Egypt: press remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Kaja Kallas following the meeting with Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates, Mr Badr Abdelatty

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Minister Abdelatty, Dear Badr, thank you for your hospitality. It is good to be back in Cairo. Like the Minister already explained, we discussed a lot of issues. I want to stress that Egypt is an indispensable partner to the European Union. Just last year, we opened a new chapter in our relationship with the first ever EU-Egypt Summit. Through our Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, we are delivering concrete results in many areas, from trade and investment to security and science. As part of this partnership, the EU is providing Egypt with €5 billion in loans to strengthen your competitiveness and also the green transition.

In March, we will hold the first EU-Egypt Security and Defence Dialogue here in Cairo, and this will be the opportunity to discuss what more can we do together in this very insecure world. For example, regarding maritime issues – the Red Sea, you already mentioned- but also cyber security and counter terrorism.

Our relationship is already strong, but we are working on making it even stronger. Today, our discussions focused above all on the region itself. Egypt's diplomatic leadership has been crucial in preventing further destabilisation in the Middle East, and we deeply value your role. In Gaza, the situation is extremely severe still. Hamas refuses to disarm. It blocks progress to the next states of the peace plan.

At the same time, Israel also is restricting the international NGOs, that is putting humanitarian aid access at serious risk. Without the NGOs, aid cannot reach the necessary scale in Gaza. There is no justification for the humanitarian situation in Gaza to have deteriorated to the current level. We also spoke about Gaza's recovery and governance. It is important that the plans for a technocratic committee to administer Gaza and a stabilisation force move forward without delays. Any power vacuum will just benefit extremists.

We are, as European Union, the largest donor in Gaza. We support the Palestinian Authority's reforms and provide funding. Right now, the European Union is working to expand

our two missions on the ground, including the capacity to train more Palestinian police. I believe that in this area, the European Union and Egypt can work closely together.

Syria still faces enormous challenges. The clashes in Aleppo over the last days show how fragile the security situation remains. After Assad's fall, the European Union was one of the first – or actually the first one - to ease the sanctions, to help the country to rebuild. But it does not only do the trick. Also, investors need to trust the economy, and that is why the reforms and the rule of law are extremely important.

EU Foreign Ministers recently decided to move forward with the new EU-Syria political partnership. And today we discussed the state of Syria's tradition and how we could better support governance and security sector reforms, because a stable Syria is in the interest of Egypt, but it is also in the interest of Europe.

Lebanon faces a dangerous moment. Hezbollah's insufficient disarmament efforts and continued Israeli strikes risk dragging the country back into escalation. The EU is now discussing options to strengthen Lebanon's internal security forces, because it is clear that Lebanon needs more support to extend the state authority to all parts of its territory.

As the Foreign Minister just said, we also discussed many issues today. In addition to the security issues in your region, we also have a war going on in Ukraine and we were also discussing, what more can we do to bring peace to Ukraine, and how we can work on also Russia coming to the negotiation table.

Dear Minister Abdelatty, dear Badr, thank you very much for hosting us. And, as I said, Europe and Egypt stand side by side for stability in your region and for a stable neighborhood for us all.

Thank you.

Q&A

Q. The European Union has been quite soft on the American takeover of Venezuela. What will be the move if the US decided not to respect Greenland's sovereignty and territorial integrity? You have been talking about sovereignty and integrity for countries in the region, so I think it is quite an interesting question. And do you think that the low-key rate points that the US has been giving on Venezuela could weaken its position concerning Greenland?

We had a European Union and 26 Member States statement on Venezuela quite quickly, saying, of course, that international law should be respected. We know that international law gives two rights to use force: one is for self-defence, and the other is in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution. So, whoever uses force needs to justify this as well. We have been very firm on the UN Charter. We have been very firm on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries - that has to be respected. And we have been also talking to the American colleagues about these things. Of course, the

messages that we hear regarding Greenland are extremely concerning, and we have had discussions also among the Europeans. If this is a real threat, and if it is, then what would be our response? As Denmark has been a good ally for the United States, all these statements are not really helping the stability of the world, I would say. The international law is very clear, and we have to stick to it. It is clear that it is the only thing that protects smaller countries, and that is why it is in the interest of all of us. And we discussed this today, as well, that we uphold the international law on all levels.

Q. Egypt continues its economic reforms. How will the European Union support the Egyptian efforts in the upcoming period, and how will it encourage the European investments in Egypt?

Like I said, Europe sees Egypt as an indispensable partner. And we are currently also discussing and hopefully getting the decision done on the macro financial assistance that we are giving to Egypt to deliver on reforms and also providing expertise in this regard. Then, of course, we have issues that we were discussing, where additional investments could come. The green transition is very important to the European Union, there is a lot of potential there. We had, in Brussels, the Egypt-EU investment Conference to also show the European investors the possibilities to invest in Egypt and to work together in this regard. So, of course, eventually, it is the private companies that have to decide whether to invest or not, but I think we have made the conditions as favorable as possible.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/media/video/I-282928

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