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Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria

Introduction

The war in Syria, one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has faced since World War II, continues to have devastating and tragic consequences for its people. Last year's destruction of Aleppo was the latest chapter in the grim and, so far unending history of this conflict. In addition, it is also having an increasingly destabilising impact on the wider region, through the displacement of people, the spread of terrorism, the exacerbation of political and sectarian differences.

The aim of the EU strategy for Syria, called for by President Juncker in his State of the Union speech in September 2016, is to define how the EU can play a bigger role in contributing to a lasting political solution in Syria under the existing UN-agreed framework and help build stability and support post-agreement reconstruction once a credible political transition is underway. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ('the High Representative') and the Commission are seeking endorsement of the strategy on the eve of the Brussels conference 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region' of 5 April 2017 as an EU contribution to two of the three broad themes of that conference: support for the political process; and support for reconciliation and stabilisation. The third theme of the conference, support for the region, is separately addressed through the EU's London pledge and the implementation of EU compacts with Jordan[1] and Lebanon[2] and of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey[3].

The strategy is also a review of the Syrian aspects of the *EU Regional Strategy for Syria, Iraq and the fight against ISIL/Da'esh*, last reviewed and updated by the Council in May 2016.[4] It is necessary to review the EU's role and what it can do to help promote a political solution,

[1] http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12384-2016-ADD-1/en/pdf (See annex)

[2] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/11/pdf/st03001_en16_docx_pdf/ (See annex)

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/frit_factsheet.pdf

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/20150206_JOIN_en.pdf

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/05/23-fac-syria-iraq-daesh-conclusions/

based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254 that works for all Syrians, enabling them to live in freedom and dignity, securely and safely.

Bilateral cooperation with the Syrian government was suspended after the regime's violent repression of the civilian uprising in 2011. The EU has, nevertheless, continued to support the Syrian people, through humanitarian assistance to save lives, as well as aid to provide essential services and support civil society. Enhanced coordination between EU Member States and EU institutions, and their respective financial instruments is vital for the effective implementation of this strategy.

1. Situation in Syria

1.1 Political and security context

The military reaction of the Syrian regime to the peaceful political uprising in 2011 led to a protracted civil war supported and exacerbated by a number of external actors. The continuation of the war is creating a patchwork of segregated and competing regions run by different armed groups and enabling Da'esh to thrive.

In spite of successive UN-led peace talks, the Geneva Communiqué of 2012[5] and the efforts of the International Syria Support Group and its working groups, no agreement between the parties in conflict has been reached to put an end to the war. The fourth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva in February 2017 has identified three baskets for future negotiations, in line with UNSCR 2254 – governance, constitution, and elections – plus an additional ad-hoc basket in which counter-terrorism could be discussed.

Meanwhile the escalation of violence on the ground has been systematically pursued by the Syrian regime and its allies, as well as by violent extremist groups and elements of the armed opposition. This has led to the increased vulnerability of the Syrian people, demographic engineering through forced evacuations, and gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

[5] http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf

There has been no attempt at dialogue on the part of the regime: the message is clearly 'submit or leave.' Such a repressive approach can never become a stable basis for a future united and inclusive Syria.

1.2 Humanitarian context

Six years of conflict have taken an enormous toll on the civilian population in Syria. Life expectancy has decreased by 20 years. The economic and human development of Syria has been reversed by 40 years, leading many Syrians to leave their country. The Syrian economy has collapsed and has been replaced by a war economy, which benefits only a small minority. 13.5 million people,[6] almost three quarters of the remaining population,[7] are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including more than six million internally-displaced people and more than five million people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

The almost daily violations of international humanitarian law, such as the continued deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure, including water distribution systems, medical facilities and schools, have led to severe shortages of essential services. At the same time, access and delivery of humanitarian assistance have been severely hampered by an increased politicisation of aid.

1.3 State of play of EU assistance as of January 2017

Since the outbreak of the war in 2011, the EU has collectively (EU and Member States) mobilised more than EUR 9.4 billion in response to the Syrian crisis both inside Syria and in the region, making it the largest donor.

Inside Syria, the EU has mobilised more than EUR 900 million. More than EUR 600 million of this has been used to provide humanitarian assistance. This funding has responded to people's needs across the 'Whole of Syria' and prioritised multi-sectoral, life-saving operations, particularly in under-served, contested and besieged areas.

The EU's humanitarian assistance has reached millions of people in need inside Syria and in neighbouring refugee-host countries. Inside Syria, our assistance has allowed our partner to

[6] http://www.unocha.org/syria

[7] http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/syria-population/

provide food, emergency health support, shelter, drinkable water and hygiene items to millions of people, particularly the most in need and has supported the UNICEF polio immunisation campaign for 2.7 million children. Though the focus of this Communication is on inside Syria, the EU has also mobilised substantial support to neighbouring refugee-host countries (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon) where more than 1.15 million Syrian refugees in the region have been provided with life-saving health and medical assistance, as well as psychosocial support and protection.

The EU has also provided EUR 327 million in non-humanitarian assistance through various instruments: The European Neighbourhood Instrument[8] has funded actions within Syria in various sectors, such as education, support to livelihoods, local governance, health and civil society support.

This funding aims to maintain Syrian human capital, facilitate people's access to basic services and enhance the capacities of local civilian institutions. Under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace[9] and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights,[10] the EU is supporting Syrian civil society and human rights defenders. The Development Cooperation Instrument[11] also supports projects inside Syria to increase the food security of the Syrian population.

The EU has created a Facility for Refugees in Turkey, with a total budget of EUR 3 billion for the period 2016-2017, to support longer-term livelihoods, socio-economic and educational perspectives of refugees in Turkey.

The EU has also created a Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis[12] that includes EUR 932 million of contributions from 22 Member States and Turkey. This is in addition to

[8] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32014R02 32&from=EN

[9] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/140311_icsp_reg_230_2014_en.pdf

[10] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32014R02 35&from=EN

[11] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32014R02 33&from=EN

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20161220-eutf-syria_0.pdf

direct financing from the EU budget, that has been used to date in the region, in order to help Syrians and hosting communities in neighbouring countries.

The EU funding has contributed to improve the lives of the refugees in particular in the education sector. For instance, 663.000 Syrian refugee and host community children and youth in Turkey Lebanon and Jordan are provided with access to quality primary education, protective services and psycho-social care. In the higher education sector, the 'HOPES' project is offering scholarships, educational counseling and language training to some 250.000 Syrian refugee and host community youth in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. In Turkey, interventions in the area of education include the construction and equipment of 70 new schools.

2. Risks and threats to EU core interests if the war continues

The continuation of the war in Syria could lead to either the division of the country along sectarian lines which could further fuel violent extremism and terrorism, or the imposition of military control by the regime over the whole country. Both will lead to continued instability with wider disruptive consequences regionally and globally, including eroding the capacity of the international legal and institutional architecture to resolve other disputes.

The repercussions of either of these options — continued conflict or continued autocratic rule, the alternatives to a negotiated political transition — would be contrary to the interests of the Syrian people, the region and the EU. They would include:

- loss of life and aggravated human suffering, including from sieges, leading to further population displacement, notably large refugee flows across the region and to Europe;
- continued violence, radicalisation of armed groups and the spread of violent extremism;
- the spread of criminal activities resulting from a war economy, including arms and human trafficking;
- continued economic decline with shrinking business and economic opportunities;
- the entrenchment of sectarian differences, rendering efforts to pursue a national reconciliation process more difficult;

- greater instability in neighbouring countries, including a hindering of the stabilisation of post-Da'esh Iraq, and further direct impact on Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey; and

- further destruction of cultural heritage, including World Heritage sites, and trafficking of cultural goods.

3. EU strategic goals

The EU's strategic goals on Syria align with its core interests and values and build on the Global Strategy for the EU's foreign and security policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy:

- One Syria — a united and territorially integral country for all Syrian citizens.

- A democratic Syria — a legitimate government and a pluralistic political system with respect for the rule of law and individual rights-based on equal citizenship.

- A diverse and inclusive Syria — a multi-cultural country in which all ethnic and religious groups feel that their identities are protected and that they have equal access to government.

- A strong and secure Syria — an effective state with functional institutions, with a focus on citizens' security and services, a single national army and accountable police and security forces.

- A stable Syria — a stable political system and a strong economy, providing proper education and healthcare to its population, as well as being attractive to foreign investment, maintaining good relations with all its neighbours and integrated into the international community as a constructive partner.

  As these strategic goals are being achieved, this will enable the voluntary, dignified and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

4. EU objectives

In order to achieve these strategic goals, the EU's objectives for Syria are:

- An end to the war through a political transition process negotiated by the parties to the conflict with the support of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and key international and regional actors.
- Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria through support for the strengthening of the political opposition, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué.
- Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations.
- Promote a national reconciliation process based on peace building efforts and countering violent extremism and sectarianism, including an approach to transitional justice that should include accountability for war crimes.
- Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.
- Support the resilience of the Syrian population, as well as of the institutions and Syrian society.

These objectives are discussed in more detail under Section 5.

5. The main lines of action in Syria to implement EU objectives

5.1. An end to the war through a political transition process negotiated by the parties in conflict with the support of the UN Special Envoy and key international and regional actors

Any lasting solution to the war has to be centred on meeting the democratic aspirations and needs of the Syrian people, allowing an opening of the political and civic space to previously excluded groups and a democratic and genuine reform of state institutions. Given its interest in a negotiated political transition and using the tools at its disposal, the EU will play its part in full.

The EU will continue to provide its direct assistance to UN-brokered talks in Geneva, including in technical discussions that could advance political negotiations to end the war and define the parameters of a transitional governing body in line with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué. The EU welcomes steps taken by Russia, Turkey and Iran in support of the ceasefire, as endorsed by UNSCR 2336, and as a means of preparing for intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

As the Syrian war is currently shaped to a large extent by the direct military engagement of a number of regional and global actors, the EU has launched, in full coordination with the UN, an initiative to develop political dialogue with key actors from the region to identify common ground for the end-state in Syria and the conditions for the reconciliation and reconstruction process. This work aims to further contribute towards an agreement in the intra-Syrian peace process.

Peace cannot be achieved by only engaging with Syrian stakeholders at the macro-level. It requires first of all a concerted effort directly aimed at Syrian civil society, communities and the population affected by the war, which should participate in the process of defining transitional arrangements and the future of the Syrian political system. The EU Syria Peace Process Support Initiative[13] is developing a concrete platform to support the peace process and ceasefire, strengthen the opposition parties and contribute to the dialogue with civil society. The EU will continue to support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria to include civil society in his work through the Civil Society Support Room and the Women's Advisory Board.

The EU will maintain its restrictive measures against Syrian individuals and entities supporting the regime as long as the repression of civilians continues. The measures targeting certain sectors of the Syrian economy will also be maintained as far as necessary. The current sanctions will be extended further as necessary. The EU will keep the impact of sanctions under constant review and will regularly consider options to mitigate any unintended consequences.

[13] EU fund for Syria set up by the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability.

5.2. Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria through support for the strengthening of the political opposition, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué

A comprehensive and viable transition in Syria cannot be achieved without the representation and empowerment of all the main Syrian political groups.

The Syrian opposition, both inside and outside Syria, needs support to sustain its efforts in transforming itself into a strong and sustainable political platform capable of providing a democratic alternative and playing a significant role in the transition and post-transition phases in Syria. The EU will continue to build on its existing work to support the major political opposition groups in the negotiation process, as well as help them further develop and adapt their vision of transition and the future of the Syrian state and society.

The EU will continue to invest in the unification of the Syrian opposition through its efforts to strengthen the High Negotiations Committee, as well as its two main political components, the Syrian National Coalition and the National Coordination Body.

The EU will support the expansion of the opposition's platform for negotiations through dialogue with other Syrian opposition groups who have not been represented in the Geneva process. Furthermore, the EU is encouraging dialogue between opposition groups and Syrian stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, religious and tribal leaders, the business community and women's associations, with a view to incorporating their views into a political platform.

The EU will continue to support the cooperation and engagement of the Syrian political opposition with moderate armed groups with a view to strengthening their participation in the ceasefire and the preparations for a future political transition.

5.3. Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations

The EU will continue to provide substantive support to Syrian civil society organisations, which share the values of promotion of democracy, human rights and freedom of speech. Syrian civil society will need to play a prominent role in a post-conflict Syria, including helping the country to deal with the past, enabling efforts for local and national reconciliation,

intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and contributing to the monitoring of any political agreement.

In particular, the EU will support Syrian civil society's aggregation into coherent platforms that can better promote their objectives and give voice to the widest possible spectrum of Syrian society. It will work towards strengthening civil society's capacity to engage with the public, articulating Syrian citizens' concerns. Support will be maintained for women's, youth and minority rights organisations that promote an agenda for their participation in an inclusive and democratic Syria.

Support for freedom of speech should include support to development of dynamic, free and independent media and the fostering of channels for open and tolerant communication including through social media.

5.4. Promote a national reconciliation process based on peace building efforts and countering violent extremism and sectarianism, including an approach to transitional justice that should include accountability for war crimes

During and after the conflict, the EU will continue to support transitional justice initiatives to help ensure accountability for war crimes, human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. This includes the confirmed use of chemical weapons, as well as the support for the investigation of war crimes at both national and international level. These efforts will be done in conjunction with the support for the strengthening of psycho-social relief and reconciliation across the country.

On peacebuilding efforts, the EU will assist the different components of Syrian society to support peaceful co-existence and community resilience as a pre-requisite for building a future democratic Syria. Mediation efforts will need to be carefully targeted to meet the specific needs of local communities and the evolving context of the conflict.

The EU will support work on the identification of missing and disappeared persons and provide support to their families through counselling, legal advice and advocacy.

5.5. Save lives by addressing humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner

Delivering humanitarian aid inside Syria has become increasingly challenging. Approving or withholding humanitarian access has become a tactic of war used by all parties to the conflict for their own purposes. The EU will continue its practical engagement with the Government of Syria and opposition groups to reassert the need to comply with basic humanitarian principles by all parties to the conflict and the need to avoid political interference in humanitarian aid delivery. The EU will maintain a principled, non-discriminatory and needs-based approach to the delivery of aid through its partners.

The EU's humanitarian response will continue to cover two types of scenarios — first-line emergency response and post-emergency response — through an integrated approach of five key sectors of intervention: food; health; shelter and non-food items; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and protection. Through its first-line emergency response, the EU and its humanitarian partners will prioritise areas where civilian population have no or limited access to humanitarian assistance. The EU supports the development of contingency plans, in order to anticipate and respond effectively to any deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

The EU will also continue to provide life-sustaining assistance to the most vulnerable Syrians in post-emergency situations, such as long-term displacement or protracted lack of basic services. The EU will further strengthen complementarity between humanitarian aid, resilience and support to livelihoods.

The EU, as part of its humanitarian diplomacy, will continue to demand that all parties to the conflict ensure the protection of civilians, allow humanitarian access and deliver a humanitarian response in line with international humanitarian law and accountability principles. The EU will maintain its support to a strong 'Whole of Syria' approach as the best way of addressing access constraints and delivering assistance to populations in need from all aid hubs, including both cross-line and cross-border operations in a consistent, principled and effective manner.

5.6. Support the resilience of the Syrian population, as well as of the institutions and Syrian society, in line with the Whole of Syria approach

Building the resilience of the Syrian population according to the 'Whole of Syria' approach requires the provision of aid to affected populations throughout the country. This is increasingly challenging because of lack of access, insecurity and the capacity of implementing partners to work in a conflict environment. This approach necessitates a cautious, conflict-sensitive assessment and monitoring of where and how EU assistance can be delivered. The EU has therefore taken measures to mitigate political and other risks of working inside Syria and has strengthened its presence in the region.

The EU will continue to support the resilience of the Syrian civilian population. A particular focus will be put on the creation of jobs through community-based and locally-owned approaches to generate revenue and promote a sense of empowerment. The EU will also continue to focus on the provision of education, including basic and higher education, skills development, vocational training and psycho-social support services for Syrian children and youth, as well as specific actions promoting equal access to education for girls. This will enable them to continue their schooling and studies, thereby providing them with the prospect of a better future and to equip them with the necessary skills to contribute to Syria's reconstruction. This will also encourage people, and in particular young people, to remain in or return to Syria post-conflict, and create alternatives to participation in or the influence of armed or violent extremist groups.

The EU will work to avoid the collapse of the Syrian state administration. For a functioning state it is necessary to ensure the linking of governance structures at all levels across the country. The EU will expand the support it has been providing to local civilian governance structures in opposition-held areas, such as local councils and other administrative entities, to improve their transparency, participation and accountability in the provision of services and to prevent the control of civilian structures by military actors. The EU will coordinate closely

with other donors and Syrian stakeholders, including the Syrian interim Government[14] to ensure harmonised and complementary approaches within and across different sectors.

Under the 'Whole of Syria' approach, the EU will continue to provide resilience support throughout the country. This support is aiming at:

(i) maintaining Syria's human capital and the delivery of services, thereby paving the way for post-conflict recovery; and

(ii) providing the means for people to remain in their homes in dignity or for internally-displaced persons to receive basic services, thus reducing migratory flows.

This 'Whole of Syria' approach should be pursued with a view to preparing the ground for post-conflict recovery and post-agreement state reform, where local institutions throughout the country are expected to play a key stabilisation role.

6. EU engagement in early planning for reconstruction and transition

6.1 Post-Agreement Planning

The EU has been clear that it will not be able to assist with the reconstruction of the country until a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition is under way. EU engagement in reconstruction is therefore linked to a political solution to the conflict based on UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communique. In addition, special responsibility for the costs of reconstruction should be taken by those external actors who have fuelled the conflict. Nevertheless, in order to be ready to act quickly and effectively at the appropriate moment, preparations have to start in advance. Investment needs will be extremely substantial and a global effort will be required.

The EU will continue to engage and contribute to the post-agreement planning exercise conducted by the UN Inter-agency Task Force that will detail the multi-sectoral interventions that will be needed in the first 6 months following a peace agreement to support the political process and the transitional government structures. Work is also ongoing to expand existing

[14] The Syrian Interim Government has been created in 2013 by the Syrian National Coalition and is working to establish functional local governance structures inside Syria in opposition areas that are able to provide services to the population.

joint EU-UN assessments of damage and needs in a number of Syrian cities and to ensure that the needs of the population are tackled in reconstruction efforts. The EU will seek to integrate similar, parallel efforts of the World Bank. This work will prepare the ground and reduce the time needed post-agreement for the conduct of a joint Recovery and Peace Building Assessment between the EU, the World Bank and the United Nations, in support of the longer term recovery and reconstruction plans of the transitional government structures.

The EU is already engaged in increasing the coordination of EU Member States and key donors in Syria. In this regard, the EU has already hosted nine core donor meetings since October 2012 in order to improve international coordination of non-humanitarian recovery, resilience and development aid and forward planning for the response to the Syria crisis. In preparation for a post-agreement phase, the EU will engage with Syria's neighbouring countries, the Arab International Financial Institutions and other relevant third parties to discuss ways in which Syria's neighbours and regional actors can contribute to Syria's reconstruction as well as how a safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons could be supported.

6.2 EU role in Syria's reconstruction

Once a genuine political transition in accordance with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué is underway, the EU could take steps in support of reconstruction. Such steps will be undertaken in an incremental way, and only in response to concrete and measurable progress:

- Lifting restrictive measures: the EU could review the current restrictive measures against Syria to support early recovery and reconstruction.

- Resuming co-operation**:** the EU could resume bilateral co-operation relations with the Syrian Government and mobilise appropriate tools under the EU Neighbourhood Policy and other programmes to boost the economy and tackle governance and accountability challenges.

- Mobilisation of funding: when a genuine and comprehensive political transition starts, the EU will be ready to contribute to the reconstruction of Syria, as well as to mobilise and leverage funding from other international donors. The EU Regional Trust Fund in

response to the Syria Crisis should play an important role in pooling and channelling EU and Member States' as well as other contributors' funding.

Without prejudging the results of consultations with post-agreement Syrian counterparts that will need to define their own reconstruction priorities, the EU could provide support in the following sectors:

- Security: the need for security will be paramount in implementing any political agreement. In the immediate post-agreement phase, the EU could fund demining and removal of unexploded ordinance and support local or international mechanisms to oversee and monitor the cessation of hostilities. A transition in Syria will only be successful if security institutions are reformed to become accountable and focussed on citizens' safety and security. This will require civilian oversight at local and national levels. The EU could support Security Sector Reform and demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants into civilian life or reformed security services. The EU may fund other relevant aspects, including disposal of chemical agents and the tracking and disposal of small arms and light weapons.

- Governance, reforms and service delivery: in the immediate post-agreement phase, the EU could support the provision of peace dividends by rapidly restoring basic services delivery at local level (education, health, water, electricity, rubble removal, waste management, etc.), especially for areas hosting large numbers of the displaced or returnees. In the longer-term, the EU could support the post-conflict reform of state institutions, including efforts to overcome the existence of different practices/administrations, reinforce the coherence of service delivery and bring divided communities back together. The EU could support the drafting of a new constitution and the organisation of elections, notably through assistance to election management and an EU electoral observation mission. It could also scale up its service delivery support through state and local institutions, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of reformed and accountable state and local institutions throughout Syria. The EU could support Syria in combating financial crimes by implementing Financial Action Taskforce (FATF) recommendations.

- Social cohesion, peace-building and reconciliation: in the immediate post-agreement phase, the EU could support inclusive local-level reconciliation processes to reinforce

the peace-agreement and prevent relapse into conflict. It could also provide support to the transitional authorities in dealing with the most pressing issues (former detainees and missing persons, housing and land property dispute resolution, etc.), working closely with civil society. The EU is also willing to play a role in preparing and supporting the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and internally-displaced persons to their homes, and their inclusion into Syrian society. In the longer-term this will need, among other things, a rights-based and victim-centred transitional justice mechanism and measures to encourage national and local reconciliation, such as a national dialogue, alongside profound judicial reform.

– Human capital: the EU can build on existing initiatives to develop and maintain the human capital that will be needed for the reconstruction of Syria. To this end, relevant EU sectorial policy instruments, such as the Horizon 2020 Programme, could be mobilised.

– Economic recovery: in the immediate post-agreement phase, the EU could increase its livelihoods support to the population, notably for the most vulnerable, young people, and displaced persons. In the longer-term, peace and the reconstruction of Syria will only be achieved through a re-launch of the Syrian economy, which has been severely damaged by six years of war. Creating jobs and business opportunities for all Syrians (in particular for returning refugees, the displaced, communities affected by war and former fighters), including those offered by the reconstruction process, will be important for economic recovery. In order to maximise the effectiveness of international support, it will be essential for the international community to work in one direction and in a fully coordinated manner. In this context, once the conditions allow and depending on requirements, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could take the lead in a macroeconomic stabilisation effort, in conjunction with World Bank loans and advice on structural and sectoral reform policies. EU macro-financial assistance could be available to Syria in a post-conflict scenario, subject to the existence of a disbursing IMF programme and the relevant preconditions – respect for democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In line with their respective mandates, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

(EBRD) could leverage their expertise in infrastructure financing and private sector development, including support to small-scale entrepreneurs through micro-credit.