

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference with United Nations Special Envoy to Syria Staffan De Mistura

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Thank you very much, Staffan. It is a pleasure for me to be here at the UN with you on a day that is clearly special for Europe. I was this morning in Brussels, meeting with the Prime Minister of Belgium, the Prime Minister of France, with all my colleagues in the European Commission, to not only commemorate and honour the victims of the attacks in Brussels yesterday, but also to look at our response.

And part of our response, the external part of our response, is the work that you are doing together with the rest of the international community, with the support of the UN Security Council, and with the full support of Europe. So I was particularly honoured and grateful for the call that you gave me to come to work more and more together, to try and consolidate and accelerate the process for bringing peace in Syria.

I immediately thought that this was an excellent idea, because I was yesterday in Amman, the day before in Lebanon, including in the Beqaa valley, meeting so many Syrians, children, grandparents, women and men, and all of them were telling me the same thing: "We want to go back home, when are we going to be able to go back home?" And they were asking, even the small children at school: "How are talks going in Geneva?" And I was saying: "You know, they are in good hands, proceeding, but still the way is long".

When the news of the attacks in Brussels came, my first thoughts were that the responsibility that we are all having - and Staffan, on behalf of all of us is having for bringing peace to Syria - is first and foremost for the Syrian people, it is for the region, but it is also for the Europeans. The threat that is coming to Europe and elsewhere in the region and the world has clear connections also with the spread of Da'esh in Syria. If we want to tackle this threat, this existential threat, in an effective way, we have to do something internally in the European Union - this is not the place and I am not the person to address this-, but it is also to accelerate and consolidate our common work, the common work of the international community to put an end to the war in Syria and to concentrate and join forces against Da'esh in an effective way.

That is why I discussed this with John Kerry yesterday evening on the eve of his trip to Moscow today and I met today, first of all, Staffan, to understand in which ways the European Union can fully and in an active way support his efforts, and I passed the message that we all share to the delegations present here, that we expect them to engage

in the process on three key elements that were agreed by all of us in the International Support Group for Syria and that are the backbone of our common position, endorsed by UN Security Council resolutions.

First, the consolidation and expansion of the cessation of hostilities. Second, the consolidation and expansion of the humanitarian access to the areas that are still to be reached. And third, and I would say extremely important, enter into the political process, without delays, without games, with the spirit of reaching a solution.

Negotiations are in the hands of Staffan, but I felt that I had to respond to his call and pass the message that it is important - not only for the Syrians but for the Europeans - that this process starts, works and delivers. For the sake of the Syrians, for the sake of the region, for the sake of the Europeans, for the sake of the international community. I would like to thank very much Staffan for his work, for the excellent cooperation we have and for all what we will be able to do also in the coming weeks. I say weeks, hopefully Inshallah, not months or years to address this issue, that is, as we said and as we know, one of the most crucial issues of our times on the global level.

Thank you!