Jordan: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell after the EU-Jordan Association Council

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Shokran ya sadiqi (thank you my friend) Ayman [al Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan].

It is a great pleasure to be in Jordan again. Jordan was the first country in the region that I visited as High Representative of the European Union. But it was more than two years ago, in February [2020], just before the pandemic started.

And now, I am coming here in the middle of a war, and with the prospect of a food crisis that will create hunger in many countries around the world. So, one could say that - the pest, the war, and the hunger – we are facing the three horses of the Apocalypses. And until a certain point, it is right.

In these two years, the world has become much more troubled. And our partnership will help us face these troubles and challenges.

Two years ago, I was honoured to meet with his Majesty the King [Abdullah II], and [I did] this morning again. We have had the chance to share with the King an important geopolitical discussion about the war Russia is waging against Ukraine and the repercussions and consequences for the Middle East. We have to look at this war from the point of view of its causes and their consequences.

I had the opportunity to express to his Majesty the King our strong support for his reform agenda, especially on modernising the Political System, and the political and economic new developments that he highlighted in his speech on the Independence Day on 25 May.

Allow me to stress that Jordan is the first partner country where we hold an Association Council, which I co-chaired with Minister Safadi today. These meetings are usually held in Brussels or Luxembourg, and the fact that we hold this Association Council here, in Jordan, is a clear demonstration of our special relationship and friendship.

Today, we also signed and adopted the new Partnership Priorities, which will guide our relations and cooperation for the next five years. Here again, Jordan is the first country in our Southern Neighbourhood to sign this new strategic and forward-looking document with the

European Union. It is very much important to stress that you are a pioneer in our relationship.

These [Partnership] Priorities cover our cooperation in three main areas, the main parameters of our relationship for the next years. First - as the Minister has said - regional stability and security, including the fight against terrorism. Second, economic stability, because there will not be political stability without economic progress. And this progress has to be based on a green, digital, inclusive and knowledge-based growth, based on the quality of education and jobs creation. And the third one, strengthening good governance, [the] rule of law, democratic reforms and human rights.

We will support, from the European Union, all these areas. And we will also support regional integration, renewable energy development, energy efficiency and management of water resources in Jordan. We know how much water scarcity is affecting Jordan's development. Jordan is the second country in the world with the biggest problem of water scarcity. I know this is a source of major concern for you, Minister, and for all Jordanian citizens. That is why we will support Jordan to bring water from the Red Sea to Amman, in an innovative project under the European Investment Plan.

We also exchanged on democratic principles, fundamental freedoms and human rights, which constitute one of the main pillars of our partnership. These three things – [fundamental] freedoms, human rights and democracy – are the cornerstone of the European Union. And we want it to be also the cornerstone of our partnership with Jordan.

Of course, we discussed the negative and very damaging consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Today is the 99th day of the war. Since this 24 of February, when at 5 o'clock in the morning Russia started bombing Kyiv.

The repercussions of this war are an issue for Europeans, but not only for us. They affect everyone in the world. In the Middle East especially, because Putin is de-constructing the international rules-based order, trying to replace our basic principles and exchange the rule of law for the rule of the gun.

Secondly, in light of the very concrete and damaging consequences of the war, the global food crisis –the third horse of the Apocalypses - that Putin has triggered with his attack against the Ukrainian people, with his blockage of the Ukrainian ports. We can see it very easily from the satellite how the Russian navy is blocking the Ukrainian ports, with many ships waiting to take the wheat that people need and is stockpiling in Ukraine, with the troops looting and destroying Ukrainian grain silos and bombarding fields.

Ukrainian wheat and grain that used to be exported to this region, to Africa and Asia. I want to remind that Ukraine exported up to 5 million tonnes of grains per month before the war – 5 million per month. In May, [it was] only 600.000 [tonnes] - ten times less were exported. Someone will not eat this wheat. Someone around the world will suffer from hunger.

And what could still be exported is blocked by the Russian navy in the Black Sea. We are facing a grain war, using hunger as a weapon against the most vulnerable – not only in Ukraine, but also here in the Middle East, in Africa, in Asia.

That is why we are taking urgent action, stepping up rail and road infrastructure to ensure exports. And we support the efforts of the United Nations to find an urgently needed solution to open the ports and use the seaway. And if this agreement between the United Nations and Russia happens, the European Union will be ready to take its part in implementing this solution.

I have to say that I strongly appreciate Jordan's clear stance in the UN General Assembly, condemning the Russian aggression. We will continue to work together in defending the UN Charter and international law.

Putin is responsible for aggravating the food and energy crises. But we are ready to help Jordan to face the negative consequences, especially on food prices. The Commissioner [for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi] will give more details about it. And that is what friends are [there for] - to support each other in difficult times.

We are helping Jordan also with the consequences of other conflicts – similarly aggravated by Russia's military actions. I am talking about Syria. We commend and appreciate Jordan's generosity in hosting Syrian refugees for more than a decade now. Some of them were born here and have never been in Syria – we call them 'Syrian refugees' but they have never been to Syria. And we will continue to support you, Jordan, in this context.

And that is why, last month, in Brussels, I chaired the Conference [on supporting the future of Syria and the region] to raise resources. A pledging conference in order to continue supporting you and not forget this region, despite the recent unprecedented humanitarian and refugee crisis at our doorsteps in Ukraine. You have [almost] 700,000 Syrian refugees registered, maybe 1.5 million [in total with the] registered and not registered, but Poland has received 5 million people in less than one month.

We also discussed the Middle East Peace Process that worries us a lot. And thank you, thank you again for your efforts to maintain the stability and the status quo in Jerusalem, in the middle of the troubles that we have been witnessing in the last weeks, especially in relation with your role as the Custodian of the Holy Sites and as a moderating voice. Your work is invaluable in bringing stability to a troubled region.

Allow me to take this opportunity to say that we remain committed to a two-state solution. Because we believe that there is not another one, even if some things that happen every day, make this solution less and less viable in the eyes of some. We will continue fighting for an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable Palestinian state, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and mutual recognition, and with Jerusalem serving as

the capital of both states. And Jordan for many decades has been hosting more than 2 million Palestinian refugees, the largest Palestinian population anywhere.

We also welcome Jordan's multi-faceted approach to terrorism and violent extremism, notably Jordan’s engagement in the Global Coalition against Da'esh and the Aqaba Process, initiated by His Majesty the King.

So, all in all, our message today here, in this beautiful place, full of history and remembrances of a past, and a present also – you have to look at the past but mainly you have to look to the future. Our main message today from the European Union is that Jordan can continue counting on the friendship and assistance of the European Institutions and the European Member States. We are a strong and sincere partner, Minister. In good times but especially in times of crisis.

Since my last visit here two years ago, crises have been flourishing. I mentioned three of them – the pest, the war and the hunger. But together, we will be stronger to face them.

Q&A

Q. [EN translation] To what extent are the negative consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine affecting the situation in Jordan and especially in the northern border of Jordan? We have heard remarks from His Majesty the King regarding the presence of Iranian militias in this area. What is your reaction and that of the EU?

The Minister has explained the consequences of the [Russian] war for Jordan, and for the borders of Jordan, which are nearby Russian troops in Syria.

Allow me to use this opportunity to insist on the consequences of this war from a global perspective, that also affects Jordan. That is why, as my colleague Commissioner [for Neighbourhood and Enlargement] Olivér Várhelyi has explained, we are going to provide support in order to face the looming economic and food crisis. But Jordan is not going to be the most affected country. Many others have stronger dependency on wheat exported from Ukraine and from Russia.

And the Russian propaganda, echoed by other people around the world, tries to convince the world that this humanitarian crisis, food crisis and energy crisis are being caused by our sanctions. And that is completely false. These crises are a consequence of the war itself. They are the consequences of the bombing, looting and blocking the wheat from Ukraine. It is not because of our sanctions, because European sanctions have never forbidden to export food or fertilisers. It is because there are 20 or 30 million tons of wheat blocked in Ukraine, blocked by the Russian navy. And in two months it will be 60 million more of the next crops. And if we do not solve this blockade, just calculate how many daily breads someone will not eat.

The United Nations is working hard in order to get an agreement in order to deblock the situation. We are supporting the United Nations, we do whatever we can, but they are not [caused by] our sanctions. It is the war, a war created by a man. This is the war of Putin. Unhappily, the causes are clear, but the consequences can be much graver if we do not solve the situation.

Be sure that the European Union will do whatever it can, even participating in any navy mission, if there is an agreement between Russia and [the] United Nations.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-226428 (from 10:08)

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/jordan-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-eu-jordan-association-council_en