The Council continues to support a settlement negotiated on the basis of the fundamental principles established in the framework of Madrid and Oslo and subsequent agreements, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. From the beginning, the Council has lent its support to the efforts of the United States to relaunch negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Since the beginning of the clashes, the EU has not ceased to work for an end to violence and for dialogue to be taken up again at the highest level. The EU’s Special Envoy, Ambassador Moratinos, has remained in the region almost permanently, in close contact with the Parties, to facilitate the search for an end to the crisis. Following the negotiations held in Paris on 4 October 2000 under the aegis of the Presidency, the Secretary-General/High Representative went to the region to help prepare the ground for the Summit held in Sharm el Sheikh on 17 October, in which he was an active participant.

At that Summit, which brought together Mr Arafat, Mr Barak, President Clinton, President Mubarak, King Abdullah II of Jordan, the UN Secretary-General and the Secretary General/High Representative, a decision was taken to create a commission to establish the facts about the violence in the Palestinian territories. The Secretary General/High Representative will participate in the work of this commission, alongside the former Turkish President Suleiman Demirel, the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Thorbjørn Jagland and former United States Senators George Mitchell and Warren Rudman. The Council welcomes the fact that the commission has begun its work. It has noted Israel's decision temporarily to suspend its participation in the commission and would urge the Parties to resume their discussions as quickly as possible, since the outcome originally planned for the end of March 2001 should provide a positive contribution to the Peace Process.

The Council has just adopted the new MEDA II Regulation. It aims to support the efforts which Mediterranean partners, including the Palestinians, are making to reform their economic and social structures. For the period 2000-2006 it will be worth € 5,350 thousand million. It will make possible a substantial simplification of procedures, leading to speedier disbursement.

The possibilities for humanitarian intervention are rather a matter for ECHO, the European Community Humanitarian Office. In July, humanitarian aid operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria received funding of € 8.5 million and in September a sum of € 3,545 million was given for assistance to southern Lebanon.

Moreover, the Union supports the Palestinians with major financial aid programmes outwith the MEDA programme, particularly in the framework of Community financial and technical cooperation with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for 1999-2003 (Regulation (EC) No 2840/98), and also specific actions financed under other budget headings, its contribution to UNRWA and the bilateral programmes of its Member States, all of which make the Union the principal donor to the Peace Process.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3477/00
by Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(8 November 2000)
Subject: Cable pipes through the Brabantse Wal special protected zone

In July of this year 24 cable pipes were laid in the frontier park 'De Zoom — Kalmthoutse Heide' (part of the Brabantse Wal). They are to be used as protective sheaths for optical-fibre cables which have still to be installed. Heavy equipment was used in the laying, with the result that substantial areas of greenery were destroyed and the peace of the area was disturbed. The Brabantse Wal is designated a special protected zone under the Wild Birds Directive. The role of the local authority of Woensdrecht appears to be confined to ex post monitoring of the work carried out.
Does the Commission share the view that the cable pipes in question should not have been laid through the frontier park, particularly as bordering the park there is a paved path which could have been used as an alternative route for the pipes?

Does the Commission also think that the local authority of Woensdrecht should at least indicate a form of compensation to restore the damage caused?

Does the Commission share the view that the Dutch authorities should improve the way in which they communicate to local authorities the significance and the substance of the Wild Birds Directive to prevent a repetition of this sort of incident?

**Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

**(18 December 2000)**

The Commission was not aware that 24 cable pipes had been laid in the frontier park 'De Zoom – Kalmthoutse Heide' (part of the Brabantse Wal) in July 2000.


According to Article 6(3) any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a SPA shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site. The national authorities shall agree to the project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the site and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

According to Article 6(4) if, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, the project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

The cable pipes as such are not likely to have significant effects on the SPA. The destruction of greenery could have had significant effects within the meaning of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of Directive 92/43/EEC. This depends on the circumstances of the case. However, the Commission has not received specific information about this. If there were no significant effects the authorities are neither obliged to consider alternatives nor to demonstrate that there were imperative reasons of overriding public interest nor to take compensatory measures under Article 6(4).

In first instance it is the responsibility of the Member States to ensure that Community law is complied with at all levels. Since compliance is a matter for the Member States the Commission is unable to recommend how this should be done.

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