

ANNEX 1: Wittenburg Joint Understanding, January 2003

JOINT UNDERSTANDING OF IULA, FMCU, APLA AND ULAI

for the organisation of a joint international local governments conference

We, Mr. Jeremy Smith, Secretary General of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and Mr. Mohamed Boussraoui of the 'Fédération Mondiale des Cités Unies' (FMCU), met between the 24th and 26th of January 2003 in The Hague, The Netherlands, on invitation and facilitation of Mr. Wim Deetman, President of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), Mayor of The Hague, to explore possible actions at the local level to contribute to just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and have agreed to the following Understanding, that has been endorsed by Ghassan Shakah, President of the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), Mayor of Nablus, Adi Eldar, President of the Union of Local Authorities of Israel (ULAI), and Mr. Meir Nitzan, Chairman of the General Assembly of ULAI and Mayor of Rishon LeZion:

Considering the long history of dialogue between the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and the Union of Local Authorities of Israel (ULAI), particularly within the international arena under the umbrella of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and 'la Fédération Mondiale des Cités Unies' (FMCU),

Recalling the international agreement reached under the aegis of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), during the IULA World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, in March 1999, that calls on CEMR to take an active role to enhance peace and cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli people,

Following the outcome of joint working meetings between Senior representatives of APLA and ULAI together with IULA and FMCU, during the joint IULA/FMCU meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico, in June 2002, that agreed that concrete action should be undertaken to organise an international local government conference to take place consecutively in Palestine and Israel,

In pursuit of the discussions that took place in Athens, Rome and the Hague, both sides reaffirm the Understanding reached in Rome, which is attached to this understanding,

In response to the increasingly louder calls of Palestinian and Israeli citizens for security, peace and prosperity, and the stagnation of the peace talks at national level,

Strongly condemning all acts of terror and violence that continue to be inflicted on the Palestinian and Israeli citizens,

Recognizing that it is the obligation and responsibility of the local authorities to proactively work towards ending the occupation by finding a just solution in which the Palestinian and Israeli citizens can live side by side in two states, Palestine

and Israel, in security, peace and prosperity; and that the only manner to achieve this, is through mutual dialogue and cooperation, whereby the Palestinian and Israeli local authorities are to work as partners in order to effectively address the problems that stand in the way of just and lasting peace;

We have reached a further understanding on the following main issues that need to be resolved in negotiations by the respective national governments, supported by the international community, in order to achieve just and lasting peace:

Violence and Terrorism

Both sides reject all acts of violence and terrorism and consider negotiations as the only way to achieve lasting and just peace. At the same time, it is the duty and obligation of both sides, with assistance of the international community, to end the circle of violence and control terrorism on both sides.

Jerusalem

Both sides recognise that Jerusalem should be one united city at municipal level, with free access to all holy places and as two (2) capitals for two (2) states.

Settlements

The basic principle should be “peace and construction”, whereas a solution for the settlements should follow the Understanding reached at Camp David and the Mitchell report

Water

Both sides agree that a common policy should be formulated on a just and equal distribution of water in quality and quantity. For this an international assistance is needed to ensure a sustainable, and just use of water resources.

Refugees

It is considered essential to have a good recognition and understanding of the refugee problem and that the issue of refugees is not only the responsibility for the Palestinian and Israeli authorities, but for the international community as a whole, and finding a just, equitable and agreed solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, while respecting the integrity of both sides.

Transport, Environmental Issues

Moreover, the issues of transport and environment are considered important issues to be discussed in future negotiations.

Borders

Specifically, both sides should negotiate acceptable and safe borders and sovereignty for the two states.

Recognizing the above, we reaffirm our commitment to organize an international local government conference, under the umbrella of the IULA and FMCU, to promote peace and dialogue and seek international support for the construction of Palestinian local government capacities, as well as the local government capacity in Israel.

We consider this conference as an important step in promoting peace and dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli local authorities and their communities, and in establishing an international Municipal Cooperation Programme to support the Palestinian and Israeli local governments.

In this context, we consider the overall objectives of the conference as follows:

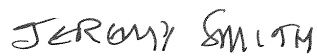
1. To build confidence, trust, dialogue and cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli local authorities and their communities to achieve the ambitions of their citizens to live side by side in peace, freedom, security and prosperity;
2. To identify common goals and a comprehensive vision on how local authorities and their associations can contribute effectively to achieving just and lasting peace for the region;
3. To initiate joint cooperation activities and direct relationships between local authorities in the region to advance the socio-economic development for the citizens of Palestinian and Israeli municipalities, and foster people-to-people activities to improve the atmosphere of understanding between Israeli and Palestinian citizens;
4. To jointly call for solutions (at the human level) to the problems that stand in the way for lasting peace and address the relevant political leadership accordingly;
5. To seek international support from local governments and donor agencies worldwide in achieving our joint objectives

Through the conference we would like to offer the opportunity to municipalities and their representative bodies worldwide to contribute in a constructive and coordinated manner to the above objectives.

We hope that the conference, to take place consecutively in Palestine and Israel, will result in an international agreement among all participating mayors on a joint action plan for a Municipal Cooperation Programme that will be able to effectively contribute to just and lasting peace in the region and that is complementary to the initiatives of ongoing civil society activities.

We express our sincere gratitude for the continued support of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and 'la Fédération Mondiale des Cités Unies' (FMCU) and their willingness to jointly organise the conference, with APLA and ULAI, and ask the new world organisation "United Cities and Local Government" to continue this responsibility. Moreover, we thank Mayor Deetman, President of the Netherlands Association of Municipalities (VNG), for hosting the gathering and VNG International for their willingness to act as secretariat for the international working group that will make the necessary preparations for the conference and an initial outline of the Municipal Cooperation Programme.

We call upon the international donor agencies, especially the European Union, to make available the necessary financial resources to allow us and our international partners to organise the conference in a professional manner.



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Secretary General
International Union of
Local Authorities (IULA)

Mohamed Boussraoui
On behalf of the
Fédération Mondiale des
Cités Unies' (FMCU)




Wim Deetman
Chairman
Netherlands Association
of Municipalities (VNG)
and Mayor of The Hague



Ghassan Shakah
Chairman
Association of Palestinian
Local Authorities (APLA)
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Adi Eldar
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Meir Nitzan
Chairman of the General
Assembly of ULAI and
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