

Brussels, **23 DEC. 2015**
A(2015)5032132-5863813

Mr Roger Helmer MEP
Mr Paul Nuttall MEP
Mr Petr Mach MEP

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your letter of 11 November 2015 in which you state your concern over the recent Interpretative Notice issued by the European Commission on the indication of origin of goods from territories occupied by Israel since June 1967.

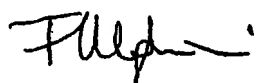
While EU-Israel relations are generally thriving, the EU has repeatedly stated its concerns and opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context. The EU's long-standing and well-known position is that it will not recognise any changes to pre-1967 Israeli borders other than those agreed by the parties to the conflict. Until such an agreement is reached, the EU has decided to make the necessary distinction between Israeli settlements in the occupied territories on the one hand, and Israel within its pre-1967 borders on the other, which has allowed the development of bilateral relations within the framework of the 1995 Association Agreement. In this respect, a technical arrangement between the European Union and Israel, based on postal codes, has been in force already for more than a decade, ensuring that preferential customs duty treatment is granted only for goods coming from within Israel proper. In a similar way, post-1967 areas are excluded from the benefit of the EU's Horizon 2020 programme.

The interpretative notice which was adopted by the Commission on 11 November aims at ensuring the uniform application of existing EU law to the indication of origin of Israeli settlement products. The notice responds to a unanimous request by European Union Member states for clarity on the application of *existing* EU legislation in the matter.

Any analogy of this Notice to a boycott or an attack against Israel is not only misleading but also unjustified. The EU is not boycotting but is simply differentiating between Israel and the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

In its resolution of 10 September 2015 on the Middle East Peace process, the European Parliament welcomed the EU's commitment – in the spirit of differentiation between Israel and its activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory – to ensuring that all agreements between the EU and Israel must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Furthermore, the Parliament encouraged me to take the lead within the Commission with a view to completing the work on EU-wide guidelines on the indication of origin of Israeli settlement produce.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Federica Mogherini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Federica Mogherini