



media release

Global Leaders Support New Israeli-Palestinian Peace Initiatives

Brussels, 1 December 2003: Fifty-eight global leaders – former presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, defence ministers and heads of international agencies – have signed a statement in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace plan formally launched today in Switzerland, and an associated petition initiative.

Both of the initiatives being backed are aimed at creating a new dynamic for peace in the Middle East. The “Geneva Initiative”, negotiated by teams led by former ministers Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo, is the most ambitious blueprint for peace ever written by citizens of the two sides. The “People’s Voice” project, initiated by Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh, aims at gathering mass Israeli and Palestinian public support for similar principles describing the outlines of a permanent status settlement.

The basic elements of the Geneva Initiative blueprint already command majority support among both Israelis and Palestinians, as shown in a poll released on 24 November 2003 commissioned jointly by the James A. Baker III Institute at Rice University and the International Crisis Group (see www.crisisweb.org for media release and poll details).

The citizen initiatives show – at a time of increasing despair and hopelessness among both Israelis and Palestinians – that a comprehensive peace agreement is indeed achievable. The attached statement emphasises that point, and calls on the international community to do everything possible to help make it happen.

The International Crisis Group, which initiated this international statement of support (on the understanding that efforts were under way by others to produce similar expressions of support from within the U.S.), has produced its own series of reports on this subject in July 2002. *Middle East Endgame I: Getting To A Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement*, and *Middle East Endgame II: How A Comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian Peace Settlement Would Look* spell out, in terms very similar to the Geneva Initiative, what the detailed elements of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement might look like; and detailed treaty proposals for resolving other outstanding Arab-Israeli issues are contained in *Middle East Endgame III: Israel, Syria and Lebanon – How Comprehensive Peace Settlements Would Look*. All these reports are accessible on www.crisisweb.org.

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To Israelis and Palestinians

A Statement of Support

On the occasion of the signing today of the “Geneva Initiative” – a blueprint for peace negotiated by teams of Israelis and Palestinians led by former ministers Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo – we express our strong support both for this and the “People’s Voice” petition initiated by Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has taken far too great a toll already. Both peoples have paid dearly in lives and livelihood in a war which both are losing. Every passing day undermines the prospects for a peaceful, two-state solution. As long as the conflict endures, it will be a source of instability and violence for the region and the international community as a whole.

We believe that the best way to move forward is to address at the outset, not at the end of an incremental process, all the basic principles of a fair and lasting solution. Postponing the final outcome makes any progress hostage to extremists on both sides. A process must be devised to give practical and political expression to the heartfelt desire of clear majorities on both sides to end this conflict once and for all.

The Geneva and People’s Voice initiatives both reflect that public opinion, and can help give it new momentum. On the Israeli side, they can help undo the myths taking hold since the collapse of the peace process and onset of violence: that the Palestinian people are not prepared to accept a two state solution and Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state. On the Palestinian side, they can offer an alternative to the current mindset that sees in violence the only possible means of ending the occupation. They send a powerful signal that an alternative to the current situation exists. They have the potential to transform the domestic political dynamics on both sides.

International support will be crucial to translate these endeavors into a concrete mechanism to bring about a lasting peace. The international players most relevant for this purpose – the U.S., E.U., Russia, UN ‘Quartet’, and the members of the Arab League – should wholeheartedly back these initiatives. They should urge both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to be guided by the outcomes most of their peoples want. And they should make clear their own willingness to lend all the political, economic and military support needed to help implement a comprehensive peace agreement.

The Israeli and Palestinian peoples, by making clear their belief in the Geneva and People’s Voice initiatives, can help turn the principles embodied in them into reality. You can count on our support in this endeavor.

Martti Ahtisaari

Former President, Finland

Ali Alatas

Former Foreign Minister, Indonesia

George Alleyne

Former Director, Pan American Health Organization

Oscar Arias Sánchez

Former President, Costa Rica,
Nobel Peace Prize 1987

Lloyd Axworthy

Former Foreign Minister, Canada

Alexander Bessmertnykh

Former Foreign Minister, Soviet Union

Carl Bildt

Former Prime Minister, Sweden

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Former UN Secretary-General

Lakhdar Brahimi

Former Foreign Minister, Algeria

Fernando Henrique Cardoso

Former President, Brazil

Ingvar Carlsson

Former Prime Minister, Sweden

Lord Carrington

Former Foreign and Defence Secretary, UK and NATO Secretary-General

Jorge Castañeda

Former Foreign Minister, Mexico

Claude Cheysson

Former Foreign Minister, France

Jacques Delors

Former President, European Commission

Jiří Dienstbier

Former Foreign Minister, Czechoslovakia

Ruth Dreifuss

Former President, Switzerland

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen

Former Foreign Minister, Denmark

Gareth Evans

Former Foreign Minister, Australia

Mark Eyskens

Former Foreign and Prime Minister, Belgium

José María Figueres

Former President, Costa Rica

Malcolm Fraser

Former Prime Minister, Australia

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

Former Foreign Minister, Germany

Bronisław Geremek

Former Foreign Minister, Poland

Mikhail S Gorbachev

Former President, Soviet Union, Nobel Peace Prize 1990

I K Gujral

Former Prime Minister, India

Bob Hawke

Former Prime Minister, Australia

Bill Hayden

Former Governor-General and Foreign Minister, Australia

Raffi K Hovannisian

Former Foreign Minister, Armenia

F W de Klerk

Former President, South Africa, Nobel Peace Prize 1993

Wim Kok

Former Prime Minister, Netherlands

Masahiko Komura

Former Foreign Minister, Japan

Budimir Lončar

Former Foreign Minister, Yugoslavia

Barbara McDougall

Former External Affairs Secretary, Canada

Gianni de Michelis

Former Foreign Minister, Italy

Boyko Noev

Former Defence Minister, Bulgaria

Sadako Ogata

Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Lord Owen

Former Foreign Secretary, UK

Surin Pitsuwan

Former Foreign Minister, Thailand

Augusto Ramírez-Ocampo

Former Foreign Minister, Colombia

Fidel V Ramos

Former President, Philippines

Jerry John Rawlings

Former President, Ghana

Mary Robinson

Former President, Ireland

Michel Rocard

Former Prime Minister, France

Nafis Sadik

Former Executive Director, UN Population Fund

Salim Ahmed Salim

Former Prime Minister, Tanzania, and Secretary-General OAU

Cornelio Sommaruga

Former President, International Committee of the Red Cross

Kalevi Sorsa

Former Prime Minister, Finland

Eduardo Stein

Former Foreign Minister, Guatemala

Pär Stenbäck

Former Foreign Minister, Finland

Max van der Stoep

Former Foreign Minister, Netherlands

Thorvald Stoltenberg

Former Foreign Minister, Norway

Hanna Suchocka

Former Prime Minister, Poland

Alex Sceberras Trigona

Former Foreign Minister, Malta

George Vassiliou

Former President, Cyprus

Hubert Védrine

Former Foreign Minister, France

Franz Vranitzky

Former Federal Chancellor, Austria

Ernesto Zedillo

Former President, Mexico

1 December 2003

Signatures subsequently received:

Abdou Diouf

Former President of Senegal

Vahit M Halefoğlu

Former Foreign Minister of Turkey