Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary's remarks on constructive G8 Foreign Ministers' meeting

2013-04-11

The Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming.

Today G8 Foreign Ministers held very purposeful and very constructive talks on the theme of preventing and resolving conflict, and dealing with its consequences.

Syria was, of course, the most urgent foreign policy issue that we discussed and we all remain deeply concerned about the human tragedy that is continuing to unfold there. We agreed that our immediate priorities are increasing humanitarian access, ensuring that donors who generously pledged their support at the Kuwait conference fulfil their commitments, and supporting stability in the countries that are providing shelter to refugees. And we also welcome the UN Secretary General’s announcement of an investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria.

This week the UK, United States and France also held separate talks before the G8 meeting with the Syrian National Coalition, the Syrian opposition, where we emphasised our support and discussed how to intensify our work with them on better delivery of services and humanitarian assistance inside Syria, and other practical support and achieving a political solution.

The Assad regime continues to show a flagrant disregard for human rights and human life and continues to do so. And now is the time for a Syrian-led political transition that respects the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

We also reviewed the threat to regional security posed by recent North Korean provocation and condemned the DPRK’s continued work on missile and nuclear weapons programmes. If the DPRK conducts another missile launch, or nuclear test, we committed ourselves to take further significant measures and I refer you to the conclusions that we have issued of the meeting in which G8 foreign ministers condemned in the strongest possible terms the continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. We made clear that Ministers supported the commitment to strengthen the sanctions regime, and further significant measures in the event of a further test or launch by DPRK. We also condemned

DPRK's aggressive rhetoric and confirmed that this would serve to further isolate DPRK. We urged them to engage in credible and authentic multilateral talks on de-nuclearisation.

We also discussed recent talks on Iran's nuclear programme. The outcome from the recent talks between the E3+3 and Iran on its nuclear programme was disappointing, as Tehran's position falls short of what is needed for a diplomatic breakthrough. We will continue with the twin track approach of sanctions and negotiations, but ministers were clear that the window for diplomacy will not remain open forever.

We also had very good discussions on the Middle East Peace Process and particularly welcomed Secretary Kerry's recent visits to the region and his commitment to finding a just, lasting and comprehensive peace there. We offer our full support to the United States in this effort. Both sides must show bold political leadership, which includes refraining from actions that threaten the viability of a two-state solution.

We have reaffirmed our political and practical support for the democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa. The UK's G8 Presidency this year will be used to help create economic opportunities in those countries, particularly for women and young people. Our G8 partners have endorsed our practical programme which is designed to promote investment, support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and to work with partners from Arab Countries towards achieving the return of stolen assets. These initiatives will play an important part in supporting the transition in these countries.

On Somalia, following the striking progress that has been made, we agreed to support the reengagement of international financial institutions such as the IMF, so that Somalia can invest in its economy. We have also established a timetable for further international assistance during 2013, which we will discuss at the Somalia conference here in London on 7 May.

On Burma, we welcomed the political and economic progress that has been made and considered the Burmese Government's proposals for encouraging investment. We welcome these proposals and stand ready to support this effort, but we are also concerned about continued ethnic and religious conflict in Burma and we emphasised the need for peace and reconciliation.

We also agreed conclusions about the threats and opportunities in cyberspace, including how we can do more to share best practice and build capacity in countries that lack the infrastructure and expertise to secure their networks effectively.

Finally, in addition to these current challenges, my personal priority for the G8 was to agree a major declaration that rape and serious sexual violence in conflict are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. I am delighted that we have reached agreement on that declaration, as well as a number of practical commitments to make real, tangible progress on the ground on

the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, including £23 million in new funding towards this effort from different countries. I am also grateful to German Foreign Minister Westerwelle for committing his country to review progress against these commitments during their G8 presidency in 2015. This has been agreed and we have set a goal to end the use of sexual violence in conflict. It is time to shatter the culture of impunity and today we have made significant progress.

These have been excellent and productive discussions and I look forward to working with the G8 Foreign Ministers to implement the areas for joint action and cooperation that we have agreed upon.

Further Information

Read the

G8 Foreign Ministers' meeting statement

Read the

G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

UK announces

additional funding to address conflict sexual violence

Find out more about the

G8 Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Storify

Read more about the

Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative

More information on the

Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative at our tumblr

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretarys-remarks-on-constuctive-g8-foreign-ministers-meeting