

**ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND JORDAN**

The Association Council

**Luxembourg, 17 June 2019
(OR. en)**

UE-RHJ 3301/19

MINUTES

Subject: 12th meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council (Brussels, 10 July 2017)
- Minutes

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The **Association Council between the EU and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan** held its twelfth session on 10 July 2017 in Brussels.

This session was chaired by Ms. Federica MOGHERINI, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The European Commission was represented by Ms. Emma UDWIN, member of the Cabinet of Commissioner HAHN as well as by Mr. Michael KOEHLER, Director at DG NEAR.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was represented by Mr. Ayman SAFADI, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates who led the delegation of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and by Mr. Imad FAKHOURY, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation.

Opening remarks

The High Representative Ms. MOGHERINI welcomed the Jordanian delegation to the plenary session of this twelfth meeting of the Association Council and thanked the Minister for the very fruitful discussion on regional issues throughout the restricted session. This occasion was considered a good opportunity to take stock of the EU-Jordan partnership and to identify forthcoming areas of dialogue which could profit from the excellent state of bilateral relations. In this context, the High Representative recalled the ambitious Partnership Priorities agreed in December 2016 that aimed at expanding and intensifying the areas of cooperation, as well as the mutual commitments made following the conference on Supporting Syria and region hosted in London in February 2016.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. SAFADI thanked the High Representative for hosting the Association Council and revealed how proud he was of the special partnership with EU which enabled both parties to work together on addressing many of the current regional challenges. He thanked the EU for supporting the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's resilience in view of its reform strategies and the challenges that emanated from the regional crisis, particularly the refugee crisis.

1. POINT 1: ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

The Association Council adopted the agenda of its meeting as outlined in document UE-RHJ 3301/17.

2. POINT 2: ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 11TH SESSION OF THE ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Both sides agreed on the adoption of minutes from the eleventh meeting of the Association Council as set out in document UE-RHJ 3302/17.

3. POINT 3: BRUSSELS CONFERENCE ON SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA AND THE REGION – FOLLOW UP

Before starting the discussion Ms. Mogherini thanked Member States participating in the plenary session and gave the floor to the Spanish representative. Mr. Manuel ACERETE, PSC Ambassador, thanked for the opportunity to make a brief remark. He welcomed the Jordanian representatives and affirmed that Spain considered the EU-Jordan Association Council a milestone carrying benefits to the EU, its Member States and Jordan, a partner country that was seen as a key State in a region facing many challenges. He acknowledged the progress and reforms which have been carried out by the Jordanian authorities and the extraordinary effort that Jordan makes in assisting Syrian refugees and in the common fight against extremism and terrorism.

Ms. MOGHERINI recalled the political efforts, humanitarian assistance and commitments in support of the region made in the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region underlining the collective focus on trying to reach a political solution through the UN-led Geneva talks, on that same day. Concerning the support to the region, the Brussels conference output paper and the EU-Jordan compact showed an innovative approach fully supported by the EU on how to look to the impact of the Syrian crisis. The EU appreciated Jordan's holistic approach with regard to the refugee situation and, moreover, warmly commended Jordan's efforts in accommodating refugees, integrating Syrian children in the school system and granting over 50,000 work permits to Syrian refugees.

As for the next steps, the European Union will continue to support the work done by Jordan and the international community in ensuring life-saving protection and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need. In turn, Jordan was expected to sustain its efforts to guarantee the protection of refugees, ensuring their registration to reduce the number of undocumented people, and facilitate their further participation in the labour market. In terms of financial support, following the London commitments for Jordan, 651 million euros had already been delivered and further 200 million euros should be allocated by the end of 2017 through a macro-financial assistance programme. Looking at the future, the EU intended to maintain, in 2018 and 2019, the level of support already allotted for 2016 and 2017, to continue supporting Jordan's economic and political reforms and to use different financial instruments for the protection and assistance of Syrian refugees. On the political follow-up of the Brussels conference, the new round of talks taking place in Geneva reconfirmed the imperative of a credible political solution for the Syrian crisis, in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2254 and the central role played by the UN.

On the Syrian crisis political context, Minister SAFADI reiterated that Jordan saw no military solution to the conflict and, therefore, supported every effort to implement a comprehensive ceasefire across all Syrian territory. Within that spirit, Jordan ultimately believed that a political solution to the conflict had to be reached through the UN led process, headed by the UN envoy Stefan De Mistura, and UN Security Council resolution 2254. Nevertheless, Jordan supported the goal of the Astana talks' to achieve a ceasefire and worked together with the United States and Russia to create a de-escalation map in the south-east of Syria, a region considered a matter of national security for Jordan. The Minister recognised the tremendous support received from partners in the EU regarding capacity building, as well as assistance needed for people not just in Jordan but also across the border in Syria, and commended the newly approved EU macro-finance assistance loan to help Jordan.

Mr FAKHOURY, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Jordan, emphasized the EU leadership in the Brussels conference, as a follow-up to London, and the Jordan output document agreed, which set a clear roadmap for Jordan and the international community in terms of the on-going innovative paradigm of how to deal with the refugee crisis. He pointed out the need for the EU to proactively drive the international community, in view of the commitments to the Jordan Response Plan prepared in partnership with donors, NGOs and UN agencies. This plan outlined the needs of refugees in and outside the camps, of the host communities and the government to continue providing all the public services expected. The international support reached only 8,5% of the plan agreed and at least 60% would be needed to counter the fact that Jordan was at the very high saturation point of its economy. At the same time, Jordan was implementing an austerity IMF programme that reduced the budget and increased taxation by 1,5% of the GDP, thus diminishing the country's ability to continue providing improved services. For this reason, the EU was expected to have a proactive driving capacity and, possibly, organise a stock-taking meeting with neighbourhood countries, in the margins of the UN General Assembly meetings, to keep the pressure on all parties and make them aware of the limits to stability and resilience in Jordan. The Jordan output document mentioned a critical list of priority capital expenditure projects needed for the communities hosting the refugees. Despite the fact, however, that donors were funding the necessary actions to be implemented, the "must do" projects to avoid losing the social cohesion between Jordanian hosting communities and the Syrian refugees had not been launched. He gladly reported on the updated number of 55,000 work permits granted and on the intention to award also short term permits to allow donors to employ people in intensive infrastructural projects and encourage refugees to take up more jobs. The fact that Jordan's neighbours did not employ Syrians was a source of concern, as it was triggering new waves of migrants to Jordan. He concluded by recalling the World Bank reclassification of Jordan from an upper middle income country to a low middle income country, which was considered a disturbing fact in terms of national public opinion.

Ms. MOGHERINI showed willingness to consider the possibility of having side events in the margins of the UNGA on the follow-up of the Brussels conference and found essential to continue working together on the implementation of the decisions taken: monitoring, taking stock and pushing further support for the region.

4. POINT 4: EU-JORDAN BILATERAL RELATIONS: PROGRESS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT AND THE EU-JORDAN PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES & COMPACT

Ms. MOGHERINI introduced the topic by recalling the agreement on Partnership Priorities and the EU-Jordan Compact that further strengthened the solid relationship between the EU and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. This reflected the path followed since the Association Agreement was signed in 2002 and the strategic interest the EU has in Jordan' stability, resilience and prosperity, which was also echoed in the new cooperation plan for bilateral assistance for 2017-2020, focusing on youth and women across different fields. The EU had honoured its commitments, not least financially, and since the start of the Syrian crisis, 1.6 billion euros had been allocated to Jordan of which 1 billion alone in response to the Syrian crisis. Progress had been made in quite different fields, namely: on the rules of origin relaxation scheme, now in place, which was yet not fully exploited by Jordanian companies. In this context, it was proposed to establish an informal roadmap to work on improving the access to export companies to seize all the opportunities created by the agreement; secondly, on education for all, the current and future support to education, technical and vocational training benefiting the Jordanian youth and refugees to trigger stability and development; thirdly, the second programme of macro-financial assistance decided in December 2016, for which negotiations on a Memorandum of Understanding were successfully concluded and should enable the first disbursement in the short term. Special emphasis was given to the debut of negotiations for Jordan participation in the Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), a flagship regional research innovation programme targeting issues such as food production or water management, with a view to encouraging a knowledge-based economy and society in Jordan. The importance of science diplomacy to build trust in the region, the support to SESAME at political, technical and financial level, the increased mobility possibilities for students and research, and the e-twinning actions were mentioned also as linking tools. On migration and mobility issues, the EU welcomed different initiatives in the mobility partnership context, including the project addressing the traffic of human beings and also the bilateral negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission of persons residing without authorisation in view of reaching a comprehensive agreement.

Minister SAFADI acknowledged the support received for the development and reform agenda of Jordan under the EU-Jordan bilateral relationship, the Partnership Priorities and the EU-Jordan Compact and thanked the EU for being Jordan's biggest partner. The economic context in Jordan was presented as very challenging since 2011. The country could be considered even under economic siege, as per the IMF assessment, meaning that, despite of all promising steps achieved, Jordan could not control the negative spill over rising from regional circumstances. Because of the Syrian refugees, the population had increased by 14%, the debt to the GDP went from 60 to 95%, the unemployment increased from 11% to 18.2%, and youth unemployment rose up to 35%, making the youth agenda and the economic empowerment of youth and women a very critical priority for Jordan. Also due to the neighbourhood's situation, the loss on 20% of exports and poverty increase from about 14% in the past six years to an estimated 20% currently, threaten Jordan's social cohesion. All these unfortunate circumstances forced Jordan to pay about 2, 5 billion dollars for a debt accumulated over the past six years. The IMF statement requested very strongly from donors to continue providing budget support and extremely concessionary financing for Jordan in order to help continue its very tough austerity programme, and progressing in the Jordan compact, especially with regard to its pioneering model to deal with refugees. On the other hand, Jordan was proceeding with six parallel tracks: first, maintaining macroeconomic and fiscal stability within the IMF programme, an area where Jordan would need further support to avoid destabilisation, if unemployment and poverty levels continue to grow. Second, the national integrated development plan, including the economic growth programme for the next five years, depicting priorities for the government, structural reforms and key strategies: on human resources development, energy, water, e-government, public sector reform, etc. Thirdly, Jordan's Response Plan and EU-Jordan Compact, contained the additional burden to be incurred and reflected the additional support needed to sustain resilience from an economical point of view. The fourth track aimed at decentralisation and the upcoming municipal and regional elections. The fifth was about the reform of the judicial and rule of law, building on the constitutional reforms, that had already been enacted with four laws in the Lower House. On the employment agenda, the focus of much of the work done together with the EU was touching upon the inclusive growth agenda of the economy to enable Jordan to continue allowing the Syrian refugees to work and, at the same time, increase job opportunities for the Jordanians. In this regard, the rules of origin arrangement should be scaled up as only 2 out of 8 qualified Jordanian factories had started to export.

On the other side, Jordan also sought further EU investments in the country to create the complementarity and promote integration along the DCFTA track between the EU and Jordan. Some MS had started to help manufacturers reach the European market, however Jordan would still require EU mentoring to ensure success in this regard. Jordan was very pleased for initialling the PRIMA partnership, to be fully signed during the November 17 World Science Summit, hosted in Jordan. To conclude the topic, the Minister pledged for the EU to support Jordan's resilience, currently reaching a serious stepping point that left the country without financial resources for any additional actions for the refugees.

Ms. MOGHERINI reassured the Minister by confirming the EU's determination to continue supporting Jordan's struggle in all different ways and agreed on establishing a formal mechanism to allow Jordan's economy to better profit from the relaxation of the rules of origin.

On promoting economic stability, sustainable and knowledge-based growth, quality education and job creation, the High Representative welcomed Jordan's holistic approach, the ratification of the Paris agreement on climate change, the adoption of the green growth plan and underlined the EU's will to support Jordan to sustain national resources. The cooperation to turn climate goals into climate actions with programs on renewable energy, energy efficiency and solid waste management should be strengthened. In the field of water security, the EU was looking forward to the implementation of the Red Sea - Dead Sea project, subject to the positive findings of the environmental impact assessment. The equivalent involvement of the Palestinian side was considered an important element to ensure the success of the project that should play a role in the adequate provision of water for populations in the region with an impact on current and future sources of conflict and combating the effects of climate change in the Dead Sea.

On strengthening democratic governance, rule of law and human rights, the High Representative underlined that the respect of democratic principles, human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law embodied a core pillar of the Association Agreement, underpinning the Partnership Priorities and symbolizing a common value, as confirmed in the national plan for human rights by the his Majesty the King of Jordan. The EU appreciated the regular dialogues and the joint work on judiciary reforms and the fight against corruption. The close cooperation on electoral reform was welcomed following the second EU election observation mission in 2016, that commended Jordan well administrated and inclusive process and issued recommendations for further consideration and implementation. The EU welcomed Jordan's determination to move forward on political reforms and, in this context, launched an important program in support of democratic governance, to strengthen the Independent Election Committee and the parliamentary and political party system. On women's rights, an area on which progress can be further achieved, the EU welcomed the government's proposal to abolish article 308 of the penal code, and commended Jordan's efforts in the area of freedom of religion or belief to promote peaceful religious coexistence setting a positive example for the entire region in this field. The EU had expressed concerns on freedom of expression online and off-line, as well as on freedom of association, that have been challenged in Jordan, by the use of counterterrorist provisions. Looking at Jordan's active civil society, the EU considered that the best antidote for radicalisation is an open society where human rights and fundamental freedoms are promoted and protected. In this context, the EU called for a balanced and targeted use of legislative and administrative provisions related to the disclosure of civil society organisations and media in full compliance with International Human Rights Law. The concluding observations of the review in 2015 by the UN Committee against torture provided a useful benchmark for engaging and for the strengthening of the legal framework, including the criminalisation of all forms of torture and ill-treatment. The EU called on Jordan to continue investigating all alleged torture cases and to prosecute the perpetrators to the judiciary system and regretted that a de facto moratorium on the death penalty, which was in place from 2006 to 2014, was interrupted. Consequently, the EU called upon Jordan to reinstate the de facto moratorium with a view to ultimately abolishing the death penalty. The EU regretted that Jordan, State party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, received the president of Sudan, for whom an arrest warrant had been issued, at the occasion of the 2017 Arab League Summit.

Mr. SAFADI expressed gratitude for the continuing support received to Jordan's efforts to introduce the political, economical and governance reforms and asserted that the country sought a future of peace and stability fostering a participative civil society. The ongoing reforms were rooted in a vision articulated by his Majesty the King of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with a view to a democratic country, compliant to human rights, where the rule and order prevail. Nonetheless, the threats and challenges coming from the neighbouring region led to a necessary compromise in order to enable the protection of the people and to contribute to a safer global community while fighting terrorism. Jordan trusts that the best guard against terrorism and the best protection against the spread of the ideology of hate is to promote an environment of openness and respect for others, respecting human rights and creating opportunities for all, including the Syrian refugees. This was considered an investment in the collective security to avoid that neglected populations became susceptible to an ideology of hatred. The Minister recalled the High Representative's critical observation about freedom of speech and expression and asserted that, in Jordan, media are not controlled, but, on the contrary, the goal is to foster an environment whereby the promotion of the hate speech is not seen as a right and issuing fatwas or similar language to deprive people of their right to live is not allowed. In full respect of EU recommendations, Jordan can ensure an environment in which freedom of expression and worship have not been hindered, for all peoples living there: Iraqis, Yemenis, Libyans, Christians, Muslims, Shia, Yazidis, etc. Regarding the capital punishment, and while valuing the EU position, the current reality in Jordan could justify such actions. However, the judiciary reform pack in implementation will enable a transparent and accessible litigation process which ultimately ensures people's rights. Jordan is situated in the Middle East, a region full of troubles, lacking many resources except for its people and educational system and, sometimes, the ability to act is hindered by external developments, as it happened with the Syrian crisis and its refugees, that had major internal repercussions, for instance in the public school system. In this distressed region, Jordan will not waiver on its commitment to improve the human rights environment and advance political reforms, even if its voice of fairness and reason clashes with the surrounding reality. In Jordan, elections have been successfully held during the tense period of the Arab spring. As regards torture and prisons, the government promotes the investigation of all alleged cases and everything is done to have perpetrators held accountable.

On political developments in Jordan, Mr. ABBADI, Secretary General of the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, underlined the progress achieved in the country since 2014. The Election Law for the Parliament, in 2016, has consolidated the system of political parties in Jordan, using the proportionality methodology enabling all parties to be represented in the Parliament. In 2017, the same system will be used for the municipal and regional elections, as Jordan aims to have participatory elections at all levels, also with a view to encouraging youth and women to participate and be part of the political life. His Majesty the King put forward in the sixth Discussion Paper on "Rule of Law and Civil State" a roadmap for the political reform in Jordan containing legislation to guarantee the same rights for all citizens, that is currently being discussed in the Jordanian Parliament. In 2015, a law on political parties was enacted and Jordan is proud of its 45 parties published in the official Journal, a proof of its democratic political scene. A system of quotas was adopted so that women are encouraged to participate in the local and municipal parties and national elections as well. The CSOs have been boosted and consolidated provisions enable commissions in charge of political reforms to be active. In Jordan, about 169 civil society organisations are very active in order to oversee and to accompany the reforms carried out by the government aiming at ensuring that CSOs and the Parliament are interactive also with counterparts in the EU.

Ms. MOGHERINI invited the Jordanian Minister to add any further comments on the topic of Counterterrorism, Security and Stability.

Mr. SAFADI confirmed a firm security cooperation with the EU and its Member States in several fields: militarily, in the field of intelligence and on the joint effort to counter the terrorist narrative. Jordan is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism on three grounds: militarily, as part of the international coalition to fight DAESH and Al-Nusra; security-wise, with a solid network of cooperation, not only with partners in the EU but across the globe; and culturally, trying to counter the ideology of terrorists. The Minister reaffirmed that only the Arabs and Muslims can stand up to the terrorists and discredit their claim to represent their common faith, therefore, Jordan will continue to fight the terrorist ideology, which is not part of the Arab culture. Jordan is engaged in the global coalition in Syria, in monitoring 378 km of border with this country, making sure that terrorists do not cross there, which is a great responsibility that has been managed with success. However, the collapse of the so-called caliphate in several regions creates a dangerous situation of having foreign fighters coming across other countries to try and exert damage, something which requires stronger intelligence cooperation among all partners.

One key component of fighting terrorism is not just the exchange of intelligence but to cooperate in defeating the terrorist agenda of trying to dividing Muslims and non-Muslims and do not fall on the trap of seeing Muslim communities in the West to feel targeted or regarded as suspects. The growing radicalisation is the new threat and the biggest challenge is to mitigate home radicalisation developing inside the societies. Consequently, there is a need to develop the right narrative and, not least, to address the right causes of despair and anger on which terrorism thrives. Ambassador BATAINEH, Head of the Mission of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the EU, briefly addressed some key points on security cooperation underlining the Mobility partnership declaration. He recalled the EU-Jordan dialogue on migration, mobility and security focusing on five areas of relevance, namely: border management, international protection, travel and identity documents, organised crime and counterterrorism and, finally, migration management. Since 2012, regular meetings have taken place to assess the situation and find ways to enhance the level of security cooperation. EU counterterrorism officials visited Jordan and met with their relevant counterparts to setup the guidelines for the Jordan-EU terrorism security workshop which took place in March 2016, in addition to the joint declaration providing the roadmap for actions on countering violent extremism, terrorist financing and border security. Stronger contacts have been established between the Chairmen of Jordan Armed Forces and of the European Union Military Committee to further discuss the military and security cooperation. Other forms of cooperation were also mentioned, including the prospects of a framework participation agreement for Jordan's participation in EU CSDP Missions, General Kostarakos participation in the AQABA process, or the offer to train Imams in Jordan specialised centres.

Ms. MOGHERNI reiterated how much the EU appreciated the most structured and regular dialogue established and the partnership on security issues. The EU welcomed Jordan interest in strengthening the cooperation in the field of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), through the secondment of personnel to missions and operations in addition to the development of a framework agreement for Jordan's participation to EU crisis management activities. In the same context, she expressed the EU's interest for cooperation in preventing radicalisation, shared Jordan's approach on the need to unite communities and peoples rather than fostering separation and concluded by appreciating the initiative of His Majesty the King of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan regarding the AQABA process.

Closing remarks

Ms. MOGHERINI concluded by thanking the Jordanian Minister and the delegation for the fruitful meeting and, on a personal note, also showed her gratitude to His Majesty the King of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for his constant dedication to the Jordan-EU friendship and cooperation in many different fields. She considered that the common understanding on challenges and opportunities had been reinforced and provided fertile ground for building on the positive outcome of the meeting.

Mr. SAFADI expressed his thankfulness for the hospitality and for the prolific discussions which confirmed the alignment of visions for the future. He praised EU's support to sustain Jordan's resilience, to help the country seizing the opportunities and progressing within a wonderful but troubled neighbourhood.

5. POINT 5: POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

This point was treated in the informal part of the Association Council.

6. POINT 6: A.O.B

No issue was raised under this item of the agenda.

ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND JORDAN

The Association Council

Brussels, 3 July 2017
(OR. en)

UE-RHJ 3301/17

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Twelfth EU-Jordan Association Council

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Adoption of the minutes of the 11th EU-Jordan Association Council
3. Brussels Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region – Follow Up
4. EU-Jordan bilateral relations: Progress regarding the implementation of the Association Agreement and the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities & Compact
5. Political Dialogue on regional and international issues¹
6. A.O.B.

¹ Point to be dealt with in the restricted session

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DELEGATION OF JORDAN

H.E. Mr. Ayman SAFADI - Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*

H.E. Mr. Imad FAKHOURY - Minister of Planning and International Cooperation*

H.E. Mr. Yousef BATAINEH - Ambassador, Head of the Mission of Jordan to the EU*

H.E. Mr. Omar AL NAHAR - Advisor to the Minister and Head of the European Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates*

Mr. Baker ABBADI - Secretary General of the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*

Mr. Mohammad TARAWNEH - Deputy Chief of Mission, Mission of Jordan to the EU*

Ms. Zeina TOUKHAN - Director of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation*

Ms. Katherine AL-HALIQUE - First Secretary, European Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates*

Mr. Fadeel AL MOQBEL - Second Secretary, Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates*

Mr. Ala AL-LOUZI - Third Secretary, Mission of Jordan to the EU*

Ms. Abeer AL JAMMAL - Third Secretary, Mission of Jordan to the EU*

* participants in the restricted session

DELEGATION OF THE EU

Ms. Federica MOGHERINI, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*

Mr. Michael CURTIS, Member of the HR Cabinet*

Ms. Sabrina BELLOSI, Member of the HR Cabinet*

Ms. Catherine RAY, HR Spokesperson

Mr. Leonardo SCHIAVO, Director General, DG C 2– Foreign Affairs, Enlargement and Civil Protection*

Mr. Kimmo PEIPPO, Co-Secretary of the EU-Jordan Association Council, Head of Unit, Unit Security, Foreign Affairs, Enlargement and Civil Protection

Mr. Dimosthenis MAMMONAS, Political administrator, in charge of the MAMA Working Group*

Ms. Emma UDWIN, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Johannes Hahn*

Mr. Michael KOEHLER, Director, DG NEAR*

Mr. Michael MILLER, Head of Unit, DG NEAR*

Ms. Fabienne BESSONNE, Head of Sector DG NEAR

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Mr. Nick WESTCOTT, Managing Director North Africa, Middle East, Arabic Peninsula, Iran, Iraq*

Mr. Colin SCICLUNA, Deputy Managing Director North Africa, Middle East, Arabic Peninsula, Iran, Iraq*

Mr. Andrea FONTANA, Head of the EU Delegation to Jordan*

Mr. Patrick COSTELLO, Head of Division*

Ms. Sibylle BIKAR, Deputy Head of Division

Ms. Rachel GALLOWAY, Co-chair, MaMa Working Group

Mr. Patrick DUPONT, Policy officer EEAS

Mr. Frank NEISSE, Policy officer EEAS

Other Participants:

SPAIN

Mr. Manuel ACERETE, PSC Ambassador

** Participants to the restricted session.*

TWELFTH MEETING OF THE EU-JORDAN ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

(BRUSSELS, 10 JULY 2017)

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. On the occasion of the **twelfth meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council** and seven months into the agreement of 19 December 2016 on Partnership Priorities (and Compact) between the EU and Jordan, the EU reiterates its commitment to further strengthening the strong partnership between the EU and Jordan. In line with the EU Global Strategy, the EU has a strategic interest in Jordan's stability, resilience and prosperity, both internally and with a regional context. The EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities symbolise a steady strengthening of the political and operational engagement since the entry into force of the EU-Jordan Association Agreement in 2002. The EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities were the first to be concluded under the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which is itself clear evidence of our strong relationship.
2. The EU attaches great importance to its bilateral relationship with **Jordan as a key partner**, as demonstrated by the meetings between His Majesty King Abdullah II and the Presidents of the European Institutions in 2015 and 2016 and the visits to Jordan during this and the previous years of High Representative Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn and several other Members of the European Commission. Official missions by Delegations from the European Parliament and frequent senior-level dialogues in the context of multilateral and regional fora, the co-chaired Union for the Mediterranean as well as the EU-Jordan Association Committee and Subcommittees, have demonstrated the mutual benefit to Jordan and the EU to sustain our engagement.
3. The EU commends the **excellent working relations** in Amman between the EU Delegation and the authorities of Jordan. The EU is grateful to Jordan for temporarily hosting the EU Delegation to Yemen in Amman. The EU is appreciative of Jordan's logistical support, which is essential in facilitating the work of the EU in Yemen.

4. The EU commits to further deepening dialogue and cooperation with Jordan, setting a **strategic agenda** around the three mutually reinforcing objectives reflected in the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities: macro-economic stability and sustainable and knowledge-based growth; strengthening democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights; regional stability and security, including addressing counter-terrorism. Cooperation will also be pursued on a number of cross-cutting priorities such as migration and mobility, including the further implementation of the Mobility Partnership. The EU will prioritise the economic, social and political inclusion of vulnerable groups, including youth and women across the different areas of engagement with Jordan.
5. Jordan has been heavily impacted by the crisis in Syria, which has further aggravated existing challenges. The EU is committed to support Jordan in pursuing an ambitious economic and political reform agenda, on the basis of a long-term strategy, as it provides the best guarantee for upholding stability and prosperity. The EU welcomes Jordan's **comprehensive approach** as outlined in its development strategy 'Jordan 2025: a National Vision and Strategy' as well as HM King Abdullah II's discussion papers.
6. At the Brussels Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region, hosted by the EU on 5th April 2017, the Conference co-chairs commended once again on behalf of the international community the continuous efforts of the people and authorities of Jordan in accommodating Syrian refugees. The EU will continue supporting Jordan in its **holistic approach** to the refugee crisis and in maximising impact, including in terms of the mutual commitments set out in the Brussels Conference output document on 'Supporting Resilience of Host Countries and Refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis', as well as the EU-Jordan Compact. The EU recalls the shared commitment that measures taken in support of Syrian refugees will not be at the detriment of other people residing and seeking protection in Jordan.

7. Since the start of the Syria crisis, the EU has allocated close to **EUR 1.63 billion to Jordan**, of which EUR 1 billion as a response to the Syrian crisis including humanitarian assistance and support to vulnerable host communities and refugees from Syria via the EU regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the 'Madad' Fund. It also includes EUR 380 million allocated in macro-financial assistance (MFA). At the Brussels Conference, the EU confirmed its willingness to maintain the level of support allocated for 2016-17 in 2018 and committed to a similar level for 2019.
8. While applying the different components of its **operational tool box**, from bilateral aid to stability support, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy support, concessional financing and MFA, the EU will ensure full complementarity and coherence.

Strengthening Economic Stability, Sustainable and Knowledge-Based Growth, Quality Education and Job Creation

9. The EU welcomes Jordan's strategic vision outlined in "Jordan 2025" and in its 2018-2022 plan to **stimulate the Jordanian economy**. The EU reiterates its full support to Jordan in the effective implementation of economic reform.
10. The EU will continue to provide budget support for structural reform focusing on improved public service delivery and resource management, accountability and transparency and on enhancing the environment for investment and job creation notably for youth by the **private sector**. The latter will benefit from: a more predictable and simplified legal and regulatory framework; consistent implementation of existing legislation; improved framework for access to credit by companies, notably micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and efforts to ensure that the population has skills that match the needs of the labour market. The EU's private sector development and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) budget support programmes will assist Jordan in these areas.
11. The EU will support initiatives to increase the **participation of women in the economy** as a way to increase the level of economic activity and in line with the EU Gender Action Plan.

12. The EU adopted a second programme of **macro-financial assistance** for Jordan in December 2016. The EU looks forward to a swift agreement on the implementation modalities. The EU remains committed to consider a third MFA package to Jordan, as long as this is matched with structural reform measures and provided the related requirements are met.
13. The EU will continue to foster the **enhancement of trade relations** with Jordan, as an important vehicle for investment and job creation. The EU will continue to support Jordan in its efforts to improve its export performance by boosting its general export capacity and competitiveness and achieving a closer integration into global value chains. To this end, the EU will work actively with Jordan to support Jordanian producers in meeting specific technical, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements that may at present hinder their ability to take fuller advantage of the preferential access Jordan already enjoys on the EU market. The EU stands ready to explore ideas for additional steps to facilitate trade or deepen the existing Free Trade Agreement.
14. The EU will support Jordan to ensure the full and swift implementation of the decision on the relaxed **rules of origin**, agreed on 19th July 2016, as was most recently confirmed at the joint event on “Trade and Business Opportunities in Jordan”, held in Brussels on 3rd May 2017. The first positive results under this ground-breaking initiative can now be seen in terms of Jordanian companies registering under the scheme and committing to employing additional number of Syrian refugees. However, the EU notes that the results to date in terms of additional investment, exports and employment creation have been modest and considers much more can be achieved. The EU therefore encourages Jordan to intensify efforts to implement the scheme, to publicise its benefits to potential investors in the private sector, and to take forward more general initiatives to improve the investment climate, which would also be likely to have wider spill-over benefits for the economy beyond the Rules of Origin initiative.

15. The EU commends Jordan's efforts to integrate refugees into the formal labour market, having allocated since January 2016 over 50,000 **work permits** to Syrians. The EU will support Jordan in further increasing the number of work permits, to meet the objectives set in the EU-Jordan Compact and the London Conference Compact. The EU also encourages Jordan to maintain efforts to reduce the number of undocumented refugees and facilitate their participation in the labour market.
16. The EU will work with Jordan in the implementation of Jordan's **Human Resource Development Plan**, and reform in the sectors of education and vocational education and training as outlined in HM King Abdullah II's 7th Discussion Paper of April 2017. The EU will provide support to policies and programmes designed to improve the quality of education and vocational education and training, increasing the focus on analytical thinking, entrepreneurship and new technologies, notably in view of enhancing the employment opportunities of young people.
17. Increased **student and staff mobility** as well as capacity building projects through Erasmus+ and other programmes will be pursued in the same vein. The EU would in particular welcome the participation of Jordan in the eTwinningPlus action virtually linking schools in Europe and partner countries.
18. The EU will sustain Jordan's efforts in providing education to all, as reconfirmed at the Brussels Conference in April 2017 and inspired by the objective to have '**no lost generation**'. Acknowledging the heavy impact on Jordan's resources, the EU has provided budget and other support to construct schools, allow the enrolment of 125,000 Syrian students in the formal education system and to hire and train some 5,700 teachers. The EU will work with Jordan to ensure that all children without exception have the opportunity to attend school and receive basic education.

19. The EU is committed to enhance the integration of **research and innovation** in education and TVET programmes, as well as in public and private sector investment. Increased cooperation between research and innovation centres and small and medium enterprises will have a positive effect on Jordan's competitiveness. The EU welcomes Jordan's positive approach in that regard and encourages Jordan to make full use of Horizon 2020 and of research mobility and partnership initiatives.
20. The forthcoming **Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area** (PRIMA) will provide additional opportunities for cooperation between the EU and the PRIMA Participating States, and the EU looks forward to active cooperation with Jordan soon. PRIMA is expected to mobilise joint research on two of the most urgent challenges to the Euro-Mediterranean area which are highly relevant to Jordan: the efficiency and sustainability of food production and water provision. In this context, the EU will welcome the successful finalisation of negotiations on an international agreement for Jordan's participation in PRIMA.
21. The EU welcomes the launch of the **SESAME** international research centre on 16th May 2017 following substantial EU financial support for its construction and operation. Through the universal language of science, SESAME offers unique opportunities to the research and science communities of Jordan and countries in the region. Importantly, increased cooperation among researchers from different countries in the region can create a peace dividend.
22. The EU also welcomes Jordan's interest in space cooperation including EGNOS/Galileo. In this regard, the EU will continue discussing and examine interest in EGNOS extension to the whole ENP South region.
23. The EU welcomes the ratification by Jordan of the **Paris Agreement** on climate change in November 2016. The EU seeks to intensify cooperation with Jordan to turn climate goals into climate action and will support the implementation of its Nationally Determined Contribution. This will be closely related to other areas of active engagement between the EU and Jordan such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, support for low-carbon, resource efficient growth and natural resource management. The EU will cooperate with Jordan in fostering innovative research and knowledge-based solutions.

24. The EU recognises the importance of water security in Jordan. In this context, the EU looks forward to the implementation of the **Red Sea/Dead Sea** project, subject to the positive findings of the ongoing environmental impact assessment. The EU sees the equal involvement of the Palestinian side as an important element to ensure the success of the project. The project should play a role in the adequate provision of water for the populations in the region, with an impact on current and future sources of conflict, and combating the effects of climate change on the Dead Sea. In addition, resources from the European External Investment Plan and the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis ('The Madad Fund') may be used to support reforms and finance investments in the area of water and wastewater treatment and solid waste management to provide the necessary infrastructure, notably in light of the additional pressures as a result of accommodating Syrian refugees.

Strengthening Democratic Governance, the Rule of Law and Human Rights

25. The respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights constitutes a **key pillar of the EU-Jordan Association Agreement**. The EU values strongly the regular dialogue at political and senior official level and the commitment by Jordan to advancing on the rule of law, parliamentary government and the respect of human rights. The EU has welcomed Jordan's National Plan for Human Rights 2016-2025 and HM the King's Sixth Discussion Paper of 16th October 2016 on the Rule of Law and the Civil State. The EU commends efforts on core issues related to the rule of law such as an effective and well-functioning judicial system as well as addressing corruption. The EU has supported Jordan's Justice Reform Strategy and will support Jordan in its implementation, including by promoting the interface between rule of law and security.

26. The EU will intensify work with Jordan on **electoral reform** in support of the Independent Election Commission and the **strengthening of the parliamentary and political party system** in the country. The EU encourages Jordan to take up the recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) which was deployed to Jordan to observe the parliamentary elections of 20 September 2016. As for other domains, the EU advocates that particular attention be given to the inclusion of youth and women.

27. On the human rights front, the EU has expressed concern that **freedoms of expression and association** have been challenged by the use of counter-terrorism provisions. Jordan has an active civil society and the EU takes the view that the best antidote for radicalisation is an open society where human rights and fundamental freedoms are promoted and protected. It is in that context that the EU calls for a balanced and targeted use of legislative and administrative provisions related to the regulation of civil society organisations in full compliance with international human rights law.
28. The concluding observations of the review in 2015 by the UN Committee Against **Torture**, provide a useful benchmark for engaging with Jordan in further strengthening its legal framework including the criminalisation of all forms of torture and ill-treatment. The EU calls on Jordan to continue investigating all alleged torture cases and to prosecute the perpetrators.
29. The EU welcomes the proposal of the Government of Jordan to revoke article 308 of the penal code, which allowed rapists to marry their victims to escape punishment; the EU looks forward to its early adoption. This is a positive step towards gender equality and enhancing **women's rights**, an area on which further progress could be achieved.
30. The EU commends Jordan's efforts in the area of **freedom of religion or belief** and in promoting peaceful religious co-existence. This sets a positive example for the entire region.
31. The EU regrets that the de facto moratorium on the **death penalty**, which was in place from 2006 until 2014, was interrupted with executions in December 2014 and early 2015 and was further eroded with the execution of 15 convicted persons in March 2017. The EU calls on Jordan to re-instate the de-facto moratorium, with a view to ultimately abolishing the death penalty. The EU also regrets that Jordan, State Party to the Rome Statute of the **International Criminal Court** received the President of Sudan on the occasion of the 2017 Arab League Summit on 29th March, for whom an arrest warrant has been issued.

32. The EU will continue to support efforts by Jordan and the international community in ensuring life-saving protection and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need. The EU acknowledges progress and calls on Jordan to continue to do its utmost to facilitate humanitarian access and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance to those stranded along the border with Syria, many of whom are living in dire conditions. With respect to Syrian refugees on its territory, the EU calls on Jordan to sustain its efforts in guaranteeing their **protection** and ensuring their registration. Return to their country of origin should only occur when the conditions allow and on a voluntary, dignified and safe basis, in accordance with applicable norms of international law and the principle of non-refoulement.

Strengthening Cooperation on Regional Stability, including Counter-Terrorism

33. The EU commends Jordan's active diplomatic role including its constructive and effective engagement within the **United Nations**, to the benefit of the global good, for instance during its membership of the Security Council and in the run up to the UN General Assembly Summit on International Migration in 2016.
34. The EU strongly values its co-Presidency with Jordan of the **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) since 2012. UfM cooperation has constituted a solid basis for engagement between the EU and its Southern partners on key issues ranging from natural resource management to employment creation and youth inclusion impacting on the stability of Mediterranean society which is of mutual interest to the EU and its partners. The EU values the role of Anna Lindh Foundation in support of the EuroMed dialogue.
35. Jordan's hosting of the 2017 League of Arab States Summit and of several World Economic Forum events for the MENA region are other examples of the country's active regional engagement, with positive benefits to Jordan. Improved regional stability and greater regional economic cooperation will be conducive to increased prosperity for Jordan and its neighbours, including Iraq. In light of tensions in the region, the EU strongly values Jordan's active and consensus-seeking diplomatic role.

36. The EU Strategy for Syria endorsed by the EU Council Conclusions of 3 April 2017 reconfirmed the imperative of a credible political solution to the **Syria crisis** in line with the Geneva communiqué and UNSCR 2254 and the central role played by the UN in that regard. Initiatives in view of reducing violence should be framed in support of the Geneva process. The EU is committed to intensifying its partnership with Jordan within this framework and in supporting Jordan's political and diplomatic efforts, including in the context of the International Syria Support Group and the EU's Regional Initiative for the Future of Syria.
37. The EU recognises Jordan's indispensable role and will continue to engage closely with Jordan in pursuing a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU recalls the specific significance of the holy sites and makes a strong call for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Haram al-Sharif / Temple Mount in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role, and underlines the significance of the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty.
38. A number of security and terrorist incidents and the phenomenon of foreign fighters indicate that Jordan has been seriously affected by the threats posed by **terrorism** and violent extremism. The EU welcomes Jordan's multi-faceted approach, engaging in the Global Coalition against Da'esh on the one hand and continuing diplomatic initiatives in support of for instance inter-religious tolerance on the other. The EU has also welcomed HM King Abdullah II's initiative with the Aqaba process.
39. The EU and Jordan will continue to work together on **countering violent extremism**. On-going actions supported by the EU have included: institutional capacity building; public messaging and communication; as well as a comprehensive study on the drivers behind violent extremism in Jordan. Results are expected during summer 2017 and will guide further EU support in this field.

40. The EU-Jordan Workshop on Counter-Terrorism/Enhanced Security of 15th March 2016 has laid the basis for regular policy dialogue and increased bilateral cooperation that must be stepped up. The EU is committed to enhancing its support to Jordan, including on issues related to **integrated border management**, considering the multiple advantages from a security, protection, mobility and economic point of view. It is in Jordan's vital interest to maintain stability at its borders.
41. The EU also welcomes the initiative launched and the actions carried out with Jordan since 2016, to exchange views and best practices in the prevention and combatting of **trafficking of firearms**. The EU looks forward to strengthening its cooperation with Jordan in this regard.
42. The EU welcomes Jordan's declared interest in strengthening cooperation in the field of **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**, including through the secondment of personnel to CSDP missions and operations. The EU is ready to support further steps in this regard, notably the opening of negotiations of a Framework Participation Agreement (FPA) on the participation of Jordan in EU Crisis Management Operations in accordance with the relevant procedures.

Implementing the EU-Jordan Mobility Partnership

43. Migration and mobility are a cross-cutting issue in the cooperation between the EU and Jordan. The EU welcomes the different initiatives in the context of the Mobility Partnership, including the project addressing the trafficking of human beings and engaging with Jordanian expatriate communities abroad. The EU encourages active exploration of the opportunities provided by the Mobility Partnership conducive to other programmes of cooperation. The EU welcomes that bilateral discussions on **visa facilitation** and **readmission** of persons residing without authorisation started in November 2016, and is ready to advance in the negotiation process in view of reaching a comprehensive agreement

THE 12TH MEETING OF JORDAN-EU ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

BRUSSELS, JULY 10TH, 2017

- Jordan highly welcomes the convening of the 12th meeting of the Jordan-EU Association Council which confirmed the strong strategic partnership with the EU, reviewed the state of Jordan-EU bilateral relations and took stock of progress made in the implementation of the Association Agreement and of the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities 2016-2018 in addition to the EU-Jordan Compact adopted in December 2016 as well as the joint decision on simplified rules of origin reached in July 2016.
- Jordan highly values its historic relations and strong partnership with the EU and will continue to work to further enhance and consolidate this partnership in all its aspects. Jordan also appreciates the EU's strong commitment to the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Partnership Priorities.
- Jordan also values the EU's continued support to Jordan over the years and appreciates the additional assistance received and announced at the London and Brussels conferences to ease the burden of hosting Syrian refugees in the Kingdom. Jordan also appreciates the EU's efforts in hosting and convening the recent Brussels Conference. EU partnership and support in shouldering the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordan has helped the country stay resilient in a very difficult and unprecedented regional setting.

- Jordan continues to work closely with the EU as the co-president of the Union for the Mediterranean to enhance and promote regional cooperation and economic integration. Jordan continues to perceive the UfM as an important platform for policy dialogue and drawing up regional projects and initiatives of strategic significance in the context of the priority areas identified by the Paris Summit Declaration in 2008. As co-president, Jordan has worked hard to create new bridges of cooperation and succeeded in organizing many operational, ad-hoc and ministerial meetings in various fields including business development, social and civil affairs, higher education and research, environment, urban development, water, energy and transport. Jordan will continue to actively participate in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean as an important platform for promoting Euro-Mediterranean relations and various cooperation modalities.

Regional Issues

- Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Jordan continues to be a voice for moderation and tolerance in the region, exerting tremendous efforts to steer the region towards peace, stability and prosperity. Jordan reaffirms that it will remain a strong proponent for openness and inclusion as the key instruments to such goals and to creating conditions conducive to lasting peace, stability and development in the region.
- **On the Palestinian-Israeli conflict**, which is the core issue of the Middle East, Jordan reaffirms that the Two-State solution is the only viable solution to resolve the conflict, whereby a viable Palestinian State would be established on Palestinian soil along the lines of June 4th 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with a secure Israel, as pertained in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which was re-launched in Amman Summit in 2017.
- Jordan will continue exerting its utmost efforts to safeguard Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. This role is part of the historical Hashemite custodianship over Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem. In this regard, Jordan will continue to reject any attempts to change the historical status quo in Jerusalem.

- **On Syria**, Jordan reaffirms that there could be no military solution to the crisis. The Kingdom supports a political solution that will end the bloodshed, restore security and stability, and preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and the dignity and unity of its people. Jordan believes this political solution should be reached through the Geneva process and should be based on UNSC Resolution No. 2254 and the Geneva I Communiqué. The Kingdom supports the efforts of UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura in achieving that goal.
- Jordan seeks an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire across Syria. It has supported Astana which it has attended as an observer as a credible effort to achieve this ceasefire and a step towards achieving the political solution through the Geneva process, and as an observer in Astana Talks welcomes all efforts that lead to a comprehensive cessation of hostilities, as the latest ceasefire in South-West Syria.
- The Kingdom has also worked with the United States and Russia to support the implementation of the cease-fire in south of Syria. Jordan will continue to work with the United States and Russia to help establish a de-escalation area in south Syria with a view to producing conditions conducive to progress towards a political solution.
- **On Iraq**, Jordan congratulates Iraq on the liberation of Mosul and stands firmly by the Iraqi Government in its fight against terrorism and its quest for peace and stability, and in preserving the sovereignty and unity of Iraq.
- The Kingdom also supports an all-inclusive political process that would meet the aspirations of all the components of the Iraqi people towards a stable, secure and prosperous Iraq.
 - **On Countering Terrorism**, the danger of terrorism has been on the rise in the region and the world. Jordan believes that the evils of terrorism proved that no region is safe; it poses a threat on all of us; sparing no religion, faith, race or color.
 - Jordan still calls on the International Community to work collectively in a holistic approach and in total coordination to defeat terrorism.

- Jordan stresses that Europe is an important partner in the efforts to stop the global rise of Islamophobia, as part of the holistic approach to face extremism and radicalization. On its behalf, it spearheaded several initiatives to promote tolerance and interfaith dialogue, such as the “Amman Message”, “A Common Word”, “Global Interfaith Harmony Week”, in addition to the “Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security” that was held in August 2015, which came in translation to the notion that was presented in April 2015 by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah at the United Nations Security Council during Jordan’s presidency, as part of the short-term: military, med-term: intelligence and security and long-term: education and ideology, strategy to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

Key Political and Economic Reforms

- Jordan’s accelerating pace of its political reform process has been crucial to its stability at these critical times. Jordan strongly believes in the need to continue strengthening the country’s democratic and good governance framework. A new wave of laws was endorsed with the aim of further increasing citizens’ participation in decision-making process while empowering political parties and enhancing their participation in Parliament thus leading to the formation of parliamentary governments in the future.
- After successfully holding its 18th Parliamentary elections in September 2016, the country is now preparing to hold its next municipal elections in August 2017 and for the first-time decentralization elections to elect governorate councils as part of the drive towards decentralization and continuously increasing citizen participation in national decision-making process and prioritizing development needs at local levels.

- The Government is continuing to further strengthen public oversight to improve public accountability, integrity of public service and good governance, where based on a new legislation, the Ombudsman Bureau and the Anti-Corruption Commission were merged into a strengthened National Commission for Integrity and Anti-Corruption. Jordan, being the first Arab country to join the Open Government Partnership in 2011, remains committed to this partnership and has submitted its 3rd National Action Plan for Open Government for 2017-2018 currently under implementation. To further develop the judiciary and enhancing the rule of law, a comprehensive judicial reform process is underway implementing the outcomes of the Royal Committee (tasked by His Majesty the King) for developing the Judiciary and Enhancing the Rule of Law.
- Jordan is a role model of respecting human rights in the region. Its commitment to advancing human rights is unwavering. This commitment is demonstrated in a host of legislative reforms undertaken by the Government. While Jordan will continue to do all it can to fight terrorism and protect its people and their interests, It again stresses that advancing an open political and social environment that guarantees openness and respect for all is the best weapon against the ideology of hate and terrorism.
- Another Attestation of respecting human rights in Jordan, is hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees and economic migrants, including Syrians, Iraqis, Yazidis, Yeminis, Libyans and others from different ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, where their diverse rights are preserved including freedom of belief and worship, and the right to live. They all share with Jordanians the same access to public services including education, health, and judiciary system and enjoy the right to protection in accordance with International standards.
- The existing challenging situation in the region did not weaken Jordan’s drive and commitment for reforms. The country is moving on a comprehensive multi-track reform process. On the economic reform track, Jordan launched in 2015 a new 10-year socioeconomic blueprint for the country, “Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy” aimed at achieving a prosperous, resilient, and inclusive economy while deepening reforms and inclusion. As dictated by this blueprint, Jordan has been sustaining macroeconomic and fiscal stability as part of national fiscal and economic reform program supported by the IMF.

- A 3-year program with the IMF “Extended Fund Facility” was also reached in August 2016, building on the successfully implemented Stand-by Arrangement Program during 2012-2015, aimed at advancing fiscal consolidation to gradually lower public debt and broad structural reforms to enhance the conditions for more social-friendly inclusive growth. Jordan has been adopting a new generation of economic laws to enhance investments, doing business environment and competitiveness as part of its continuous improvement approach. Jordan launched recently the Jordan Economic Growth Plan for 2018-2022 to refocus efforts on inclusive growth agenda in view of unprecedented turbulence in the region and which contains must-do reform measures under Jordan 2025 including structural reforms and key deliverables under main national sectoral strategies in human resources development, energy, water, employment, poverty and social protection, green economy, e-government among others along with key investment opportunities and needed capital expenditure program that will be implemented through maximization of using Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) frameworks.

Jordan and the Refugee Crisis

- Jordan’s external environment remains challenging. Spillover from the conflicts in the region (including hosting 1.3 million Syrians) continues to pressure Jordan’s resilience, security and stability. About 90% of Syrians are living in Jordan’s cities, towns and villages exhausting existing social and physical infrastructure and impacting delivery of basic services. Over the past 16 months, Jordan has been pioneering an innovative model and paradigm shift for the world by carrying out a global public good in terms of hosting refugees and providing them with needed services and economic opportunities in spite of the tremendous economic, military, security and humanitarian burdens.

- The Syrian refugee influx and an extremely challenging external environment have had severe effect on Jordan's infrastructure, public service delivery and overall economic well-being. This sudden influx, and the protracted nature of the crisis now in its seventh year, has pushed Jordan's absorptive capacity to its limits and is impacting all aspects of life in the country. Additional capital investments made over the past years to accommodate the refugee influx have led to a significant increase in operation and management costs across service sectors. Jordan has also reached its maximum carrying capacity with no fiscal space remaining under the new Extended Fund Facility with IMF (embarked upon in 2016) nor in terms of resources, existing physical and social infrastructure or government services.
- Moreover, due to regional situation, closure of Iraqi borders and loss of trade and transit trade routes via Syria, the country remains under economic siege. Jordan has been faced with persistent low anemic growth levels over the past 6 years at an average of 2%; a level that is insufficient to make a dent in the increasing unemployment rates which reached 18.2% in the first quarter of 2017 where youth unemployment is about 35%. Public debt to GDP grew from 60% in 2010 to 95% end of 2016. Poverty rates have increased by more than 30% from 14.4% in 2010 to an estimate of 20% in 2016. Jordan was recently re-classified by the World Bank as a lower middle-income country from being an upper middle-income country due to the increase in population and to the low growth. This economic situation is also increasingly undermining social cohesion and creating discontent that extremists will take advantage of to widen their support base.
- For years now, Jordan has been setting a regional and global model in terms of dealing with Syrian refugees and in adopting a paradigm shift by turning the refugee crisis into an economic opportunity based on the commitments made in the Jordan Compact adopted at the London Conference last year. To date, about 55,000 work permits were issued to Syrian refugees. Today, 90% of Syrian refugee children are in schools or catch up programs. 98 additional double-shift schools (total 196) established to accommodate up to 50,000 additional Syrian children in formal education.

- Jordan is also pleased to work closely with the EU towards the implementation of the joint decision on simplified rules of origin, a key deliverable under the Jordan Compact, by providing firm level support to 21 quick wins pilot factories to export to Europe in addition to creating employment hubs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees to work in the development zones covered by the joint decision.
- To date, eight factories have met all the requirements of the decision and were granted authorization to export to the EU under the new RoO agreement. Around 635 individuals are employed by these factories, of which 26% are Syrian refugees. Two factories have been successful in exporting to the EU in the plastic sector exporting to Spain, Cyprus, Belgium, and Hungary. Yet, going forward it is critical to significantly scale up support in order to maximize the potential under the new RoO agreement, including technical support at factory level, facilitating B2B, matchmaking and identifying buyers, complying with EU standards and specifications, creating a network among the Syrian business Diaspora in Europe among others.

EU support to Jordan

- Jordan highly appreciates the EU for its continued support to Jordan and in being a critical and longstanding development partner to Jordan over the many years. Jordan is also grateful to additional humanitarian assistance and development assistance through Madad Regional Trust Fund and other instruments committed over the past few years to support refugees and host communities and alleviate part of the pressures as a result of hosting Syrian refugees on the state budget especially in the education sector.
- The EU support extended to Jordan under different modalities and instruments is of great added value and has significantly contributed to the country's development efforts in key areas of common interest particularly institutional and capacity building; fiscal and macroeconomic stability; private sector development; trade and transport facilitation, as well as the support to key sectors such as local development, services and industry; research and innovation; microfinance, water, E-TVET, energy, education and higher education, security, and justice.

- Jordan pays high attention to the Madad Fund and the projects approved to date in supporting resilience of institutions and host communities as well as supporting Syrian refugees in Jordan. Going forward, Jordan continues to count on the EU's sustainable support to priorities identified under Jordan's Executive Development Program 2017-2019, including the recently launched Jordan Economic Growth Plan 2018-2022 as well as support to the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) 2017-2019.
 - Jordan also counts on the EU as the Brussels Conference and its convening role to ensure that the international community delivers under the Jordan Output document inclusive of their commitments to fund critical must do capital investment projects under the JRP in host communities across services delivery sectors. It is also critical to continue investing successfully in full coordinated partnership and with sufficient resources in Jordan's model and the Jordan Compact to ensure long-term success of the paradigm shift that Jordan embarked on, both sufficient in grants to rebuild host communities needs in addition to increased budgetary support grants and concessionary financing building on precedent of the Global Concessional Financing Facility launched in 2016.
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