

Statement of the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Iyad Ameen Madani, at the the Opening Session of the Geneva-II Peace Conference on Syria, Montreux - Switzerland

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Date: 02/02/2014

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations Honorable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you all; At the outset, I would like to commend the continued efforts and constructive initiatives of His Excellency the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria with a view to finding a peaceful solution. I would also like to express our appreciation and consideration for the Joint Special Envoy of the Arab League and the United Nations, H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, for his dedicated efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through negotiation and peaceful political solutions within the framework of Geneva-I final communiqué and UN Security Council resolution 2118. Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, We all know that the popular movement in Syria began in March 2011 with peaceful demonstrations calling for change and reform, in line with peoples' right and aspirations all over the world to good governance, respect for human rights and sustainable development. But the Syrian regime responded to these legitimate demands and peaceful marches with repression, killing and destruction of public and private property; and with severe damage to the cultural and religious heritage of all segments of the Syrian society. The regime also exerted efforts to instill sectarian and ethnic conflict at the expense of disrupting social cohesion and equilibrium. The Organization of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC) has, since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, called on the Syrian regime to meet the legitimate demands of the Syrian people, and to refrain from using warfare and lethal means to brutalize its own citizens. The OIC also supported all regional and international initiatives to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis, including the initiatives and efforts of the Joint Envoy of the Arab League and the UN. Due to the intransigence of the Syrian regime and its persistence in continuing the policy of violence which turned the situation in Syria into the greatest human tragedy in the present day, the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah on 14-15 August 2012 decided to suspend Syria's membership of the OIC and all its subsidiary and specialized organs. The 12th Islamic Summit Conference held in Cairo on 6-7 February 2013 outlined the basis for the OIC policy towards the Syrian crisis with the aim to preserve Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; and to abide by Islamic values of peace, justice and equality and respect for human rights. It also insisted on protecting Syria from civil war and its consequences on the Syrian people, the region and on international peace and security, and stressed the Syrian Government's primary responsibility for the tragic deterioration of the situation within Syria. The Islamic Summit in Cairo reiterated its support for the actions to implement the objectives to facilitate a Syrian led political process and for the principles and guidelines for a peaceful political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The leaders of OIC member states also called on the Security Council to assume its full responsibility in finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the Syrian crisis, and in paving the way for a political transition consistent with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, We believe that Geneva-II Conference, which kicks off a process today, must put an end to the Syrian crisis, and open up promising prospects to re-build Syria and restore its security and stability, and to guarantee freedom, justice, equality and respect for human rights for all Syrians without discrimination on religious, ethnic, sectarian or partisan grounds. To achieve these goals, the OIC stresses the need to observe the following principles: 1. Negotiations should focus on ways to implement the final communiqué of Geneva-I Conference of 30 June 2012, which affirms the need to facilitate the launching of a political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, enabling them to shape their own future in an independent and democratic way. 2. Commitment to the full implementation of the six-point peace plan and UN Security Council resolutions 2042 and 2043 adopted in 2012. 3. Putting a time frame to Geneva-II Conference negotiations to which negotiating parties should commit in order to reach an agreement bringing the Syrian crisis to a peaceful and definitive end. 4. The international community, especially the leading powers and international and regional organizations, should follow up the negotiations, and demonstrate a genuine international will that would lead, as soon as possible, to a peaceful solution putting an end to the distress of the Syrian people, and to the killings, destruction and devastation in the country. 5. The Security Council should be called upon to adopt a binding resolution to implement the final agreement in order to resolve the crisis peacefully. 6. The international community should undertake the responsibility to contribute actively to post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development in Syria. We also call on the Syrian Government to observe an immediate ceasefire once negotiations start, as a demonstration of its good will and desire to reach a

peaceful solution to the crisis. It must also grant international and regional relief organizations access to enable them to provide emergency humanitarian aids to the Syrian people. In this vein, we confirm the readiness of the OIC and its institutions to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. The OIC is also ready and willing to utilize its entire potential to assume any responsibility and carry out any mission that may help restore security and stability in Syria. Excellencies, The suffering of millions of internally displaced Syrians and refugees, and the illegal use of chemical weapons are major issues we have to address at this meeting, but we must not forget that what is taking place in Syria, at its essence, core and substance is about the struggle of a people yearning for a decent life, away from oppression, injustice, and despotism. And so long as the struggling Syrian people do not achieve these legitimate goals, and as long as they are deprived of their rights, the crisis will persist. To put an end to it, what is needed now is an international will that honors its ideal, principles and declarations. This is the prime responsibility of the permanent members of the Security Council who have given themselves the right to veto. It is also a basic responsibility for the countries of the region and their ability to reach a new regional paradigm where the crisis in Syria is not looked at as a stage to gain and exercise influence, but rather a reason to reach a new consensus within which the interests of all shall thrive in a stable, prosperous and harmonious region having the ability to live at peace with itself and with the world at large. May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon us all.

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