

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2009 9:40 AM
To: H
Subject: Kouchner

Purpose of call: Minister Kouchner has asked to speak with you about the letter to President Obama from President Sarkozy and President Mubarak, proposing a Middle East peace conference this fall.

· Middle East Peace Conference: Our aim for any conference is that it be meaningful, advance our shared goal of comprehensive peace, and be held at a time that is conducive to moving the process forward. At present, we are focused on encouraging all stakeholders in the region to take meaningful steps to build a positive climate for negotiations. We intend to conclude this phase as soon as possible, and then resume negotiations. France and Egypt's work with the parties and other actors in the region to underscore these points is particularly important. · Our position remains that the timing is not yet right for a conference this fall. Two UN Security Council Resolutions and multiple statements of the Quartet have also endorsed a separate international conference on Middle East peace in Russia in 2009.

· I would like Special Envoy Mitchell to brief you after his next meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu.
Background: In a letter to President Obama, Presidents Sarkozy and Mubarak proposed hosting a Middle East peace conference this fall, while France and Egypt hold co-presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). President Sarkozy first proposed a conference during the Israeli operation in Gaza this past winter and has raised the idea with Special Envoy Mitchell and with President Obama. The French and the Egyptians will support any format or approach that pushes negotiations forward. Sarkozy and Mubarak believe they can shape the UfM agenda, and the UfM has already brought all the parties to the conflict together. Sarkozy has actively promoted the UfM and notes that it is the only international organization that managed to persuade former Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Syrian President Assad to appear together, which they did at its launch in Paris in July 2008.