

Statement by the Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions

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(Archived Content)

WASHINGTON - The Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions, “the Group,” held its second meeting in Washington, DC on June 6, 2012. The Group last met in Paris on April 17, a meeting which was the result of the decisions taken during the conferences of the Friends of the Syrian People in Istanbul on April 1st and in Tunis on February 24th. Qatar, Turkey, and the United States co-chaired this second meeting. The U.S. Department of the Treasury hosted the event. U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Tim Geithner delivered opening remarks. Approximately 60 countries participated in the event.

The Group reaffirmed its support for an immediate end to the violence against the Syrian people and called on all members of the international community to demonstrate solidarity with the Syrian people by implementing and enforcing measures to increase pressure on the Assad regime to fully comply with its obligations in accordance with UN and Arab League Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan’s Six Point plan and UNSCRs 2042 and 2043. The Group also reaffirmed its support for the imposition of the sanctions outlined in the Group’s statement from its Paris meeting and the Friends of the Syrian People’s statement issued following its meeting in Tunis on February 24.

The Group identified the Assad regime’s ongoing brutality as the greatest threat to the well-being of the Syrian people and emphasized that sanctions do not target the civilian population of Syria but aim at increasing pressure on the persons and institutions responsible for the Syrian regime’s brutal repression, as well as at depriving the regime of the resources it uses for this repression.

The Group expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Assad regime’s failure to abide by its commitments under the Annan Plan thus far and grave concern over the growing threat to regional stability. There was substantial agreement that further measures will be necessary in light of the continued violence by the Assad regime and the continued denial of the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people. In this regard, the Group expressed support for taking steps toward a United Nations Security Council Chapter VII resolution, as called for last week by the Arab League, that would include the imposition of sanctions by member states on the Assad regime, including asset freezes, travel bans, an arms embargo and other measures.

The Group recognized the steps that participating states have taken thus far and called on all member countries to fully implement and enforce existing sanctions in order to bring about maximum pressure on the Syrian regime. The Group recognized that measures

taken by the Friends of the Syrian People are imposing significant strain on the Assad regime but that a continued concerted multinational approach is necessary to further deprive the Assad regime of the financial resources needed to sustain its campaign of violent repression.

The Group called upon all states to take steps to harmonize national and regional sanctions regimes by imposing, at a minimum, an asset freeze on senior Syrian regime officials as well as an asset freeze on and restriction of transactions with the Central Bank of Syria and the Commercial Bank of Syria to ensure their isolation from the international financial system. The Group also called upon all states to adopt an embargo on Syrian petroleum products and a ban on the provision of insurance and reinsurance for shipments of Syrian petroleum products. The Group also called on all states to adopt a formal ban on the shipment of arms to the Syrian regime and the provision of insurance and reinsurance for third-country arms shipments to the Syrian regime.

The Group called on all states to issue guidance to their domestic financial institutions regarding the risks associated with doing business with Syria and to require these financial institutions to exercise enhanced due diligence on all transactions involving Syria in order to protect against the Syrian regime's efforts to deploy deceptive financial practices aimed at evading international sanctions.

The Group called upon those Syrian business leaders and others who continue to support the Assad regime to withdraw their support or face further isolation from the international community.

The Group deplored those states that are undermining the Annan Plan's chances for success by providing financial, diplomatic, or material support to the Assad regime, and called on them to cease immediately the provision of any support which aids in the violent repression of the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

The Group affirmed that once the democratic transition is started, the Group is committed to bringing about a swift review of the sanctions regimes in place in order to support the reconstruction of the future Syria in coordination with the Friends of the Syrian People Working Group on Economic Reconstruction and Development.

In line with its mandate from the member states of the Friends of the Syrian People, the Group reaffirmed its commitment and resolve to act collectively in order to increase, strengthen and enforce restrictions and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters and to act with determination to achieve greater effectiveness in the enforcement of the restrictive measures put in place by states and international organizations.

The Group reaffirmed its strong commitment to continued information sharing on measures taken to increase the pressure on the Assad regime.

The International Working Group on Sanctions will hold its next meeting in Doha, Qatar in July 2012.

