Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK Hosts Syria London 11 Senior Officials Meeting

2013-12-13

The UK today hosted a meeting of Senior Officials from the ‘London 11’ – the Core Group of the Friends of Syria – and subsequently with the senior leadership of the Syrian National Coalition. The meeting built on the ‘London 11’ Ministerial Meeting held on 22 October.

The London 11 Senior Officials endorsed the following Chair’s Statement which included an agreement on the need for urgent progress on humanitarian access before Geneva II and a tribute to those regional countries who are hosting a large number of refugees and are taking on an immense burden.

Chair’s Statement

We reaffirmed the text of the London 11/Core Group Ministerial Communiqué of 22 October. We reaffirmed that the aim of Geneva II was to implement a negotiated solution on the basis of the Geneva communiqué, by establishing a Transitional Governing Body with full executive powers agreed by mutual consent. This is the only way to end the conflict. Assad will have no role in Syria, as his regime is the main source of terror and extremism in Syria.

We welcomed the announcement by the UN Secretary General to convene the Geneva II conference on 22 January.

We fully endorsed the decision by the National Coalition and Supreme Military Council to take part in the Geneva II process. The National Coalition’s commitment to a democratic and pluralistic future for Syria, preservation of its territorial integrity and rejection of extremism is the only way forward.

We restated our strong support for the National Coalition leadership. They would form the “heart and lead” of the opposition Geneva II delegation. We call on the National Coalition and Supreme Military Council to ensure the makeup of their delegation at Geneva II is representative, including of women.

We reject Assad’s claim that only he can defeat the extremists: his determination to cling to power, and the regime’s brutality, only fuel extremism.

The rise of extremism is a threat to us all. We are concerned at the growth of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat al-Nusra and all groups who reject the democratic values of the revolution. They undermine the Geneva II process and threaten Syria’s territorial

integrity as well as international and regional security. The wishes of the majority of Syrians and the spirit of the revolution must be respected.

We call for Iran, Hizballah, and all other foreign fighters and forces to withdraw from Syria.

The best protection against extremism is to support those – particularly the National Coalition and Supreme Military Council – who support the vision set out at Istanbul: democracy, pluralism, rejection of extremism. We deplore the attacks and occupation of the Supreme Military Council Headquarters and warehouses on 7/8 December.

The only way to secure our objectives is for opposition military groups to respect democratic and pluralistic values, and operate under the political authority of the National Coalition. As long as that remains the case, the London 11 parties agree to intensify their political and practical support to the National Coalition / Supreme Military Council ahead of and during the Geneva II process.

The seizing of material assistance for the opposition and Syrian people needs to stop. It does the work of the regime.

We agreed on the need for urgent progress to be made on humanitarian access ahead of Geneva II, in line with the 2 October UN Security Council Presidential Statement. Primary responsibility lies with the Syrian regime to comply with the UN Security Council Presidential Statement and allow access across all of Syria.

We welcome the National Coalition's letter to the UN Security Council and commitments to work with the UN and appoint empowered interlocutors. We urge the opposition to allow full access to all areas under their control.

The London 11 group fully supports the UN High-Level Group process. We share the UN's concern about the gravity of the situation for the hundreds of thousands of ordinary Syrians besieged by regime forces in the Old City of Homs, Moadamyeh and the Ghouta region.

We pay tribute to those regional countries who are hosting a large number of refugees, and who are taking on an immense burden. We call on the international community to provide much-deserved additional support.

In support of the UN appeal due on 16 December, London 11 members call for substantial pledges at the upcoming UN-Kuwait conference on 15 January. We also encourage contributions to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund.

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