Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

‘London 11’ meeting on Syria

2013-10-22

After the conclusion of a core group of the Friends of Syria meeting which he had hosted in London, the Foreign Secretary spoke on behalf of the group.

The Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

We have just concluded an important and productive meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Friends of Syria core group, including the President of the Syrian National Coalition.

We have met against the backdrop of the regime’s escalating use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force against the people of Syria. They are using tanks, torture, artillery, SCUD missiles, air attacks; laying siege to desperate people; and presiding over the creation of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Members of the opposition have spoken powerfully about people starving and women and children suffering at the hands of the regime. The only sustainable way to end this conflict and the suffering of innocent Syrian civilians is through a political transition in Syria. The purpose of our meeting today has been to send a signal of our resolve, our unity and determination in brining that about, building on the diplomatic progress made during the UN General Assembly last month.

We have agreed a number of important steps today:

First, we agreed that we would put our united and collective weight behind the UN-led Geneva II process, which must lead to establishing by mutual consent a Transitional Governing Body with full executive powers as set out in the Communiqué in 2012. By definition that means that it can only be agreed with the consent of the Syrian National Coalition. So Assad will play no role in that future Government of Syria.

Second, despite the enormous challenges faced by the Syrian opposition, we urged the National Coalition to commit itself fully to the Geneva II process and to lead and form the heart of any opposition delegation. Geneva offers the Syrian people the best hope to improve their lives.

Third, we agreed with them that we will provide the intensive political and practical support that will be required to give the Geneva II process the best chance of success.

Fourth, we agreed a set of principles, attached to

today's communiqué

, that underline the unity of our approach to the Geneva II process as the Friends of Syria core group.

We agreed the Syrian opposition, including the moderate armed groups, and moderate opposition represented by the coalition continue to need our strong collective backing. There can be no peaceful and political settlement in Syria without the participation of the moderate opposition. So we pledged further support to them.

President Al Jarba attended lunch and made clear, as in New York, his support. We are as clear as he is that Assad has no part in the future of Syria.

The UK will continue to support the opposition in its efforts to help and protect the Syrian people from the murderous abuses of the regime through the more than £20 million in support to the opposition that we have provided this year. This is support that to helps to save lives and provide services to the Syrian population – including search and rescue equipment and training, power generators, communications, support and training to civil administrations.

Between now and Geneva II Conference, we plan to announce a further package of UK support, including substantial non-lethal support to the National Coalition working with General Idris of the Free Syrian Army's Supreme Military Council. This assistance is likely to take the form of communications, medical, and logistics equipment. It will help them to save lives on the ground.

None of us has lost sight of the deepening humanitarian disaster.

As winter approaches, the risks are growing to the nearly 7 million Syrians in need. This is compounded still further by the actions of the regime. The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos said yesterday that the UN continues to be denied access on the ground to those in need of humanitarian assistance by obstacles placed by the Syrian regime. In the suburbs of Damascus, many innocent Syrians remain trapped as a result of the regime's siege tactics. This is unacceptable and full and uninhibited access for humanitarian aid to people in need must be allowed.

We have intensified the humanitarian support our eleven countries are providing, and encourage others to do the same through further funding pledges and we will be pressing the case for humanitarian access as called for by the UN Security Council on 2 October.

The UK is the second largest humanitarian donor to the Syria conflict with over £500 million of aid allocated to date. Yesterday, we announced a further £15.5 million of lifesaving support

to Palestinian refugees both inside Syrian and in neighbouring countries. This will include food for over 150,000 people and clothing for people in need of urgent help.

Our eleven countries will continue to work closely together in the weeks leading up to a Geneva Conference to ensure it has the best possible chance of success, and the people of Syria finally get the political transition they so desperately need and deserve.

Further information

Read the London 11

Final Communiqué

The London 11 consists of: Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Representatives of the leadership of the National Coalition also attend the meeting.

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