

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT



32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 119200, Moscow G-200; tel.: (495) 244 4119, fax: 244 4112
e-mail: dip@mid.ru, web-address: www.mid.ru

**Vladimir Putin met with the President of the Palestinian National Authority,
Mahmoud Abbas, Sochi, May 15, 2006**

The conversation took place in the President's Bocharov Ruchei residence in Sochi.

They discussed various aspects of their bilateral cooperation and also possible ways to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Beginning of Meeting with the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas

Vladimir Putin: Mr President, please allow me to welcome you to Russia. I am very glad that we are able to meet regularly. I am happy to see our friend here as our guest and to have the opportunity to talk not only about issues concerning the development of the Palestinian territory and the settlement with Israel, but the whole range of regional problems. I know that you are making a great deal of effort to settle the situation in the territories and to create the required conditions for normal development there. You know that Russia has always been a reliable and consistent friend of the Palestinian people. I am very happy to have the opportunity today to discuss the actual problems you face and the various ways that Russia could provide assistance in resolving these problems.

Welcome to Russia.

Mahmoud Abbas: I am happy to be here today your Excellency. I thank you for the opportunity to exchange opinions on issues that we are both interested in. When on Russian territory we always feel that we are in a friendly state that invariably provides support to the Palestinian people. And our friend, the Russian Federation, is always at our side, even in the most difficult, most critical moments. For that reason we express our deep gratitude and respect for the help that the Russian Federation gives us, including help that stems from your personal orders, your Excellency. This is evidence of the close bonds that link the two peoples. For this reason I would like to express our feelings once again. We are very happy to be in a friendly state and to exchange opinions with you. To learn about your various positions, first and foremost as our friend and, secondly, as an important and influential state within the Quartet of international mediators.

Your Excellency, these days we are making large efforts to help our people out of a serious economic crisis. We hope that we will overcome this crisis as quickly as possible, otherwise we will incur extreme hardships. We also expect that the new Israeli government will start negotiating with us since we are its partner and believe in the process of peaceful settlement.

Negotiations are the only thing that will allow us to find a settlement in the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict, to find a compromise that would please both peoples and would put an end to the many regional problems.

We also believe in the effectiveness of the Road Map that the Quartet suggested since we consider that this plan is an important, if not the only, way to reach a political settlement.

As you know, the Palestinian problem is intrinsically linked with the surrounding circumstances and for that reason many explosive situations directly influence our own situation. Your Excellency, we are here to exchange opinions on the different ways to start the political process and also because this is crucially important after a new government has been formed in Israel.

I will also use this opportunity to thank you personally for the help that you gave the Palestinian National Authority. I would like to emphasize that it was the first help that we received from all our friends in the world.

We unfailingly wish you success in your own affairs and progress in your own country. In connection with this we point out that we read your latest speech with interest. Your speech defines the prospects for the development of the Russian Federation under your leadership in a clear and precise way. We felt that your speech was designed to be comprehensive and addressed the most topical problems that Russia is facing today. We consider your speech to be evidence of the Russian Federation's determination to move forward under your leadership and to once again return to the place that it deserves and merits in the international arena.