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Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner on cutting fuel supplies to Gaza

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Brussels, 21 January 2008

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner on cutting fuel supplies to Gaza

***Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy
Benita Ferrero-Waldner on the cutting of fuel supplies to Gaza***

"I condemn the rocket fire into Israel and we fully understand Israel's need to defend its citizens. I have called for an immediate ceasefire.

However, the recent decision to close all border crossings into Gaza as well as to stop the provision of fuel will exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and risks escalating an already difficult situation on the ground.

Following the closure, the only Power Plant in Gaza has completely shut down. Cutting the supply of fuel jeopardises the electricity production and the supply of clean water. Over the weekend we have already seen blackouts in parts of Gaza, affecting both homes and hospitals. Closing the crossings will also result in shortages of food, medical and relief items.

I urge the Israeli authorities to restart fuel supplies and open the crossings for the passage of humanitarian and commercial supplies.

Neither the blockade nor the recent military strikes are able to prevent the rocket attacks. Only a credible political agreement this year, as foreseen at Annapolis, can turn Palestinians away from violence. That is why we must support Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas in their current efforts."