Statement by the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL

2016-04-27

The Small Group of the Global Coalition to counter Daesh met today in Kuwait at the invitation of His Excellency, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled al-Jarallah to further refine and synchronize our efforts in Iraq and Syria, and to reinforce our determination to defend our populations and homelands against Daesh's global terrorist activities. We express our gratitude to our host, the State of Kuwait, for its important role in the Coalition and as a leader in the area of humanitarian support to the Iraqi and Syrian people, recognizing that it has to date hosted three donor conferences for Syria, co-hosted the 4 February 2016 donors conference for Syria in London and pledged $200 million for humanitarian aid in Iraq.

We welcome the momentum we have witnessed in recent months against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Daesh continues to lose territory as well as control of strategic resupply routes and resources. When we last met in Rome in February, Iraqi Security Forces had seized Ramadi. They have now advanced up the Euphrates River Valley, liberating Hit and pressing on to end the Daesh siege of Haditha. They are attacking Daesh simultaneously in Anbar and Ninewa provinces. Since the Rome conference, Shaddadi, a critical Daesh supply route between Raqqa and Mosul has been retaken from Daesh, the al-Tanf crossing point on Syria-Iraq border was cleared of Daesh elements, and moderate Syrian opposition forces liberated additional towns along the border with Turkey. Daesh has retreated in other areas of Syria, as well.

Daesh continues to be degraded in other significant ways. It has been losing its leaders at a high rate and has lost large numbers of fighters. Its resource base is drying up as Coalition strikes have lowered Daesh oil production by at least 30 percent and destroyed millions of dollars stored in bank vaults and other locations. As a result of its deteriorating financial situation, Daesh has relied more on generating revenue through taxation, imposition of rents and sale of confiscated property, including vehicles, heavy equipment, and construction materials. Fighter pay has been cut by half in some areas, and desertions are increasing. Daesh is resorting to conscription to fill its ranks, recruiting children to conduct suicide attacks and is less able to mount offensive operations.

Our work goes beyond the military realm. We are supporting security and stabilization programs in areas liberated from Daesh, including those covered by the UN's Funding

Facility for Immediate Stabilization and its new Funding Facility for Expanded Stabilization, both of which help local partners to set the conditions for the return of displaced residents and promote the economic revival of their communities. Clearing explosives in liberated areas and training police forces to secure local communities are prerequisites for sustainable recovery and represent important priorities for our Coalition.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the growing humanitarian needs resulting from the conflict in Iraq and Syria. While the unprecedented response of international donors at the February 2016 London Conference will help address Syria's overwhelming humanitarian needs, we urge countries to follow through immediately with all pledges. The urgent needs of civilians in Iraq set out in the UN's 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan call for further life-saving funding and additional efforts to guarantee protection and humanitarian access for all civilians in need, including in areas where they are trapped by Daesh. The international community's coordinated efforts to deliver aid and assistance should be intensified over the coming months.

While Daesh is clearly on the defensive and losing ground, it is still dangerous. We take seriously the threat Daesh still poses, and we understand its lasting defeat will require a long, difficult effort. The recent attacks in Tunisia, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Belgium reinforce our determination to eliminate Daesh and its distorted ideology and to help the communities it has devastated. We stand with the countries victimized by these acts of terrorism, including the host of this conference, Kuwait. We are fully committed to supporting civilian and military operations to set the stage for liberating areas in Iraq and Syria now under Daesh control and ensuring its lasting defeat. As we prepare to liberate more territory from Daesh, we must focus intensively on stabilization efforts to improve the lives of the people who suffered under its terror.

We underscore our support for international frameworks – UNSCRs 2178, 2199, 2253 – along with institutions such as the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum and Financial Action Task Force, to block Daesh and foreign-terrorist-fighter travel, financing and illicit trade. We will continue to strengthen our cooperation to detect, monitor and interdict foreign terrorist fighters, while disrupting facilitation networks. We are determined to disrupt Daesh's ability to generate, move and use funds, building on the success of our coordinated efforts to reduce its revenues. We are likewise resolved to keep Daesh completely cut off from international financial channels and to eliminate its ability to maintain financial links with its affiliates outside Iraq and Syria. We welcome the creation of diverse Coalition counter-messaging centers now collaborating to counter Daesh's propaganda at increasing pace and at scale. We encourage support for initiatives such as the Sawab Center in the United Arab Emirates that strengthen cooperation in countering Daesh's on-line and social media messaging and undermine its claims to legitimacy and strategic success.

Our support for Iraq extends beyond its security needs. The Coalition supports the Iraqi government's commitment to pursue reforms and comprehensive dialogue to achieve inclusiveness and national reconciliation. As military operations continue to progress against Daesh, the Coalition will continue its support to the Government of Iraq in ensuring not only the safety and security of Iraqis, but also their livelihoods and economic well-being. Iraq is experiencing a triple economic shock of low oil prices, incurring the costs of combating Daesh, and caring for internally displaced persons and refugees seeking safety. We reaffirm our continuing support for Prime Minister Abadi and the Government of Iraq as it manages these issues at the national and provincial levels. We further reaffirm our continuing support for the Government of Iraq as it works to promote stability in areas liberated from Daesh, decentralize certain federal authorities to the provincial level and address corruption.

The Coalition stands with the Syrian people and supports processes under way to achieve a genuine political transition based on the 2012 Geneva Communique and UNSCR 2254, aimed at establishing an inclusive, pluralistic and non-sectarian government that represents the will of all Syrians. We urge full adherence to the Cessation of Hostilities which, for the first time, has opened the door to a reduction of violence and greater focus on ending the conflict and pursuing the fight against Daesh. We call for the end of indiscriminate bombing and actions deliberately intended to block humanitarian assistance, for which the Syrian regime bears the primary responsibility. These actions undermine the UN-sponsored negotiations in Geneva aimed at a political transition and the pursuit of a lasting solution that unites Syrians and reverses the tide of extremism. We call on all the parties to commit constructively to the political dialogue under United Nations auspices as the only means to achieve peace and preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

In Libya, we are encouraged by the Government of National Accord's entry into Tripoli on 30 March and the steps it has taken to unify Libyan institutions and begin its work in the capital. We stand ready to assist the Government of National Accord, including through the new Stabilization Facility for Libya, in its efforts to establish peace and security for the Libyan people and defeat Daesh. We will continue our attention to Libya and the threat posed by Daesh.

Mindful of the many challenges Daesh poses in diverse regions, we remain committed to sustaining momentum of the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, and we look forward to the ministerial meeting of the Small Group planned for July 2016 in Washington.

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