



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Syria

*3157th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union is increasingly appalled by the unfolding situation in Syria and recalls the European Council conclusions on Syria of 1 and 2 March 2012. The EU strongly condemns the continued brutal attacks and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian regime, including the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas, which risk exacerbating further the spiral of violence, sectarian clashes and militarisation, and endanger the stability of the region. President Assad must step aside to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition. The EU also condemns recent bomb attacks in Damascus and Aleppo causing scores of death and injuries. Acts of terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances.
2. The European Union reiterates its deepest concerns at the increasingly worsening humanitarian plight of the Syrian civilian population as a result of continuous and widespread violence. The Syrian authorities must grant immediate, unimpeded and full access of humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria in order to allow them to deliver humanitarian assistance and medical care. In this regard, the EU welcomes the recent visit of USG Valerie Amos to Syria and her efforts to agree a clear framework of humanitarian access with the Syrian authorities and takes note of the start of the preliminary humanitarian assessment in Syria. It also welcomes the outcomes of the Syria Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva on 8 March, as well as the UN Security Council statement of 1 March 2012, deploring the humanitarian situation in Syria. It fully supports measures aimed at ensuring a coordinated, rapid and effective humanitarian response of the international community. In the light of growing needs, the EU and Member States have increased their financial support to humanitarian organisations and will continue to mobilise the necessary assistance. The EU is greatly concerned by reports of anti-personnel land mines being laid along the Syrian borders aiming to prevent Syrians from fleeing.

P R E S S

3. The EU welcomes the recent visit to Damascus of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States Kofi Annan and urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with him. The EU recalls its full support for his mission and his efforts to stop violence and facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive dialogue leading to a political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people on the basis of the UN General Assembly resolution of 16 February 2012 and League of Arab States resolutions, in particular those of 22 January, 12 February and 10 March 2012.
4. The EU reiterates its call for the UN Security Council to agree urgently on a resolution on Syria in order to obtain the cessation of violence, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access and leading to a political process in response to the aspirations of the Syrian people. It calls on all members of the Security Council, particularly Russia and China, to work together in an effort to stop the violence and to support fully the implementation of the League of Arab States resolutions. The EU welcomes the UNSC Presidential Statement of 21 March expressing its gravest concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria and full support to the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the LAS, Kofi Annan.
5. The EU welcomes the outcome of the debate of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria on 12 March 2012 and the adoption of the HRC resolution on 23 March 2012 on the human rights situation in the country and the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. There must be a full investigation of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry which pointed to crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights committed in the country. The EU reaffirms that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of such alleged crimes.
6. The European Union supports the Syrian opposition in its struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy for the Syrian people. The EU stands ready to step up its engagement with all representative members of Syrian opposition which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values as they make progress to form a broad and inclusive platform. The Syrian National Council, recognised by the EU as a legitimate representative of Syrians, and other representatives of the opposition must unite now in the peaceful struggle for a new Syria that is democratic, pluralistic, stable and guarantees human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and where all citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of their affiliations, ethnicity, belief or gender. To this end, the EU urges all representative members of the opposition to set up an inclusive coordination mechanism under the auspices of the League of Arab States and to agree on a set of shared principles for working towards an orderly and peaceful transition .
7. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU approved today further designations of persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters. It calls on all Syrians to disassociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.
8. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilising assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition."