



Council conclusions on Syria

Foreign Affairs Council meeting

Brussels, 15 December 2014

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling the Council conclusions of 20 October, the EU expresses grave concern regarding the continued deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Syria. The EU condemns unreservedly the atrocities and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the Assad regime as well as ISIL / Da'esh, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist groups. The EU will continue to encourage all efforts to reach a political solution by mutual consent in order to maintain the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Syria. A lasting solution to the conflict can only be achieved through a Syrian-led political process leading to a transition.

The EU is committed to fully support the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura's efforts to achieve a strategic de-escalation of violence as a basis for a broader sustainable political process. The EU stands ready to support concretely the development of his proposals, in particular the proposal to build on local freezes of hostility in compliance with international humanitarian law in Aleppo and elsewhere.
2. Reduction of violence will not be achieved without effective monitoring, preferably anchored in the United Nations Security Council. The EU recalls that cases of forced surrender imposed by the Assad regime through starvation sieges were labelled fallaciously as local ceasefires in the past. It expresses serious concern regarding the intensified military action by the Assad regime against areas held by the opposition, which threaten the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's initiative. The EU will seek ways to provide practical support to his efforts notably by contributing to the revival of local governance and administration, to the restoration of basic services and to the return to normalcy in areas of reduced violence, in particular in Aleppo, as conditions allow.
3. The EU recalls that the overall objective remains a Syrian-led process leading to a transition that meets the aspirations of all the Syrian people, based on the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 and in line with relevant UNSC Resolutions. The EU calls on all Syrian parties to show clear and concrete commitment to this process, and to ensure the involvement of civil society and women. The EU is ready to engage with all regional and international actors with influence over the Syrian parties and calls on them to use their influence constructively towards this end.

4. The EU recalls that the moderate opposition, including the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC), is a vital element of both a future political settlement and in fighting the extremist groups on the ground in Syria. The EU encourages both internal and external opposition groups to unite behind a common strategy in order to present an alternative to the Syrian people. It will seek ways to enhance its political and practical support to the moderate opposition including in opposition held areas such as Aleppo.
5. The EU condemns the continued widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated in Syria, in particular by the Assad regime and terrorist groups, as reported by the Commission of Inquiry. This includes indiscriminate bombings with barrel bombs by the regime forces and atrocities committed by ISIL / Da'esh. The EU welcomes the adoption of the UN General Assembly Third Committee resolution condemning human rights violations in Syria. It underlines its concern regarding cases of forced disappearances and calls for the immediate release of the victims. The EU will spare no effort to ensure that all perpetrators of such violations and abuses are held accountable for their crimes which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. The EU reiterates its call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
6. The EU will continue its policy of imposing and enforcing sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters as long as repression continues.
7. The EU urges the Assad regime to fully implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention and to take the necessary measures to eliminate its chemical weapons program completely and irreversibly. This includes the destruction of the remaining production facilities and the provision of evidence to support the assurances that Syria has fully abandoned its chemical weapons program. The EU remains extremely concerned by the gaps and discrepancies in the Assad regime's declarations to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The EU condemns the use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon by the Assad regime and it will continue its support to the investigations of the OPCW's Fact Finding Mission. The EU recalls that, in line with the Convention on Chemical Weapons, it is the primary responsibility of the Assad regime to bear the costs related to the verification and the destruction of its chemical program.
8. The EU urges all parties to comply with international humanitarian law as regards protection and access to humanitarian aid and to provide humanitarian aid to all people in need, including in hard-to-reach areas. The EU condemns the continued impediments in the delivery of aid for which the Assad regime bears the primary responsibility. The EU urges all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to fully and immediately implement all the provisions of UNSC Resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). The EU fully supports the renewal of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2165 in order to foster effective cross-border and cross line assistance and ensure access to vulnerable people regardless of their location.
9. The EU and its Member States continue to play a leading role in the provision of humanitarian aid in response to the crisis, having mobilised so far €3 billion for relief and recovery assistance to those most in need in Syria and in neighbouring countries, including host communities. The EU will sustain its efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the people affected by the crisis and to build their resilience through recovery assistance and basic services in Syria and the neighbouring countries alike. The EU expresses serious concern about the severe lack of funding for the UN Appeals 2014, which resulted in a temporary suspension of World Food Program assistance to Syrian refugees. Therefore, it calls on the international community to step up its funding and assistance in view of the winter and in response to the forthcoming 2015 appeals.

10. The Council welcomes the establishment of the European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis that will act in coordination and complementarity with ongoing assistance including the existing Syria Recovery Trust Fund.
 11. The EU commends the considerable efforts of Lebanon and Jordan as well as Turkey sheltering refugees from Syria. It will spare no effort to continue to help them provide assistance to refugees and vulnerable host communities and comply with existing refugee laws, conventions and humanitarian principles as regards protection and access to humanitarian aid. In this context, it welcomes the Berlin declaration "Solidarity with the refugees and their hosts" of the Conference on the Syria Refugee Situation of 28 October 2014.
 12. The EU remains fully aware of the immense security challenges that the crisis in Syria poses to Lebanon and Jordan in particular. The EU underlines the importance of the ongoing EU and member States' support, and it reiterates its commitment to seek ways to further enhance this support to both countries to meet those challenges. "
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