Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

# Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria meeting

2012-04-01

The Second Conference of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People (“the Friends’ Group”) was held in Istanbul on 1 April 2012.

The Friends’ Group welcomed the growing interest and participation of the countries which totaled 83 at this meeting including the representatives from the United Nations, The League of Arab States, The European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the African Union.

Recalling the conclusions of the first meeting in Tunisia, the Friends’ Group reaffirmed its determination to support the just cause of the Syrian people. The Friends’ Group underlined that the future of Syria must be determined by the Syrian people and that it will stand firmly by them until their rightful and Relegitimate aspirations are fulfilled. In this context, the Friends’ Group underscored its firm and strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, political unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

The Syrian National Council presented a report to the Friends’ Group, regarding the situation on the ground in Syria. As explicitly stated in this report, the situation on the ground is grave. The Syrian regime’s widespread and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms continue unabated. Thousands of Syrians, including women andchildren, have perished. Tens of thousands have been arbitrarily detained and maltreated. Many have been forced to abandon their homes and have become displaced persons. Whole towns and neighborhoods have been destroyed. The regime has failed its people in every respect. The atrocities committed by the regime amount in some cases to crimes against humanity, as the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry has stated. The regime has also continued to deceive the international community and tried to manipulate its efforts. The Syrian regime must immediately put an end to all these practices, stop all attacks against the Syrian people and fully comply with its obligations under international law.

As it declared at its first meeting on 24 February 2012 in Tunisia, the Friends’ Group reiterated its full support for the initiative of the League of Arab States to facilitate a Syrian led political transition leading to a civil, democratic, pluralistic, independent and free state; one which respects people’s rights regardless of ethnicity, belief or gender; one which determines its own future based on the collective will of its people.

The Friends' Group, in this vein, re-emphasized the importance of the full implementation by the Syrian regime of relevant UN, Arab League and OIC resolutions and declarations and of the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy (JSE) Kofi Annan which was endorsed by the UN Security Council in its Presidential Statement of 21 March 2012 and the Arab League at its 29 March Summit. The Friend's Group welcomed the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan and expressed its support to the full implementation of his mandate as stated in the UN General Assembly Resolution 66/253 of 16 February 2012 and the Arab League Resolution 7444 of 22 January 2012 and 7446 of 12 February 2012. The Friends' Group urge all parties to fully engage with them.

However, the Friends' Group stressed its deep regret of the continuation of the actions of the Syrian regime, despite its announcement of acceptance of the six point plan of JSE Kofi Annan. Since the announcement of acceptance on 27 March, violence by the regime has not ceased and since that date, many have lost their lives. Against the background of numerous previous failures to fulfill its promises, this emerges as a fresh example of the insincerity of the regime. Therefore, the regime will be judged by its deeds rather than its promises. The window of opportunity for the regime to implement its commitments to Joint Special Envoy Annan is not open-ended. The Friends' Group called upon the Joint Special Envoy to determine a timeline for next steps, including a return to the UN Security Council, if the killing continues. The Group appeals to all members to bear their responsibility. In the meantime, the Friends' Group will continue to work on additional appropriate measures with a view to the protection of the Syrian people.

The Friends' Group very much welcomed the National Covenant announced during the Opposition Conference in Istanbul which was held on 26-27 March 2012 in coordination with the Arab League as articulated in the Chairman's Conclusions of the Tunisia meeting. The Covenant laid out for the first time the foundations of the new Syria. The Group expressed full support to the opposition's common vision in the Covenant of a free and democratic Syria which clearly states that all citizens of Syria will enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms irrespective of their affiliations, ethnicity, belief or gender. The Group welcomes the commitment of the Syrian opposition, as articulated in the National Covenant, to a political and economic transition that is peaceful, orderly and stable; a process reflecting the initiative of the League of Arab States. During the political transition, it is essential that Syrian institutions be preserved and reformed. The new Syria will be a constitutional democracy where the rule of law is upheld and all citizens are equal before the law.

The Friends' Group also wholeheartedly welcomed the Final Communique of theabove-mentioned Opposition Conference in which the participants committed themselves to work together to put in place an all-embracing and re-structured opposition platform in order to advance their common vision for the new Syria. The Friends' Group applauded the role of the Syrian National Council and others in making this result possible.

In view of the above, the Friends' Group recognized the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of all Syrians and the umbrella organization under which Syrian opposition groups are gathering. The Friends' Group also stated its support to the activities of the Syrian National Council towards a democratic Syria and noted the Council as the leading interlocutor of the opposition with the international community.

The Friends' Group appealed to responsible citizens of Syria not to be a part of the atrocities committed by the regime. It called particularly on those serving in the armed forces, security agencies and other government offices not to obey unlawful orders targeting the Syrian people.

The Friends' Group expressed its admiration for the many thousands of protesters who, in the face of the atrocities committed by the regime amounting to tyranny and oppression, continue to take to the streets to demonstrate peacefully for a free and democratic Syria. The Group expressed its support for legitimate measures taken by the Syrian population to protect themselves.

The Friends' Group strongly urged all the members of the international community to take all necessary measures to deprive the regime of the means it is using to oppress the Syrian people. In this regard, prevention of the regime's access to arms is at the foremost.

The Friends' Group took note of the suspension of the diplomatic activities and recalling of the Ambassadors of various countries in Damascus since the Tunisia meeting and decided to take further appropriate measures in this direction.

The Friends' Group strongly condemned the ongoing human rights violations, which are massive, systematic and widespread. It noted with grave concern the two reports of the international and independent Commission of Inquiry mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, implicating members of the Syrian security forces in atrocities committed against the Syrian people. The Friends' Group made clear that the monitoring of the human rights situation by the International Independent Commission of Inquiry must be continued and evidence of international crimes and other gross violations must be systematically collected to facilitate the process of holding the perpetrators of such acts accountable. It welcomed the decision of the Human Rights Council on 23 March to extend the mandate of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry.

The Friends' Group agreed to develop a multilateral initiative to support international and Syrian efforts to document, analyze and store evidence of serious violations of human rights in order to deter such conduct and lay the foundation for future accountability.

The Friends' Group committed to render all possible assistance, both technical advice and direct support, to a Syrian-led political process that is peaceful, orderly and stable. In this

respect, the Group also committed to continue and increase, as a matter of urgency, its assistance, including funding and financial support, to meet the needs of the Syrian people.

The Friends' Group also decided to set up a Sanctions Working Group, in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the enforcement of the restrictive measures already put in force by states or international organizations including the measures stipulated in the Chairman's Conclusions of the first meeting of the Friends' Group. France will chair the first meeting of the working group in April along with other members of the Friends' Group.

The situation in Syria has negative impact on the economic activities in the region. For example, difficulties on transportation routes constitute a major problem. The Friends' Group recognized these difficulties and agreed to take all necessary measures to minimize the negative effects in neighboring countries and to facilitate alternative routes.

Being cognizant of the challenges on the path towards political and economic transition of Syria, the Friends' Group committed itself to support Syria economically in the next period in order to ensure that new Syria stands on its feet in financial and economic terms.

In this vein, the Friends' Group endorsed the mandate for the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development which aims to be a central forum of the international community for planning and coordination of assistance to the economic recovery and development of Syria. To this end, the working group will work closely with designated representatives of the Syrian opposition. The working group will be co-chaired by Germany and the United Arab Emirates and will be open to all Friends of the Syrian People.

The Friends' Group expressed its grave concern about the worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. It reiterated its call on all parties to allow free and unimpeded access by humanitarian agencies to deliver essential relief goods and services to those most affected by the violence, including the treatment of the wounded. It expressed its support for calls for a daily two hour humanitarian pause in fighting to allow the delivery of aid.

The Group expressed deep concern at the tens of thousands of Syrians who had to flee to neighboring countries and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons inside Syria. It acknowledged the serious and growing burden on Syria's neighbors in hosting Syrians fleeing violence by the regime. The Friends' Group reiterated its commitment to provide support and assistance to the neighbors of Syria and others in handling the repercussions of the crisis.

The Friends' Group reiterated its commitment to distinguish clearly between the humanitarian response and the ongoing political negotiations. It welcomed the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinators' efforts to gain humanitarian access, plan the response to identified needs, and establish predictable funding mechanisms, in particular the UN Emergency

Response Fund for Syria. Members of the Friends' Group committed to continuing to provide funds to meet humanitarian needs in support of the Syrian people.

The Group reiterated its continued support to the efforts of the United Nations to coordinate the humanitarian response. It noted with satisfaction the conclusions of the first meeting of the Syrian Humanitarian Forum, held on 8 March 2012 at Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. It recognized the value of convening such an inclusive Forum to share information and develop a common approach to the humanitarian response.

The Friends' Group also expressed its firm support to the work of the Syria Humanitarian Forum and to the mission of Mrs. Valerie Amos, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and welcomed the efforts of other agency and organizations, notably the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group took note of the UN-OIC humanitarian assessment mission dispatched to Syria.

The Friends' Group expressed their thanks and appreciation to Turkey for hosting the Second Conference of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People. The Group agreed to hold its next meeting in France.

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