

Procedure file

Basic information		
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1998/2027(COS)	Procedure completed
Middle East: role of the European Union in the peace process and its future assistance		
Subject 6.10.01 Foreign and common diplomatic policy 6.40.05.06 Relations with the countries of the Middle East		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy		22/04/1998
		PSE COLAJANNI Luigi Alberto	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
Council of the European Union	BUDG Budgets		
	CONT Budgetary Control		26/11/1998
		PSE TOMLINSON The Lord John E.	
	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2070	23/02/1998

Key events			
16/01/1998	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0715	Summary
20/02/1998	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
23/02/1998	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
21/01/1999	Vote in committee		Summary
21/01/1999	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0042/1999	
11/03/1999	Decision by Parliament	T4-0191/1999	Summary
11/03/1999	End of procedure in Parliament		
21/06/1999	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1998/2027(COS)

Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 142
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/4/09700

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(1997)0715	16/01/1998	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0042/1999 OJ C 153 01.06.1999, p. 0003	21/01/1999	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0191/1999 OJ C 175 21.06.1999, p. 0192-0282	11/03/1999	EP	Summary

Middle East: role of the European Union in the peace process and its future assistance

OBJECTIVE: to redefine the role which should be played by the European Union in the Middle East peace process. **SUBSTANCE:** The Commission document is a response to the stalemate in the Middle East peace process and its direct impact on the initiatives adopted by the Community in connection with the Barcelona Conference. The failure of the peace process has had a disastrous impact on Europe's economic assistance programme, and the knock-on effect which the Union envisaged in terms of helping to stabilize the region has not been achieved. Instead of attracting private foreign investment, the massive aid from the Union has got bogged down, and economic indicators now show that the living conditions of the Palestinians are deteriorating. Nonetheless, the communication shows that international economic aid, particularly from Europe, has made it possible to keep the process alive and with it the Palestinian Authority. This paradoxical situation therefore makes it desirable to continue the aid. 1998 is the last budgetary year of the aid plan initiated in 1993. In view of the gravity of the situation and in order to give the peace process of chance of survival, the Commission proposes a series of initiatives for the future. These are primarily designed to enhance the role of the Union, both economic and political: 1) bilaterally: the aim is to guarantee the economic development of the Palestinians by eliminating barriers to both domestic and foreign trade. The Commission proposes that the Union should help Israel to eliminate these barriers in the context of common dialogue. It also proposes granting adequate financing for technical assistance projects for the Palestinians; 2) multilaterally: the Union should formulate practical proposals within the framework of the Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWG) which it chairs in order to impart renewed impetus to the regional economic integration process; 3) regionally: the Union should renew its efforts to implement its Euro-Mediterranean policy, which has been at a standstill since the peace process reached deadlock. The Commission particularly proposes organizing a ministerial conference to review the Barcelona process in mid-1998; 4) politically: the Union has positioned itself as an intermediary complementing the USA, as the economic engine of the peace process. It is important that this role should be more correctly recognized and rewarded. The Commission therefore proposes that the role of the Union be re-evaluated in coordination with all parties concerned (Israelis, Palestinians, USA and international community). This new role should be reflected in practical terms at two levels: -with regard to participation, where the Union should be recognized in all the fora established in support of the negotiations between the parties to the conflict, alongside the USA; -with regard to the coordination of financial aid in accordance with a formula to be negotiated with other donors (the Union being the main net contributor to the peace process).?

Middle East: role of the European Union in the peace process and its future assistance

Luigi COLAJANNI (PES, I) voiced concern at the dangers of a rigid approach. He argued that whether or not aid should be provided ought to be based on political assessments. If funding for the police were called into question this would prevent the PA from combating terrorism, which would be a major obstacle to the peace process. To cut off funds for education would in effect leave teaching in the hands of fundamentalists and extremists. Mr MARÍN replied that there was no question of "dropping" areas such as education. However, the watchword must be selectivity and there was a need for agreement between the three institutions (Parliament, Commission and Council) as to what should be financed. Once a programme was drawn up, he planned to submit details of the operating costs to Parliament so that choices could be made on the basis of maximum transparency. Mr Marín's reply anticipated one of the demands made in Mr COLAJANNI's report containing a motion for a resolution on the role of the EU in the peace process and its future assistance to the Middle East, which the Foreign Affairs Committee had adopted earlier that morning. In its report the committee expressed concern about the approach of the fateful date of May 4th, on which, if no progress has been in the peace process, the PA plans to make a unilateral declaration of independence. The Israelis have already announced that, in that case, they would immediately occupy the Territories. The resolution therefore calls for every effort to be made to prompt the Palestinians to postpone the date until after the Israeli general elections in May and June. The committee hopes that the necessary conditions will then exist to enable the principle of "land for peace" to be accepted by Israeli society and to enable the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinians to found their own state to go hand in hand with recognition of Israel's right to security. On the subject of EU funds, the resolution says "swifter action should be taken to ensure that the Commission exerts direct control over the use to which European funds are put, given the unacceptable fact that such funds have been repeatedly misappropriated". In this connection, it supports Commission initiatives "aimed at ensuring total transparency of expenditure and the measures it intends to adopt to this end". ?

Middle East: role of the European Union in the peace process and its future assistance

The Parliament adopted its report, drafted by Mr. Luigi COLAJANNI (I, PES), on the peace process and future of assistance to the Middle East. The House expressed its support for the Middle East peace process and called on all sides to avoid taking actions that would exacerbate the situation. One amendment regrets the fact that the Israeli government subsequently added new unilateral conditions to the original Wye agreement that had brought the implementation of the accord to a standstill. MEPs also want to see an independent Palestinian state and the recognition by the Arab world of the State of Israel's existence. It goes on to express concern over the gaps in proper financial control over EU funding to the region, and an amendment that was passed expresses interest in the outcome of the investigation by the Court of Auditors into the issue.?