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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 11 December 1991 from the Permanent
Representative of the Netherlands to the United
Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text, in English and French, of a Declaration of the European Council on the peace process in the Middle East, issued on 9 December 1991 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 35.

(Signed) Robert J. van SCHAIK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Declaration on the peace process in the Middle East

The European Council attaches great significance to the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, which has launched a process of negotiations on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 which should lead to a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. On the basis of the principles that have long governed their position, the Community and its member States are determined to continue to undertake all possible efforts alongside the United States and the Soviet Union to support this process. In Madrid they pledged their constructive partnership in all phases of the negotiations.

The European Council considers it of vital importance that the momentum gained at Madrid is not dissipated on procedural matters. It noted that the second round of bilateral negotiations has been convened in Washington. These negotiations should be pursued in good faith by all parties. Only then may the way be opened to movement on substance and meaningful confidence-building measures. The European Council considers a halt to Israel's settlement activity in the occupied territories an essential contribution to creating the stable environment that progress in the negotiations requires. Renunciation of the Arab trade boycott is another.

With regard to the situation in the occupied territories, it is important that both sides show restraint and that Israel abide by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The European Council looks forward to a tangible improvement in the situation in these territories, even before the putting in place of interim or other arrangements. In this respect, it notes reports indicating that since the Conference in Madrid, the level of violence there has diminished. Indeed, this Conference has led to an atmosphere of hope, both in the occupied territories and elsewhere, which should not be disappointed.

The European Council reaffirms the commitment of the Community and its member States to make an active practical contribution to progress in the multilateral phase of the negotiations on regional cooperation. It expresses the hope that all parties in the region will participate in these negotiations. The European Council considers that the bilateral and multilateral agendas should go hand in hand, each one reinforcing the other. However, regional cooperation cannot progress faster than movement towards a political settlement. Given its close ties with all the parties involved, the Community and its member States are determined to remain in close contact with all participants and to do all they can to promote significant steps in the direction of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.
