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## R E M A R K S

### **by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini ahead of her meeting with Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu**

*"Thank you, Prime Minister. It's a pleasure for me to start from here. It's my first trip outside of the European Union and there's a reason for that: not only friendship that is there between Israel and the European Union, but also the fact that the new European leadership, the new Commission, has started this mandate, this five-year mandate, with the slogan of a new start. And it would be good to have a new start also in this part of our region.*

*And so my message here is: Count on the European Union to build this new start. We have threats and challenges, more threats than challenges, in the region. It's not only your threats and challenges: it's also in European interests to have stability and security and peace in this part of the region, and we are convinced that European Union can have a major role in supporting a solution.*

*It is true that never as now the situation has been more dangerous in this area, but this could also bring some opportunities in terms of the regional framework. And I believe that the European Union is ready to support efforts in this direction. It would be good if we all managed to lower tensions, verbal and on the ground. What is happening and what has happened here in Jerusalem in the last week is extremely worrying. It is also worrying that after the ceasefire was reached in Cairo in August, we are still having difficulties in advancing with the direct talks. We would encourage, the European Union would always encourage direct talks, not unilateral steps on both sides, to find the solution of the two states: Israel living in full security, not only solving the Palestinian issue, but also with the Arab neighbours.*

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*And we believe there is a potential there to explore in these months and the Palestinians having a state, a proper state.*

*Any step that goes in that direction will have the full support of the European Union in concrete terms, not taking one side but helping the process and supporting the process. Security and peace for all in this region is crucial for European interests, not only for our values that are shared. And I'm also looking forward to fruitful discussion, but especially to working together in the coming years. "*

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