEMBER 2011.

With the approach of the annual UN General Assembly (UNGA) session and the Palestinians not yet completely decided on whether to go ahead with a bid for full membership in the world body, the U.S. in late August 2011 stepped up efforts to avert the move. These included pressure on the Palestinians to accept a proposal by the Middle East Quartet (the U.S., EU, Russia, and the UN) to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talk in lieu of their statehood bid. U.S. envoys presented several formulas, but the Palestinians found them insufficient and not serious, and said that even if a viable proposal were presented, the statehood bid would proceed (see Quarterly Update in this issue for details). The U.S. urged its Quartet partners to issue a statement on reviving talks nonetheless, believing it would give the U.S. leverage to argue that an alternative to the statehood bid still existed through negotiations, and that until all negotiating prospects were exhausted unilateral Palestinian steps should be opposed.

The statement that the Quartet finally produced after intensive and difficult negotiations was issued several hours after Abbas submitted the application and delivered his address to the UNGA (see Docs. B1 and B2 below). Bereft of new or actionable elements, the initiative as expected went nowhere, but the statement, and especially its "timetable" for reaching an agreement between the parties, was used within the UN Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members both by those favoring the Palestinian application and by those opposed (i.e., both as an argument that admission would not affect the negotiations and as an argument for delaying admission so as not to disrupt them).

The document was taken from the UN website at www.un.org.

The Quartet takes note of the application submitted by President Abbas on 23rd September 2011 which is now before the Security Council.

The Quartet reaffirmed its statement of 20th May 2011, including its strong support for the vision of Israeli-Palestinian peace outlined by United States President Barack Obama.

The Quartet recalled its previous statements, and affirmed its determination to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

The Quartet reiterated its commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reaffirms the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Quartet reiterated its urgent appeal to the parties to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations without delay or preconditions. But it accepts that meeting, in itself, will not reestablish the trust necessary for such a negotiation to succeed. It therefore proposes the following steps:

1. Within a month there will be a preparatory meeting between the parties to agree to an agenda and method of proceeding in the negotiation.
2. At that meeting there will be a commitment by both sides that the objective of any negotiation is to reach an agreement within a time-frame agreed to by the parties but not longer than the end of 2012. The Quartet expects the parties to come forward with comprehensive proposals within three months on territory and security, and to have made substantial progress within six months. To that end, the Quartet will convene an international conference in Moscow, in consultation with the parties, at the appropriate time.

3. There will be a Donors Conference at which the international community will give full and sustained support to the Palestinian Authority state-building actions developed by Prime Minister Fayyad under the leadership of President Abbas.
4. The Quartet recognizes the achievements of the Palestinian Authority in preparing institutions for statehood as evidenced in reports to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, and stresses the need to preserve and build on them. In this regard, the members of the Quartet will consult to identify additional steps they can actively support towards Palestinian statehood individually and together, to secure in accordance with existing procedures significantly greater independence and sovereignty for the Palestinian Authority over its affairs.
5. The Quartet calls upon the parties to refrain from provocative actions if negotiations are to be effective. The Quartet reiterated the obligations of both parties under the Roadmap.
6. The Quartet committed to remain actively involved and to encourage and review progress. The Quartet agreed to meet regularly and to task the envoys and the Quartet Representative to intensify their cooperation, including by meeting prior to the parties' preparatory meeting, and to formulate recommendations for Quartet action.