



MIGUEL ÁNGEL MORATINOS

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain

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This is a good moment to turn to an international expert on international negotiations and agreements, the Former Foreign Minister of Spain, Miguel Angel Moratinos.

Miguel Angel MORATINOS

Good morning. Thank you to the organisers for inviting me and my friend, Thierry de Montbrial and the Qatari authorities. I am always very happy to be back in my second home, Qatar. I used to live here and it is always a pleasure to see old friends and colleagues. I want to start with an obvious comment, that we have all been saying, in the speeches from the Qatari Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister of France, from my friend Saeb and Youssef Amrani, everybody has underlined that we live in a new world. The problem is that we all know we live in a new world but we do not really respond to the challenges of this new world.

Let me tell you about my own experience on 31 December 1999. On the eve of the new millennium, we had all had a good dinner, a drink a dance and we were waiting for the new millennium and, the next morning, we woke up with a hangover, put on our ties, and went about our business as usual. We thought that nothing had changed. I remember that Itamar and Saeb thought that we were going to have peace between Israel and Palestine. We had a Clinton administration; we had the best conditions; Hafez al Assad was practically convinced to make peace in Syria and in Palestine. Then 9/11 happened and the whole security challenge collapsed. The Twin Towers collapsed and the Bush administration made, from my point of view, an extremely serious strategic mistake, and then nothing happened. We continued as if nothing had happened and then we had to wait until December 2007 and Lehman Brothers collapsed, the financial system collapsed, and we did not change. The paradox is then that from 11/9 the President of the United States is Donald Trump. We should be aware that we are living in a different world. We are living in a new world and that is completely reflected in the Middle East, the epicentre of old and new agendas for diplomacy, global terror, war and peace, conflict, refugees, etc.

We are prepared for this, or we are not prepared for this. We want to change and address the issues, or we do not, but there are three main questions. Syria, on which I do not want to elaborate – the Prime Minister has already mentioned ceasefire, end of violence, end of war, etc. We will try and make it the sooner the better. Let us go to my personal and I would say professional living and that is the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Next year, 2017, is a special year. You know, diplomats and politicians like to have some sort of historical reference. November next year brings together several historical events related to the Arab Israeli conflict. The Balfour Declaration and the Jewish homeland were on 2 November, 100 years ago. UN resolution 181 about partition to create Jewish and Arab states and some international areas, was passed on 29 November 70 years ago. Security Council Resolution 242 on the occupation areas was passed on 22 November 1967, after the Six-Day War.

Let us try to understand what happened in these 100 years. We can and should try to solve this lasting conflict because instability in the Middle East will continue if the Palestinian Israeli issue is not resolved, even if we want to defeat Daesh or make peace with Syria internally. For that reason, we should be prepared because we do not know what the new US administration is going to do. During the campaign, we heard candidate Trump make quite extraordinary and worrying announcements at an American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) meeting. It was a



special gathering but I do not know if they will move the US embassy to Jerusalem, or if they will maintain a different policy towards the Palestinians.

Of course, we have to be prepared; we do not know what will happen but, once and for all, why do Arabs and Europeans not have a Plan A and Plan B in case something goes wrong? Why do we have to wait for Godot to try to solve all the issues? Why cannot the Arabs, the Palestinians, the Europeans offer the Israelis a plan like a business initiative with a French initiative to be together to try to solve the problem and put the Israeli government into the negotiation process? My message is that we should not wait for what Mr Trump is going to do, but to prepare ourselves. Youssef Amrani asked: what should Europe do? Europe should not wait for action from the US; we should lead. The French Prime Minister was wise to say that he would continue to lead this initiative. That is my plea.

Finally, if we succeed with the Syrians and the Palestinians, we then have to look to the future of the region and on that I finish. I think that we all know that Sykes Picot is over. We know that from the security point of view and our Chinese friends say that we need stability in the region. How are we going to guarantee stability? Why not take the example of European security with the 1975 Helsinki Act? We are here in Doha, my dear friend and the rest of my Qatari friends, why do they not have the courage to go for a Doha Act, like the Helsinki Act, to have a comprehensive, collective security system for the whole region? It is a paradox, that in the Middle East there is not a collective security system. You are behind the American security system, or you are under Iranian threat. Why do you not move forward and get everyone around the same table including Israel and Iran, Arabs, Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, everybody who has certain things to do so that we cannot a multilateral framework that cannot guarantee peace, cooperation, and security for the future? Thank you.