European External Action Service (EEAS)

Egypt: Press remarks by High Representative Kaja Kallas after the meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Badr Abdelatty

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Thank you very much.

Good afternoon everybody.

It is a pleasure to be here. Minister Abdelatty, dear Badr, thank you for the warm hospitality here.

We discussed many important issues that the Foreign Minister has already covered, including relations between the European Union and Egypt, as well as the regional worries.

I must stress that the European Union and Egypt are very important partners.

Since we signed the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership last year we have deepened our relationship and there is a lot to build on. You already pointed out different areas, spanning political relations, trade, migration, security and education.

We greatly appreciate Egypt's vital efforts in promoting stability across the region at a time when there are so many dangerous security developments going on.

I think that we really need to stick together.

Today, particularly we discussed the situation in Gaza. Egypt has played a key role amid the ceasefire negotiations and we are very grateful for that.

We strongly oppose Israel's resumption of hostilities, which caused an appalling loss of life in Gaza. The killing must stop. In a new war, both sides lose. That is very clear.

From the European side, it is very clear that Hamas must release all hostages. Israel must fully reinstate humanitarian aid into Gaza. Negotiations must resume.

While it is difficult to speak of rebuilding of Gaza while bombs are flying, we also discussed the Arab plan for Gaza's reconstruction. The plan offers a solid blueprint for rebuilding, and, again, I thank Egypt for the crucial role you have played in hosting the talks.

The European Union is ready to assist and is preparing a financial package to support also Gaza's reconstruction. But it is clear that more clarity is needed on issues such as cost-sharing, security arrangements, and the future governance of Gaza. We will be discussing these issues with the Arab-Islamic Ministerial Committee later today.
We also remain committed to strengthening the governance of the region. It is clear that we do not support Hamas participating in the governance of Gaza in the future.

What I want to stress is that the EU's commitment to the two-state solution is the only path to a real lasting and sustainable peace. The EU is committed to the two state solution, so we are supporting that path.

We also discussed Syria. The recent violence has shown that hope is hanging by a thread in Syria and we need to do everything to have stability in the region. Syrians have a small window of opportunity to shape their own destiny and this process has to be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. And we will have to help them seize to size this opportunity window.

Last week, in Brussels we hosted the Syria Conference, pledging 5.8 billion euros for Syria's recovery. But, of course, the lifting of sanctions is a step-for-step approach so we need to see the steps going in the right direction. This pledging will also support Syria at this crucial time of transition and help address the dire needs on the ground.

Foreign Minister, thank you again for the hospitality.

I think that there is a lot of work to do, that we need to work together for the stability of the region but also for the stability of the whole world, so I am really glad to be working with you and really looking forward to a close cooperation.

Q&A

Q. You have said that the EU is supporting the Arab Islamic Egyptian plan for the reconstruction of the Gaza strip and you mentioned that Israel should take the responsibility of the ceasefire. So, what is the stance of the European Union towards Hamas? Would you like that Hamas gets out of the scene in order to provide the support, or not?

Thank you for the question. Yes, we welcome the Arab Plan but, like I said, it also has a lot of questions that need to be clarified. One question is the cost sharing of the future reconstruction, the very important question of the governance of Gaza in the future and the security arrangements as well, because the security concerns of Israel also need to be taken into account.

The European Union's position is that Hamas should have no role in the future governance of Gaza and that is something that we definitely need to discuss because the Arab plan does not address this in concrete terms.

Q. You will leave from Egypt to Israel. In light of the Israeli aggression in Gaza and in the south of Lebanon, what is the political role of the European Union? How can the European Union practice pressure to stop this aggression? In addition, on the plan of the reconstruction in Gaza, can the European Union have a power inside Gaza in the first phases?

Thank you. Yes, I will travel to Israel and of course, we will raise all these issues because we are very concerned about the hostilities and the loss of life in Gaza due to Israel's resumption of hostilities. We had the Association Council with Israel where we were also raising all these issues: that they should resume the negotiations and stop the killing there and stop the bombing there. Of course, the hostages have to be released as well.

So, our messages are very clear: humanitarian law has to be followed, people's lives have to be saved, humanitarian aid must reach the people, it can't be politicised. Our border-crossing mission that the minister was mentioning, EUBAM Rafah has to be open, because people with medical needs will get out of Gaza. It is very important that the hostilities stop and people's lives are saved and spared. I think that the resumption of this war just brings more killing and is not in the interest of anybody. So, I will definitely raise these issues and we, European Union, will use the tools that are in our hands.

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