

## Government Response to the Report of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

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place the information, data, and methodologies that will be needed once negotiations resume;

- declared conviction that the status of Jerusalem can be resolved only as part of a general settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute;
- Canada is supporting an initiative by the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto to identify new and practical recommendations on the administration and sovereignty of the Old City and Holy Sites in Jerusalem using economic, religious and cultural concerns of Israelis and Palestinians as a starting point to formulate durable and workable solutions.

The Government's position on incitement in the Middle East region is an extension of our domestic legislation and Canadian values, and we take all relevant opportunities to remind parties to the conflict of the importance of combating incitement.

Concrete examples of Canadian policy in action:

- The Government has supported an initiative by Sesame Workshop and its local partners to develop educational materials and a community outreach program to complement a television program for young children in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Exposure to the series has helped Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli children learn more about their own and each other's language and culture which, in turn, is helping break cultural stereotypes;
- The Government is also supporting an innovative effort by UNRWA to teach Palestinian children in refugee camps in Syria the importance of tolerance, self-esteem and peaceful conflict resolution using "popular theatre methodology". This project is spearheaded by a Canadian educator based in Damascus.

In recent months there have been three important developments which will affect the future course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: i) Prime Minister Sharon's plan for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank is moving ahead; ii) President Bush's reaffirmation, since his re-election, of his commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state; and iii) the election on January 9 of a new Palestinian Authority President. These developments have opened a window of opportunity for progress toward peace in the Middle East, as evidenced by the agreement between Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas at Sharm-el-Sheikh on February 8 to cease mutual violence.

The Government believes that it is important to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority. In this respect, Canada will consider how best to support Palestinian governance, security during and after Israeli withdrawal, and developing the Palestinian economy.