

Khatib highlights importance of concerted international effort to maintain global stability

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib on Monday warned of dire consequences on world stability by terrorist elements taking advantage of a collapse in regional security, saying a concerted international effort was needed to help serve the cause of peace.

"The collapse of security conditions either in the Palestinian territories or in Iraq will play into the hands of terrorist elements and organisations, and therefore have dire consequences on the world security and stability," Khatib told participants at a conference to discuss the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) Mediterranean Dialogue and the Broader Middle East Region.

"Consequently, there is a

need for a much more concerted effort and cooperation between all of us," he said, adding that NATO can assist both the Palestinian Authority and the new Iraqi government, along with the international community, in building their security capacity and institutions that are necessary to advance the welfare of their people.

Khatib also called for greater cooperation between NATO and its Mediterranean partners in the ongoing efforts to counter terrorism, ensure greater border security and dispel cultural misconceptions about each other. He suggested ways to develop relations between the alliance and its Mediterranean partners by advancing the more than a decade-old dialogue into a genuine partnership and by starting a joint public diplomacy ef-

fort that provides a better understanding of NATO's transformation and current policies.

Khatib's remarks were made at the start of a two-day conference — organised by the Regional Centre on Conflict Prevention and NATO's Public Diplomacy Division — to discuss NATO's role in the region, its aims and actions for the Mediterranean dialogue and ways to develop this dialogue into full-fledged cooperation.

The conference seeks to develop a better understanding and awareness of NATO's capabilities and its offer for greater security cooperation for the benefit of partner countries and subsequently the region and the rest of the world, according to organisers.

NATO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador

Alessandro Minuto Rizzo told participants that the alliance's basic aim of engagement across the Mediterranean was to build trust and mutual understanding, to involve more countries in a common struggle against shared security challenges and thus in increasing the chances to meet such challenges.

"NATO is not imposing anything on any of its Mediterranean Dialogue partners, but offering to work together in areas in which it has the experience and expertise and where our partners are prepared to define specific requirements," Rizzo said.

"NATO wants to complement ongoing cooperation in and with other international fora, rather than to duplicate or complicate this cooperation," he said, adding that

over the past years the number of opportunities for concrete, practical cooperation under the Mediterranean Dialogue has more than doubled.

This cooperation, he added, ranges from a wide array of military activities in the field of border security to airspace management, civil emergency planning and many other arenas.

"Countries such as Jordan — but other Mediterranean partners as well — have gathered considerable experience in participating in UN and NATO operations. We have introduced a number of tools and instruments to build on that experience and to further enhance the interoperability between our military forces," Rizzo said, adding that Jordan has expressed interest in making use of a trust fund, for sever-

al areas including dismantling landmines.

The trust funds, described as new opportunities under the partnership, are an instrument in which NATO expertise and funding by interested nations and institutions are combined and offered to help partner countries.

Other opportunities include giving countries participating in the dialogue the chance to develop an individual cooperation programme with NATO and an offer of training and education.

"If we want to be more effective in meeting the security challenges, it is vital that we further develop our common understanding of those challenges, the efficiency of our defence establishments and the ability of our military to work together," Rizzo said.

NATO's political role

Two sessions were held yesterday, the first to discuss NATO's transformation since the cold war and how its operations and missions changed, while the second looked at the alliance's role in promoting security in the Mediterranean and the Broader Middle East.

In the first session, participants tried to get a clearer image of the alliance's political role and how far it can influence a change in the region and help in the push for reform and democratisation.

NATO officials were asked if the alliance was looking for a new enemy after the end of the cold war and if Islam was the next target.

Alliance officials were also asked why NATO does not take a more decisive stance

towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and what role it can play in Iraq other than the existing one of training military and security personnel and offering logistical support.

On the Arab-Israeli conflict, head of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division Nicola de Santis said NATO has no direct role in solving the Israeli-Palestinian question, adding that it was not on the alliance's agenda and there were many issues that NATO and the region could cooperate on before tackling the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He quoted remarks on the matter by NATO's secretary general saying that NATO can only get involved if there was a final settlement to the question, if both parties asked for NATO's help and if there was a UN mandate to do so.