

## **Text of President Mahmoud Abbas' speech**

"In the name of God, His Excellency Mr. President Hosni Mubarak, his Majesty King Abdullah the Second, Mr. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, dear ladies and gentlemen, I first would like to start to express my gratitude and appreciation to President Mubarak and to the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this meeting as a continuity of the Egyptian effective role in sponsoring the peace process in our region.

"I also thank His Majesty King Abdullah for his effort and the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in this regard. And I would like to congratulate His Majesty and Her Majesty Queen Rania with a newborn prince, Hashim, and also congratulate him on his birthday.

"We have agreed with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to cease all acts of violence against the Israelis and against the Palestinians wherever they are. Tranquillity and quiet that will be witnessed and in our land, starting today, is the beginning for a new era. The beginning of peace and hope, what announced today in addition to being the implementation of the first article of the road map that was established by the quartet. It is also a step -- and a basic step, an important step that provides a new opportunity for restoring the peace process and its momentum and so that the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples restore hope and confidence in the possibility for achieving peace.

"I believe that we all understand our big responsibilities and joint responsibilities to consolidate (ph) this opportunity and to development. This can be achieved through an urgent work of restoring the spirit of partnership and reciprocity and to avoid unilateral steps.

"And we have, starting this very moment, to protect what we have already announced, to provide the suitable mechanisms toward implementation. What we agree on today is just the beginning of a process of bridging the gap and difference among all of us.

"We differ on several issues. And this may include settlement, the release of prisoners, the wall closing institutions in Jerusalem. We will not be able to solve all of these issues today, but our positions towards these issues are clear and firm. Intensifying our efforts will lead us to implementing another obligation on the road map, which is resuming the negotiations of the final status in order to end the Israeli occupation that started in 1967, of the Palestinian territory and solving all of the issues pertaining to the final status, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and other issues which were kept for the final status and negotiations according to the terms of reference in the road map, mentioned in the road map.

"Mr. President, His Majesty, Mr. Prime Minister, just less than one month ago the Palestinian people went to the ballot boxes for the presidential elections, which were held after the departure of President Yasser Arafat. In this remarkable democratic practice, the Palestinian people embodied through this elections their setting to the just peace that will put and end to dictates of war, violence and occupation. Peace that means the establishment of a Palestinian state, or the state of -- the democratic state of independent Palestine along the State of Israel, as mentioned in the road map plan.

"Here in the city of Sharm el-Sheikh, the city of peace, renew on behalf of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the Palestinian Authority, our adherence to the terms of reference of the peace process and to the resolutions of international legitimacy and all the resolutions endorsed by the PLO, the Palestinian government, and the government of Israel, and the road map as well.

"And also I assert our interest in respecting all our obligations and implementing all our commitments. And will save no effort whatever to protect this newborn opportunity of peace, that is provided through what we have already declared here today. We hope that our brothers in the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, we hope that they will continue their good efforts as well as we hope that the quartet, the international quartet, will resume its responsibilities to achieve acceleration of progress on the Palestinian/Israeli with reviving a peace process, as well, on the Syrian and Lebanese track as -- tracks as one.

"It is high time that the Palestinian people restore their freedom and independence. It is high time that the decades, the long decades of suffering and pain would stop. It is high time that our people enjoy peace and their right to live a normal life, just like all other peoples in the world under the sovereignty of law, under one authority and one weapon and with political plurality.

"We look forward to that day and hoping it will come as soon as possible in order that the language of negotiations will replace the language of bullets and cannons and in which neighbourhood and livelihood will prevail instead of the war; and in order to provide our

grandsons and our future generations, Palestinian and Israelis, a different tomorrow, a *promising tomorrow*.

"This is a new opportunity. A new opportunity of peace is won today in the city of peace. Let us all pledge to protect this opportunity in order to see that the wish of peace becomes a true and daily fact in this region.

Thank you very much".