



"Tony Robinson"
<trobinson@europarl.
eu.int>

31/05/2002 17:26

To: undisclosed-recipients;;
cc:
Subject: Party of European Socialists welcomes Middle East
breakthrough

From Tony Robinson, Spokesman, Party of European Socialists
31 May 2002: Tel +32-475-257410

PES WELCOMES MIDDLE EAST BREAKTHROUGH

The Party of European Socialists today welcomed a major breakthrough in the Middle East crisis, under which parties in the region agree that mutual recognition of the states of Palestine and Israel should be the basis of a settlement.

The Israeli Labour Party, a partner in the coalition government, agreed on the plan with Meretz and Fatah at the Socialist International's Council meeting in Casablanca.

Said Henri Nallet, French vice-president of the Party of European Socialists: 'We are delighted that this breakthrough has been achieved. The premise of future talks will be the creation of a Palestinian state.'

A resolution tabled by former Norwegian foreign minister Thorbjorn Jagland, chair of the SI's Middle East committee, says that 'the mutual recognition of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, as two states to live side by side should be the initial commitment before negotiations start between the two people.' Negotiations should be opened immediately and should 'handle all outstanding issues', says the SI resolution. It adds: 'Cease-fire cannot be a condition to the start of negotiations. Extremists cannot be given the upper hand. The parties . . . renounce violence and will refrain from participating in any violent activity that harms civilian lives.'

Delegates gave unanimous support to the SI initiative under which a 'basic common position should be elaborated before an international peace conference with the participation of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, relevant Arab countries, the US, EU, Russia and the UN. The conference would set a timetable for final status negotiations.

The resolution urges member parties involved in the conflict 'to prepare their respective public opinions for a compromise.' It says: 'Israel may not have peace and at the same time keep settlements, while Palestinians may have to accept an internationally supported compromise on the refugee issue.'

The role of the international community in monitoring and funding progress to peace is also set out in the resolution.

Said Mr Nallet: 'The text is an excellent one because it is supported by the three parties in the region and because it really does set out something absolutely new.'

end