

Annapolis Conference, November 27 2007

Full text of Bush's speech at Annapolis, including joint statement

Thank you for coming. Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas, Secretary General Ban, former Prime Minister Blair, distinguished guests, welcome to one of the finest institutes we have in America, the United States Naval Academy.

We appreciate you joining us in what I believe is an historic opportunity to encourage the expansion of freedom and peace in the holy land.

We meet to lay the foundation for the establishment of a new nation, a democratic Palestinian state that will live side by side with Israel in peace and security.

We meet to help bring an end to the violence that has been the true enemy of the aspirations of both the Israelis and Palestinians.

We're off to a strong start.

I'm about to read a statement that was agreed upon by our distinguished guests.

"The representatives of the government of the state of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, represented respectively by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas, in his capacity as chairman of the PLO executive committee and president of the Palestinian Authority, have convened in Annapolis, Maryland, under the auspices of President George W. Bush of the United States of America, and with the support of the participants of this international conference having concluded the following joint understanding:

"We express our determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering and decades of conflict between our peoples; to usher in a new era of peace, based on freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect and mutual recognition; to propagate a culture of peace and nonviolence; to confront terrorism and incitement, whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis."

"In furtherance of the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, we agree to immediately launch good-faith bilateral in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements.

"We agree to engage in vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations and shall make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008."

"For this purpose, a steering committee led jointly by the head of the delegation of each party will meet continuously as agreed.

"The steering committee will develop a joint work plan and establish and oversee the work of negotiations teams to address all issues, to be headed by one lead representative from each party.

"The first session of the steering committee will be held on 12 December, 2007.

"President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert will continue to meet on a biweekly basis to follow up the negotiations in order to offer all necessary assistance for their advancement.

"The parties also commit to immediately implement their respective obligations under the performance-based road map to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict issued by the Quartet on 30 April, 2003" - this is called the road map - "and agree to