



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COMAG 8
COHAFA 9
PESC 56**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: Council

On: 20 January 2014

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Subject: Council conclusions on Syria

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Syria, as adopted by the Council on 20 January 2014.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON SYRIA

1. The EU fully supports the peace conference on Syria, which will take place on 22 January in Switzerland. The Geneva conference should be the first step in a process that will lead to a political solution to the conflict. The EU reiterates that the only solution to the conflict is a genuine political transition, based on the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué, and preserving the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. The EU commends the efforts of the Joint Special Representative Brahimi and his team.
2. The EU recalls that the objective of the conference is the formation by mutual consent of a Transitional Governing Body (TGB) with full executive powers, including over security, military and intelligence. Any elections in Syria should only take place within the framework of the Geneva Communiqué. The regime, as well as the opposition, must commit themselves to the full implementation of the Communiqué as a matter of urgency, and demonstrate that commitment through their actions. The EU calls on all parties to engage constructively in a genuine negotiation.

The EU welcomes the invitation sent by the UN Secretary General to the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC), commends its decision to participate in the conference and welcomes its commitment to establish an inclusive and representative delegation including women. The EU stands ready to assist the opposition delegation led by the SOC in needs that might arise as part of the negotiation.

The EU considers it important throughout the Geneva process to also work on promoting confidence building measures that would directly benefit the local population and increase the chances of the conference's success. Confidence building measures could for example be agreements on local ceasefires, lifting of sieges on certain urban areas so to allow for improved humanitarian access, and the release of arbitrarily detained prisoners or the exchange of detainees.

3. The EU remains gravely concerned with the continuing and indiscriminate bloodshed among the civilian population and calls for the cessation of all violence to allow urgent humanitarian access on the ground. It strongly condemns the regime's escalating indiscriminate attacks, including use of SCUD missiles, barrel bombs, air and artillery strikes and brutality on the ground, notably in Aleppo. The regime bears the primary responsibility for the conflict and its actions on the ground are undermining the potential for genuine political transition and fuelling extremism.

The EU shares growing concern about the spread of extremism and extremist groups, including ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra. Their involvement in the conflict poses a threat to the peace process, the territorial integrity of Syria and to regional and international security. The EU welcomes the SOC's condemnation of all forms of terrorism and extremism, and that the moderate opposition is opposing extremist groups.

As the majority of Syrians reject violence, all efforts must be channelled towards the common goal of rebuilding the country, rid it of its authoritarian past, preserve its traditions of inter-religious, inter-ethnic and cultural co-existence, and ensure full respect of all human rights. The EU is concerned about the plight of all vulnerable groups, and ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians.

4. The EU has consistently supported civil society groups, with a view to supporting a political solution to the conflict. Member states have also provided assistance and capacity building, including through recent events such as the Cordoba conference, and will continue to do so throughout the Geneva process.

5. The EU stresses the importance of an inclusive Syrian peace process and supports the active and meaningful participation of women and civil society in the overall political transition process. This will help facilitate an inclusive and sustainable outcome that meets the needs of the Syrian people. The EU encourages both parties to appoint women to their Geneva II delegations as their involvement in the process leading to a political settlement is crucial for its sustainability. The EU also calls upon the UN to facilitate the participation of women's groups and civil society organisations at Geneva, in a way that supports the two official delegations to the talks and into the peace process, in line with UNSC resolutions 1325 and 2122. In this context, the EU welcomes the meeting “Promoting Women’s Engagement in the Syrian Political Process” convened by UN Women and the Netherlands on the 12-13 of January.

6. The EU will continue to defend human rights and will remain active in ensuring accountability for the widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated in Syria. The EU reiterates its call on the UN Security Council to urgently address the situation in Syria in these aspects, including on a possible referral to the International Criminal Court as requested in the Swiss letter to the Security Council of 14 January 2013. The EU recalls that all those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes must be held accountable. The EU reaffirms its support to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry for Syria established by the Human Rights Council.

7. Following the Kuwait II Donors' Conference on 15 January where the EU and its Member States pledged €550 million, and in line with the European Council conclusions of 20 December 2013, the Union will continue to urge for progress and engage its partners in the framework of the UN-led High Level Group on humanitarian challenges.. Humanitarian aid and access cannot, and should not, be taken hostage of military tactics and political negotiations. Therefore, the EU calls on all the parties to the Syrian conflict, in particular the Syrian government to immediately implement in full the provisions of the Presidential Statement of the UN Security Council of 2 October 2013. Considering the unprecedented scale and nature of the crisis, the EU calls for a humanitarian resolution by the UNSC. The EU urges all parties to the conflict, in particular the Syrian government, which has the greatest responsibility in enabling humanitarian access, to take decisive steps to facilitate safe, unhindered and immediate access to all people in need, including those in besieged areas, through the most effective ways, including across conflict lines and across borders, and to protect aid and medical workers, and health facilities. The EU calls on the Syrian regime and encourages the governments of neighbouring countries to facilitate access for international aid organisations.

8. Recalling its conclusions of 30 November 2013 on the regional impact of the Syria crisis, the EU will continue ongoing efforts to support the Syrians affected by the conflict inside and outside Syria as well as the hosting communities and governmental institutions of Syria's neighbours that have courageously welcomed the refugees. EU remains committed to be an important actor in all aspects of the post-conflict reconstruction.

9. The EU welcomes the start of the transfer of chemicals from Syria for destruction outside the country. This development marks an important step, but much remains to be done, including the actual destruction of the chemicals. Therefore this step must be followed by swift and decisive action by the government of Syria to meet all its obligations and commitments within the agreed timelines of SC Resolution 2118 and OPCW Executive Council decisions. The EU acknowledges the invaluable work of the staff of the UN-OPCW Joint Mission and the contributions of a large number of countries. The EU has provided assistance to the joint mission and to the OPCW trust fund. It will continue its support financially, politically and logistically. The EU notes that further financial contribution to the OPCW trust fund is required in order to achieve a swift elimination of the Syrian stockpile. In this regard the EU emphasises the responsibility of the Syrian regime to cover the costs associated to the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons stockpile.

10. The EU calls on all foreign fighters in Syria, including Hezbollah, to withdraw immediately.

In view of the risks posed by foreign nationals traveling to Syria, including from Europe, to join extremist groups and following the work of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the EU calls on all states bordering Syria or with direct air or maritime routes in to Syria to remain vigilant. It encourages those states to take appropriate measures to prevent the flow of foreign fighters to and from Syria. The EU is determined to engage with third countries also to deal effectively with terrorism and the financing of the flows of foreign fighters.