Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK & US have an alliance of values & remain closely aligned on Syria

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Speaking today the Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to host my great friend and colleague John Kerry here in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office again.

Of course we spent most of our time discussing the crisis in Syria, but I want to begin by paying tribute to Secretary Kerry for his work on the Middle East Peace Process, which has now led to the resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This is a reminder, amidst all the difficulties of the whole Middle Eastern region, of the progress that effective diplomacy can offer. And, I will meet President Abbas here in London later today. The UK will do all it can to provide support to this process, and I will remain in close touch as we always do with Secretary Kerry on this in the coming weeks. Achieving a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a very, very high priority in foreign affairs and John Kerry has placed it there and given enormous energy to this in the last few months.

We've discussed all aspects of the crisis in Syria. The position of the United Kingdom following our Parliamentary vote ten days ago is well known, and the government, as you know, fully respects the decision made by the House of Commons. But, our objectives and efforts between the UK and the US remain closely aligned in four areas in particular.

First, working to create the conditions for a Geneva II peace process that can lead to a transition government in Syria;

Second, addressing the desperate humanitarian situation;

Third, supporting the moderate Syrian opposition and saving lives on the ground;

And fourth, mustering a strong international response to the use of chemical weapons.

Our government supports the objective of ensuring that there can be no impunity for the first use of chemical warfare in the 21st century. As an international community we must deter further attacks and hold those responsible for them accountable.

We admire the leadership of President Obama and Secretary Kerry himself, in making this case so powerfully to the world. This week the European Union, the Arab League, and many of the countries of the G20 have called for a strong international response, and it is to the credit of the United States that once again they are prepared to lead such efforts. They have the full diplomatic support of the United Kingdom. I welcome the fact that an increasing number of countries have signed up to the joint statement on Syria adopted last week during the G20 by eleven countries, and I urge other countries to do the same.

Secretary Kerry and I share the same revulsion at the utter callousness of a regime that has presided over the deaths of more than 100,000 people, and caused 2 million people to become refugees, among them 1 million children. The

Prime Minister announced an additional £52 million in humanitarian

assistance last week bringing our total to four hundred million pounds. The United Kingdom will be working intensively over the coming weeks, including at the UN, to try to secure unfettered access for aid inside Syria and to address the aid shortfall, working closely with the United States which is leading by example here as in many other areas.

I briefed Secretary Kerry on the

talks we held last week with the President and senior leadership of the Syrian National Coalition

. There can’t be a political solution in Syria if the Assad regime is allowed to eradicate the moderate opposition, so we discussed ways in which we will continue to coordinate our assistance to them. And we reaffirmed our commitment to a Geneva II peace conference, which should create a transition government leading to elections in Syria, and to continuing our diplomacy with Russia to try to bring about the necessary breakthrough.

At its heart, the US-UK special relationship is an alliance of value: values of freedom, of maintaining international peace and security, of making sure that we live in a rules based world. So the United Kingdom will continue to work closely with the United States taking a highly active role in addressing the Syria crisis and working with our closest ally over the coming weeks and months.

And as well as addressing all these immediate challenges and crises, we continue to work together on a whole range of issues from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership to Somalia, to my work on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict which the Secretary has strongly supported and, and of course, deepening the economic ties that are indispensable to both nations.

Further information

The

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