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### **Statement of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, PES President**

It is with great sadness and emotion that I have learned about the death of President Yasser Arafat today in Paris.

On behalf of the Party of European Socialists, on my own personal behalf, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mr Arafat's wife, to his relatives and to the Palestinian people.

Mr Arafat dedicated his entire life to the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and became a strong symbol of the struggle for independence. Founder of the Fatah movement, that became a member of the Socialist International, he was the indisputable leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and elected President of the Palestinian Authority.

I have met President Yasser Arafat regularly over the past years. I appreciated his determination in working for the rights of the Palestinian people to live peacefully in a sovereign and independent state beside Israel. Yasser Arafat was a Statesman, a man of Peace, recognizing the State of Israel, a publicly denouncing terrorism and signing the Oslo Agreement on the Palestinian autonomy with Yitzhak Rabin for which they were rewarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In the memory of Yasser Arafat, I would like to give all my support to all those who struggle for peace in the Middle East. The PES calls on the members of the Quartet to relaunch the implementation of the Road map without delay. A political solution enabling the Palestinian people to live in their own independent and viable state next to a secured state of Israel remains our only objective.