Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary remarks on Syria at press conference in Paris

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Speaking at a joint press conference on Syria with French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Laurent Fabius, and US Secretary of State John Kerry, Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

I'm pleased to be here with my colleagues where, as you will have gathered and as you've heard from Laurent Fabius, we've been discussing urgent steps to implement the US-Russia agreement on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons; and I pay tribute to Secretary Kerry for the work that he has done with Foreign Minister Lavrov on this.

We are in close accord about this as allies, including about the part that the credible threat of military force has played in bringing about this opening, this new possibility.

And our first priority is to secure prompt action at the United Nations Security Council that enshrines in the Security Council resolution the Syrian regime's responsibility to hand over its chemical weapons stocks.

A resolution, in our view, should create a binding commitment for the regime to give up its chemical weapons within a specific time frame and to credibly, reliably and promptly place them under international control for destruction. It is the Assad regime that has stockpiled these weapons and that has used them repeatedly against the Syrian people, so the pressure is on them to comply with this agreement in full. The world must be prepared to hold them to account if they don't - and our three countries are certainly determined to do so.

We've agreed on the vital importance of accountability for those responsible for using chemical weapons in Syria, and we'll consult in the future about how that can be achieved in the light of the UN inspectors' report in New York later today.

And, third, we are determined to do everything we can, as you have heard, to stop the bloodshed in Syria, to support the moderate opposition and to alleviate humanitarian suffering. Our goal remains to convene a second Geneva conference to bring all sides together to agree a political solution to the conflict, and we will work with Russia on bringing that about as soon as possible.

In that regard I welcome the National Coalition’s decision to appoint an interim Prime Minister, Ahmed Taomeh. There can be no peaceful settlement in Syria without the legitimate Syrian opposition. So the task ahead is very difficult and complex but our three countries are united and determined to use our full weight as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and as each other’s close allies to implement the agreement on Syria’s chemical weapons, to maintain the pressure on the Assad regime and to bring about a peaceful end to this appalling conflict.

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