

Good afternoon everyone. First of all let me express my warm thanks once again to President Abbas and all his colleagues who have attended the conference here today but also to the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to the Presidency of the European Commission, Condoleezza Rice on behalf of the United States of America and the Foreign Ministers of many different European and Arab and other countries who have attended the conference here today. I think it may just help if I try and explain what we've been trying to achieve through the course of this conference and you will have I think now the 17-page document that is the communiqué and will set out for you in detail the agreements that we've reached. But the thing I really want to say is this – everybody can talk about the possibility of an independent, viable Palestinian state; we can all make speeches about it; we can all make declarations in favour of it. What we have today is an agreement not just on behalf of the Palestinian authority that has got to usher in such a state, but also on behalf of the whole of the international community as to the practical steps, the foundation stones necessary to create that viable state in the future, and without those foundation stones it simply will not happen. The agreement that we have reached today is an agreement which has three sections to it. The first is in respect of governance, where the Palestinian authority have set out the steps that they want to take, steps in relation to elections, steps in relation to the institutions of any future Palestinian state; measures in respect of security, to bring coherence to security structures to make sure we've the best possible chance of defeating the terrorism that will inevitably want to disrupt this process; and measures also in respect of economic and social development because that is a vital aspect of the future for any Palestinian state. And in addition to those measures, which some of you will see summarised before you, the actual laws, the practical steps necessary, there is the commitment by the international community to support that because building this capacity and capability takes a great deal of work. And in respect of governance, the European Commission, not only the European Commission but the European Commission principally has agreed to do a lot of the work there in order to assist the Palestinian authority with what they want to achieve there. In respect of security there is to be a United States security co-ordinating group led by General Ward, who also attended the conference here today, which will co-ordinate the support for

the measures necessary to get proper security structures. And then in relation to economic and social development, the World Bank obviously, whose President Jim Wolfenson attended today, plays a crucial role. And so what you have today right from the very outset, I've tried to say to people what this conference can be and what it can't be. What it can't be is a substitute for the eventual negotiation of a final settlement between Israel and Palestine. That is something that must await a future date. However, if that is to succeed, what must be clear is what are the building blocks of that independent, viable Palestinian state – viable not just in terms of its territory, which should be contiguous as President Bush set out last week, but viable also in terms of its institutions. That's the purpose of it. And what we've achieved today is an international consensus upon that. I also want to make one other point, which is you know why is it so important for us here, for us here not just in Britain but in Europe and elsewhere, to give this support? I described it recently as the single most pressing political challenge. There are many other challenges that we face, debating some of them at the G8 later this year, but I'd describe this as the most pressing political challenge for this reason. Right round the world, in Britain, in Europe, elsewhere, not just in Israel, in the Palestinian territory, in the Middle East but right round the world this is the issue that causes as much misunderstanding, division, concern, worry as virtually any other in the whole of the international community and if we are able to make progress on it, that is relevant and of interest of course primarily to the Palestinian people, to the Israeli people. It is also a major part of ensuring the security and stability of countries like Britain, of the European Union, of the whole of the rest of the world. You know much of the poison that we want to take out of international relations has swirled around as a result of the failure to make progress on this issue. The benefit, if we are able to succeed, will not just be felt by the Palestinian people or the Israelis, vital and primary though that is, it will be felt by all of us. That's why it's important to do it. We had a reminder last Friday in the terrorist act in Tel Aviv of how there will be people who try to disrupt this progress. The best answer we can give from the international community is to make it clear that these terrorists who want to destroy the possibility of people living side by side in peace are not going to succeed. They are not going to succeed in Palestine; they are not going to succeed anywhere else; they are not going to succeed

in Israel. Now I think the other interesting thing that's happening is that the changes that President Abbas and his colleagues want to see and we want to support are part of a whole series of changes going through this region at the moment and for the past few years on occasions times have seemed very dark indeed. I think we can see some light. We don't over-state it. We don't become complacent about progress towards it but I think today's conference hopefully is one step and a significant one to achieving the goal that you I know Mr President want to see, that your people want to see and that all of us want to see, which is an Israel confident of its security, living side by side in peace with an independent, viable Palestinian state. I hope we can achieve it. Thank you, sir.