

Brussels V ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’: Opening remarks by HR/VP Josep Borrell at the Ministerial session

eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria/95996/brussels-v-‘supporting-future-syria-and-region’-opening-remarks-hrvp-josep-borrell-ministerial_en

Check against delivery!

We meet at a sober moment here in Brussels on this Conference [on Supporting the future of Syria and the region]. Ten years since the start of this terrible conflict in Syria.

As United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, has said, the human cost of this conflict is unthinkable, awful. More than 400,000 people have died. Perhaps 100,000 more have disappeared and over 12 million refugees and internally displaced people. Over 13 million people need humanitarian assistance. Half of them are children. It means that a whole generation of Syrians has only known war. Their existence has been war.

Yet, there has been relatively military calm this past year. Yes, but this is not the same as progress. In recent days, violence has returned with attacks on civilian populations, even on health facilities done on purpose. The conflict is certainly far from over.

Meanwhile, negotiations in Geneva are close to a standstill, no progress. And yet we need to advance on the political front towards a comprehensive and sustainable solution. We need that if we want to pull Syria back on track, back on its feet.

To reach such a solution, the European Union stands behind United Nations Special Envoy, Geir Pedersen, supporting his work to ensure full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. We support the Special Envoy calls for parallel implementation of mutual and reciprocal steps. We agree with this urgent appeal for constructive international engagement on Syria.

Today’s Conference is part of such efforts. It is long past time to bring this conflict to an end. We must be open to new ideas to prevent further decades of desperation, dependency and despair.

The Syrian regime and its allies should consider what is on offer if they abide by United Nations Security Council Resolution [2254]: restoration of regular investment and trade, normalisation of diplomatic ties, international support for the reconstruction of Syria’s infrastructures, economy and, indeed, reconstruction of the society.

However, as the European Union has made clear, we cannot and we will not normalise anything while violence and repression continues. Nor can we accept that elections as currently planned by the regime should lead to any measures of international normalisation, no.

At present, the regime offers no future to the Syrian people. It makes no contribution to the stability of the region. Unless this changes, it cannot be a partner to the European Union or to the international community. That is why we call for a change in behaviour.

A clear and unambiguous decision to end the repression and to engage meaningfully in United Nations led negotiations. And the same applies to the regime's supporters. Only a political solution will bring stability and allow Syria to become the united, sovereign, prosperous and free country we all want to see.

Accountability for all violations of international, humanitarian and human rights law is the only sound basis for sustainable peace and for genuine reconciliation.

Secretary-General, Ministers, colleagues,

We are here today to reassure the Syrian people of our continuing commitment and solidarity. Syrian civil society, young people and women must play their full part in building the future of Syria. We will continue to reserve a space for them.

Let no one doubt our commitment to a sustainable solution to the refugee crisis, we remain committed to supporting the five point six million refugees and their [host] communities in Jordan, in Lebanon and Turkey, as well as in Iraq and Egypt. We commend their solidarity and generosity.

Finally, we pledge our continued support for those Syrians who remain inside Syria, and many of them, 6.6 million, who are displaced from their homes, many in camps for a long time.

The pandemic has been further worsening the already dire humanitarian situation. It is vital that assistance can reach those in need. I call on the Security Council to renew the cross-border resolution later this year is of vital importance for humanitarian help to be able to be brought to these people.

Since the start of the conflict, the European Union collectively provided nearly €25 billion in assistance for the benefit of Syrians in need. And today, I am proud to announce that the European Union is reconfirming its pledge. The same amount made at last year's conference for 2021. And that we are this year pledging an equal amount from the European Union budget for 2022: €560 million.

Once again. I would like to ask for generous pledges at today's conference, so that we can somewhat alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

Our core message as European Union remains clear, we are and we will remain fully committed for Syria and supporting their people.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-203802>

Nabila MASSRALI (link sends e-mail)

Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

+32 (0) 2 29 88093

+32 (0) 460 79 52 44

Daniel PUGLISI (link sends e-mail)

Press Officer for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

+32 (0)2 29 69140

+32 (0)460 767374

Zoi MULETIER (link sends e-mail)

Press Officer for Neighbourhood and Enlargement/Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

+32 (0)2 29-94306

+32 (0)460794306

Tags:

Syria Brussels V Conference