

Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini following the meeting with Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister

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Text

Check against delivery Thank you very much Frank [Steinmeier]. Let me start by saying how grateful I am for the chance to exchange views and coordinate at the beginning of my stay in Berlin. It will be a short stay this time as we have very similar agendas today, not only in terms of meetings, meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and meeting with Secretary Kerry later on, but also very similar, if not identical political agendas. I believe that the true essence of showing leadership in a European way is exactly this: putting all the national strengths of diplomacy and policy, I wouldn't say at the service, but in coordination with the European one. I would like to thank you personally for always doing that in an excellent way, always having the European perspective in your national initiatives and bringing that to our European table in a very effective and strong way. The main two points we discussed are the migration and the refugee crisis, also touching upon the preparations of the Leaders' Meeting on Sunday on the Western Balkans route. I also had the chance to brief Frank about the results of my recent visit to Addis Ababa and the preparations of the La Valletta Summit. It was also a good opportunity to hear from Frank about his recent visits in the Gulf, in the Middle East and Tehran; again, coordination is of essence if you want to pass strong, united and unified messages. But apart from that, the Middle East Peace Process, or the lack of Middle East Peace Process, and the Syrian crisis were the core of our talks. On the first issue, on the Middle East, we will both meet Prime Minister Netanyahu later on, separately. I am just heading there from here and I can announce here that tomorrow in Vienna we will have a Quartet Principals' Meeting, following up the one we had in New York at the margins of the UN General Assembly. So I will be there together with Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov and the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General, to coordinate messages, to pass on a strong message to the parties to calm down the situation on the ground, to tackle the situation of the holy sites seriously and with restraint, to deescalate also the rhetoric and to try to start implementation on the ground of some positive steps that could lead to more confidence building. I know it sounds as a desperate agenda in these days, but I believe, and we share this: unless we manage to re-establish some common ground for positive developments, we can only expect negative developments to happen. Things don't change for the better by themselves, we need to work on them diplomatically and this is why, I believe, the meeting tomorrow - and the meetings we are having today, preparing the ground for it - will be important in the sense of gathering the whole international community in a multilateral way to encourage and engage with the parties, to try to create better conditions on the ground, especially in Jerusalem, but also in the West Bank and

Gaza. And when it comes to the Syrian crisis, again it has been an excellent opportunity to exchange and compare notes. We have both had talks in the last couple of weeks with different key actors in the region and not only in the region. And we are indeed - and I can say for myself for sure, but I know this is also true for you Frank - following up very seriously and in a very committed way the indications we shared with all our European Union friends and colleagues, and the Foreign Ministers meeting just a few weeks ago in Luxembourg, to engage seriously with the partners and with the regional actors, to try to start the political process and the transition process as soon as possible in parallel with the military activities that are going on, on the ground. I believe, that coordination in this sense with Secretary Kerry and with Foreign Minister Lavrov whom I will meet tomorrow in Vienna, with the regional actors – Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran – with whom the European Union has a specific role to play given the open channel we have after the reaching of the Iranian deal, is key: they are all going to be pushing in the same direction. This means opening the political transition, opening the political process and trying to find diplomatic solutions to the crisis. Things, as you see, are moving, on different levels, but hopefully in the same direction. And we will use these hours and days, today and tomorrow, to try to see if these different moves on different levels can initiate something useful in that direction. **Q&A** 1) What do you hope and wish for from the Palestinians and from PM Netanyahu? Are you referring to contractual agreements on the use of the Temple Mount, or does it mean more?

2) On the meeting tomorrow: who is attending; what outcome are you expecting; why is FM Steinmeier not attending; HRVP will be there, right? The meeting tomorrow in Vienna - the one I am going to participate to, apart from bilateral meetings that will happen at the margins - is the Quartet Principals. The Quartet on the Middle East Peace Process is the UN, the EU, the US and Russia. This has always been the case, so there was never a discussion to enlarge it to Germany. But it is true; we had in New York an enlarged version of the Quartet, where we invited some key Arab countries and some European – and not only European - friends to join to create an international environment to accompany this process but this is the Quartet itself. So, the format is well established. And I have to say the European Union itself and I have personally invested a lot in revitalizing the work with the Quartet that in the last years was, let's say, not necessarily very proactive. Since I started my mandate, I decided with the full support of my European Union colleagues to revitalize the format as a very effective multilateral format to tackle the crisis in the Middle East. And, reaching out, proactively to three key countries in the region, namely, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, especially with the three links, I would say: the role of Egypt in Gaza strip, the role of Saudi Arabia for what it concerns the Arab Peace Initiative and the role of Jordan, we see it very clearly in these days, regarding the holy sites. And let me add something I forgot to mention before. Tomorrow I will also meet the Jordanian Foreign Minister in Vienna and I am planning to meet President Abbas in Brussels in the coming days. Expectations: briefly, this is a question that we can really answer maybe at the end of this day of consultations rather than now. But the main objective is, first of all, to calm down at least the rhetoric of the leaderships. Because the paradox of the Middle East Peace Process and the situation between Israel and Palestine is that being one of the oldest conflicts we are dealing with,

it is also one of the few for which the final outcome, the final settlement is more or less understood by everybody and it is a matter of political leadership, political will and support internally on the different sides to achieve this. My impression sometimes is that the parties don't realise that today compared to decades ago the regional security situation is different and it is much more dangerous to leave this conflict unsolved. What we see in the holy sites risks to inflame the whole region and far beyond, from Indonesia to Chile, there is not one single meeting - I am sure it happens the same to you - where the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not mentioned. In these times, solving that conflict, showing restraint, calming down the rhetoric, not mixing the political side with the historical or with the cultural or with the religious one is the only way we have to bring a little bit of rationality in the management of this.

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