

PLO NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

THE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

November 2007

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Annapolis Conference?

The Annapolis Conference is an international meeting convened at the US naval base in Annapolis, Maryland on 27 November 2007, with the aim of reviving the Middle East peace process. Following a series of bilateral meetings between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, beginning in February 2007, US President George W. Bush, on 16 July 2007, called for an international meeting “of representatives from nations that support a two-state solution.”¹

2. Who is attending the conference?

The Annapolis Conference signals broad international support for Palestinian and Israeli leaders’ efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. In addition to the United States (the host), most of Arab states, including Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa, as well as the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and representatives of the European Union’s Commission.

Those invited to attend the conference are: United States, Israel, Palestinian National Authority, Algeria, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, European Union Presidency rep. by Portugal, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Yemen.

Other intergovernmental organizations that will attend the conference include: The United Nations represented by the Secretary General, the Arab League represented by its Secretary General, the European Union Commission, the European Union High Representative and the Quartet Special Envoy Tony Blair. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank will attend as observers.

¹ President George W. Bush, July 16, 2007 Speech, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/> (accessed November 26, 2007)

3. Why are the Palestinians attending the conference?

Annapolis represents the first opportunity in seven years to engage in a serious process aimed at reaching an agreement on all final status issues and an end to the conflict. There is overwhelming international consensus, including from Arab states, to stand strong behind the Palestinians and Israelis in their efforts to resume the peace process. The Palestinians welcome this united front to reach a peace treaty involving the resolution of all of the permanent status issues, including borders, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, water and security. Indeed, as stipulated in US President George W. Bush's letter of invitation, the Annapolis conference will be a launching point for negotiations leading to an end of the 40-year Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

The meeting will also serve to launch a multilateral process involving the Arab states, as called for by the Arab Peace Initiative. This initiative represents the Arab states' collective offer of full peace and normalization with Israel in exchange for a peaceful end to the 60-year-old regional conflict.

In addition to vast international support, the Annapolis conference represents a US commitment to re-launch a meaningful peace process, based on full implementation of the following terms of reference: the Roadmap as endorsed by the UN Security Council in UNSC Res. 1515, UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, which provide for the "land for peace" formula, and the Arab Peace Initiative. The US reaffirmed this commitment in the official invitation to the Annapolis conference from President George W. Bush to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

4. What do the Palestinians hope to achieve from the Annapolis conference?

Palestinians are seeking from Annapolis and the period after Annapolis what they have wanted since they embraced the two-state solution in 1988: the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as the capital, living alongside Israel in peace and security, and a just and agreed resolution to the refugees question. Getting there requires the launch of substantive bilateral negotiations with the aim of resolving all permanent status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, water and security, within the next year.

Palestinians hope that the Annapolis Conference will galvanize international support for a framework within which those issues are negotiated and, hopefully, concluded. This framework should provide a clear timeline for reaching a comprehensive agreement, together with a third party mechanism to ensure full and timely implementation of all that is agreed.

In the meantime, the Roadmap as endorsed by the UN Security Council in UNSC Res. 1515 spells out the obligations that both parties are required to implement immediately and in parallel. The Palestinians have actively begun the implementation of their Roadmap

obligations on security, reflecting their commitment to the revival of the peace process. Israel's implementation of its Roadmap obligations is a test of Israel's intentions and seriousness towards a credible peace process.

Under the Roadmap, Israel is obligated to freeze "all settlement activity" without any exceptions – including in East Jerusalem and what Israel refers to as "natural growth" – as well as to dismantle all settlement outposts established since March 2001. Further, Israel must end its policies of land confiscation and home demolitions. Israel is also obliged under the Roadmap to re-open Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, as well as lift the internal closures that restrict Palestinian travel within the West Bank and Gaza Strip.