Conclusions of the Council of the European Union: A call for an urgent de-escalation and cessation of hostilities

Brussels, 19 November 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The European Union expresses grave concern about the situation in Gaza and Israel and deeply regrets the loss of civilian life on both sides. All attacks must end immediately as they cause unjustifiable suffering of innocent civilians. It therefore calls for an urgent de-escalation and cessation of hostilities. It supports the efforts of Egypt and other actors to mediate for a rapid ceasefire and welcomes the mission of the United Nations Secretary General to the region.

2. The European Union strongly condemns the rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip which Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza must cease immediately. There can be no justification for the deliberate targeting of innocent civilians. Israel has the right to protect its population from these kinds of attacks; in doing so it must act proportionately and ensure the protection of civilians at all times. The EU stresses the need for all sides to fully respect international humanitarian law.

3. An immediate cessation of hostilities is in everyone's interest, particularly at a time of instability in the region. The current situation underlines once more the urgent need to move towards a two-state solution allowing both sides to live side-by-side in peace and security. The European Union will continue working with all those with influence in the region to bring this about.