COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Council conclusions on Syria

3183rd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 23 July 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The EU stands by the Syrian people at this critical juncture in their peaceful and courageous struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and human rights. The EU is appalled by the horrific killings in the village of Tremseh on 12 July 2012. It strongly condemns the ever increasing use of force by the regime, including use of heavy artillery and shelling against populated areas in blatant violation of its obligations under the Annan Plan and UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043. The EU calls for an immediate international independent investigation. The EU urges the Syrian regime to end immediately the killing of civilians, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities and to allow for a peaceful transition for the sake of the country. International humanitarian law must be respected by all. The EU is deeply concerned about the recent intensification of violence, including in Damascus, which demonstrates the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring back stability in Syria. The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

2. The EU remains deeply concerned about the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. It calls on the Syrian regime to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighbouring countries. The regime's brutality has had tragic effects in Syria and serious repercussions in neighbouring countries.

P R E S S

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3. The European Union recalls its full support to the Joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's mission and his six point Plan that must be implemented. It welcomes the outcome of the Action Group meeting in Geneva on 30 June 2012 and in particular the call for the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers made up of opposition and government representatives and formed by mutual consent. The EU encourages Kofi Annan to continue working on the implementation of this transition plan, including with the Action Group, and urges all parties to support these efforts.

   The EU also welcomes the outcome of the third meeting of the Group of Friends of Syrian people on 6 July in Paris that has gathered more than 100 countries and organisations and showed the growing consensus of the international community in favour of a democratic transition in Syria and looks forward to the convening of the next meeting of the Group.

   The EU underlines that those whose presence would undermine the transition should be excluded and that President Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

4. The EU deeply regrets that the UNSC has not been able to agree to a UNSC resolution which would have endorsed the communiqué of the Action Group and foreseen measures to enforce compliance with the Annan Plan under Article 41 of the UN Chapter. The EU regrets that the UNSC has thus failed to uphold its responsibilities and to back the Joint Special Envoy's efforts. The EU calls for united action by all members of the UNSC, including Russia and China, to add more robust and effective pressure and ensure that there will be serious consequences for continued non compliance with its previous decisions.

5. The EU welcomes the decision to renew the mandate of UNSMIS for a final period of 30 days, taking into account the UN Secretary-General's recommendations to reconfigure the Mission and taking into consideration the operational implications of the increasingly dangerous security situation in Syria. The EU recalls that the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the mission. The EU is ready to provide the needed support to guarantee the success of the supervision mission.

6. The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation and breaches of international humanitarian law in Syria. The systematic and widespread human rights violations and abuses committed by the regime demonstrates its outright contempt for human rights. The EU is also concerned about recent reports of alleged use of cluster munitions against civilians. The EU reaffirms its support to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to hold to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity. The EU recalls that all those responsible for widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations must be held accountable. The EU welcomes the adoption of the UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 6 July on the human rights situation in Syria.

7. Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against further militarisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which can only bring further suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact on the region.

In this regard, the EU expresses concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. The EU is also concerned about the influx of weapons into Syria. Therefore, the EU calls on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country. The EU is seriously concerned about the potential use of chemical weapons in Syria.

8. The EU welcomes the National Pact and the Common Political Vision for the transition in Syria issued following the Syrian opposition conference held under the auspices of the Arab League in Cairo on 2-3 July and encourages all groups to continue engaging in this process. The EU continues to urge all opposition groups to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. The EU urges all opposition groups to continue support to Annan's efforts and to be ready to provide leadership and engage with the transition plan designed by the Action Group for Syria on 30 June. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.

9. The EU takes positive note of the start of the implementation of the humanitarian response plan in Syria which was confirmed by the fourth Syrian Humanitarian Forum on 16 July. However, in view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country, the EU calls on all parties to allow full and safe access for humanitarian workers since the humanitarian efforts need to be scaled-up further, to respect international humanitarian law, including the respect and protection of civilians, and to facilitate the implementation of humanitarian pauses to allow for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU stands ready to offer additional support including financial to help neighbouring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, to host the increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing violence in Syria. The EU will increase its humanitarian assistance to the Syrians, including internally displaced persons and refugees, and calls upon all countries to do likewise.

10. The EU approved today the designation of new persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures, in particular members of the Army and the intelligence and security services directly involved in the repression of the civilian population. The EU also agreed on measures to strengthen the enforcement of its arms embargo. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the third meeting of the International Group on Sanctions which was held in Doha on 19 July. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition. In this regards, the EU welcomes recent high profile defections.

11. The EU recalls that as soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, it is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition."