



Towards an even stronger EU role for Syria, reinforcing EU efforts to build peace

Strasbourg, 14 March 2017

The European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have today adopted a Joint Communication proposing a forward-looking EU strategy for Syria. As called for by President **Juncker** in his [State of the Union speech](#) in September 2016, the Communication defines how the European Union can play a stronger role in contributing to a lasting political solution in Syria under the existing UN-agreed framework. It also looks at how the EU can continue its assistance to over 13 million people in need in Syria, help build resilience and stability in the country, and support post-agreement reconstruction and the voluntary, dignified and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons once a credible political transition is underway.

The High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The Joint Communication adopted today strengthens not only our current engagement and support for a political solution to the war as the only way we can bring peace back to Syria, but also what the European Union could do in a post-agreement context in which reconstruction can start. And there is much the European Union is ready to do, together with the United Nations and the rest of the international community. The Syrians want peace, they deserve it, as they want and deserve to finally have the possibility to shape the future of their country. We are at their side to support the future of Syria."*

As outlined in the Joint Communication, the European Union's engagement in Syria goes beyond the current state of play. It is defined by a longer term perspective in support of the EU's strategic goals on Syria. The Syrian people deserve a united, democratic, diverse, inclusive and territorially integral country. A stable, strong and secure Syria will be rebuilt provided that a political settlement in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué is reached.

The Joint Communication comes at a crucial moment for Syria, as we mark the 6th year of the conflict and with the resumption of the UN-led talks in Geneva, supported by a ceasefire mechanism established as a result of the Astana talks. The Communication reiterates the European Union's direct support for the UN process, notably through ongoing political dialogue with regional actors under the [EU regional initiative on the future of Syria](#) and ongoing work to strengthen both the Syrian political opposition and civil society organisations.

The European Union will continue to be the first and leading donor in the international response to one of the worst humanitarian crises since World War II. Since the outbreak of the conflict, the EU has mobilised over €9.4 billion, providing life-saving humanitarian assistance and resilience support to the Syrian people and neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees.

The Joint Communication presents the current political, security and humanitarian context in Syria and the state of play of the EU's assistance in response to the Syria crisis. It contains an assessment of the risks and threats posed by the continuation of the war to the EU's core interests, regional and global stability, as well as the definition of a set of clear objectives for the EU's policy for Syria, which include:

- Ending the war through a political transition process negotiated by the parties to the conflict with the support of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and key international and regional actors;
- Promoting a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria through support for the strengthening of the political opposition, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué;
- Promoting democracy, human rights and the freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations;
- Promoting a national reconciliation process based on peace-building efforts and countering violent extremism and sectarianism, including an approach to transitional justice that should include accountability for war crimes;
- Saving lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in a timely,

effective, efficient and principled manner;

- Supporting the resilience of the Syrian population, as well as of the institutions and Syrian society.

As a next step, the Communication proposes clear lines of action to implement these objectives, in close coordination with regional partners and international organisations, and to continue the diplomatic work and post-agreement planning in order to ensure that international support is ready, coordinated and can be delivered effectively when the appropriate moment comes.

High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will present the Joint Communication to EU Foreign Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council on 3 April; it will also be presented to the European Parliament. The Communication will also serve as an important input for the [Brussels Conference "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region"](#) on 5 April 2017 that the EU will co-chair with the UN, Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom.

Background

The European Union's last strategy on Syria was adopted in March 2015 as part of the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat. The Joint Communication represents the review of the Syria-related aspects of the Regional Strategy that was [last reviewed](#) and updated by the Council in May 2016.

In his [2016 State of the Union address](#), European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"I call today for a European Strategy for Syria. So that Europe can help rebuild a peaceful Syrian nation and a pluralistic, tolerant civil society in Syria."*

For more information

[Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria](#)

[Factsheet: The EU and the crisis in Syria](#)

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