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Israel President Speech: Time for action rather than words

Press release from François Alfonsi, Jill Evans, Ana Miranda

Several MEPs from the European Parliament's EFA Group, which represents Europe's stateless nations, minorities and regions have responded to today's address by the President of Israel in Strasbourg.

Addressing the European Parliament, Israel's Head of State said that it was time to renew the peace process and resume peace negotiations towards a two state solution. He said that Israel would work with the Palestinian authority, and described Palestinian President Abbas and the European Union as partners for peace.

Whilst welcoming the conciliatory tone in parts of the speech, the MEPs emphasised that this is the time for actions rather than words, particularly on halting the building of illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory.

Three EFA MEPs visited the West Bank and East Jerusalem in October 2012.

EFA Group President **Jill Evans MEP** (Wales) said:

"The biggest obstacle to a two state solution today is Israel's continued settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, in clear violation of international law.

"It's time for action rather than words. There would be no clearer signal of Israel's commitment to a lasting peace and two state solution than an immediate halt to settlement building and a return to the negotiating table."

Francois Alfonsi MEP (Corsica) said:

"We visited the West Bank and East Jerusalem at the end of 2012. We saw for ourselves the devastating effects of movement restrictions and settlement building on the Palestinian people. Those are the main barriers now to a two state solution.

"The EU must be ready to use its influence with Israel to get back to the negotiating table and build a political solution."

Ana Miranda MEP (Galicia) said:

"We welcome the clear commitment to a two state solution achieved through negotiation, and the acknowledgement of the EU's role in building peace. But to make peace a reality, we have to see an end to the main obstacles that prevent Israeli and Palestinian representatives restarting direct negotiations.

"Halting settlement building, particularly in East Jerusalem, would be extremely helpful in moving towards a viable two state solution."

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Jill Evans

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