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Developments in the Broader Middle East

REPORT

submitted on behalf of the Political Committee
by Josette Durrieu, Rapporteur (France, Socialist Group)

ASSEMBLY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION
THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE ASSEMBLY
43, avenue du Président-Wilson, 75775 Paris Cedex 16
Tel. 01.53.67.22.00 – Fax: 01.53.67.22.01
E-mail: info@assembly.weu.int
Internet: <http://assembly.weu.int>

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on developments in the Broader Middle East

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RECOMMENDATION 765¹***on developments in the Broader Middle East***

The Assembly,

- (i) Considering that the Middle East and North Africa is a vast region, the majority of which is Arab-Muslim, in which a number of conflicts are unresolved and where stability and security are under threat, while noting that it is also has the most extensive energy sources in the world;
- (ii) Noting that in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa almost 40% of the population is under the age of 16 and does not have access to a proper education; that power remains in the hands of an unelected elite which also controls the economy; that the countries in question are suffering from a lack of democracy and transparency, economic stagnation, poverty, unemployment, inequality and injustice all of which are conducive to terrorism;
- (iii) Noting that recent developments have resulted in a change of mindset and the increased attraction of extremist groups which exploit religion and manipulate thinking while having recourse to terrorism to pursue their goals;
- (iv) Aware that since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in particular, the Western world has come to understand that far greater efforts need to be made at all levels to improve communication and cooperation with the Arab and Muslim world and to promote political, economic and social reform in the regions concerned;
- (v) Noting, however, that the governments of most of the countries concerned now seem to have realised that reforms are necessary in order to meet the needs of their citizens and respond to changes in society with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the region, but that the reform process which has started is highly inadequate;
- (vi) Stressing that in recent years and as part of its Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the European Union has embarked on comprehensive programmes and concluded specific agreements with countries of the Middle East and North Africa to help them guarantee peace, stability and prosperity for their peoples;
- (vii) Noting that the action plans which the EU is drawing up with Middle Eastern countries as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy contain a set of conditions that must be met by the country concerned in order to make further progress, but also aware that in the past the EU has not always been strict enough with partners which have not met certain conditions;
- (viii) Aware that the EU member states are sceptical about the likelihood of all-encompassing plans leading to the establishment of a new order in the Middle East and North Africa, and that they prefer cooperation agreements and complementary activities on a bilateral and multilateral level, tailored to the needs and capabilities of each partner or group of partners;
- (ix) Taking account of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) launched by the United States at the G-8 Summit in June 2004 with the aim of promoting economic, political and social liberalisation in a large number of Muslim countries;
- (x) Considering that the G-8 initiative supports the regional reforms proposed by independent intellectuals, civil society and governments and that they are superimposed on EU initiatives or are complementary to them, while aware that achieving these reforms in the Middle East will require an overall long-term and sustained commitment;
- (xi) Considering that if the West wishes to pursue a strategy of far-reaching reforms to help promote democratic change in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, the way to go about achieving that objective is to engage in dialogue, partnership and cooperation;

¹ Adopted by the Assembly on 15 June 2005 at the 5th sitting on the basis of the amended draft recommendation.

- (xii) Considering that the West must in the first instance step up its efforts to help resolve the region's major geopolitical conflicts and crises – in particular the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the problem of instability in Iraq and Lebanon, the nuclear threat from Iran, the isolation of Syria and the precarious situation in Afghanistan – and that in order to create a secure and stable environment it is necessary to establish a system of mutual protection and cooperative security;
- (xiii) Aware that if the European Union and the United States are serious about implementing their policies for the purpose of stimulating reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, they will have to strike a balance between their relations with authoritarian regimes in the region on the one hand and opposition reform movements on the other hand;
- (xiv) Considering that “freedom”, as propagated by new Western initiatives and especially the United States initiative, includes not only civil and political liberties and therefore freedom from oppression, but also individual freedom and thus deliverance from anything that constitutes human subjugation and is incompatible with human dignity such as poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, torture, the death sentence and a lack of work;
- (xv) Considering that in the Arab world such freedom is threatened by undemocratic regimes which may sometimes find support in tribal culture and in ancestral or religious traditions;
- (xvi) Considering that, with all the respect due to Islam, certain interpretations of Koranic law cannot be the lasting pretext for the oppression of women and non-respect of their individual and social freedom, and that the deprivation of recognised rights of the individual and citizen, and of sexual equality in particular, is contrary to the democratic process;
- (xvii) Considering that in their efforts to engage in dialogue and partnership with a view to appropriate and acceptable reforms in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, both the United States and the European Union must take into account the place of Islam as a religion, a political force and a social force, and recognise that there is no inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy;
- (xviii) Considering that in a democratic State religious beliefs and traditions may be a source of legislation provided they are not incompatible with the measures that are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others;
- (xix) Disagreeing with the categorical statement by some regimes in the region according to which democratisation will bring radical Islamists to power, but considering that in an environment where freedom of speech, association and assembly are heavily restricted, Islamist movements enjoy the important advantage of being the only groups able to organise and express themselves in mosques and other religious institutions;
- (xx) Taking note of the progress made in Iraq where the forthcoming adoption of a Constitution will pave the way for the establishment of a democratically elected parliament to which the government will be accountable;
- (xxi) Welcoming the fact that free elections will shortly be held in Lebanon following the withdrawal of the Syrians, which should be complete;
- (xxii) Considering it essential in the interests of future peace and stability in Iraq for the transitional government, with the help of the United States and the international community, to restore law and order, re-establish security and control terrorism;
- (xxiii) Expressing the hope that the Iraqi economy will pick up and that the Constitution that is to be drawn up will give the country the most appropriate institutional framework and will accord every respect to ethnic and religious groups on the territory of Iraq;
- (xxiv) Considering that the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now an absolute priority and that it cannot be the result of a unilateral action on the part of Israel but that it must be achieved by a renewed initiative from the Quartet on the basis of the roadmap;

- (xxv) Considering that the United States, the European Union and the Arab League states which have already taken initiatives (the Saudi Arabia Plan – Beirut 2002) together have the capacity to achieve common objectives for the region, which should rest on three pillars, namely, security, stability and prosperity;
- (xxvi) Considering that in the immediate term the mutual ceasefire agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh must be complied with and violence kept under control; that terrorist acts against the civil population must cease; that Israel is committed to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the West Bank; that Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank should be opened to allow access to cultivated land and water sources; that prisoners must be freed when terrorist acts have ceased; and that the Palestinian Authority must continue to prove that it will not tolerate terrorist acts;
- (xxvii) Considering that the Gaza Strip should be linked to the West Bank by a secure passage and that the administrative reorganisation of this area and its economic activity will not be viable unless access to the sea is assured and the port and airport in Gaza are free and operational;
- (xxviii) Considering that peace between Israel and Palestine in this region will not be possible without a specific, comprehensive and lasting settlement that builds on all the various earlier commitments, namely: Israel's right of existence, the creation of a viable Palestinian State in one area lying within the 1967 confines and with East Jerusalem as its capital; the end of illegal settlements and the gradual dismantling of those settlements and the separation walls in the West Bank; the principle of the right of return for the refugees or financial compensation;
- (xxix) Considering that the international community should take the initiative to organise an international conference in order to plan for phase 2 (the transition phase involving the creation of a Palestinian State with provisional borders) and then phase 3 (leading to a final agreement putting an end to the conflict) of the roadmap;
- (xxx) Considering that lasting peace and stability in the region and the world as a whole depend on a solution to the existence of weapons of mass destruction, and in particular of Israel's nuclear weapons, and mindful of the disturbing possibility that Iran might possess such weapons in the near future;
- (xxxi) Considering that it will never be possible to draw up rules to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction if a policy of double standards is applied, and that it is preferable to continue with negotiations to persuade Iran to put a stop once and for all to its uranium enrichment activities and to other nuclear activities liable to lead to the acquisition of nuclear weapons;
- (xxxii) Considering that under these circumstances and in the interest of a lasting peace in the region, it is necessary to envisage the full denuclearisation of the area by decreeing that the Middle East is a zone free of weapons of mass destruction;
- (xxxiii) Considering that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is unfair and should be revised so as to put an end to a selective approach and to varying degrees of stringency according to the country concerned, and that a new definition of nuclear proliferation is necessary to draw a distinction between civil and military nuclear programmes, the various technologies, fissile material, and legal and illegal traffic;
- (xxxiv) Considering the danger inherent in strikes against nuclear sites in Iran if the negotiations being conducted by France, Germany and the United Kingdom were to fail, unless the UN Security Council were to find a solution to this problem;
- (xxxv) Considering that it is in the interests of peace in the region not to isolate Syria, a "country on the axis of evil", which is being threatened by the United States;
- (xxxvi) Considering finally that the fight against corruption, organised crime, fundamentalism and terrorism is part of the same combat to ensure stability in the region, and that the disarmament of radical Islamic movements and their integration in the political process should be an objective of immediate priority,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE EUROPEAN UNION:

As regards the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East

1. To pursue dialogue, cooperation and the development of economic and trade relations in partnership and complementarity with the United States and the specific initiatives undertaken by the G-8 in the Arab-Muslim region in order to prevent a clash between civilisations;
2. To continue its specific financial transfers whose aim is to improve the situation of the populations; to accompany economic and social progress and to develop education, especially for girls;
3. To promote social and economic reforms and to initiate the process of democratisation of the states and regimes in the region;
4. To participate in the full emancipation of women and the repeal of the laws which subjugate them, especially in certain countries;
5. To improve control over the use of donated funds and to assess regularly the results of the programmes undertaken, which should lead to more security, stability and prosperity;

As regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

6. To take a fresh initiative within the Quartet and possibly to extend it to Egypt and Jordan;
7. To decide to hold an international conference in order to move on to phases 2 and 3 of the roadmap and arrive at a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict;
8. To ensure that the organisations and states concerned implement the agreement that is concluded and decide in particular to denuclearise the region and guarantee its security, perhaps by establishing an international force there;

As regards the other threats in the Middle East

9. To actively pursue negotiations with Iran with a view to halting the development of nuclear facilities which may have a military application;
10. To work for a revision of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is no longer fair and requires a new definition of proliferation and a distinction to be drawn between civil and military nuclear programmes;
11. To prevent Syria from being isolated as this will do nothing to promote either peace or stability in the region;
12. To take steps to achieve the disarmament of radical Islamic groups and their integration in the political process.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

submitted by Josette Durrieu, Rapporteur (France, Socialist Group)

A. THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST PROJECT AND THE VARIOUS WESTERN INITIATIVES

I. The Broader Middle East

1. The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) is a Bush Administration initiative which was launched at the G-8 Summit meeting which took place from 8-10 June 2004 in Sea Island, Georgia. It is a multilateral development and reform plan aimed at fostering economic and political liberalisation in a wide area of Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries.
2. In November 2003, President Bush had publicly acknowledged that the US and the West had made mistakes in the past, noting that “60 years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe, because in the long run stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty”.
3. Inspiration for the initiative was also drawn from two UN Arab Human Development Reports published in 2002 and 2003. These reports were well-known in the United Nations and underlined a number of worrying development shortfalls in the Arab world and the disastrous consequences that might ensue if no action was taken.
4. The Sea Island Declaration established a “Partnership for Progress and a Common Future” to support political, economic and social reform in the Middle East. It created a “Forum for the Future” bringing together G-8 and regional foreign, economic and other ministers for regular discussions on reform with business and civil society leaders participating in parallel discussions.
5. The region in question is composed of 22 Arab League nations (Bahrain, the Comores, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Algeria, Djibouti, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and the PLO) plus Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Turkey.
6. The area in question therefore stretches from Mauritania to Afghanistan. The fact that it includes Maghreb countries had led to a change in its denomination. Instead of being referred to as the Greater Middle East, it is now called the Broader Middle East and North Africa. It is mainly, but not exclusively, an Arab-Muslim area – Turkey and Iran are not Arab nations and Israel is not a Muslim state.
7. President Bush recently set out his vision of the Broader Middle East (and of the BMENAI) and of US interest in the region. What the Americans want to do is combine a guarantee of secure oil supplies with a political vision of a region that is in the process of democratisation. This is an essential complement to the war on terrorism, which is at the core of their initiative.
8. At its summit meeting the G-8 also adopted a plan of support which included the following initiatives:
 - Democracy Assistance Dialogue to promote and strengthen democratic institutions, coordinate and share information on democracy programmes, and sponsor exchanges; this is given expression through the campaign to eradicate illiteracy, initiatives to improve the role of women and support for the private sector;
 - Literacy Initiative to halve the illiteracy rate over the next decade;
 - Microfinance Initiative to promote economic reform in order to meet the demographic challenge by helping to develop small businesses and providing microfinance loans; creation of financing companies and regional banks for reconstruction and development; creation of a regional free-trade area;
 - Business and Entrepreneurship Training Initiative to help 250 000 young businessmen and women expand their employment opportunities;

- Private Enterprise Development Facility at the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to invest US\$ 100 million to finance small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Network of Funds to coordinate the work of development institutions and international financial institutions working in the region; and
- Task Force on Investment to assist the region’s efforts to improve the business climate.

9. In December 2004, foreign affairs and finance ministers from some 20 Arab and Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa met with members of the G-8 and representatives of business and NGOs at what was called the Forum for the Future. Despite severe criticism from some Arab representatives, especially about the lack of progress towards a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Forum adopted a number of measures. One of them concerned the creation of a region-specific enterprise development fund at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), designed to provide technical support and financial assistance to small private enterprises. Another measure concerned the establishment of a “Democracy Assistance Dialogue” to allow civil society groups to engage regional governments in discussions on reform. In addition, the G-8 decided to set up a Microfinance Training Centre in Jordan to allow NGOs to provide small loans to entrepreneurs able to obtain bank loans.

10. Washington has increasingly been concluding free-trade and bilateral agreements with countries in the region such as Morocco (March 2004), Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (2005).

11. Discussions are under way with Qatar and Kuwait (without these interfering with the process in the Gulf Cooperation Council according to those countries).

12. According to an OECD study, US financial aid for the Broader Middle East has been estimated at US\$ 2.6 billion out of a grand total of US\$ 11 billion (the Americans are contributing less than the Europeans). Of this amount, US\$ 919 million has been earmarked for Egypt and US\$ 529 million for Israel, two countries to which Washington gives preference.

13. In terms of reforms the United States has embarked on its own programme. It takes the form of US Bilateral Economic Assistance via the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which is operating in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Yemen and the Palestinian territories. The objective is to promote economic development and modernisation through the improvement of existing infrastructure, access to water, education, good governance and socio-economic reform. Substantial aid and assistance also goes to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

14. According to the Americans the official purpose of all these political and economic measures is to “change the world” and “the environment”.

15. This “transformational diplomacy” was defined by Condoleezza Rice in her new role as US Secretary of State, when she gave an address in Paris in February 2005. She referred to the example set by Harry Truman, who had not been content to accept the world as it was and thought it could be changed. The Secretary of State also explained that what the US wanted to do was to become involved with people in other countries with a view to giving them the wherewithal to make progress towards democracy and prosperity.

16. The US Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was announced in December 2002 by the then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell. This programme places more emphasis on aspects of reform, including regime evolution, good governance and capacity-building in civil society. MEPI’s funding amounts to only 2% of total US aid to the region. For 2006, a US\$ 120 million funding budget has been requested.

17. Europeans have stressed that the BMENAI has little chance of success unless the US is prepared to step up its efforts to help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU is not prepared to give up its autonomy as defined under the Barcelona Process or to abandon the programmes it has been pursuing since 1995, which have earned it much credit in the Arab world.

18. It should be noted that whereas the BMENAI includes Afghanistan and Pakistan, the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East does not.

19. The Forum for the Future, which took place in Morocco on 11 December 2004, was attended by the foreign affairs and finance ministers of some 20 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the G-8 and by the outgoing US Secretary of State, Colin Powell. It merely recognised that the region faced common challenges and that there was a need for a global response to them through dialogue and cooperation.

20. The final resolution placed the emphasis on projects to promote political, economic and social reforms in the Arab world, and on the freedom each country should have to make progress according to its own particular situation and at its own pace.

21. In the final communiqué the participants stated, moreover, that their support for reforms in the region would go hand in hand with their support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

22. Other reservations were expressed on behalf of the Arab League by its Secretary-General, Amr Moussa, who said that although he was in favour of the proposed “partnership” with the G-8 countries, it would have to be based on “an equal footing”.

23. While this initiative, which was inspired by the United States, was not rejected outright, many people have strong reservations and doubts about it. The main reason is that people in the Arab-Muslim region in question are sceptical about any new initiatives, given that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is continuing and the United States is supporting Israel’s approach.

24. Furthermore, the Arab world wants to see reforms which it considers to be necessary and which it believes must be adopted as part of an overall solution. It does not want reforms to be imposed from outside.

25. In contrast, it supports the idea of cooperation and partnership with Europe and would like this discussed in the framework of a “dialogue of civilisations” which it believes should be engaged without further ado. According to Amr Moussa, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, there has to be reference to an Arab world but Islam must be left alone.

II. European Union initiatives

1. The EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East (SPMM)

26. In response to initiatives taken by the US Administration, which led to the G-8 Summit Declaration, the European Council adopted, in June 2004, a Final Report on an EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East² based on its own internal analysis and on consultations with its partners. Some of the key priorities in the report are the following:

- the need to promote joint interests by helping to address the challenges of the EU’s partners in the Mediterranean and the Middle East;
- the importance of a partnership approach;
- the need for differentiation;
- recognition that reforms can succeed only if they are generated from within the societies concerned and that they must not be imposed from outside;
- the need for a consistent basis for EU policies and for a concrete policy agenda.

27. The EU recognises that different countries face different challenges, but it also identifies a number of challenges common to the majority of the countries involved. These can only be met through political, social and economic reform. Many of them derive from one overarching concern: a predominantly young population creating an ever-increasing demand for education and full employment.

² The full report is available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euomed/publication.htm

28. The prime objective of the EU's Strategic Partnership is to promote the development of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The EU agenda for action should address the following major issues by pursuing clearly stated objectives:

- the Middle East peace process
- political dialogue – human rights and the rule of law;
- non-proliferation, security dialogue and counter-terrorism;
- migration;
- economic reforms;
- social development;
- cultural dialogue.

29. To develop its relations with a large group of Mediterranean and Middle East countries, the EU has at its disposal the Barcelona Process, enhanced by the European Neighbourhood Policy. Taken together, they allow for a multilateral but also a country-by-country approach.

30. For the countries east of Jordan the EU has contractual relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council and Yemen, but such a framework is still lacking for Iran and Iraq. It is aware that the economic and social characteristics of these two countries call for instruments which differ from those used in the Barcelona Process.

31. In pursuit of the goals set out in the SPMM, the EU will also work closely with the UN and seek opportunities for coherent action in conjunction with initiatives put forward by other parties under schemes such as the G-8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative. Progress on implementing the SPMM will be reviewed for the first time in June 2005 and every six months thereafter.

32. In this context it is important to consider the relevance of the European Security Strategy which the European Council adopted in December 2003. The Strategy document evaluates global challenges and key threats, defines the EU's strategic objectives and assesses the policy implications for Europe of the principles of action it lays down, including the use of military force.

33. As key threats the document identifies terrorism, in particular global terrorism which is linked to violent religious extremism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts with a direct and indirect impact on European interests such as those in the Middle East, state failure and organised crime. It emphasises the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a strategic priority, without which there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle East. It also recommends a broader engagement with the Arab world.

2. The Barcelona Process (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership)

34. The Barcelona Process was launched in November 1995, when a Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs created a wide framework of relations between the EU member states and their partner states of the Southern Mediterranean. At present these Mediterranean partners are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey, while Libya has had observer status since 1999. Turkey is currently an official candidate for accession to the European Union and negotiations are due to start before the end of 2005.

35. As defined in the Barcelona Declaration, this process has three main sections :

- a political and security chapter concerning the establishment of a common area of peace and stability through strengthened political and security dialogue;
- an economic and financial chapter concerning the creation of an area of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area;
- a social, cultural and human chapter designed to bring peoples closer through a partnership in social, cultural and human affairs, promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.

36. The Barcelona Process comprises two complementary dimensions:
- the bilateral dimension, for bilateral activities between the EU and each country, the most important of which are the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements. These agreements are based on the general principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, but they also contain characteristics which are specific to relations with individual partners;
 - the multilateral dimension, in which a regional dialogue takes place, covering all issues included in the three above-mentioned chapters. It covers problems which are common to many Mediterranean partners.
37. The main financial instrument for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is the MEDA programme, which has earmarked 5 458 million euros for cooperation programmes and other activities. At the same time, the European Investment Bank is providing loans for development activities in partner countries. From 1974 to 2003 it provided loans totalling 14 billion euros.
38. The EU recognises that the three chapters of the Barcelona Process do not carry equal weight. The economic and trade pillar has proved solid, but the others, covering political and security issues on the one hand, and social, cultural and human aspects on the other, have turned out to be much weaker.
39. On 12 April 2005, the European Commission therefore presented a wide-ranging work programme to reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership over the period 2005-10. The Commission has outlined proposals for tangible progress in three areas which it considers critical for the future of the region: education, economic growth and human rights and democracy.
40. The Commission's proposals will be the basis for decisions that are to be taken later this year at a meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process.

3. The European Union and the Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability

41. At the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers in Malta (15-16 April 1997), the 27 partners decided to draw up a Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability to institutionalise the mechanisms for promoting and maintaining stability in the region. Unfortunately, several years later, despite the very considerable political will shown by the French Presidency, this initiative was severely hampered by the lack of any prospect of progress in the peace process and by the fresh outbreaks of violence in the Middle East in September 2000.
42. Work on the Charter has continued nonetheless. Once approved, it will have the same value as the Barcelona Declaration, that is to say it will be a political declaration agreed by the 27 Euro-Mediterranean countries, representing a political and moral but not a legal commitment to prevent tensions and crises and help keep the peace. The Charter could be described as an unfulfilled wish to establish a system of collective security in the Mediterranean basin.

4. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

43. At its meeting in Luxembourg on 14 June 2004, the European Council adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy, confirming that its objective was to share the benefits of an enlarged EU with neighbouring countries in order to contribute to the increased stability, security and prosperity of the European Union and its neighbours. The ENP offers the prospect of an increasingly close relationship, in the spirit of the Council's conclusions of 16 June 2003, involving a significant degree of economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation, with the aim of preventing the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours.
44. When it was launched, the reaction to the ENP was surprise, questions and even concern among the EU's Mediterranean partners. The EU has pointed out that the Barcelona Process and the ENP are complementary rather than contradictory. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership encompasses countries which are naturally and geographically drawn together by the Mediterranean Sea. It is of key importance for relations between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries.
45. Although the ENP is based on a bedrock of shared values and objectives which are deemed indispensable, it allows for a bilateral approach and differentiation among the partners. This helps to

attenuate diverging developments. But the Barcelona Process will continue to be an indispensable multilateral framework for exchanges between Mediterranean countries.

46. The ENP will be pursued through Action Plans to be agreed jointly by the EU and the countries concerned. These should have a minimum duration of three years and may be subject to renewal. They will clearly identify a limited number of key priorities and offer real incentives for reform.

47. Countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East covered by the ENP are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia. It also concerns the Palestinian Authority.

48. EU Action Plans have already been negotiated with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia. Jordan and Morocco have committed themselves to far-reaching reforms. Tunisia has undertaken to carry out major human rights reforms. The Palestinian Authority has also given firm commitments to reform. In return, the EU has undertaken to continue its support, much of which is now being channelled through the World Bank Trust Fund.

49. In March 2005, the European Commission adopted Country Reports for Egypt, whose Association Agreement has entered into force, and for Lebanon, where entry into force of the Association Agreement is imminent. These Country Reports provide an analysis of political, economic and institutional reforms.

50. The Commission has now started work jointly with Egypt and Lebanon to prepare Action Plans for these countries as well. Progress in consultations with Lebanon will depend on how the internal political situation in that country develops, but the Commission hopes to agree all the Actions Plans by the end of 2005.

51. The Algerian Parliament recently ratified Algeria's Association Agreement with the EU and the European Commission now intends to prepare a Country Report.

52. The EU has concluded an Association Agreement with Syria, but the European Parliament has made it clear that it will not give its approval until the autumn of 2005 at the earliest, and that its agreement is subject to the implementation of reforms in the fields of political freedom and human rights which have been announced by the Syrian authorities.

5. The EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council

53. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established as a regional organisation in May 1981 by the Arab Gulf States – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. They took this step as a first response to a perceived vulnerability arising from their limited military capabilities and their relatively small populations dispersed over a vast territory with considerable resources in oil and gas.

54. In 1989 the EC and the GCC concluded a Cooperation Agreement under which the EU and GCC Foreign Ministers meet once a year at a Joint Council/Ministerial Meeting³. The objective of this agreement is to facilitate trade relations, as well as more generally to contribute to strengthening stability in a strategic part of the world.

55. At its May 2004 meeting, the Joint Council agreed to incorporate clauses on human rights and migration in the Free Trade Agreement. The Joint Council agenda also includes cooperation on counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, economic integration, education and judicial cooperation, as well as political reforms.

56. The 15th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting took place in Manama (Bahrain), on 5 April 2005. Political reform and a free trade area were among the many issues discussed. The parties expressed their willingness to reinforce their dialogue and develop cooperation on human rights, and invited officials to make proposals. Since the last meeting of the Joint Council, NGOs responsible for human rights have been established in most GCC countries and are responsible for overseeing the implementation of relevant UN conventions and the laws of the respective countries.

³ See also <http://europa.eu.int/>

57. Finally, the Joint Council recalled its objective of establishing an effectively verifiable zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East including the Gulf Region.

6. The EU-Yemen Cooperation Agreement

58. After the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, the civil war in 1994 was short but violent. The government has made considerable progress in improving security but the situation is still worrying on account of a culture of tribal loyalties, widespread poverty and an armed civil population. Previous regimes were too tolerant of Islamic terrorist groups who used the country as a safe haven and a base for training and logistic support. According to Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, the Minister of the Interior, Yemen did not wait for the 11 September 2001 attacks to wage war on terrorism. It had been one of the most active proponents of the 1998 Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and had had to work hard to persuade some of its neighbours to accept that there was an international dimension to terrorism and that increased inter-state cooperation was therefore essential. Prior to 11 September, Yemen's neighbours would certainly not have been inclined to conclude the bilateral agreements which, today, bind them all to Sana'a. Mr Al-Alimi stressed the importance of this regional cooperation which has made it possible to score major successes against terrorism. Furthermore, he pointed out that jurisdiction in the fight against terrorism was a priority.

59. The Minister stressed that the Americans were to a large extent to blame for the fact that the arguments put forward by al-Qa'ida continued to attract interest:

- (a) they bore a historical responsibility because in the 1990s "Afghan" mujaheddin trained and funded by the CIA had returned to Yemen;
- (b) they had failed to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and were applying double standards in their Middle East policy;
- (c) they had invaded and occupied Iraq with the result that second-generation "Iraqi Afghans" had today returned to Yemen and Iraqi Shi'ites were attempting to manipulate Yemeni Zaydites.

60. Mr Al-Alimi also underlined the need for appropriate religious education, i.e. relaying the "real message" of Islam and improved training for Imams. At a more general level there should be a thorough reform of the education system and the school curriculum as this was the only way to counter the teachings of radical Islamic movements in the long term.

61. Following the terrorist attacks against the American destroyer, the USS Cole, in 2000, the 11 September 2001 attacks, and the bombing of the French Limbourg oil tanker in 2002, the Yemeni authorities changed their methods. They are now cooperating closely with the US and the international coalition. The Yemeni Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mustapha Nowman, considers that cooperation with the United States was an absolute necessity as the government in Sana'a had been informed of a semi-secret plan under which there was to have been a US strike against Yemen a few weeks after military intervention against the Taliban in Afghanistan. "Yemen was number 2 on the list" according to Mr Nowman, who also points out that the Americans had not been overly concerned by the presence of radical Islamic groups in Yemen prior to the attacks against the USS Cole and the Limbourg. Efforts are being made to flush out any members of the al-Q'aida network and uproot other components of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.

62. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world and by far the poorest country in the Middle East. The government is implementing the economic and administrative reforms launched in the mid-1990s with the support of the World Bank and the IMF.

63. In 2000, Yemen and Saudi Arabia at long last concluded an agreement on the border between the two countries, opening the way to a normalisation of their relations and the gradual reintegration of Yemen in the region. In 2001, Yemen was admitted as a member of some technical cooperation committees of the Gulf Cooperation Council, but full membership of the GCC does not seem to be an option at this stage.

64. Yemen is making progress in the field of democracy and respect for human rights. The third parliamentary elections, judged to be "free and fair", took place in April 2003. Presidential elections

are scheduled to be held shortly, at the same time as local council elections. Life in Yemen is still largely determined by the tribal structure of society and clan allegiances. The Ministry of Human Rights, headed by a courageous woman minister, is particularly active.

65. Yemen's cooperation with the EU began in 1978. A Development Cooperation Agreement was concluded in 1984 with the then Yemen Arab Republic (Northern Yemen). In 1995 this agreement was extended to cover the entire territory of unified Yemen. An advanced and expanded framework cooperation agreement was approved in 1997. It is part of the EU's overall strategy towards the region and focuses on democracy, human rights and cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

III. Western and transatlantic initiatives

1. The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul cooperation initiative

66. NATO is strengthening cooperation with the Mediterranean countries that do not belong to the Alliance within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD).

67. The MD was launched in 1994⁴ with a view to building confidence and establishing cooperation between the Organisation and its seven partners in the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. NATO is also anxious to enhance security and stability in the region. The dialogue concentrates on practical cooperation in security and defence matters and on exchanges of information covering two dimensions.

(a) The political dimension

68. The political dialogue consists of regular bilateral (26 + 1) and multilateral (26 + 7) meetings at ambassadorial and working level. These meetings provide opportunities for exchanging views on a range of issues relevant to the security situation in the Mediterranean.

(b) The practical dimension

69. The overall aim is to build confidence through cooperation.

70. Since NATO's Istanbul Summit (28-29 June 2004), the Mediterranean Dialogue has included four objectives:

- enhancing the existing political dialogue;
- achieving interoperability;
- developing defence reform;
- contributing to the fight against terrorism.

71. But the development of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue has always been thwarted by a number of problems. Europe and the United States take the view that political dialogue will lead to a climate of trust and constructive cooperation. However, the Arab countries maintain that the first priority is to settle matters connected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They believe that Confidence Building Measures (CBM) will only work if a strategic balance is struck between the various players and if all disputes are resolved

72. The Arab countries' somewhat lukewarm commitment to the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue is their response to Israel's attitude to the Middle East peace process⁵. Furthermore, they suspect that the

⁴ The NATO Brussels Summit Declaration of 11 January 1994 proposes measures to promote dialogue, understanding and confidence-building between the countries in the region. In December 1994, the NATO Foreign Ministers instructed the North Atlantic Council to work out the details of the proposed dialogue and to make the necessary initial contacts. Finally, in February 1995, the North Atlantic Council invited Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to participate in the initial phase of the Mediterranean Dialogue. Jordan was invited to take part in November 1995 and Algeria in March 2000.

⁵ NATO & South Mediterranean in Search of a Concert for Moderation, Cooperation and Peace, *op.cit.*

United States is planning to transform the region in line with its national interests. The settlement of the Palestinian question is essential for the future development of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue⁶.

2. The OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue

73. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is active in promoting stability in the Mediterranean basin because of the cultural, economic and political interests that historically link the OSCE region with the countries south of the Mediterranean.

74. As early as 1975, the participant countries recognised that “security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole”⁷. It was in 1994 at the Budapest Conference that the OSCE heads of state and government decided to step up their contacts with the Mediterranean countries. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia were invited to attend meetings of the Organisation.

75. The OSCE established a network of special relationships with these six Mediterranean countries. They are known as Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation (MPCs).

76. At the 1999 Istanbul summit, the OSCE heads of state and government reiterated the need to strengthen the Organisation’s relationship with its Mediterranean partners.

77. In 2002, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly established a Forum on the Mediterranean in order to develop stronger links with the parliamentarians of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

78. Despite all these efforts, the OSCE initiative in the Mediterranean has stalled. The interests of the OSCE countries are different from those of the Mediterranean partners, which have a deeply rooted distrust of northern countries. Indeed, when the idea of a security concept on CSCE lines for the whole of the Mediterranean basin was first mooted, most of the countries to the south of the Mediterranean were strongly opposed to it.

B. ARAB AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

79. A number of Arab governments, worried that the Western world might impose reform policies from outside without taking account of specific elements of Arab culture and civilisation, have started to take their own initiatives for reform.

80. In January 2004, a regional conference in Yemen on democracy, human rights and related issues resulted in the Sana’a Declaration, supporting the principles of democracy, calling for an end to the occupation of Arab territories and suggesting the establishment of an “Arab Democratic Dialogue Forum” to foster communication on human rights and democracy between governments and civil society groups.

81. A mostly non-governmental Arab conference on reform in the Arab world, held in Alexandria in March 2004, adopted the Alexandria Declaration, calling on individual Arab countries to push forward with their own reforms within a general framework agreed by all Arab countries.

82. This statement further called for modern constitutions to be drafted that would include clear-cut separation of legislative and executive powers; the abolition of emergency laws and extraordinary courts; independent ownership of the media; the granting of political rights to students to allow peaceful demonstrations. Apart from political reform issues, the document called for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, respect for the territorial integrity of Iraq, and the transformation of the Middle East into an area free of weapons of mass destruction.

83. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which from the outset has been a somewhat ineffective organisation, partly because of differences between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara, has not taken any steps to respond to the American initiative on the Broader Middle East and North

⁶ Reuters, 25 November 2004, statement by the Secretary-General of NATO at UN headquarters, Algiers: “There is too much at stake and we face too many common challenges for us to allow our future cooperation to be hostage to this conflict”.

⁷ Helsinki Final Act, 1975.

Africa. The same is true of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), an organisation grouping 56 states which held its last summit in Malaysia in October 2003 without any noticeable results to report.

84. The Arab League held a summit meeting in Tunis on 22-23 May 2004 with a view to agreeing general statements on reform prior to the G-8 Sea Island Summit so as to avoid the impression that the West was driving the reform agenda in the Middle East. The Tunis Declaration that was finally adopted, however, was very general, providing no specific details as to how change and reform in the Middle East were to be brought about.

85. The 17th summit of the Arab League, held in Algiers on 22-23 March 2005, was a clear demonstration of its member states' inability to join forces in order to tackle at least some of the many problems they face, both within and outside their territories.

86. Only 13 of 22 leaders attended the summit. Arab political reforms and divisions were only mentioned in passing and leaders recorded their support for Syria against "foreign intervention" when discussing UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for Syria to pull out of Lebanon and for Hezbollah to disarm.

87. A resolution was adopted to reactivate the 2002 Beirut peace initiative in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, based on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the creation of a Palestinian State. Israel immediately rejected this peace proposal and the Algerian Foreign Minister recognised the Arab League's inability to take joint action on this issue when he concluded that normalisation of relations with Israel was a sovereign act – member states were free to do as they wished and joint action could not be taken in this connection.

C. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A REGION OF CONFLICT AND INSTABILITY

I. Problems on which there is some degree of consensus

88. This vast Arab-Muslim region stretching from Mauritania to Afghanistan, the cradle of the greatest and most ancient civilisations of the Mediterranean region and site of the world's richest oil reserves is also plagued by many problems: political instability and unresolved armed conflicts; tribal and religious dictatorships; non-recognition of human rights; lack of progress on the condition of women; illiteracy; economic imbalance between the oil states (Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Iran) and those states living below the poverty line (such as Yemen).

89. This misery provides a breeding-ground for terrorism. However, there is a consensus on a number of important points and on certain issues that have to be addressed:

- *The principle of a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of peace in the Middle East* are considered to be the priorities because they are at the root of all the problems. However, opinions diverge on how to arrive at a definitive solution. On the Arab side, the 2002 Beirut peace initiative and the plan put forward by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia were reconfirmed at the Algiers Summit in March 2005. For the West, the way forward is the roadmap defined by the Quartet.
- *Stability in the region* as a whole. There is a need to ensure peace and the integrity of states (Iraq, Lebanon) but also the sovereignty of peoples in recognised states (Israel and Palestine).
- *A common effort to combat terrorism*, which first reared its head in this region and feeds on its problems and misery.
- *The imperative need to bring about balanced economic development*, to fight poverty in order to reduce inequalities among peoples, regions and states (i.e. the oil states and the others), and to combat illiteracy;
- *The need for "varied" and "adapted" reforms*, as recognised in a number of declarations:
 - the 2004 Sana'a Declaration on the "Arab Democratic Dialogue Forum";

- the March 2004 Alexandria Declaration on “Reform in the Arab World” which referred to the need to draw up modern constitutions;
- the declarations made at the Arab League Summit in Tunis in May 2004;
- the declarations made at the March 2005 Algiers Summit are along the same lines and illustrate this common intent: Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, for example, summed up the essential points when he referred to the need for various bold collective actions to bring about reform in the region.

II. Problems which are evolving: Iraq and Lebanon

1. Iraq

90. The Americans’ position at the end of 2004 before President Bush’s re-election was that the US had been “right” to wage war against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The only point on which they admit having gone wrong and misjudging the situation is as regards the vacuum that arose after Saddam’s fall, and which was conducive to the development of insecurity, violence and insurgent attacks.

91. However, although fighting and attacks continue on the ground, it is to be noted that the process launched by the 30 January 2005 elections is moving forward and that a government has been in place since 28 April 2005.

92. The Parliament – or rather the transitional Iraqi National Assembly – elected in January, shows some distortion in its representation due to abstentions by some groups. It has 275 members. Ayatollah Sistani’s list, a coalition of political and religious Shi’ite movements, is the largest group with more than 48% of the vote, but it does not have an absolute majority.

93. The Kurds, who hold a quarter of the seats, represent the country’s second largest force. Their support is necessary and they have expressed ambitious demands, for example for the post of President of the country. But they have other demands concerning the town of Kirkuk, oil reserves and a federal state system which will have to wait.

94. The Iraqi List, a secular liberal democrat grouping headed by the party of outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi lost ground with 13.8% of the votes, or 40 seats. That grouping had supported the Bush Administration.

95. The vast majority of Sunnis chose to abstain, and with no seats at all in the National Assembly they are the big losers. Nevertheless, Hajem al-Hassani, who was elected Speaker of the National Assembly by 215 of the 241 members present, is a Sunni and has been the spokesman for the Iraqi Islamic Party and close to the Muslim Brotherhood since 1990.

96. The two Vice-Speakers of the new Parliament are a Shi’ite (Shahristani) and a Kurd (a member of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan).

97. The transitional Iraqi National Assembly is to draft a new Constitution by 15 August 2005 which is then to be approved by referendum before 15 October 2005.

98. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who was appointed Prime Minister on 7 April 2005, is a moderate Islamist Shi’ite and a member of the United Iraqi Alliance. He is head of the Dawa Party and is supported by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. In his oath of office he claimed allegiance to an Islamist movement and stated that “Islam must be the State religion, since three quarters of our people are Muslims. But we are working to establish a democratic and pluralist system (...) in which Islam will be one source of our law, but not the only one (...) There is no question of imposing Sharia law (...) We want a democracy which will respect human rights and the rights of women (...)”.

99. Referring to the government which has now been formed, the Prime Minister explained that it reflected the ethnic and religious diversity of Iraqi society. It has 35 members (18 Shi’ites, 8 Kurds, and 9 Sunnis) including 7 women. The new government must be approved by Parliament, which must express a vote of confidence by a simple majority. The Prime Minister described the appointment of the new government as a first step towards the construction of a new Iraq, adding that no effort would be spared to put a smile back on the face of the country’s children.

100. The President of the Republic of Iraq is a non-religious Kurd. Jalal Talabani was elected on 6 April 2005. He will be assisted by two Vice-Presidents, a Shi'ite (Abdel Mahdi) and another Sunni (Ghazi al-Yawar).

101. Thus the system is now in place. Clearly it has strong religious connotations and may appear to be close to the Islamic regime of neighbouring Iran. However, it is difficult for the moment to say where the dividing line between the religious Shi'ite identity and the Iraqi national identity lies. In fact, the situation is a compromise between religious forces, Shi'ite hegemony and Kurdish demands. We are far from the "democratic, federal and pluralist" state that Prime Minister Allawi called for in his statements prior to the elections.

102. Iraq, then, is confronted with the two-fold challenge of national reconciliation and the withdrawal of foreign forces. The Prime Minister has stated in that regard that "no Iraqi wishes to see the multinational force remaining in Iraq", but that "a state may accept the presence of foreign forces on its territory when it is unable to guarantee its own security. Once we are able to do that the multinational force will no longer be necessary".

103. A new Constitution is to be drawn up and put to a referendum in October 2005. The transitional Government will administer the country until the next elections, which are scheduled for the end of 2005. "Learning democracy takes time and patience, especially after 35 years of dictatorship".

2. Lebanon

104. This small country (10 452 km²) is located between Israel to the south and Syria to the east and north. It has a population of some three millions, of which 250 000 Palestinians and 500 000 to 700 000 Syrians. It became a French protectorate following the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It became an independent "parliamentary republic" in 1943. The national pact of 22 November 1943 is an unwritten agreement – a compromise between the Christian and Muslim communities – designed to supplement the 1926 Constitution.

105. Lebanese society is a patchwork composed of four main groups:

- the Maronites (founding saint St. Maron, 6th century): the original call for the creation of Lebanon came from this community. The Maronites were hard hit by the 1975 civil war. Many of them left Lebanon and their community, whose political power was reduced by the Taef agreements, now represents only 25% of the population. Their leader is the Patriarch Cardinal Sfeir;
- the Muslims: Shi'ites, Sunnis and Druze:
 - the Shi'ites are the disciples of Ali, the prophet Mohammed's son-in-law. They are a mainly rural community from the south of the country and the Bekaa Plain. They have flocked in mass to the southern suburbs of Beirut and represent some 30% of the population. They were divided following the civil war into the Amal (moderate) movement and Hezbollah (pro-Iranian fundamentalist) movement, whose leader is Sheik Hassan Nasrallah;
 - the Sunnis are a mainly urban community present in the large towns of Lebanon. They constantly refer to their ties with the Arab (mainly Sunnite) world, Syria in particular. Two Sunni leaders were assassinated during the civil war, one of them the Prime Minister Rachid Karame. Rafic Hariri, a businessman from a modest Sunni family, first came onto the scene in the mid-eighties and is viewed by many as the person who rebuilt Lebanon. Following his assassination on 14 February 2005, suspicions were immediately directed towards Syria, even though it is a Sunnite country. His son Saadeddine Hariri has become the community's new leader;
 - the Druze community (which appeared in the 11th century) is from the Ismaelite school (Fatimid dynasty, Egypt). Opposed by the various other branches of Islam, the Druze took refuge in the mountains of Lebanon, Syria and Israel. They resisted Turkish rule and together with the Maronites form part of Lebanon's identity. The famous socialist

intellectual Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt was assassinated in 1977. His son Walid Jumblatt is now the community's uncontested leader.

106. The compromise between the Christians and Muslims: the Christians renounced all foreign protection, in other words the dominant influence of a western power over the country, while the Muslims recognised the existence of Greater Lebanon and gave up all ideas of Lebanon becoming part of a Syrian or Arab entity. This balance between the two communities reflects the fact that Lebanon belongs to the Arab nation but has indissoluble ties with the West:

- the President of the Republic is a Maronite Christian;
- the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim;
- the Speaker of the Parliament is a Shi'ite.

107. Unlike other Arab countries, Lebanon has no state religion, but the different religions are protected by the State. The 1975 civil war in which Christian militia fought against Palestinian movements led to a situation of chaos in which 300 000 people lost their lives. Peace was only properly restored in Lebanon following the signing of the Taef Agreements in 1989.

108. Those agreements, which are essential for national unity, made provision for the gradual disarming of the militia groups and a revision of the 1943 Constitution in order to adapt the Lebanese political system to the current breakdown among the different population groups. That constitutional reform led to three changes:

- the powers of the (Maronite Christian) President were reduced, while those of the (Sunni Muslim) Prime Minister and (Shi'ite Muslim) Speaker of Parliament were increased;
- the executive power was placed with a Council of Ministers, in which the ministerial posts were equally shared among Christians and Muslims;
- the number of deputies was increased from 99 to 108, thus doing away with the numerical supremacy of the Christians and achieving a balance between Christians and Muslims in Parliament.

109. The remaining key state positions would be allocated among the different communities as before, namely: the post of President of the Republic would go to a Maronite Christian; the post of Prime Minister would go to a Sunni Muslim; the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies would be a Shi'ite Muslim.

110. The Taef Agreements led to a revision of the Lebanese Constitution promulgated on 21 September 1991. Paragraph 4 of the new Preamble makes provision for the gradual disappearance of the confessional political system. Nevertheless, the confessional system continues to exist in Lebanon and a new political imbalance has arisen with the emergence of the Shi'ite Islamist Hezbollah movement, the "Party of God", which forms the backbone of the anti-Israeli resistance in southern Lebanon. The Israelis pulled out of Lebanon on 24 May 2000. It was a defeat for the Israelis, a "day of national liberation" for the Lebanese and a victory for Hezbollah which is in total control of the southern part of the country, where the Lebanese army never goes.

(a) The events of 2005 and the death of Rafic Hariri

111. The assassination of Rafic Hariri on 14 February led to demonstrations and protests in the streets of Beirut. The majority of Lebanese, Christians and Muslims (Druze and Sunnis) alike, for the first time joined forces to express their anger and call for the withdrawal of Syria which they accused of having perverted the country's political and judicial system and ruined its economy.

112. On 28 February the pro-Syrian Prime Minister, Omar Karamé, stepped down. According to the White House spokesman, freedom "was on the march". President Bush claimed that the toppling of the government by public protest was proof that the strategy of promoting democracy in the Middle East could work. It was certainly one of the greatest demonstrations of popular power in the modern history of the Arab world, but whether it was really the result of a "domino effect" following the Iraqi

elections is another matter. Another noteworthy point is that there was no division of the Lebanese army along political lines and that it did not intervene.

113. On 8 March 2005, Beirut was submerged by a Shi'ite tidal wave when several hundred thousand people, including the Hezbollah – which had abandoned their famous flag with the kalashnikov on it – poor people from Beirut's southern quarters, farmers from Bekaa and Syrian workers marched under the Lebanese flag and banners proclaiming "Syria, yes. United States get out!"

114. The Lebanon that will emerge from this crisis will certainly be different, but we do not know what the balance of power will be between a popular majority which aspires to become a political majority and the minority that is currently in power and which is opposed to change. Neither do we know what the new relations will be with Syria, which was obliged to withdraw its forces, and for which Lebanon remains a vital economic force and provides an opening to the Mediterranean Sea. Constructive relations are important to both sides. Above all, we do not know what will become of the resistance movement, in other words,

(b) The Hezbollah

115. This Shi'ite Islamic resistance movement is supported by Iran and is the country's major organised political force under its leader Hassan Nasrallah. Since 1985 it has been behind numerous spectacular acts of terrorism including kidnappings, suicide attacks, executions and plane hijackings.

116. In 1992 Hezbollah entered the Lebanese Parliament with 12 out of 128 seats. It has its own television station, al-Manar, which broadcasts messages in support of the *jihad* against Israel. It has its own weapons arsenal, including over 12 000 missiles with no less than 180 targets in Israel, and for which the order to fire does not depend on the Lebanese Government. It has some 1 000 to 1 500 full-time combatants but can mobilise a further 10 000. It has financial resources and can pay up to 100 000 dollars for each suicide attack.

117. Hezbollah is an armed movement, a "state within a state". It is independent of the official state institutions. However, it is financially dependent on Iran and had ties essentially with Syria for its military action against Israel. It has been on the United States' list of terrorist movements since 1997.

118. Recent declarations by Secretary-General Nasrallah have been geared to seeking a "genuine national consensus around the Lebanese army" and respecting "civil peace". He wishes to achieve coordination between the resistance movement and the army in order to deter Israel from all forms of aggression and claims that if resistance were to depend on orders from the government it would be totally ineffective on the ground.

119. UN Security Resolution 1559 calls, precisely, for the disarmament of the Hezbollah. The problem, however, is whether now is the right time. Depending on the political situation and the democratic process in Lebanon, Hezbollah could be transformed into a political party, but the first step would be for it to lay down its arms.

(c) UN Security Resolution 1559

120. This Resolution, which was voted at the request of the United States and France in particular:

- calls for the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon;
- calls upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon;
- calls for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias;
- supports the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory;
- declares its support for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon's upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence;

121. It should be noted that the Resolution concerns Syria, the “occupying country”, and that it in no way differs from Resolutions 242 and 338 calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. Syria was present in Lebanon “at the request” of the Lebanese Government and by virtue of the Taef Agreements. The United States for its part went to Iraq to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. This policy of double standards is often criticised and weakens our credibility vis-à-vis the Arab world.

122. Furthermore, the disarmament of the Hezbollah is being called for, in particular by the United States (but not France).

123. A thorny issue is whether this Resolution is a further destabilising factor for Lebanon and the region as a whole. Hezbollah’s presence in southern Lebanon is a “deterrent” to attacks and penetration of Lebanese airspace by Israel. The Hezbollah, according to the UNIFIL soldiers, “handle the systematic reprisals in a masterful and professional manner”. On 6 April 2005 the UN Special Envoy in Beirut, Terje Roed Larsen, declared that disarmament of the Hezbollah was not for the moment on his agenda.

124. The withdrawal of Syrian troops took place on 30 April after 29 years of military presence (starting in 1976). There was no mass popular movement to hail that historic development. Syria’s withdrawal was clearly an unwilling one, but it notified the UN of the military evacuation of Lebanon in accordance with President Bashar Al-Assad’s undertaking of 5 March 2005. A team of experts will remain on the ground to verify its withdrawal.

125. Its withdrawal signified the departure of 14 000 soldiers and thousands of intelligence agents and the removal of equipment. The head of general security who was at the centre of the security system controlled from Damas has resigned. And yet, in his report of 28 April 2008, Kofi Annan expressed doubts concerning the completion of Syria’s withdrawal and noted the presence of agents from the Syrian intelligence services in the South of Beirut.

126. Moreover, the Lebanese army has not been deployed over the whole of the country and the militias have not been disarmed. Yet the Lebanese Government has recalled that the resistance movement is seeking to recuperate farms on the Bekaa Plain close to the Syrian-Lebanese border and which are claimed by Lebanon, since they have been occupied by Israel since 1967.

127. Does the end of the Syrian occupation mark the beginning of independence for Lebanon? The political process is beginning now, but we do not yet know what the outcome of the crisis will be.

128. Parliamentary elections are to take place in Lebanon in four stages from May to June 2005. The investigation into Rafic Hariri’s assassination is under way. A government of national unity has been formed and a Prime Minister appointed. The government has maintained the electoral law of 2000, a decision criticised by the opposition. The most recent development is the return from exile of General Michel Aoun.

129. How can this country create lasting political stability? Is the system based on religion which has been in place for so many years still viable? Is secularism a principle that can be adapted to this country?

130. The Islamists are influential and armed. It would be better to incorporate them in a democratic process (following Turkey’s example) once they have laid down their arms. It would be better to avoid divisions within the country along religious lines (as in Iraq).

131. Another question which is inseparably linked Lebanon’s stability is that of the creation of a Palestinian state and the return of the 400 000 Palestinian refugees living on Lebanese soil.

132. A possible sequence of events would be:

- free elections (scheduled for 31 May 2005);
- an economic cooperation agreement between Damas and Beirut that will preserve the legitimate interests of both sides;

- settlement of the problems that led in the first place to the existence of the Hezbollah resistance movement in southern Lebanon (the Bekaa farms and the Golan Heights, which should be part of an overall agreement when the time comes);
- disarmament of the Hezbollah at a time which will depend on political developments.

133. Is there any hope of a “Beirut spring”?

III. Conflict situations and threats

1. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

(a) Developments in the peace process from 1967 to 2005

134. Following the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel seized Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The peace process is gradually moving forward on the basis of a number of basic principles:

- recognition of the existence of the State of Israel;
- acceptance of the creation of a Palestinian State within the borders defined by the “green line”, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem;
- acceptance of East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State;
- the principle of the right of return for Palestinian refugees, with reference to the 1948 text (concerning the right of return for Palestinian refugees who were expelled when the State of Israel was created, and UN Security Council Resolution 194).

135. Following the Yom Kippur War in 1973 numerous successive attempts were made to re-launch the peace process. The most notable were the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, Oslo in 1993 (assassination of Yitzhak Rabin – 1995), Taba in 1996, Sharm el-Sheikh in 1999, Camp David in 2000 (failure and second Intifada). All these efforts ended in failure. And yet the international community continued to call for a negotiated settlement leading to the co-existence of two states whose borders were defined with reference to those of 1967. Moreover, it insisted that a solution that was just and fair for both parties should be found regarding the status of Jerusalem and of refugees.

136. Hopes were raised again in March 2002 with the Beirut peace initiative and the plan put forward by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Under the proposals Israel would gain recognition if it withdrew to the 1967 borders in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Jerusalem would be the capital of a Palestinian State and refugees would have the right to return home.

137. With a view to moving the peace process forward, the EU, the United States, the UN and Russia came together to create the “Quartet” on 20 December 2002. The group adopted a three-phase plan known as the “roadmap”. The aim of the roadmap was to set the peace process in motion again and to set objectives, draw up a timetable for the implementation of concrete measures in the area of security, as well as in the political, economic and humanitarian fields. The end goal was to achieve a global settlement by 2005 which would include the creation of a Palestinian State and the implementation of appropriate solutions.

138. The roadmap remained a dead letter despite the good intentions of the international community. Palestinian activist groups continued their suicide bombings and attacks in spite of the ceasefire that had been declared. The Israelis continued their policy of extending their settlements and building so-called security fences, although Israel had been condemned in 2004 by the International Court of Justice for violations of international law and human rights.

139. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, was perceived as an obstacle to the peace process and was not accepted as a negotiating partner either by the Israelis or the Americans, who wanted the Palestinians to elect a new leader.

140. On 1 December 2003, the Geneva Pact was signed. The initiators on the Israeli side were Yosso Beillin and Amram Mitzna. Yasser Abed Rabo, a close colleague of Yasser Arafat, represented the Palestinians. The pact was intended to supplement the roadmap but it never amounted to much. The

main points it addressed were: the recognition of Israel as a State for the Jewish people; the creation of a Palestinian State along the 1967 “green line”; a corridor linking the Gaza strip to the West Bank; a divided Jerusalem as the capital city of two states; partial evacuation of the Jewish settlements; the right of return or financial compensation for refugees.

141. In 2004 Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon launched his own four-step plan unilaterally and quite independently of the roadmap. In so doing he had the tacit approval of the United States and President Bush who had just begun his presidential campaign. The international community and the Quartet in particular were powerless spectators of this initiative whose final overall objective is unknown.

(b) The Sharon Plan for 2004-05

142. The plan consists of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements on the West Bank with settlers receiving compensation.

143. The first stage, Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, is to be implemented in 2005, following 14 months of tough negotiations within the Government and the Knesset. The Gaza withdrawal plan was launched on 2 February 2004 by Ariel Sharon, who once again showed his skill at overcoming all the obstacles. The final steps in the process were the approval of the 26 March 2004 budget followed by the Knesset’s rejection on 28 March of the bill for a national referendum on the subject.

144. This fully empowered Ariel Sharon to set in motion his plan for withdrawing the army from Gaza and for evacuating the 21 settlements there, as well as four isolated settlements in the north of the West Bank, Judea and Samaria. Indeed, Israeli nationalists perceive domination over these biblical provinces as a historic challenge. “The Jewish people will never be able to fulfil its mission if one of its legs is amputated by taking away half of Israel’s land. One day or the other the whole country will be in our hands”.

145. The hard part remains to be done, because the furious settlers have vowed that they will take the fight to the streets and wage a violent civil war. The army is being mobilised for the date in question which has been set at 20 July 2005.

(c) Population of the Gaza Strip

146. 1 200 000 Palestinians are concentrated in 232 000 km² of desert in conditions likened by some to those of a concentration camp: 70% of the area has been destroyed. (A total of 3 800 000 Palestinians live in the occupied territories, including 2 500 000 in the West Bank).

147. There are only 7-8 000 Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip, out of a total of 450 000, of which 195 000 live in East Jerusalem and 245 000 in the West Bank.

148. The settlement process has been going for the past 35 years. Under the so-called “evacuation/compensation” law adopted on 16 February 2005, each family evacuated from Gaza and the northern part of the West Bank is to receive on average 1 700 000 shekels (306 000 euros). The total estimated amount paid out so far by the Israeli Government by way of compensation for settlers and companies is reported to be 7 billion shekels or 1.26 billion euros.

149. The ratio of the Palestinian and Israeli populations to the surface area is an essential statistic. The Israelis want to recuperate as much land as possible (preferably fertile land rather than desert) with the fewest possible number of people on it (Palestinians in particular). It is a simple calculation: more land (83% at the present time for Israel) and fewer people. 85% of the population (Palestinians) are now living on 17.2% of the land in the West Bank.

150. The process of building so-called security walls is also a process of gnawing away at Palestinian territory and illegally occupying land on the pretext of “legitimate self defence”, according to the theory put forward by a Palestinian lawyer born in the United States.

151. Ariel Sharon’s Gaza evacuation operation boils down to giving up a strip of land which will not even have access to the sea. Will Sharon agree to a re-opening of the Gaza port and airport? Will he guarantee safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank? And above all, what about the

1 200 000 Palestinians there? And all the while, as though in exchange for Gaza, he will be penetrating each day a bit more deeply into the West Bank.

(d) Settlements and the construction of walls

152. There are also settlements on the other bank of the Jordan. Hebron (city of the Patriarchs), Naplus and Jericho are “biblical” sites, but they are in the West Bank. As of 1970, the settlers who were “reclaiming their heritage” (the Mitnah’lin) were treated differently from the pioneers who had come to settle (the Mityashvim) and obtained a pledge from the Labour government of the time to maintain a permanent Jewish presence in Hebron and to build a new Jewish town – Kyriat Arba – beside it.

153. Some one hundred illegal settlements will be given official recognition. The settlement process began more than 30 years ago, thus well before Ariel Sharon’s time.

154. The Palestinian territories that have been occupied since 1967 now have 450 000 Jewish settlers on them. 245 000 Israelis are living in 138 settlements in the West Bank.

155. In East Jerusalem, which has been *de facto* annexed by Israel, 15 suburbs house 195 000 Jews. Originally the “hard core” of the settlements was composed of ultra-nationalist (both religious and non-religious) militant Jews, mainly Ashkenazi.

156. However, as of the 1980s, with the state investing massively in the process of settlements to populate the area, more and more Israelis crossed the “green line” to take advantage of the social and economic advantages being offered to settlers. A five-member family of settlers renting a 125 m² apartment for ten years with two monthly salaries amounting to 9 000 shekels net gets about 900 000 shekels, or US\$ 200 000 dollars.

157. The socio-cultural profile of settlers has changed drastically. The majority of settlers, in particular in East Jerusalem and certain other towns (Maale Adumim, Ariel and Alfei Menasheh), are young people from the working classes (70% of settlers are under the age of 21), “orientals” and ultra-orthodox (some 55 000 or 14%).

158. Under the Sharon Plan approved by the Knesset in March 2005, the total payout in compensation to settlers is estimated at US\$ 1 billion, which represents 615 shekels in taxes per head of the population.

159. Thousands of new houses are still springing up. According to a confidential working paper produced by the Israel land administration authority (ADI), the Government intends under the new “development plan” for the West Bank to build several thousand new housing units in existing settlements. For example, 2 100 new units in Maale Adumim or 3 500 homes. 600 are reportedly to be rented out as of this year. Moreover Maale Adumim is located to the east of Jerusalem. The new housing estates will link it up to the Jerusalem area. They will be built in such a way as to isolate the Arab quarters of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

160. In order to build a further 1 500 homes, the state will expropriate the Jahalins, a Bedouin tribe, by the end of 2005. Furthermore, Israel has already scheduled the construction of some 6 400 new units in the West Bank.

161. The construction of 120 “illegal settlements” caused an uproar. The state has treated the illegal settlements kindly; their status is to be legalised and they will benefit from all the public services. But the United States is insisting that they be dismantled.

162. Furthermore, in the framework of the new plan, 600 additional hectares are to be declared “state-owned land” and expropriated without compensation.

163. On the pretext of “recuperating” land in the West Bank abandoned by its Jewish owners between 1948 and 1967, the ADI is preparing to “requisition” a further 1 700 hectares or so. This would mean, since 2002, 32 000 new houses in 55 settlements in the West Bank. In all then, there are settlements, caravans, prefabricated buildings, military bases etc. These settlements in the West Bank are estimated to represent 300 million shekels or 53 million euros. 2 174 Palestinian families lost their homes in the West Bank in 2004 due to the construction of the security walls.

164. According to Yariv Oppenheimer, Secretary-General of the Peace Movement “These decisions prove that Sharon and his government are violating their pledge to freeze the settlement process. This is pure cynicism and one may well wonder what Sharon will say in a few years’ time to the new settlers when it is their turn to have to be evacuated”⁸.

165. This frantic extension of the settlements is of course a total violation of the roadmap, the international peace plan to which Israel agreed in 2003. Indeed, since 1967, the rate of construction has speeded up and the peaks coincide with the “withdrawal process”, according to Jad Isaac. The present peak corresponds to the withdrawal from Gaza.

(e) The dramatic situation of Palestine

166. This is a land and people exhausted by so much destruction and suffering. They want to turn the page, see the end of war, the Intifada, the occupation, misery and corruption. They long for peace, security, an independent judiciary and police, reform, economic development and jobs. 70% of families are living below the poverty line but at the same time luxurious villas are springing up all over the place in Ramallah.

The death of Arafat: December 2004

167. Arafat was the person who brought the Palestinian question to the attention of the international community and affirmed the existence of the Palestinian people. He was also the one who said that Palestine was the homeland of two peoples, the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs. This was a cultural revolution in the region.

168. However, after Oslo in 1993 he was clearly unable to evolve from the head of the resistance into a political leader. He certainly missed two historic opportunities to contribute to the birth of the state he was trying to create: Camp David in 1978, when he was not there alongside Anwar El Sadat and Menachim Begin and Camp David in 2000 when he refused the proposal of Bill Clinton to establish a Palestinian state on 97% of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel after the six-day war of 1967. Perhaps he believed, afterwards, with the arrival of Ariel Sharon, that he would be able to precipitate things, convinced as he was that Sharon would reoccupy the liberated Palestinian territories which would lead the UN Security Council to intervene by mandating an international force to evacuate Israel and proclaim a Palestinian State without having to negotiate with Israel. But we know how that turned out.

169. Arafat now belongs to history. He was said to be the major obstacle to the peace process. Was that true or just a pretext? The old historic and charismatic leader, the “father of the nation”, the first elected President of the Palestinian Authority, was kept under house arrest for several years at Moqata, the former PLO headquarters that had been bombed and fallen into disuse. Arafat is no longer with us and a new era has been opened by the elections.

Presidential elections: 9 January 2005

170. The elections went smoothly despite the occupied status of the country and the fact that the mobility of the electorate is clearly hampered – people are locked in behind a wall which already stretches 255 km out of a planned total of 622 km and which has no fewer than 740 checkpoints. The organisation was excellent, except in Jerusalem where it was deliberately badly done by Israel: registering and voting took place in five “post offices” (the only recognised vote being a postal vote).

171. In all there were 3 400 polling stations and 1 300 000 voters were registered (70% Palestinians). But in Jerusalem, which is home to 124 000 Palestinians, only 5 000 were registered.

172. The electoral campaign was not run normally in Jerusalem. No candidate was able to go there, not even the future President, Mahmoud Abbas.

173. Turnout, at more than 60%, was deemed satisfactory. It was necessary to be able to evaluate the degree of involvement of the Palestinian population in the first political act of the post-Arafat period.

⁸ Efrat Weiss, Yedio Aharonot, Extracts Tel Aviv.

174. Mahmoud Abbas, alias Abu Mazen, was elected by a majority of over 60% of the votes cast. This result too was expected as a reflection of the confidence placed in this man, who had played a role in the history of Palestine alongside Yasser Arafat and was supported by the PLO's political faction, Fatah, and by the United States. In contrast, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad had called for a boycott of the elections. Hamas, an Islamic resistance movement, was created in the Gaza Strip at the beginning of the Intifada in December 1987 with the consent of the Israeli authorities, precisely in order to weaken Fatah, which had become very powerful. The election result was a good one for Mahmoud Abbas, the new President of the Palestinian Authority.

175. As expected, Mustapha Barghouti came second with 20% of the vote and became the legitimate representative of the opposition and the fight against corruption. In third position was the communist candidate Bassam al-Salhi who had campaigned for the integration of the holy city of Jerusalem in the State of Palestine.

176. The smooth transfer of power in the 60 days following the death of Arafat, with full respect for the institutions and laws, is amazing. This demonstration of support for the democratic process allowed the Palestinians to show their political maturity and their resolve to respect the rule of law and democracy. Speaking on the day after the 2005 elections, the President of the Palestinian Parliament said that democracy was the key to the Palestinians' survival. This was their first message to Europe and the world.

The President of the Palestinian Authority

177. Mahmoud Abbas was born in 1935 in the north of Palestine, in what is today Israel. In 1948 he fled with his family to Syria. He studied there, despite economic hardship, and graduated with a law degree in 1958. He later obtained a doctorate in history in Moscow. He is a great music lover.

178. His political activities started in 1950 with Yasser Arafat, with whom he created Fatah. In the 1970s he called for an opening up of the forces of the left and for peace in Israel. He was one of the architects of the Oslo agreements in 1993. His style will be a different one, doubtless more sober than that of Yasser Arafat, who was the "father of the nation". During his electoral campaign Mr Abbas expressed the firm resolve to put an end to the Intifada. As far as the refugees are concerned, he has carefully avoided ever talking about their right of return, referring instead to a just solution to the refugee problem. As regards the issues on which Mr Arafat's position was inflexible, and on which he would accept no concessions, Mr Abbas prefers to refer to "rights that are in compliance with international law" in order to allow for more flexibility of interpretation. However, he faces a number of tough challenges.

Security

179. Armed movements such as the "al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade" with links to Fatah were connected recently with violent incidents, when for example they opened fire against the new Interior Minister, General Nasser Yussef. Mr Abbas ordered that this armed group be integrated as quickly as possible in the security services.

180. It would appear that another armed group, the Islamic Jihad, which has its headquarters in Syria, was also involved in the preparations for this attack on General Yussef. These serious incidents illustrate the major challenges confronting the President of the Palestinian Authority at the present time. He needs to reorganise the security services into a credible and effective force. He cannot remain hostage to these armed factions.

181. The Palestinian security forces are split up into some dozen services, making them less effective. Moreover, Palestinian policemen have been banned for the past three years by Israel from carrying weapons in the occupied territories. Additional aid was granted on 2 March in London with a view to rebuilding the Palestinian security services and economy.

Reforms

182. The judicial system, first of all, needs to be strengthened by a separation of powers, an independent status and the allocation of proper resources.

183. Corruption, so far treated with impunity, has been rife right up to the highest levels of power. The President must fight this legacy stemming in particular from the Arafat clan with its combatant and business activities in order to win back the confidence of the population, investors and donors of funds. Institutional reform is necessary, in particular the public sector is in need of reorganisation.

184. Democracy must be allowed to follow its normal course and institutions must be renovated. Legislative elections are scheduled for 17 July 2005 in order to elect a new Assembly, the present one having been in place since 1996. This election will provide the opportunity to bring radical groups like Hamas into Parliament, giving them a means of expression other than violence and the opportunity to become proper political parties.

185. Hamas won a crushing election victory in the Gaza municipal elections in 2004, when, with 70% of the vote, it beat the party in power, Fatah. In the second round of municipal elections in the Palestinian territories, Fatah won 55% of the seats. Hamas has no political future unless it gives up armed combat. It would seem to be prepared to envisage a two-state solution as indicated by its spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin, before he was assassinated. The radical Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements deny Israel's right to exist and reject proposals for demilitarising the Intifada.

186. Hamas nevertheless enjoys huge popular support due its network of associations financed by funds from abroad, its "incorruptible" image and its strong attachment to the values of Islam. However, suicide attacks have given it the reputation of being a terrorist organisation and the reaction to atrocities it has perpetrated in the past in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv has been one of horror and condemnation. Nevertheless, some people take the view that this was the only way to offset Israeli force and acts of terror.

187. The Palestinians have now understood that violence only breeds vengeance and reprisals. Mr Abbas too realises this, as he boldly and resolutely demonstrated with his swift reaction to the violation of the ceasefire. But the question is whether he can guarantee that a stop will be put to acts of terrorism as demanded by Israel.

The living conditions of the Palestinians must be improved

188. The dramatic situation in Palestine only strengthens support for Hamas. Israel must be made to lift roadblocks and checkpoints, stop incursions, release prisoners, freeze the settlement process, stop building the security walls and ultimately destroy them. 85% of the 255 km security wall already put up does not follow the "green line" and impinges on territory in the West Bank (2700 Palestinian families have lost their homes). The walls are a physical symbol of the restrictions on the Palestinians' way of life and freedom within their own occupied territories.

189. The occupation breeds violence and terrorism. The Palestinians' daily lives, with for example limited access to water and land, has become unbearable. They are only allowed to cross the walls at certain times of the day and all traffic, including tanker trucks and trucks laden with fruit and vegetables, is blocked. Israeli bulldozers are razing olive groves and orange tree orchards. The Palestinian economy is in ruins.

190. Efforts must be made by both sides, for Israelis and Palestinians alike are suffering and are exhausted. The international community must mobilise its efforts and negotiations must resume. Will peace really be possible one day and above all, is this what people really want?

(f) Recent developments in the peace process

191. It was at the initiative of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (who is back in the picture and will be useful) and in the presence of Jordan's King Abdullah II, that the first post-Arafat summit bringing together Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas was held at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 8 February 2005. The stakes, as well as expectations, were high. The United States was not present.

192. No global plan came out of the summit. The following measures were approved:

- a mutual ceasefire agreement (which is a first step);
- an end to violence on the Palestinian side (but how can Mahmoud Abbas guarantee it?);

- Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the removal of certain settlements in the West Bank by 2006, as well as the opening of certain checkpoints in the West Bank; however, at the same time Ariel Sharon will be continuing the construction of the wall and the expansion of the settlements, instead of freezing construction work and dismantling them as requested;
- the release by Israel of 400 to 500 Palestinian prisoners.

193. At the initiative of Tony Blair, a conference was organised in London on 2 March 2005. The Israelis were notable for their absence. The conference brought together 23 heads of state and foreign affairs ministers (including Condoleeza Rice), together with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

194. The objectives were redefined as follows:

- to promote the vision of two states in the Middle East;
- an Israeli state that can be confident about its security;
- a viable and independent Palestinian state.

195. The Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas certainly emerged strengthened from the London Summit and Sharon too said he was satisfied.

196. A summit meeting of the Arab League Summit was held on 23 March 2005 in Algiers but was attended by only 14 of the 22 Arab heads of state. The summit was marred by divisions within the “Arab family” itself.

197. The key subject was the re-launching of the Peace Plan with Israel, a proposal that had been put forward by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and endorsed by the Arab League in Beirut in 2002, and which offered Israel “normal” relations with the Arab world in exchange for a settlement of the Middle East conflict, on the following conditions:

- a “sovereign” Palestinian State on the pre-June 1967 territories;
- East Jerusalem as its capital;
- a fair return solution for refugees.

198. An incident was caused by the King of Jordan (who did not attend the summit). He proposed more moderate wording in the chapter on the right of the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel and a “spectacular diplomatic gesture” towards Israel.

199. The question of normalising relations with Israel became a highly controversial subject which divided the participants and led to a group of states led by Algeria, Libya and Syria forming a common “front of refusal”.

200. Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa wound up the proceedings saying: “we have refused to study a new peace offer to Israel following the historic offer made at the March 2002 Beirut Summit”.

201. What exactly does Ariel Sharon want? He is pushing ahead with his plan in blatant violation of the roadmap and is paying no heed to the international community, the EU and UN in particular. He is continuing with the settlement of the West Bank which he claims is “being occupied in order to maintain important positions for all eternity”.

202. Thus, on 21 March 2005 the Sharon Government confirmed the authorisation it had given for the construction of 3 500 new homes in the Maale Adumim settlement 10 km from East Jerusalem. It announced the implementation of a plan drawn up five years ago under the Labour government for linking up that settlement with the Jewish quarters in the eastern part of the holy city. This would put into practice the “greater Jerusalem” concept, making it impossible once and for all to envisage any sharing of the capital city between the two parties. The extension of Maale Adumim (28 000 inhabitants) will divide the West Bank into two parts. The future Palestinian State will no longer have the territorial continuity envisaged by the roadmap. The Palestinians might be able to travel from the north to the south of their territory via a tunnel. The announcement was made just when the preparations for evacuating 8 000 settlers from the Gaza Strip were under way.

203. The Palestinians criticised these plans immediately. Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei warned the international community about the danger for the peace process of unilateral Israeli measures of this kind. The Minister of Planning, Ghassan al-Khatib, noted that in expanding its settlements in the West Bank, Israel was giving the impression that it was trying to exchange the Gaza Strip for the “greater Israel”.

204. Early in March, Prime Minister Sharon declared that thanks to the settlement process, Israel would be keeping Jerusalem, its undivided capital, for ever. There was no reaction from the international community, the Quartet, the European Union or President Bush.

205. What is Sharon’s objective? From talks with a number of highly experienced people – Foreign Affairs Ministers and Ambassadors in Jordan, Turkey and Egypt who have had dealings with Mr Sharon for 20 years - it would appear that:

- “Sharon has his own plan which is different from the roadmap”;
- “he does not wish to negotiate the third phase”;
- “he does not want an independent and sovereign Palestinian State”;
- “he does not want continuity of Palestinian territory”;
- “he does not want an end to the conflict”.

206. So what does he want? According to your Rapporteur’s contacts:

- “the bantusisation of the West Bank”, dividing it into islands linked by tunnels and bridges”;
- “transitional, but never final settlements”;
- “a Palestinian State that can never be viable”.

207. These people did not give the impression that they were deliberately exaggerating; on the contrary, they were trying to be fair in order to provide an objective analysis. Their remarks made your Rapporteur thoughtful, indeed she was shaken. These eye-witness comments appear in this report as food for thought.

208. What is the task of the international community and of Europe in particular? To ensure that a genuine peace process is conducted with a view to finding a global and lasting settlement to the conflict and stabilising the region.

209. What new elements are there for peace at the present time? One new factor is the momentary hope and optimism linked with the new political situation (death of Arafat, elections of Bush and Mahmoud Abbas, elections in Iraq etc.).

210. Mahmoud Abbas talked in London about “new paths” and about the fact that the Palestinian administration was prepared to work hand in hand with the Israelis. “Peace is possible”, he said.

211. Kofi Annan said in London that expectations were high and that the only possible objective was a lasting peace.

212. Condoleeza Rice congratulated Israel on the historic step it had taken when it announced its withdrawal from Gaza, but appealed to it to ensure that a new Palestinian State would be genuinely viable.

213. The international community has given Mahmoud Abbas its recognition and political, economic and logistic support.

214. Washington has nevertheless expressed disapproval of the continued process of settlement by Israel and called for the dismantling of the illegal settlements that have been built since 2001. Yet Sharon carries on, without any protest from President Bush. What will happen afterwards, will the main settlements continue to belong to Israel? The misunderstanding gets worse.

215. Mahmoud Abbas is reorganising the Palestinian security forces. He has removed the people who were close to Arafat (such as General Moussa Arafat, head of security in the Gaza Strip, who has

been appointed Adviser to the President) and in April 2005 placed all the services, except the intelligence service, under the authority of the Minister of the Interior and National Security, General Youssef.

2. Syria: one of the countries on the “axis of evil”

216. One of the three “axis of evil” countries (in addition to Iraq, which can no longer be qualified as such, and Iran) is Syria. Yemen could have found itself on the list if it had not made a policy change in time.

217. Bashar Al-Assad officially began evacuating his forces from Lebanon on 30 April 2005. But the ultimate ambiguity is that Syria is now regrouping its troops on the Bekaa Plain before the “final withdrawal” following the elections in Lebanon. Could this be a strategy for dealing with a possible sudden deterioration of the situation in southern Lebanon or even a confrontation between the Lebanese opposition and the Shi’ites of the Hezbollah?

The assassination of Rafic Hariri and the “Syrian suspect”

218. The aim of this assassination was certainly to block the process that is under way in the region. Whoever was behind it, the Arab states were unanimous in deeming it to be irresponsible. Syria has been accused but the international enquiry that is under way will clarify the facts and Syria has agreed to that enquiry.

Does the Syrian regime have its back to the wall?

219. There is opposition. The Syrian people want answers and “openings”. The United States has imposed economic sanctions and stepped up pressure on Damas.

Is the situation desperate?

220. President Bashar Al-Assad has been asked to:

- monitor the border with Iraq;
- stop supporting Hamas;
- dismantle the Palestinian organisations on Syrian territory;
- calm down the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon;
- review his relations with Iran and the Shi’ites in Iraq.

221. Damas is acceding, or pretending to accede to the “request”. Washington, however, still does not seem satisfied and takes the view that in order to check the insurgency in Iraq and settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict there has to be a change of regime, or at least a change of policy in Syria. Washington denounces *inter alia* Syria’s “lack of democracy, mistreatment of prisoners and restriction of freedoms”.

Must Syria be protected in order to protect Lebanon?

222. President Bashar Al-Assad has expressed the wish to resume negotiations with Israel. Israel is still present on the Syrian Golan Heights. Syria’s relations with the Hezbollah are also of strategic importance. The Syrian President has made this request on two occasions, in particular through the intermediary of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, but it does not seem to have been heeded.

223. The international community cannot aggravate Syria’s international and regional isolation and its loss of esteem. This “axis of evil” state has been placed once again at the core of American strategy. It is probably under threat.

3. Iran – the nuclear threat

(a) The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

224. Only civil nuclear programmes are currently authorised under the NPT, provided that the relevant nuclear installations and activities are declared to and authorised by the IAEA, which must be able to carry out inspections.

225. IAEA Director Mohamed El Baradei stated during a recent interview that although the Agency did not have clear evidence that the Iranian authorities were trying to build nuclear weapons, Iran could well have a nuclear bomb because it had the necessary know-how and industrial infrastructure. Moreover there is a nationwide consensus at all levels in Iran that it should become a nuclear power in order to maintain its independence and command respect.

(b) The Iranian context

226. Iran's experience during the war with Iraq in the 1980s certainly encouraged the Iranian authorities to acquire weapons of mass destruction as the sole means of defence for a country with few allies.

227. The regional context is worrying: Israel, India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons; Iraq has not yet been stabilised; American nuclear weapons and bases are stationed in a number of countries; the Gulf States are acquiring sophisticated weaponry. All this means that nuclear weapons as a strategic option make sense to Iran.

228. Iran knows that such weapons are a means of deterrence and stabilisation. It wants both to guarantee its security against Israel and to become a centre of stability and influence in the region. The threat of nuclear weapons has after all protected Israel and hindered any serious conflict between India and China or between India and Pakistan.

229. The current Islamic regime inherited the nuclear programme started by Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. In 1970 Iran signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty which allowed it to implement its civil nuclear programme under IAEA supervision.

230. The Shah's programme included nuclear power reactors in Bushehr and a nuclear research base. With foreign assistance, initially from China and later from Russia, the programme was extended and stepped up, officially for civilian purposes. From 1984, the IAEA suspected Iran of developing a military nuclear programme. In the 1990s, Western intelligence findings indicated that Iran had conducted experiments in fissile material production, including research and development in both centrifuge uranium enrichment and the reprocessing of plutonium.

231. At the same time, Iran has acquired a fairly large arsenal of short-range ballistic missiles, including the CSS-8 with a range of 150 km, the Scud-B with a 300 km range and the Scud-C with a 500 km range. It has tested the medium-range Shahab III missile with a 1 300 km range and a 750 kg payload and is reportedly developing the Shahab IV with a 2 000 km range and a 1 000 kg payload.

(c) Iran's nuclear programme

232. According to a report published in June 2003 Iran failed to report some of its nuclear activities.

233. The IAEA Board of Governors issued Iran with an ultimatum, calling on it to provide proof that it was not developing a nuclear bomb under the guise of a civil nuclear energy programme.

234. On 18 December 2003, Iran agreed to suspend the enrichment and reprocessing of uranium and signed the additional protocol to the NPT. However, it went back on that decision in July 2004.

235. The United States, firmly resolved to check the rise of terrorism and armed resistance in Iraq, started brandishing the threat of sanctions and even the possible use of military force against Iranian nuclear installations. Both the United States and Israel want Iran's reactor destroyed and its nuclear programme halted once and for all.

236. Conversely, the EU favours a diplomatic approach and has started negotiations in order to avoid having to take the matter to the UN Security Council, which would condemn Iran and provide

legitimacy for possible US strikes against it. On 14 November 2004, at the initiative of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the Islamic Republic of Iran signed up to a new agreement.

237. Under the terms of that agreement, Iran confirms that it does not intend to acquire nuclear weapons and undertakes to cooperate with the IAEA. It has therefore decided voluntarily to maintain the suspension of its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities. The term used is “suspension” and not the final cessation of its activities.

238. That being agreed, negotiations began with the EU in March 2005 on guarantees and compensation, and in particular on a trade and cooperation agreement and Iran’s accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

239. Yet Iran continues to resist. Its commitments are vague and there is no climate of confidence.

240. In actual fact it is likely that it is continuing its activities, and in particular its plans for a heavy water reactor, on which construction has started and which will produce plutonium, needed to manufacture nuclear weapons.

241. On 27 February 2005 Russia signed an agreement with Iran for the supply of nuclear fuel for the Bushehr reactor. The first delivery of enriched uranium is scheduled for mid-2006. The spent fuel will be sent back to Russia for reprocessing.

242. Are strikes possible, under the circumstances, and how can a new crisis in this region be averted?

243. The United States does not rule out the option of military strikes against nuclear sites. Some of those targets, such as the uranium reprocessing plant close to Isfaha, the Bushehr reactor and the centrifuge near Natanz have been identified, but Iran is suspected of having secret underground installations which are difficult to detect.

244. Strikes would have grave consequences, the precise scale of which is difficult to estimate. They would certainly strengthen the current political regime in its resolve to acquire a nuclear bomb and would probably also trigger intensive terrorist attacks and further stoke the tensions in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Finally, they would almost certainly block the Middle East peace process.

245. The approach chosen by the European Union, based on negotiation, to which President Bush pays lip service, is a way of playing for time but it is not satisfactory, as it is beginning to drag. It is difficult therefore to say what the outcome of those diplomatic efforts is likely to be, although they are praiseworthy and should be pursued.

246. In exchange the US has obtained a promise from the Europeans to refer the question of Iran back to the UN Security Council for the purpose of imposing sanctions, should the negotiations fail. Hence there could be sanctions and strikes that might be considered legitimate by the UN and EU. So is a complete turnaround of the situation to be expected?

247. The Arab and Muslim countries are worried. At the same time one senses a certain “pride”. This “Muslim bomb” directed against Israel belongs to them as well; they feel solidarity with Iran. They repeatedly call for Iran “to be left alone”, drawing attention to the massive upheaval that strikes would cause not only in the Gulf region, but in the western economies too. They denounce, with reference to Israel, the double standards that are being applied. The situation is wholly unacceptable, but what should be done?

248. First of all the NPT must be revised, because although it prohibits Iran, like the other signatory states, from acquiring nuclear weapons, there is every reason to believe that Iran is pursuing its uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons programme. Indeed, Iran wants to have a nuclear bomb just like the three other powers in the region – India, Pakistan and Israel – which have acquired it, notwithstanding the treaty.

249. This so-called “Non-Proliferation” Treaty should be denounced, since it seems to be applied with varying degrees of stringency, according to the country concerned.

250. More and more non-nuclear states that have signed up to the NPT – including medium-sized regional powers such as Egypt and Libya, which have just renounced nuclear weapons – are protesting against this system which is unfair and incapable of checking proliferation. They will not support any sanctions that might be imposed by the UN Security Council against Iran.

251. A new definition of proliferation is needed. It should, in particular, identify the major proliferators and draw a distinction between civil and military nuclear programmes, but also take on board the links between terrorist groups and trafficking in nuclear technologies and materials.

252. Yet for the moment no one is seriously considering revising the NPT.

253. The five-yearly NPT Review Conference is to take place in May 2005. The five official nuclear powers want all the signatories to sign to additional IAEA protocol with a view to strengthening the surveillance of nuclear power stations and the restrictions imposed on them. But the NPT signatory states are being much more demanding and calling for the nuclear powers to live up to their obligations in the field of disarmament under Article 4 of the treaty. They want more security guarantees from the nuclear powers and confirmation that they will never threaten to use their weapons against non-nuclear states.

254. It is important to keep negotiating and to try and dissuade Iran from continuing its activities by bringing pressure to bear on its economic interests.

255. Furthermore, Iran should be regarded as a factor for stability in the region and as such incorporated in the peace process. If it were to normalise its relations with Israel, it might even play an important role. But the first step is for Iran to recognise the State of Israel and its right to live in peace.

256. Otherwise there are two alternatives for the region's future: either there will be two nuclear bombs, based on the theory of nuclear weapons as a deterrent and a stabilising factor. This is the situation we had during the cold war and it is not to be recommended. Or else the whole region must be denuclearised, which is the preferable solution.

257. For the moment the situation in Iran has not spiralled out of control and the worst has not yet happened. The vicious circle can still become a virtuous circle, depending on the resolve and cohesion of the international community.

D. REFORMS AND STABILITY IN THE REGION

I. The desire for change in the Arab-Muslim world

258. From the “cedar revolution” to the “stirrings of democracy” or “democratisation by small steps”: things are moving. This progress, with all due caution, is to be welcomed. Following their close brush with danger the Arab dictatorships have decided to make some gestures to the people and opposition movements, strengthening them in their desire for reform. These are hopeful signs, but it is difficult to say where they will lead and whether the democratic forces will come out on top. In these countries fundamentalism remains an ever-present danger, as is resistance by corrupt ruling elites ready to crush the most vulnerable members of society – members of religious or radical minorities, immigrant workers and women – who have no rights. In the Arab-Muslim world, the need for justice often takes precedence over the call for freedom.

Political developments in the Middle East in 2004/2005

259. There has been a process of relative liberalisation under direct (internal) or indirect (external) pressure, as illustrated by the elections in Afghanistan, the local elections in Saudi Arabia (2004) and the presidential elections in Palestine (2005) and soon also in Egypt. Indeed, contrary to all expectations, President Mubarak has just agreed to a constitutional amendment making provision for the organisation of presidential elections by universal suffrage.

260. He was elected with 93% of the votes in the previous elections. The reform will change the scenario but certainly not the final result. Given the conditions that have been set it will be difficult for his opponents to stand. Nevertheless, a signal has been given. The President has been maintaining a

state of emergency since 1981. However, he has just released opposition party leader Ayman Nour, a potential candidate who enjoys American “protection”.

261. In 1995 Qatar adopted a new Constitution and an elected Municipal Council. Women have the right to vote, there is a free press and a pioneer satellite TV station, al-Jazira. Kuwait has revived its Parliament. In the Sultanate of Oman there have been women members of the Consultative Council since 1994. In 2002 Emir Ben Assa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain transformed his country into a constitutional monarchy, repealed emergency laws and organised local and parliamentary elections. Jordan has a multipartite political system and has held parliamentary elections, and in 2005 the King announced an administrative decentralisation programme.

262. In Syria the political system is in deadlock. All power is in the hands of the Baath party and civil liberties are flouted. Iran is a religious dictatorship. Although there are free elections by universal suffrage, conservative forces have a monopoly of power at all levels: executive, legislative and judicial. The authorities have set up a double system of government, with the Imam as the leader of the religious revolution and the President of the Republic and the government in charge of management and reforms. Hence there are two Chiefs of the Defence Staff, one for the regular army and the other for the guardians of the revolution (the Pasdaran) in charge of religious activism on a day-to-day basis.

263. Saudi Arabia has a deep-rooted fundamentalist and patriarchal political system. In 1993 under King Fahad the country adopted by way of a constitution a Basic Law which modernised the order of succession. There is a Consultative Council composed of 60 appointed members including Shi'ites. An internal policy of opening up the system is being organised in the framework of the “national dialogue” that started in 2004. Partial local elections have even been organised, but women are still not entitled to vote. Perhaps they will be at the next elections?

264. However, in all of those countries the king, emir or sultan is still the key to the system of power and does not share it. Some people have called them “democracies without democrats”.

265. Whatever concessions may be made, the great majority of Arab or Muslim states have political regimes that have no legitimacy. They still leave far-reaching powers in the hands of the king, emir or sultan, or in those of the Rais (Mubarak) or Guide (Gaddafi) or simply the President (Ben Ali of Tunisia), for whom the official multipartite system is a way of getting re-elected with an unbeatable number of votes.

266. The fact remains that things are moving. The Saddams of the region would seem to be a thing of the past and Mahmoud Abbas is no Arafat. Whether, however, we can really talk as President Bush might do in terms of a “democratic world revolution” is another matter altogether. And yet, both out of interest and idealism, the US Administration wants to break with decades of accommodating the dictatorships of the region for the sake of stability. Stability is of course still necessary, if only to guarantee regular access to oil! One Libyan speaker summed up his vision of Bush's policy in the frankest terms by referring to the extension of the area of American influence that is essential for the US in economic terms.

267. Does this mean that the reasoning underlying US policy is necessarily erroneous? Democracies are rarely built through war as in Iraq. It is not the fact that the United States is motivated above all by economic considerations that makes its approach morally less defensible. But what does matter is that the US needs to start by applying the principle of “democracy begins at home”, with reference, for example, to human rights violations. The death penalty that still applies in a number of American states (59 executions in 2004), the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay who have still not been charged or brought to trial, the refusal of abortion rights and the 30 or 40 million people living in poverty are as many failings of the American system of democracy that make it necessary to view President Bush's universal principle of “freedom” in relative terms. This places Europe, which aspires to be a moral authority, in a difficult position.

***II. Democratic developments in the Arab-Muslim world:
fundamental principles and the relationship with religion***

268. The democratic process has varied among different parts of the world and different eras since antiquity. Democratic systems vary considerably from one western country to another (centralised or federal republics, constitutional monarchies, principalities, duchies, to mention but a few).

269. There are common references, but no single model. The basic tenets of democracy, however, are: participation of citizens in society, respect for the rule of law and human rights and shared fundamental values.

270. The road to democracy is always long and difficult. But it is always a deliberate and determined choice which cannot be imposed from the outside. It has to be built from the inside by peoples and nations.

271. Man is recognised as a universal being with rights which are independent of racial, ethnic, tribal or religious origins. The identity of minority groups is respected.

272. The individual stands above the group. This indeed is the principle of “secularism” as it is defined in Turkey, for example, which abolished the Sharia (Koranic law) in 1926, or in certain other Muslim countries which have placed the state above religious law, such as Palestine, Syria, Lebanon or Yemen.

(a) Democracy and religions: the organisation of societies

273. Democracy and religion are not incompatible. But there are different ways of approaching the relationship between the two.

- Democracy and the separation of the Church and State

274. This means a secular system, which is also one in which the private domain of the individual (for example, religion, freedom of thought, conscience and worship) is kept separate from the public domain.

275. Turkey is a secular state, as was Iraq, and as are Palestine, Syria and Yemen. Prime Minister Qurei of Palestine told your Rapporteur, “We are secular. Sharia is one important source of law, but not the only one”. Public law has been decreed superior to religious law. Turkey, where Sharia law was abolished in 1926 by Ataturk, has become a secular and modern state.

276. Indeed, for many it is a model, particularly as regards the emancipation of women and the acquisition of basic rights:

- Civil Code, 1926;
- voting rights for women, 1934;
- abortion law, 1982;
- the veil is still banned from public institutions and universities (where there are 40% women).

277. More recently, in 2001, other reforms were implemented by the Erdogan Government. In the area of family law, for example, Article 41 of the Constitution declares that the man and wife are equal. In the new civil code the husband is no longer the head of the family and the woman has inheritance rights over assets acquired during the marriage. Under the penal code which was recently adopted crimes of honour are punishable by life imprisonment. The death penalty was abolished in 2002. And yet, the arrival of a majority of so-called “moderate” Islamists in power is a source of concern. Moreover the Government does not always show the hoped-for political resolve to find lasting solutions to the problems of women in society. It has issued some conflicting signals, such as the failed attempt to make adultery a punishable offence, which perhaps indicate a desire on its part to backtrack on certain acquired rights or an unwillingness to take the necessary decisions to resolve women’s issues once and for all. And yet according to the Constitution, the rights of men and women

are identical. This is not something that exists in all European countries, although it does figure in the Constitutional Treaty submitted to the 25 EU states for approval.

– Democracy and Islam

278. “Leave Islam alone”, were the words of Arab league Secretary-General Amr Moussa. The question is whether there is compatibility and adaptability between democracy and Islam. The answer would appear to be “yes”.

279. We must first draw a distinction within Islam, as a religion, between “Islamism” or “political Islam (the use of Islam for political purposes) and fundamentalism.

280. We should also point out the Islam is divided into two major families:

- the Sunnis, who form the majority in a large number countries (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman and Turkey), while there are equal numbers of Sunnis and Shi’ites in Iraq, Syria and the Arab Emirates;
- the Shi’ites, who make up the majority in Iran and who are very numerous in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon (the Hezbollah).

281. Islamism, then, is “political Islam”. The original movement arose in Egypt with the Muslim Brothers (1920-1930) who were crushed by Nasser. However, they came back on the scene in 1970 and President Sadat was killed by Islamists in 1981. These were the combatants in Afghanistan. An isolated Islamist group claims responsibility for the latest terrorist attacks in Cairo (April 2005) and Taba (end of 2004), in which 34 people were killed. Does this mean that the seven years of calm are now over?

282. Other movements sprung out of the old one, or joined forces with it:

- the FIS in Algeria (1990), which deems democracy to be “impious”;
- the Hamas in Palestine (the Islamic Jihad is its armed branch) which was created, with Israel’s support, in order to neutralise the Fatah;
- the Hezbollah, the “party of God” in Lebanon.

283. It has to be admitted, then, that in most Muslim countries today the Islamist movement constitutes one of the main alternatives.

284. Can Islam be reconciled with democracy? The answer is yes, provided that it is accepted as an absolute principle that the rule of law is superior to religious law, in other words the Sharia.

285. Indeed, in most Muslim countries, the predominately Sunni states in particular, religious law does not take precedence, although there is certainly interaction. However, in Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as in the Gulf States, Sharia law applies.

(b) Sharia law

286. The Sharia is the Islamic penal code based on the sacred texts of Islam. The majority of Muslim nations have found satisfactory solutions for meeting with the requirements. Islam is not the state religion in many Muslim states.

287. However according to some experts the declaration of the primacy of Islam in the constitution is tantamount to a declaration of national identity.

288. In Afghanistan, the 2004 Constitution stipulates that no law of the country may conflict with the sacred religion of Islam, but at the same time it contains guarantees to protect the rights of religious minorities. The absolute primacy of Islam was the rule under the Taliban.

289. In Iraq, the religious Shi’ite parties which constitute the largest political force called for marriage, divorce and succession to be governed by Sharia law, but this was opposed by Sunni Arabs and Kurds.

290. Strict Sharia law condones stoning to death, whipping and amputations. Such punishment and torture is not acceptable by western standards. But for fundamentalist Islamist groups these practices are founded on their sacred texts and are an integral part of their values and of their religious and cultural environment.

291. However the Ulema (Islamic intellectuals) do not all agree on the interpretation of the texts concerning such practices. They add that the application of the Sharia has degenerated into an instrument for the oppression of women, the poor and political opponents, who are denied all rights to a proper defence.

292. They believe that is necessary and urgent for Muslims to tackle this issue. They recognise the importance of the sacred texts but want their interpretation and application to be reviewed in the light of the situation today.

293. They recall that Islam also comprises an obligation of “*ijtihad*”, a critical re-examination of the holy texts to enable believers to deal with the challenges of a changing world.

294. A meeting with the management of the BNP-Paribas bank in Bahrain about the Islamic banking system and with representatives of the GAFI (*Groupe d'Action Financière*) office in Malama about the funding of terrorism and economic crime were most enlightening. A Ulema Council advises the bank on the interpretation of financial situations in the light of the “principle of necessity”. This gave us a much better idea of the adaptability of Koranic interpretation.

295. A Koran adapted to modern society is gradually also becoming a reality in Jordan, Algeria (even if made only a few minor amendments to the family code in 2005) and Egypt. But it is in Morocco where the biggest changes have occurred recently. In October 2003 it amended its family code, the *Mudawana*. After decades of remarkable efforts by Moroccan women, the King finally decided to amend the code to give them more rights, including the abolition of polygamy and above all of the woman’s status as a minor.

(c) *Theocratic states*

296. In these absolute monarchies and religious dictatorships there is no respect for human rights and the rule of law.

297. In Iran, Saudi Arabia and certain Gulf States political power and society in general are tightly controlled. Human rights are not respected and minorities, people on the margins of society and women are of course the first victims. The death penalty is still applied.

298. 150 people were sentenced to death in Iran in 2004. Iranian women may have a political and civic life, since they can vote, enjoy certain rights and are emancipated, but they are still veiled. Social and private relationships are strictly controlled in day-to-day life. The *Pasdaran*, the ever-vigilant guardians of the revolution, come under the direct authority of the Imam, who is the leader of the revolution and a conservative, while the President of the Republic Khatami manages the nuclear programme, for example, and is responsible for any reforms. Is there a compromise or a conflict between those two powers?

299. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy of the tribal, theocratic and Islamic type, where apostasy (declarations against Islam or denying God) is a crime and decapitation part of divine law, where rape, armed attacks and repeat drug offences are punishable by death. Indeed the death penalty is frequently applied: 36 death sentences have been passed so far in the first four months of 2005. Under-age offenders are still executed and torture is used to extort confessions. Society is tightly controlled and women are excluded. They are life-long minors, without the right to vote or drive or to take part in civic life in any other way. The veil is compulsory.

(d) *Pluralist religious democracies: Iraq and Lebanon*

300. Religious groups assert themselves as political movements or parties. Democratic systems are built entirely on that basis. An institutional balance is achieved thanks to a system of compromises between the different groups which sometimes have their roots in history. It is hard for entirely secular

or democratic movements to find a place. It should, however, be possible for Lebanon to open up to secular democracy.

(e) Democracy and terrorism

301. *A priori* the two are incompatible. Nevertheless there is perhaps a need to review the etymological meaning of certain words like “resistance” and “terrorism” as applied to certain struggles and certain peoples. In their declarations of human and citizens’ rights western democracies have recognised the right of resistance to oppression since 1789. Later they also recognised the right of peoples to self-determination.

302. Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad started out as resistance movements. Where they are unanimously condemned is for their suicide attacks which cost the lives of Israeli civilians and for the fact that their combatants are armed. Once the conflicts have been settled a place must be found for these resistance movements, which must be incorporated in a stable democratic system. There are however two prior conditions: these Islamic militant groups must be disarmed and the rule of law must be respected, which means that state law takes precedence over religious law.

E. THE ROLE OF EUROPE

I. The initiatives needed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

303. The settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an urgent priority because it will dictate what happens next in the Middle East. It is now of the utmost importance for the international community to become more closely involved and even to take a firm line.

(a) The United States

304. There can be no peace in the Middle East without a firm and decisive commitment on the part of the United States on the basis of a broad consensus. However, the US alone cannot be the arbiter between the Israelis and Palestinians.

(b) The Quartet

305. The European Union, alongside the United States, the United Nations and Russia, approved the roadmap process. But the Quartet is not able to ensure compliance with it (see the Sharon Plan).

(c) The European Union

306. It is a paradox that it is the EU, which bears the weight of a common historical past with the Middle East and the Mediterranean region as a whole, that is by far the biggest financial donor when it comes to support for the territories of the Palestinian Authority. While the EU should be a key player and essential partner in efforts to reach a settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fact is that it participates only marginally in political developments in the region. Most of its action is taken via the Quartet and within the current constraints of implementation of the roadmap.

307. The EU’s position depicts the cruel truth, which has been stated a thousand times over, that “Europe is an economic giant but a political dwarf”.

308. In fact, the EU’s relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority are almost exclusively of an economic and commercial nature. It is involved in multilateral initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Barcelona Process complemented by the European Neighbourhood Policy, but it also has bilateral relations projects with Israel and with the Palestinian Authority. The EU is Israel’s main trading partner.

309. There is no doubt that the EU’s political role in the region falls short of its financial commitments. For 2004 alone, Community funding amounted to 650 million euros. Of this amount 124 million was allocated to the MEDA programme, 60 million was donated as the European contribution to the UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency), 30 million was allocated to ECHO (the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office) and 20 million was spent on food aid. In addition to funding, the EU also has support programmes for the civilian population in the region and for associations working for peace or contributing to educational and cultural activities. The huge

amounts involved and the fact that financial management is not very transparent have justified more stringent audits of the use made of all this funding.

310. As a result of this huge disparity between its financial input and its political role, the EU is perceived more as a donor of funds than as a decision-maker.

311. This paradox is all the more regrettable given that both the Palestinians and the Arab nations in general want the EU to become more involved in the political aspects, as the delegates appointed by the Council of Europe and the EU were told in their capacity as observers in the January 2005 elections for the President of the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, this is one of the areas in which the EU member states take more or less the same view in the context of their external relations.

312. However, Ariel Sharon does not want the European Union to take fresh initiatives on the peace process. He recently declared that although the EU is helping the Palestinian Authority when it comes to building electrical power plants, sea water desalination plants, roads and apartment blocks, it is not directly involved in the political and diplomatic process.

313. Israel is opposed to any kind of international force in the region and to Europe's desire to want to move on to phase 2 of the roadmap, in other words, to the transition phase involving the creation of a Palestinian State with provisional borders, and then to phase 3, leading to a final agreement that will put an end to the conflict once and for all.

314. Mr Sharon refused to attend the London Conference on 1 March 2005. His attitude would certainly have been different had the conference been organised by the United States.

315. The European Union must become more involved in re-launching negotiations with a view to reaching a final settlement to the conflict as soon as possible. It can bring its influence to bear on the two parties to the conflict. The stakes involved are strategic and have a direct impact on the EU's interests.

316. Javier Solana's Action Plan (November 2004) lays down the principles and establishes a negotiating framework. It may allow the EU to assert its position forcefully, namely that:

- peace in the Middle East is a strategic issue for the EU affecting its own vital interests;
- Israel's security and Palestine's sovereignty are two basic prerequisites;
- Europe vigorously condemns acts of terrorism against the civilian population but also the wide-scale construction of illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which must be dismantled.

317. The EU's position on other essential issues is equally clear:

- Jerusalem: territorial continuity between East Jerusalem and the West Bank and guaranteed access for the faithful (of all three monotheist religions) to holy sites;
- refugees: no state can be prevented from welcoming refugees on to its territory; neither can it be forced to welcome refugees.

(d) A consistent EU position

318. It should be stressed that as far back as 25 years ago, when the European Council met in Venice on 12-13 June 1980, it issued a joint declaration on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has maintained a common approach to the problem at all the European Council summit meetings which have taken place since then.

319. On 5 November 2004, the European Council adopted a short-term EU programme of action in respect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This action plan was proposed by Javier Solana, the High Representative for the CFSP. The ten new EU countries are participating fully in the framing of a common approach by all 25 member states.

320. Since the 1980 Venice Declaration, the EU has therefore maintained a consistent position which has not been affected either by successive rounds of enlargement or by institutional changes. Following its latest enlargement to take in ten new countries, the Union has not altered its position on

the Middle East conflict. At the 58th meeting of the UN General Assembly, the Netherlands Presidency was able to harmonise the member states' positions on the resolutions concerning the Middle East. Of the 20 resolutions adopted, the 25 EU member states all voted in favour of 14, abstained on 5 and were divided only on the text of one resolution.

321. The European Union's position today is both clear and balanced⁹:

- it condemns acts of violence and terrorism against Israel and on a number of occasions has called on the Palestinian Authority to reorganise its security services and to pursue individuals and groups advocating terrorist action; it has, moreover, included Hamas and Islamic Jihad in its list of terrorist organisations;
- it denounces the fact that the security measures taken by Israel to protect its citizens are aggravating the situation in the Palestinian territories in economic and humanitarian terms; it condemns punitive action and extrajudicial executions and the destruction of civilian homes;
- it is opposed to settlements in the occupied territories, deeming that they violate the fourth Geneva Convention and make it difficult to arrive at a negotiated solution based on the co-existence of two states;
- while it recognises the right of Israel to protect its people from terrorist attacks, it is opposed to the route chosen for the security wall because it deviates from the “green line”; the route modifies the status of certain territories and pre-empts the outcome of negotiations still to be held; the EU has requested Israel to stop building the security wall and to review its route, including the part in Jerusalem where it takes no account of the 1949 armistice;
- it wishes to see a fair solution to the issue of Jerusalem, in accordance with the principles laid down in UN Security Council Resolution 242, which excludes any acquisition of territories by force; the solution adopted should preserve the rights of the Jews, Muslims and Christians in respect of the holy sites;
- it is convinced that settling the question of the Palestinian refugees should be part of a solution based on the co-existence of two states; it hopes that negotiations between the two parties will lead to a just and viable solution acceptable to all.

322. An international conference must be held without delay. Time is of the essence.

323. There is without doubt a greater margin of manoeuvre in the new situation which has arisen following the election of Mahmoud Abbas, the re-election of George Bush and Israel's undertaking to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. But the potential for positive developments must not be exaggerated. There is extreme misery among the Palestinian people and tensions in Israel are still running high. The opportunity offered by the present hiatus of relative calm should be grasped before disillusion takes hold of the more extremist groups, which are clearly lying in wait for the further problems that are bound to arise.

324. It is fair to say that time does not work in favour of peace. The British Government organised a conference which, although it did not live up to all the expectations, nevertheless mapped out the road for a European initiative. This is a first step which must very quickly be followed up with the assistance of all the parties including the members of the Quartet.

II. The dialogue between civilisations and security in Europe

The 1975 OSCE Helsinki Final Act

325. According to this document “security in Europe has to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole”. The process of reform and democratisation must not stop. The process of open political commitment must be “accompanied”.

⁹ See the information report submitted on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly by Hervé de Charette and Christian Philip entitled “*Proche-Orient: l'heure de l'Europe est-elle venue?*”, No. 2205, March 2005.

326. This is Europe's founding mission. It is what it has been striving for ever since Greco-Roman antiquity up to modern times (British democracy and French revolution). Such initiatives spawned the rule of law and human rights. It is here that Europe has an exceptional role to play.

327. A clash of civilisations, which so many people fear will happen, can only be avoided through dialogue with Arabs and non-Arabs alike, and with Muslims and members of other faiths. "Speak to the Arabs" we were told by Amr Moussa, the Secretary-General of the Arab League. Together we must meet the challenges of terrorism and development, and come up with a global and lasting solution to these problems. The three pillars on which our action should be based are stability, security and prosperity.

328. The role of the major powers is first and foremost to create the right conditions for change. This is a support role which should be based on cooperation and partnership and thus on an equal footing. The various programmes and processes which have been drawn up are the framework for action to be taken on specific projects in conjunction with the various countries in the region concerned.

329. The reform process will have to start in the countries concerned even if "pressure" or "inspiration" comes from outside. There are strategic and economic differences between countries such as Turkey, Egypt or the Gulf States. The need for reform differs between Saudi Arabia, Iran and Palestine and even between Morocco, Jordan and Yemen. Nations and peoples do not like "interference" and resist. That cannot be ignored.

330. This means that we have to respect the "sovereignty of states", and the different culture and pace of life in different countries. The situation in Turkey changed under the very strong and visionary leadership of Kemal Ataturk. In Iraq changes were imposed from outside. But there can be no lasting change without the support of the people and that can only be secured if they are less miserable and hungry, if they have better schooling and training and if the media are free. Finally, the role of women is of crucial importance. Their emancipation is the key to reform because it is in the family that there must be a change of mindset.

CONCLUSIONS

331. Many countries in the Middle East have already realised that they need to move more towards democracy. Since the end of 2004 there has been a series of elections in some of them – Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian territories. A huge wave of popular support led to the liberation of Lebanon and the rapid, albeit incomplete, withdrawal of the Syrian forces.

332. At the same time, tension is mounting among the peoples of certain countries and many states in the Arab world are having to contend with organised Islamic terrorism, a powerful force both socially and politically.

333. There is no doubt that public opinion in the Middle East countries, the intellectual elite, women and the mass of often unemployed young people want more democracy. But there is wholesale apprehension, even distrust, of the political class and of ordinary citizens vis-à-vis the US Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative. There is suspicion that the declared objectives are not the real goals. European involvement would go down better and is even being called for. Some authorities are asking us to "talk to the Arabs" and above all "to leave Islam alone". We have to establish a dialogue between civilisations if we want to avoid a clash.

334. It should also be remembered that for the time being democratisation in the countries concerned is inseparable from the existence of nationalist and Islamist movements which have real force and a strong influence over society. They have even infiltrated political and parliamentary life. These radical, international Islamist movements, such as Hamas or Hezbollah, are armed and involved in conflicts. They want to join the process of democratisation but cannot do so unless they lay down their arms. They are beginning to moderate their radical and revolutionary discourse.

335. Furthermore, experience in the Middle East and North Africa (e.g. in Algeria) has shown that secular regimes have not necessarily succeeded in the presence of such Islamist movements. They have tended to veer towards authoritarianism, which shows how difficult the situation can be. They have even produced results that are the opposite of what was expected such as the increasing

popularity of radical Islam, which has become the only means of giving expression to matters that concern governments and societies.

336. The West now needs to take careful stock of the complex nature of the situation and state of Muslim thinking about the changes under way. This process cannot be separated from the place of Islam in the religious and social life of the individual. The drive for reforms whose effectiveness and extent varies and which apply to a region stretching from Morocco to Saudi Arabia and to the Gulf States, taking in Egypt as well, is not just the result of outside pressure but of an awareness on the part of their peoples, who are giving strong expression to a basic requirement.

337. The governing regimes are also aware of the need for change and a stable situation if they are to retain power. The domino effect, even if it has not yet started, is still a threat. These regimes, which more often than not have no legitimacy in the eyes of the people, have realised that reform is the way forward if their countries are to make progress. The war in Iraq has had repercussions well beyond the confines of the region. The people were involved in the debate and came out against the war and the US presence on their territory. What happens next concerns them too. The gradual introduction of reforms is one way of meeting internal demands and alleviating external pressure.

338. Islam is a key player in these developments. Its various branches may vie with each other, but they find political compromises. The Sunnites are largely dominant in the Arab-Muslim world, but the Shi'ites are in control in Iraq, Lebanon and, of course, Iran.

339. Islam also feeds terrorism, which draws its strength from the fanaticism lit by the day to day misery of men and, above all, women and the younger generation.

340. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict between two peoples belonging to the same race and between two religions holding sway in the same region. There is the Biblical land epitomising the force of what is a legitimate yet irrational hatred of these two peoples in the face of their destiny and their tragic history.

341. The international community must now intervene to help find a solution to this dramatic conflict. Compromise will not satisfy either party. But anything is better than walls and death if the intention is a just one. Now is the time to act. Recent events have created new conditions: the re-election of President George Bush, the election of Mahmoud Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority following the death of Yasser Arafat, a government of national union in Israel and a ceasefire on the ground. The opportunity is there but it is fragile and it will not wait.

342. European action to keep up the momentum generated by the London Conference and spur the Quartet into a new initiative could turn this opportunity into a plan acceptable to the exhausted Israeli and Palestinian peoples, who have a right to peace. And peace in the Middle East is also necessary to ensure peace throughout the world.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION
on developments in the Broader Middle East

The Assembly,

- (i) Considering that the Middle East and North Africa is a vast region, the majority of which is Arab-Muslim, in which a number of conflicts are unresolved and where stability and security are under threat, while noting that it is also has the most extensive energy sources in the world;
- (ii) Noting that in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa almost 40% of the population is under the age of 16 and does not have access to a proper education; that power remains in the hands of an unelected elite which also controls the economy; that the countries in question are suffering from a lack of democracy and transparency, economic stagnation, poverty, unemployment, inequality and injustice all of which are conducive to terrorism;
- (iii) Noting that recent developments have resulted in a change of mindset and the increased attraction of extremist groups which exploit religion and manipulate thinking while having recourse to terrorism to pursue their goals;
- (iv) Aware that since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in particular, the Western world has come to understand that far greater efforts need to be made at all levels to improve communication and cooperation with the Arab and Muslim world and to promote political, economic and social reform in the regions concerned;
- (v) Noting, however, that the governments of most of the countries concerned now seem to have realised that reforms are necessary in order to meet the needs of their citizens and respond to changes in society with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the region, but that the reform process which has started is highly inadequate;
- (vi) Stressing that in recent years and as part of its Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the European Union has embarked on comprehensive programmes and concluded specific agreements with countries of the Middle East and North Africa to help them guarantee peace, stability and prosperity for their peoples;
- (vii) Noting that the action plans which the EU is drawing up with Middle Eastern countries as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy contain a set of conditions that must be met by the country concerned in order to make further progress, but also aware that in the past the EU has not always been strict enough with partners which have not met certain conditions;
- (viii) Aware that the EU member states are sceptical about the likelihood of all-encompassing plans leading to the establishment of a new order in the Middle East and North Africa, and that they prefer cooperation agreements and complementary activities on a bilateral and multilateral level, tailored to the needs and capabilities of each partner or group of partners;
- (ix) Taking account of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) launched by the United States at the G-8 Summit in June 2004 with the aim of promoting economic, political and social liberalisation in a large number of Muslim countries;
- (x) Considering that the G-8 initiative supports the regional reforms proposed by independent intellectuals, civil society and governments and that they are superimposed on EU initiatives or are complementary to them, while aware that achieving these reforms in the Middle East will require an overall long-term and sustained commitment;
- (xi) Considering that if the West wishes to pursue a strategy of far-reaching reforms to help promote democratic change in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, the way to go about achieving that objective is to engage in dialogue, partnership and cooperation;
- (xii) Considering that the West must in the first instance step up its efforts to help resolve the region's major geopolitical conflicts and crises – in particular the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the problem of instability in Iraq and Lebanon, the nuclear threat from Iran, the isolation of Syria and the

precarious situation in Afghanistan – and that in order to create a secure and stable environment it is necessary to establish a system of mutual protection and cooperative security;

(*xiii*) Aware that if the European Union and the United States are serious about implementing their policies for the purpose of stimulating reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, they will have to strike a balance between their relations with authoritarian regimes in the region on the one hand and opposition reform movements on the other hand;

(*xiv*) Considering that “freedom”, as propagated by new Western initiatives and especially the United States initiative, includes not only civil and political liberties and therefore freedom from oppression, but also individual freedom and thus deliverance from anything that constitutes human subjugation and is incompatible with human dignity such as poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, torture, the death sentence and a lack of work;

(*xv*) Considering that in the Arab world such freedom is threatened not only by undemocratic regimes but also by tribal culture and ancestral tradition, sometimes under the cover of religion;

(*xvi*) Considering that, with all the respect due to Islam, certain interpretations of Koranic law cannot be the lasting pretext for the oppression of women and non-respect of their individual and social freedom, and that the deprivation of recognised rights of the individual and citizen, and of sexual equality in particular, is contrary to the democratic process;

(*xvii*) Considering that in their efforts to engage in dialogue and partnership with a view to appropriate and acceptable reforms in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, both the United States and the European Union must take into account the place of Islam as a religion, a political force and a social force, and recognise that there is no inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy;

(*xviii*) Considering that in the Western perception of democracy religious law may be one source of legislation, but that civil law must take precedence over it;

(*xix*) Disagreeing with the categorical statement by some regimes in the region according to which democratisation will bring radical Islamists to power, but considering that in an environment where freedom of speech, association and assembly are heavily restricted, Islamist movements enjoy the important advantage of being the only groups able to organise and express themselves in mosques and other religious institutions;

(*xx*) Taking note of the progress made in Iraq where the forthcoming adoption of a Constitution will pave the way for the establishment of a democratically elected parliament to which the government will be accountable;

(*xxi*) Welcoming the fact that free elections will shortly be held in Lebanon following the withdrawal of the Syrians, which should be complete;

(*xxii*) Considering it essential in the interests of future peace and stability in Iraq for the transitional government, with the help of the United States and the international community, to restore law and order, re-establish security and control terrorism;

(*xxiii*) Expressing the hope that the Iraqi economy will pick up and that the Constitution that is to be drawn up will give the country the most appropriate institutional framework and will accord every respect to ethnic and religious groups on the territory of Iraq;

(*xxiv*) Considering that the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now an absolute priority and that it cannot be the result of a unilateral action on the part of Israel but that it must be achieved by a renewed initiative from the Quartet on the basis of the roadmap;

(*xxv*) Considering that the United States, the European Union and the Arab League states which have already taken initiatives (the Saudi Arabia Plan – Beirut 2002) together have the capacity to achieve common objectives for the region, which should rest on three pillars, namely, security, stability and prosperity;

(*xxvi*) Considering that in the immediate term the mutual ceasefire agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh must be complied with and violence kept under control; that terrorist acts against the civil population must

cease; that Israel is committed to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the West Bank; that Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank should be opened to allow access to cultivated land and water sources; that prisoners must be freed when terrorist acts have ceased; and that the Palestinian Authority must continue to prove that it will not tolerate terrorist acts;

(xxvii) Considering that the Gaza Strip should be linked to the West Bank by a secure passage and that the administrative reorganisation of this area and its economic activity will not be viable unless access to the sea is assured and the port and airport in Gaza are free and operational;

(xxviii) Considering that peace between Israel and Palestine in this region will not be possible without a specific, comprehensive and lasting settlement that builds on all the various earlier commitments, namely: Israel's right of existence, the creation of a viable Palestinian State in one area lying within the 1967 confines and with East Jerusalem as its capital; the end of illegal settlements and the gradual dismantling of those settlements and the separation walls in the West Bank; the principle of the right of return for the refugees or financial compensation;

(xxix) Considering that the international community should take the initiative to organise an international conference in order to plan for phase 2 (the transition phase involving the creation of a Palestinian State with provisional borders) and then phase 3 (leading to a final agreement putting an end to the conflict) of the roadmap;

(xxx) Considering that lasting peace and stability in the region and the world as a whole depend on a solution to the existence of weapons of mass destruction, and in particular of Israel's nuclear weapons, and mindful of the disturbing possibility that Iran might possess such weapons in the near future;

(xxxi) Considering that it will never be possible to draw up rules to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction if a policy of double standards is applied, and that it is preferable to continue with negotiations to persuade Iran to put a stop once and for all to its uranium enrichment activities and to other nuclear activities liable to lead to the acquisition of nuclear weapons;

(xxxii) Considering that under these circumstances and in the interest of a lasting peace in the region, it is necessary to envisage the full denuclearisation of the area by decreeing that the Middle East is a zone free of weapons of mass destruction;

(xxxiii) Considering that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is unfair and should be revised so as to put an end to a selective approach and to varying degrees of stringency according to the country concerned, and that a new definition of nuclear proliferation is necessary to draw a distinction between civil and military nuclear programmes, the various technologies, fissile material, and legal and illegal traffic;

(xxxiv) Considering the danger inherent in strikes against nuclear sites in Iran if the negotiations being conducted by France, Germany and the United Kingdom were to fail, unless the UN Security Council were to find a solution to this problem;

(xxxv) Considering that it is in the interests of peace in the region not to isolate Syria, a "country on the axis of evil", which is being threatened by the United States;

(xxxvi) Considering finally that the fight against corruption, organised crime, fundamentalism and terrorism is part of the same combat to ensure stability in the region, and that the disarmament of radical Islamic movements and their integration in the political process should be an objective of immediate priority,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE EUROPEAN UNION:

As regards the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East

1. To pursue dialogue, cooperation and the development of economic and trade relations in partnership and complementarity with the United States and the specific initiatives undertaken by the G-8 in the Arab-Muslim region in order to prevent a clash between civilisations;

2. To continue its specific financial transfers whose aim is to improve the situation of the populations; to accompany economic and social progress and to develop education, especially for girls;
3. To promote social and economic reforms and to initiate the process of democratisation of the states and regimes in the region;
4. To participate in the full emancipation of women and the repeal of the laws which subjugate them, especially in certain countries;
5. To improve control over the use of donated funds and to assess regularly the results of the programmes undertaken, which should lead to more security, stability and prosperity;

As regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

6. To take a fresh initiative within the Quartet and possibly to extend it to Egypt and Jordan;
7. To decide to hold an international conference in order to move on to phases 2 and 3 of the roadmap and arrive at a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict;
8. To ensure that the organisations and states concerned implement the agreement that is concluded and decide in particular to denuclearise the region and guarantee its security, perhaps by establishing an international force there;

As regards the other threats in the Middle East

9. To actively pursue negotiations with Iran with a view to halting the development of nuclear facilities which may have a military application;
10. To work for a revision of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is no longer fair and requires a new definition of proliferation and a distinction to be drawn between civil and military nuclear programmes;
11. To prevent Syria from being isolated as this will do nothing to promote either peace or stability in the region;
12. To take steps to achieve the disarmament of radical Islamic groups and their integration in the political process.

AMENDMENTS 1-3¹⁰

AMENDMENTS 1 and 2

tabled by Mr Renzo Gubert (Italy, Federated Group)

AMENDMENT 1

1. Reword recital (xv) of the preamble to the draft recommendation as follows:

“(xv) Considering that in the Arab world such freedom is threatened by undemocratic regimes which may sometimes find support in tribal culture and in ancestral or religious traditions;”.

Signed: Gubert

AMENDMENT 2

2. In recital (xviii) of the preamble to the draft recommendation, replace the words “but that civil law must take precedence over it” with the words “but only if civil law endows it with civil value; at the same time, civil law must respect strongly held religious beliefs that do not contradict fundamental human rights, for if it does not, it would be legitimate in religious terms for a believer not to observe civil law;”.

Signed: Gubert

AMENDMENT 3

tabled by Mrs Josette Durrieu, Rapporteur (France, Socialist Group)

3. Replace recital (xviii) of the preamble to the draft recommendation with the following recital:

“(xviii) Considering that in a democratic State religious beliefs and traditions may be a source of legislation provided they are not incompatible with the measures that are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others;”.

Signed: Durrieu

¹⁰ See 5th sitting, 15 June 2005 (Amendments 1 and 3 adopted, amendment 2 withdrawn).

