

Keynote speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Oslo Forum

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First of all let me thank you, Borge, very much for the invitation; Javad, for what has become a format in itself. We were used to read parallel statements, saying the same things in two different languages, when we were announcing good news to the world last year and still in January, the implementation day, when the tradition that I was reading out our statement in English and he was reading exactly the same text in Farsi. Since then, we decided that wherever we go together in panels like this we rather share, and so I say one part and he says the other part. Most of the times we agree and on some issues we might disagree as well, but we are definitely the format that is showing to the world that yes, the world is definitely not in a good shape, but if you work hard on finding a common ground and win-win situations, you can find a way to solve complicated issues. This is a reason for hope and also for working even harder on the many conflicts and crises we have in front of us.

Now Borge is very nervous, because he is afraid that my Italian attitude would take much more than the ten minutes he asked me to speak for, and I will try to keep the promise of being very short.

First of all, I know that this forum is a place for peace-makers and this is really a good thing to see in these times, where I too often have the feeling that the peace-makers are sort of endangered species. So I'm happy to see so many of you here – apparently there is still room for hope and indeed for a lot of hard work. Here in Europe we have the feeling that conflicts are spreading in our entire region, making our daily lives less secure; and I know very well that this is a feeling that other parts of the world share with us. I see many friends here, from Afghanistan to Lebanon; it is not only a feeling that is perceived in Europe. The point is not only that we have a huge number of conflicts at our borders, the point is their complexity, the amount of actors involved, the variety of factors we have to address to achieve true peace and the inter-connexions among some of the conflicts and some of the challenges of our times.

Challenges, as you said Borge, have never been so global, threats have never crossed borders so easily and we still have to cope with the complexity we are facing on the conflicts we have around us. We still have instruments that are linked to traditional conflicts, while reality is evolving fast. Just a few days ago, we have seen an American kid kill fifty people his age, and declare he was inspired by Da'esh. Each war has global consequences we cannot ignore. At the same time, conflicts are deep within each of our

societies. And we need global alliances and internal work in our societies, as much as we need to act regionally and locally. So the complexity is also in the different levels of our action that is required to tackle any single conflict and crisis we have in front of us.

In many ways, this is still a world of continent-sized powers. And we saw it during the negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme – we saw it in an unprecedented way. If you think of it, never before, since the end of World War two, the United States, Europe, Russia and China had cooperated so closely towards a common goal. And it worked. And this has happened exactly in the time when many were talking about of a new “Cold War.”

So not only it is possible, not only it works, but it works even when the narrative around us is pushing in a different direction. Will this cooperation last? Will this cooperation work also for others crises and conflicts we have around us? We in Europe, in the European Union, not only hope so, but we are trying to work for this to happen. It is absolutely vital for peace in Syria. It is vital for restarting the Middle East peace process. And it is vital for prevention; this is the right key to take in this moment.

And Europe is clearly one of these continent-sized powers. None of our Member States, alone, is as relevant on the global scene as we are as a Union. I always say: the European Union Member States are of two kinds: those that are small and those that are not yet aware that they are small in this world. But together, as European Union, we are in the world's G3. We are not just one of the three biggest economies: we are the first aid donor everywhere; we are the first foreign investor, the first trade partner for almost all countries in the world. And in today's world, this so-called “soft power” is as relevant as traditional hard power – that, by the way, we do have also, but we tend to be wise in using it.

If we pool together all our European assets, our diplomatic network is the first in the world. We are increasingly considered as a global security provider – from Colombia to Myanmar. If we combine all our tools, hard and soft, we are a true super-power. The choice is ours, of our European fellow citizens, if we are ready and willing to use the instruments and the strength we have at the service of peace.

And yet, we all know that the global balance of power is shifting fast. This is not simply about the BRICS: the world is full of rising economies and demographic giants – medium-sized powers that do have a role in regional and global politics. In the Middle East and North Africa this is as relevant as it could be. None of the current conflicts – from Libya and Yemen, to the great civil war at the border between Syria, Iraq and Turkey – none of these can reach a peaceful solution if regional powers first and foremost are not fully committed to it.

And this is exactly the reason why, after the deal with Iran last year, we went back to Vienna, not by chance, with all regional players - let me say for the first time with all the

regional powers and I was very proud of that - to set up the International Syria Support Group. We did not expect all the differences between regional players to suddenly disappear: being a peace maker does not mean being naïve, on the contrary. But we all had clear in mind the alternatives to a political transition in Syria. With no peace, chaos would keep spreading. The influence of Da'esh and al Nusra would grow even further. And we could not even rule out a new escalation and open war against each other in the regional and international level. So the costs of a protracted conflict are far too high, for everyone and for Europe first of all.

This is the message that we have constantly passed over the past few months. Still, there is something we cannot forget – in Syria just like everywhere else: that ultimately, peace has to involve all international players, all regional powers and all actors on the ground. All minorities, all parties, even all militias. If you want to make peace you have to talk to everyone and you have to find some sort of common ground: the win-win approach that made it possible to reach a deal last year. And, most importantly, all individual citizens - this is a story that President Santos always tells us - all individual citizens have to see the benefits of peace, have to see their own interest in peace. And this is something that Europe can offer. Peace cannot simply be crafted behind closed doors in a conference room outside of the country; it has to be done from within. We can facilitate peace; we can never impose it upon the parties.

And here the European Union has a special role to play – although we do not often realise it, even within the European Union. Let me take the example of Syria: last year in Syria we helped host local civil society consultations, supporting Staffan de Mistura before he began his own consultations. And this week, as we speak, we are hosting in Brussels meetings of different Syrian parties and I will meet them tomorrow. Today, we are the only big donor with an active office in Damascus. In most countries, in the region but also in other parts of the world, from Asia to Latin America to Cuba, the European Union is considered and perceived as an honest broker – and this is the most powerful asset in the hands of peace that we want to make, not only for use of this but also put this as the disposal of the international community. This is the kind of engagement our European Union can offer: strong voice for peace on our global stage and in our region.

A strong and honest broker in regional dynamics. And a force for good on the ground – with our diplomatic network, with our humanitarian aid, with our development cooperation and also with the energy of our private sector, our banking system – including in Iran hopefully very soon - and our NGOs. And we see and we believe that the world needs this kind of peace-maker. The world also needs this kind of European Union. And it is sad to me to see that some European citizens have to be reminded of that from the outside. But we see more and more friends from other parts of the world telling us that not only the Europeans and the European citizens need the European Union, it is the world that needs the European Union. Because we have our strength, but we have to be aware of it to be able to use it, and we have to be strong and united to serve peace in the

world – be it in the Balkans, between Belgrade and Pristina or in Sarajevo, be it in Cyprus where we were together, be it in Myanmar where we witnessed the agreement, be it in Afghanistan, in support of women and a strong civil society, be it in the common work we are doing with Norway on Colombia and many other things. But for doing that we need to be together and we need to be united.

I thank you very much.

Link to the video: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I122718>