Eleventh meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council

Statement by the European Union

1. The European Union welcomes this eleventh Meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council which provides an excellent opportunity to take stock of the development of our relations and bilateral cooperation. In a troubled environment, Jordan continues to stand as a moderate, tolerant voice and to play a stabilizing role both regionally and internationally, including through its efforts in the United Nations Security Council. The EU values Jordan as a key partner in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and is committed to further strengthening a close, constructive and mutually beneficial partnership with Jordan. The strength of this partnership has been particularly illustrated over the last two years by the EU-Jordan co-presidency of the Union for Mediterranean.

2. In 2010 the “advanced status” partnership and the EU-Jordan ENP Action Plan set the framework of our enhanced relations and reflected our mutual commitment to achieving closer integration. Today we need a more privileged relationship on the basis of the Association Agreement which continues to provide for many opportunities of cooperation and dialogue.

3. The political developments in the Middle East are at a critical junction. Violent conflicts, the threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of certain States in the region and the massive refugee crisis have a devastating impact on socio-economic development in the region. Religious fundamentalism, extremism and sectarian divides are fuelling the advancement of terrorist groups, threatening the stability and security of the region as a whole. Millions of civilians have fled and continue to flee the horrors of civil war and atrocious exactions. Ruthless confrontation is the approach of a growing number of groups that abhor the values of human rights and democracy, show the utmost disregard for human life and reject peaceful coexistence and decent living for all. More than ever, the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles need to guide the EU – Jordan relations, as stipulated in the Association Agreement and the ENP Action Plan.
EU-Jordan partnership

4. The EU is determined to strengthen further its partnership with Jordan in the light of those challenges. Where people truly feel that they will have the political, economic and social opportunities that they rightfully deserve, extremism and war will not find a footing to nurture. That is a basic premise in the European project and the EU aspire the same assurances of long-term peace and stability to be granted to Jordan.

5. The EU values Jordan’s commitment to the implementation of the measures agreed in the ENP Action Plan, based upon Jordan’s objectives of political and economic reform and of further integration into European economic and social structures.

6. The EU remains a strong supporter of Jordan’s reforms and encourages Jordan to accelerate the continuous participatory and consensual political reform process, to protect peaceful political expression, open up political space to all partners and reaffirm its concrete implementation through, among others, political parties and elections law and enhancing freedom of expression, including on the Internet. Freedom of association and assembly shall be strengthened in order to give more weight and space for a thriving civil society and allow it to work in a favourable environment.

7. The EU invites Jordan to continue implementing the recommendations endorsed by it at the conclusion of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, to which Jordan was subject in October 2013. The EU welcomes the work performed by the established committees in charge of the follow-up and supports the inclusive process of the elaboration of a new comprehensive strategy on Human Rights for the country. The EU stresses the importance of addressing the issues of the equal treatment of women and of the protection of children and encourages Jordan to continue its efforts to eradicate torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. A fair and independent judiciary system is a key component of the rule of law and enhances the trust in the institutions. The EU recalls its principled opposition to the death penalty, commends the de facto moratorium in Jordan, and calls on Jordan to join the growing group of abolitionist countries.

8. The EU also welcomes the definition of the National Integrity Charter and its implementation as an instrument to further intensify the fight against corruption. Corruption weakens citizens’ trust in democratic institutions and their political leaders and undermines the country’s economic and social development.

9. On the economic side, Jordan has continued to face a series of exogenous shocks impacting on local economy. The EU encourages Jordan to move forward with the structural reforms that contribute to the reduction of macroeconomic vulnerability, promote growth by increasing the role of the private sector while paying special attention to SME development and strengthening Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation, generate employment and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public finances.

10. The EU welcomes Jordan’s achievements in the framework of the stand-by arrangement with the IMF to address fiscal and external challenges and foster high and inclusive growth. Those achievements have made possible the allocation of EUR 180 million in Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) for Jordan.
11. The EU welcomes Jordan’s interest to initiate negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU. The DCFTA will improve market access opportunities and the investment climate and will constitute a comprehensive agreement on trade and economic relations covering a full range of regulatory areas of mutual interest. The preparatory process has made good progress over the past months and the EU looks forward to working with Jordan to finalise this process and launch negotiations in due course.

12. The EU has always been and continues to be a strong supporter of the Agadir Agreement. It encourages Jordan to make full use of the possibilities offered by the Agadir Agreement and to work with its Agadir partners to develop the agreement further as a way to promote further integration in the region. The EU welcomes Jordan’s active participation in the ongoing regional negotiations on the revision of the Pan-Euro-Med rules of origin and the positive signal set by Jordan as the first Southern Mediterranean partner to have ratified the Pan-Euro-Med Convention on Rules of Origin in 2013.

13. The EU welcomes Jordan’s progress in the preparations for the Agreement on Conformity Assessment (ACAA). The conclusion of a bilateral ACAA for specific industrial sectors will have the effect of facilitating the access of industrial products from Jordan into the EU internal market and vice-versa. Negotiations could be launched when preparations are completed.

14. The EU welcomes today’s signature of the Joint Declaration establishing a mobility partnership with Jordan. This is a step forward following the launch in 2012 of the EU-Jordan Migration, Mobility and Security Dialogue whose overall objective is to foster closer cooperation in the field of migration and mobility. The signing of the mobility partnership strengthens the commitment on both sides to manage migration in an orderly manner, facilitating legal migration and fighting irregular migration in accordance with international standards, including those related to the protection of refugees, while at the same time ensuring that the benefits to Jordan's development are optimized. It provides a coherent framework for actions to be implemented together by the EU, participating Member States and Jordan in a comprehensive manner and in line with the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.

15. The European Union maintains its commitment to fully implement a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity in its Southern Neighborhood on the basis of mutual accountability and shared commitment to universal values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. In this regard, the EU will provide greater support to partners engaged in building deep democracy and inclusive economic development. The EU is ready to work with Jordan on these objectives in the framework of the ENP Action Plan.

16. In line with its commitment to support the reform processes in the Southern Mediterranean countries, the EU provided to Jordan until now an additional allocation of €116 million from the SPRING and Umbrella Programmes, linked to the delivery of reform measures, complementing the €210 million Jordan's National Indicative Programme 2011-2013.

17. The EU encourages Jordan to take advantage of existing funding mechanisms of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and of the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction (EBRD).
18. Given recent security developments in the region, a point of common concern is to stem the flow of foreign fighters, arms and funds, in order as far as possible to eradicate the longer term presence of terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and beyond. This should be the core focus of a security dialogue that the EU looks forward to establishing with Jordan. It will meet regularly in order to review the situation and help pave the way for enhanced security and counter-terrorism cooperation between the EU and Jordan.

Regional issues

19. The EU and Jordan share the **common objective to create conditions conducive to lasting peace, stability and development in the region** and beyond.

20. The developments in **Syria and Iraq**, most notably, represent a threat not only to Jordan, but also to the EU. Jordan and the EU are equally concerned by the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria and Iraq as a result of the occupation of parts of their territory by the terrorist organization operating under the name “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL). We are appalled by and firmly condemn the indiscriminate killings and other considerable human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by this and other terrorist organisations, in particular against persons and groups targeted because of their religion or ethnic origin and against women, children and other vulnerable groups. Those responsible for such crimes must be held to account. We will, with other partners from within and outside the region, assist the people of Syria and Iraq to act decisively against the threat of ISIL.

21. Instability in **Syria**, caused by the Assad regime's brutal war against its own people, has allowed ISIL to flourish. A lasting solution urgently requires a political transition by mutual consent based on the Geneva communiqué in order to restore stability and peace in Syria. In **Iraq**, we will work together to support the Iraqi people to meet this challenge, and we fully support the new inclusive Iraqi government in its efforts to address the needs of all Iraqis, regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief.

22. What is also needed is **joint effective action against marginalisation**, equal application of the rule of law and for the peoples of the Middle East to see a future where they can provide a decent living for themselves and their families; **effective action to promote and protect the universal human rights** and to fight against incitement to ethnic, religious, cultural or racial hatred, radicalization and violent extremism and **effective action to counter terrorism and provide the security and stability that the vast majority of the peoples seek for themselves**.

23. The EU will continue to support Jordan, notably through the European regional protection programme and the Mobility Partnership, to ensure that the refugee influx does not jeopardise the development gains achieved in recent years. The EU welcomes efforts to further align international support with Jordan's response to the refugee crisis and looks forward to the high level international “Conference on the Syrian refugee situation – Supporting stability in the region” in Berlin on 28 October.

24. Taking humanitarian aid, development assistance and macro-financial support into account, the EU has provided €428 million of supplementary support to Jordan since the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011. The EU is currently preparing a package of €66 million, including €45 million to support the Ministry of Education, which is providing places for well over 100,000 Syrian refugee children in Jordanian schools. Support provided by member States complement these efforts.
25. Regarding the Middle East Peace Process, the EU praises the important part which Jordan continues to play in promoting stability in the region. The special role of Jordan with regard to the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is of particular relevance in this context and has been instrumental in defusing recent tensions. The EU is extremely concerned about the fragile situation on the ground following the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. It calls on all the parties concerned to agree on and abide by a durable ceasefire on the basis of the 26 August ceasefire. The EU remains concerned about the disastrous humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip particularly the conditions of the displaced population and it pays tribute to the Jordanian solidarity in that context.

26. The EU recalls that the situation in the Gaza Strip has to be seen within the broader context of the Middle East Peace Process and the prospect of comprehensive peace where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace with secure and recognised borders. The Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and will be part of a future State of Palestine. The situation in the Gaza Strip cannot and must not be seen separately from the broader challenges and developments on the ground that continue to make the prospect of the two-state solution increasingly difficult to attain.

27. The EU would like to reiterate the special importance of the EU-Jordan cooperation in unconventional and conventional arms non-proliferation and disarmament. With regard to the process for establishment of a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East, the EU calls on all States in the region to urgently and proactively engage with the Facilitator, the co-convenors and each other with the aim of convening the Conference as soon as possible, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between the States of the region.

28. Since 2012, the EU and Jordan fruitfully share the co-Presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean. During their mandates, the EU and Jordan have been inspired by a shared political willingness to revitalize the Mediterranean Dialogue and to increase the potential for regional integration and cohesion among Euro-Mediterranean countries. In the framework of the strategy “Projects for Progress”, the EU welcomes the efforts carried out by Jordan to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy, cooperation and prosperity.

29. The EU looks forward to a fruitful and constructive meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council.

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