European External Action Service (EEAS)

Syria: Statement on behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP debate on the situation in the country

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Speech delivered by Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, on behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell.

Check against delivery!

President, Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Let me start by thanking, also on behalf of the HR/VP, the rapporteur MEP Loiseau, and the shadow rapporteurs, for this report with recommendations on the situation in Syria.

I have to say that we value your efforts to keep Syria high on the political agenda and take good note of your recommendations, broadly in line with the EU policy on Syria.

On 15 March, we will mark the 13th anniversary since peaceful protests began throughout Syria and were brutally repressed by the Assad regime.

Since then, the EU continues to call for real political process as the only response to the Syrian conflict and to support the efforts of UN Special Envoy Pedersen to advance on all aspects of UNSCR 2254. We encourage him to reconvene the Constitutional Committee. The reality is that the Assad regime has shown no intention to engage in any political process, even after its readmission to the League of Arab States last year.

As a result, the overall situation in Syria continues to deteriorate.

The EU position on Syria has not changed and will not change.

This means no normalisation with Damascus, no lifting of sanctions and no support for reconstruction in the absence of a credible, sustainable and inclusive political process in line with UNSCR 2254.

Support to the Syrian people continues to be a fundamental priority of EU action. The EU and its Member States remain the largest donor, having mobilised over EUR 30 billion since 2011.

Against this backdrop, the EU is organising this spring the eight Brussels Conference on Syria, which remains an essential occasion to reaffirm our unity and commitment to a political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and a key opportunity to engage with Syrian civil society. The conference remains key to generate pledges for assistance to Syrians and their host communities.

Several major donors have announced significant cuts in funding, and we are facing a funding gap. It will be important, that the EU continues to be seen as strong supporter of the Syrian people.

The Day of Dialogue will take place on 30 April, and the Ministerial on 27 May. The Day of Dialogue is an essential platform to engage with Syrian civil society and parliamentarians are also invited to attend it.

Link to the video (starting at 5:27): https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-253451

Closing remarks

President, Honourable Members,

The debate today illustrates the importance we all attach to the Syrian conflict.

We all want the same thing for the Syrian people, for Syria, for the region: an end to the conflict, a lasting peace for the Syrian people, the possibility of a voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees, and stability for the region as a whole. This goal can only be achieved through a real political process as set out by UN Security Council resolution 2254.

The dire regional situation is a stark reminder that unsolved conflict can easily degenerate and that we all have a strong interest in supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people.

Let me also emphasise again: Syria and the Syrian people remain a priority for the EU and will continue to be so. As EU will continue to raise our voices for the only path to sustainable peace for Syria: a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

And we will remain firm in our position on Syria: there will be no normalisation with Damascus, no lifting of sanctions and no reconstruction in the absence of a serious and credible engagement from the Syrian regime in the political process.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-253458

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/syria-statement-behalf-high-representative-vice-president-josep-borrell-ep-debate-situation-country_en