

MIDDLE EAST

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INFO PRIORITY MIDDLE EAST POSTS, EC POSTS, WASHINGTON,  
INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORKDUTCH FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO TUNIS, 25/26 MAY

## SUMMARY

1. VAN DEN BROEK AND ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL AGREE ON PURSUIT OF POLITICAL COMPONENT OF EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE IN MINISTERIAL LEVEL TROIKA MEETING, POSSIBLY DURING UK PRESIDENCY. MEETINGS WITH TUNISIANS CONCENTRATE ON ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH EC. LONG DISCUSSION WITH ARAFAT GIVES NO GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM ABOUT PROGRESS ON ARAB/ISRAEL.

## DETAIL

2. THE DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEFED EC HEADS OF MISSION ON 26 MAY BEFORE LEAVING TUNIS AT THE END OF HIS 24 HOUR VISIT. HE STRESSED THAT FULL REPORT WOULD BE CIRCULATED BY COREU FROM THE HAGUE. HIS BRIEFING WAS THEREFORE IMPRESSIONISTIC RATHER THAN PRECISELY DETAILED. FOLLOWING WERE MAIN POINTS.

## ARAB LEAGUE / EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE

3. VAN DEN BROEK AND KLIBI (OMRAN WAS ALSO PRESENT AT THEIR MEETING) HAD AGREED THAT THE DIALOGUE NEEDED TO BE REVIVED AND THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PURSUE THE POLITICAL COMPONENT OF THE DIALOGUE IN TROIKA MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. SUCH DISCUSSION SHOULD HAVE 'OPEN AGENDA' AND BE ON CONDITION THAT MEETING DID NOT BECOME EDITORIAL COMMITTEE FOR A COMMUNIQUE. (WHEN OMRAN HAD SUBSEQUENTLY SOUGHT TO STRESS NEED FOR A POLITICAL COMMUNIQUE, VAN DEN BROEK HAD TERSELY WARNED HIM OFF PUTTING AT RISK THE EC'S WILLINGNESS TO HAVE A TROIKA MEETING BY BEING DOGMATIC ABOUT A COMMUNIQUE).

4. ON TIMING, VAN DEN BROEK HAD RULED OUT A TROIKA MEETING BEFORE END OF DUTCH PRESIDENCY, BUT ENVISAGED POSSIBLE MEETING DURING UK PRESIDENCY, PERHAPS IN SEPTEMBER IN MARGINS OF UNGA IN NEW YORK.

## EC/TUNISIA

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5. VAN DEN BROEK CALLED ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND HAD TALKS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CAID ESSEBSI. TUNISIANS HAD DWELT ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, IN PARTICULAR THE QUESTION OF TUNISIAN EXPORTS TO EMERGED EC. WITHOUT MAKING ANY COMMITMENT, VAN DEN BROEK HAD SAID EC WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF TUNISIA'S CONCERNS AND WOULD CONTINUE EFFORTS TO RESOLVE MATTERS SATISFACTORILY.

6. IN REVIEW OF ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM, CAID ESSEBSI HAD BEEN PESSIMISTIC. TUNISIANS SEEMED LESS PREOCCUPIED BY JORDAN/PLO RIFT THAN BY STRONG BELIEF THAT ISRAEL WAS UTTERLY UNWILLING TO COOPERATE IN ANY EFFORTS TOWARDS A SOLUTION, AND THAT THE US WAS CURRENTLY NEITHER ABLE NOR WILLING TO MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT.

#### PLO AND ARAB/ISRAEL

7. VAN DEN BROEK HAD A TWO AND A HALF HOUR MEETING WITH ARAFAT LATE ON SUNDAY EVENING. QADDOUMI, ABU JAAFAR, AND OTHERS WERE PRESENT. DISCUSSION HAD BEEN TEDIOUS AND FRUSTRATING. ARAFAT HAD INDULGED IN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND REPEATEDLY REFERRED TO THE NUMEROUS TEXTS WHICH HAD CIRCULATED DURING THE JORDAN/PLO NEGOTIATIONS. VAN DEN BROEK HAD PRESSED ARAFAT ON ACCEPTANCE OF 242 AND 338, TO WHICH THE RESPONSE WAS THAT PLO COULD NOT DO SO WITHOUT SIMULTANEOUS RECOGNITION OF RIGHT OF SELF DETERMINATION. THERE HAD BEEN LONG DISCUSSION OF CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND HOW IT MIGHT BE REALISED. VAN DEN BROEK SAID THAT ARAFAT STILL SEEMED TO HOLD TO THE FORMULATIONS OF THE 11 FEBRUARY ACCORD AND THUS DISTANCED HIMSELF FROM THE MORE RECENT HARDER LINE (EG IN PLO RESPONSE TO KING HUSSEIN'S SPEECH) WHICH EMPHASISED THE GOAL OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE AND THE RECOVERY OF TERRITORY THROUGH ARMED STRUGGLE. VAN DEN BROEK ALSO THOUGHT IT SIGNIFICANT THAT ARAFAT REFRAINED FROM CRITICISM OF KING HUSSEIN AND LAID BLAME FOR PRESENT STALEMATE ON US AND ISRAEL.

8. OVERALL, VAN DEN BROEK'S IMPRESSION WAS THAT ALTHOUGH THE SUPPORT THE PLO CONTINUED TO ENJOY IN WEST BANK AND GAZA HAD BOLSTERED PLO'S CONFIDENCE, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF NEW ELEMENTS OR EVOLUTION IN PLO THINKING AND THUS LITTLE SCOPE FOR ANY MOVE FORWARD IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

9. VAN DEN BROEK WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE FACT THAT HE HAD MET ARAFAT, THOUGH PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, COULD NOT BE REPRESENTED AS HAVING REINFORCED ARAFAT'S PERSONAL POSITION NOR LED TO ANY CONCESSION BY THE EC TO THE PLO.

#### TERRORISM

10 WITH BOTH KLIBI AND ARAFAT VAN DEN BROEK HAD SPOKEN FIRMLY. VIOLENCE AIMED AT INNOCENT PEOPLE WAS UTTERLY UNACCEPTABLE, AND THOSE WHO BACKED SUCH ACTIONS COULD NOT EXPECT TO HAVE NORMAL RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OF THE EC. DESPERATION AND FRUSTRATION OVER POLITICAL PROBLEMS WAS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR INDISCRIMINATE TERRORISM AGAINST INNOCENT PEOPLE.

#### CONCLUSION

11. VAN DEN BROEK FELT HIS VISIT HAD SERVED ITS PURPOSE AND FULFILLED THE REMIT OF THE TWELVE. MEETING WITH KLIBI HAD CLARIFIED DIALOGUE POSSIBILITIES. THE FACT THAT NOTHING NEW HAD EMERGED FROM TALKS WITH ARAFAT WAS UNSURPRISING IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

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