

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference with Imad Fakhoury, Minister of planning and international Cooperation of Jordan, after the Informal Ministerial-Level Meeting on the Syrian Crisis in New York

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We had a very important session of work, co-hosted by our Jordan friends, on the issue of the Syrian refugees. We tackled not only the issue of humanitarian assistance, which was obviously the focus of the meeting, but also the political and security tracks when it comes to the Syrian crisis.

You know very well that the Syrian refugees problem is first of all a problem for the region, and we have all recognised the incredible, important, wonderful work that Jordan is playing in hosting so many refugees together with the other countries of the region, in particular Lebanon and Turkey. We also recognized the need to focus all our efforts in supporting this process, not only focusing on the work in the camps, but also on the support to hosting communities. Local communities that are hosting millions of people with a difficult situation when it comes to services, health services, education and the social situation. We also focused very much on the fact that dealing with the humanitarian aspect of the crisis is curing only the symptoms. At the same time we also have to tackle the causes, which is the war in Syria. And this requires, on one side the security track - the fight against Da'esh - and on the other side, the political one, the diplomatic efforts that are very much going on - as you know – around this week here in New York to start the political transition or, as some put it, changes in the democratic life of Syria.

I see that, around this concept of starting a political process that includes all Syrians who refuse terrorism and who want to fight and unite forces against terrorism, there might be a political space for new initiatives in the coming weeks. There are talks during this General Assembly week that can bring the different parties around the table, in Syria, around Syria with the regional players and the international community, starting from the main actors here in the UN.

This was not the main focus of the event we had – very well attended, not only by European friends but also Arab and international Ministers, Foreign Ministers or High-level officials - showing that this is an issue for the international community at large.

Let me say finally that sometimes we have the impression – I have personally the impression – that we are waking up to this now, because the refugee crisis is more visible today to our Western eyes, when our friends in the region have been facing this for 4 years now. I was visiting myself the camps in Jordan, not now, not one week ago, but in

December. I think we have to stay focused on this and we have to use this new sense of urgency that is growing in Europe in particular, but also in the rest of the world, to push for doing more on the humanitarian side: giving more money to the agencies, starting from the UNHCR, but also the World Food Programme that are doing an excellent work not only in the camps. At the same time, to push for doing something better on the political track and on the security track. So, doing more, doing more, doing more on the humanitarian. Working also on some possibilities of opening safe passages for humanitarian help inside Syria. Doing more on the humanitarian, doing more, together and better on the political and security side.

Thank you.

Q: On EUNAVFOR MED/ Sophia and funding of refugees camps

The proposal to fund the camps, but also and mostly financing the resilience of the hosting countries and the hosting communities on one side, and the work of the agencies, is the decision that the extraordinary European Council took last week - exactly one week ago, last Wednesday; a decision to increase the level of support financially, both to the countries directly - we have a Trust fund there [Trust Fund for Syria] - and also through our financing to the agencies. Let me say that the European Union is the biggest donor, not only in the region, but also worldwide. You listen often here, and President Obama also said it in his speech, the fact that the US is the first individual donor. If you question yourself why he adds the word individual, it is because the European Union is the first donor collectively. The EU plus the Members States, we have invested close to €10 billion on the Syrian crisis and the Syrian refugee crisis so far, which means that obviously we can do more, and we are doing more. We have decided to do more, but the amount of money we are putting in managing this crisis and supporting our partners and our friends in the region is already enormous, is already huge. I say it is an investment. So, I fully share that fact that it is our duty: moral, political and regional. Because we share the same region.

On Operation EUNAVFOR MED/Sophia, actually we have just decided to rename the operation. We have decided to call the operation Sophia, which is the name of the baby who was born on one of the ships that are operating in the operation and save and rescue people - among which one woman gave birth to this baby.

We have full support of our Member States [on this Operation]. We have managed to start the operation and to even decide now transitioning to phase 2 of the operation at a record time. Most of the Member States are contributing to the operation. I was visiting the headquarters last week, just before coming to New York and I am more than happy to see that Member States are fully supporting this. Let me stress, as we are here in the United Nations, where I, for the first time presented the plan to the Security Council and to the Members of the Security Council, it is an operation that is targeting the smugglers and the traffickers of human, the criminal networks. So, for the first weeks we have gathered information and intelligence on how they operate. And now we will move to phase 2,

which is in the high seas, in full respect of international law, and we'll get the possibility to seize the vessels and to bring the suspected smugglers to justice. So that the criminal organisations find it more difficult to make money out of trafficking people. And we will do this in full respect of international law in high seas. I have had the chance to discuss this also today, with some of our colleagues, in particular with Foreign Minister Lavrov, sharing the fact that this is indeed a contribution to fighting criminal organisations, and also fighting the financing of other kinds of criminal organisations, like terrorist ones, that are happening in the region.

Q: On Syria and possible political space for new initiatives.

I don't have the possibility now to get more into detail, but I think that over this Ministerial week, we have heard from different actors, narratives that are different but that have -or can lead to- a common ground. In the official speeches, in the bilateral meetings, in the multilateral meetings that we have had over the week. And I believe that this can lead – in the future weeks – to strengthen the efforts done by the UN, in the UN framework, to have and to develop a different push for political negotiations to the transition. Again, some used very different words, but I see a possible common ground for a common diplomatic effort to bring an end to this war.

Watch the video:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I109339>.

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