

GREAT DECISIONS

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The EU plays an important role in post conflict society. Could you tell me about what kind of toolkit you use to build peace, some of the experiences you have had in the past and some of the challenges you face in the upcoming year?

We [the EU] have been engaged in crisis management, peace keeping and peace making for ten years. We are an older continent and we have had experience doing operations with both military and civilian forces. I think for me, that has been one of the most interesting experiences. Both the civilian point of view and the military point of view are required and the fact that we have been doing all of the planning and all of the action from the very beginning has been very successful in Africa, Asia, and in the Balkans in particular.

So, the most important thing for me now is awareness. I have to be aware that these types of problems need to be resolved through continuous engagement: we need to be engaged from the beginning, until the end so we can take all of the elements into consideration: civilian, military, NGOs, aid etc.

Everything has to be planned from the beginning because if not the possibility of success can be limited.

Two of the biggest crises facing the international community are Iraq and Afghanistan. Neither of those situations took into account the advice that you just gave.

I figure Iraq and the Afghanistan of today are different. In Iraq the war was started purely militarily. I do think that was a mistake. I think from the beginning, as I said before, all of the elements needed to be put into place. In the beginning the military component had more weight and it was a mistake not to have the other elements in place such as reconstruction, reconciliation if possible, etc. In Afghanistan today I hope

that we will have the possibility of a new contract or compact between the international community and the new government in Afghanistan. That will lead us to a political exit. I think that at the end of today, all of the problems are political in nature. Therefore, at the end of the day you need to have an exit strategy that is political. In order to do that, you have to put together all of the elements that I mentioned before.

You also need to keep in mind that at the end of the day all of the conflicts have a solution, which is political.

Moving to Iran – you have been playing a key role in trying to bring the US, Iran and other key players to the table to begin discussing possible disarmament of Iran’s alleged nuclear program. What is your vision for getting these talks off of the ground?

We are going to maintain what we call the double track approach. The double track approach is an approach using cooperation and dialogue as a political solution to a program which will be strictly civilian. All of the countries which have signed a non proliferation treaty will have the right to have that program. That right comes accompanied with some responsibilities. The responsibility is to give to the rest of the international community the objective guarantee that these programs are strictly civilian with no military intervention. That is what we don’t have from Iran. I hope that by 2010 we will have solved this problem.

The double track approach is an approach of dialogue, but it is also an approach of sanctions because without that pressure on Iran we will never move in the direction of being a normalized country vis-à-vis the non proliferation treaty.

A similar question on the Middle East Peace Process: looking forward to the upcoming year, what do you see occurring?

The beginning of 2010 will be a very important year because elections between the Palestinians are going to occur. I hope that by that time we will have already created a new dynamic.

What do I mean by a new dynamic? I mean a process by which through mediation from the international community, both sides will create the conditions to come to a final agreement on the basic issues. These basic issues are the borders, Jerusalem, security and refugees. All of these things have to be resolved. The implementation may take a longer time but we need to at least have a definition of the parameters before the final elections take place in Palestine at the end of January.

When we talk about these issues another country comes into play, which is Russia. Europe has had a somewhat rocky relationship with Russia over the past few years.

What is your advice in terms of moving forward in regard to the EU's overall relationship with Russia?

We [the EU] need to have to have a great relationship with Russia. That can be done from many directions – from the economy, to energy security to the question related to our neighborhood.

We have a common neighborhood. There are countries which used to have a relationship with Russia that now want to have a relationship with the EU. Russia should know, and we should know that those countries have the right to choose what type of neighborhood they want to have, what type of relationship they want to have with Russia and what type of relationship they want to have with the EU. The idea of spheres of influence – are part of the past, not part of the present or the future. But everybody should be obliged to have a good relationship with all of their neighbors. This is something that we have to try to create. It is the responsibility of sovereign states to choose where they want to be, who they want as friends and what relationships they want to their neighbors.

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