

Supporting the future of Syria and the region: co-chairs declaration

1. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations and the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar, and the United Kingdom chaired today in Brussels a conference on the Syrian conflict and its impact on the region. This conference brought together representatives of over 70 countries and international organisations, international and Syrian civil society, and built on previous years' conferences in Kuwait and London.
2. The conflict in Syria has brought about destruction and human suffering on an enormous scale. In particular, the Conference condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Government and ISIL/Daesh, as identified by the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, and the attacks on Khan Sheikhun yesterday. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, must stop immediately.
3. The international community is deeply committed to engaging and working together to support a peaceful future for Syria and all its people. To that effect, the conference stressed the importance of maintaining a sovereign, independent, unitary and territorially integral country where all Syrians will be able to live in peace and security. It aimed at further progress towards a sustainable inclusive peace, while addressing the urgent humanitarian and resilience needs inside Syria and supporting the efforts of neighbouring countries in hosting over five million refugees.
4. The conference recognised that the humanitarian and resilience needs of vulnerable people (especially women and children) inside Syria and in the region have never been greater. It took note of UN-coordinated appeals requesting \$8 billion in 2017 to cover assistance and protection needs inside Syria as well as in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. It acknowledged the continuing generosity of neighbouring host countries and their communities in providing refuge to millions of displaced people. Participants agreed that in order to meet the massive needs of populations inside Syria and in neighbouring countries and strengthen the resilience of host communities, significant financial support and innovative and holistic approaches are needed. The generosity of the participants has resulted in the pledging \$ 6 billion (€ 5.6 billion) for 2017, as well as multi-year pledges of \$ 3.73 billion (€ 3.47 billion) for 2018-2020. In addition, some international financial institutions and donors announced around \$ 30 billion (€ 27.9 billion) in loans of which elements are on concessional terms. Co-chairs and others agreed to widen the resource base and ensure greater predictability, coherence and effectiveness of the aid by translating the Grand Bargain commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit into action to deliver concrete dividends for the people affected by the Syrian conflict.
5. Humanitarian assistance alone, however, cannot stop the suffering of Syria's people in the absence of a political solution negotiated between the Syrian parties, on the basis of relevant UNSCRs, including 2254, and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. The conference highlighted that any lasting solution to the conflict has to be centred on meeting the democratic aspirations and needs of the Syrian people and providing safety and security for all. Only through a genuine and inclusive political transition will there be an end to the conflict.
6. Participants therefore re-iterated their full support and commitment to the UN-moderated intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, as the only forum where a political solution should be negotiated. They welcomed the talks in Geneva, looked forward to further progress, and commended the tireless efforts of the UN Special Envoy. The role for civil society, including women's organisations, was recognised as a key part of a lasting solution. Participants explored how the international community and the region can contribute to ensuring the success of the talks.
7. Participants recognised the constructive role that regional actors can play in facilitating a resolution to the conflict and welcomed the initiative of the EU to find common ground between them on the future of Syria.
8. The Astana meetings have a potentially crucial role in consolidating and strengthening the nationwide ceasefire, guaranteed by Russia and Turkey, and, now, with the participation of Iran. Constructive contributions from the Astana meetings should complement the efforts of the Geneva Task Forces. While supporting these efforts, strong concerns were expressed about ongoing military activity and all sides were urged to redouble their efforts to achieve full compliance with the ceasefire. A genuine ceasefire should facilitate unimpeded, country-wide humanitarian access. Immediate practical measures such as the release of

detainees/abductees, the exchange of prisoners and handover of bodies, to identify missing persons, were also recognised as important confidence building measures. Participants welcomed the UN's readiness to provide technical support to improve the efficiency of the trilateral mechanism to observe compliance with the ceasefire.

9. The protection of civilians remains paramount. Participants condemned the continued violations and abuses of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law by parties involved in the conflict, including the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, in particular medical and educational infrastructure and places of worship, and sexual and gender based violence. In particular they noted the findings of the UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry on the UN-Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy. In addition participants condemned the atrocities committed by ISIL/Daesh and other UN-designated terrorist groups and reaffirmed their strong commitment to defeat them. Co-chairs called for support, including through adequate financial means, for the implementation of the UNGA Resolution 71/248 establishing an International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to ensure accountability for such systematic, widespread and gross violations and abuses of IHL and human rights in Syria.

10. Participants recalled the urgency of allowing rapid, safe, sustained and unhindered countrywide humanitarian access by UN agencies and NGOs to all those in need through the most direct routes, including across conflict lines and across borders, and to end all arbitrary denials of humanitarian access. Starvation of civilians through besiegement as a method of combat and their forcible displacement, as identified by the Commission of Inquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council, are clear breaches of IHL, and as such, they are unacceptable and must cease immediately. Providing immediate humanitarian support and protection to all those in need throughout the country remains imperative. Participants praised the work of Syrian, regional and international aid organisations, and called on those responsible on the ground to ensure that humanitarian relief and medical workers can deliver assistance without facing the risk of violence. Humanitarian mine action to reduce the impact of explosive hazards in Syria was also recognised as a critical protection issue for civilians. Neighbouring countries were called upon to continue to facilitate humanitarian access.

11. Participants recognised the challenges faced by neighbouring countries, notably Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey due to the extended presence of millions of Syrian refugees, and commended those governments, together with Iraq, Egypt and others in the region including Gulf states hosting significant numbers of people from Syria, for providing leadership in responding to the impact of the conflict. Participants took note of the resolution of the League of Arab States on the Syrian refugee crisis and reaffirmed their strong commitment to support host countries in providing public services, protection and assistance to refugees and host communities. The conference paid particular tribute to all those who had delivered such support in the most difficult of circumstances. Substantial progress has been made by regional governments in meeting London Conference objectives and participants welcomed the generosity of the countries hosting refugees. 12. The co-chairs and others acknowledged the need for support for the economic development of Jordan and Lebanon to address the impact of the protracted crisis as well as opportunities for Syrians to secure their livelihoods. They welcomed progress in opening labour markets to refugees and agreed to support job creation programmes aligned with the host country governments' social and economic development strategies. Bearing in mind the need to accelerate progress to create 1.1 million jobs, the co-chairs undertook to support economic growth for the benefit of all, including through access to external markets and concessional funding, as well as infrastructure development. The co-chairs called upon the other participants to join them in supporting the necessary reforms, which would include improved regulation and investment climate, strengthened public-private sector links and adoption of clear reform strategies. Participants committed to increasing access to vocational training for refugees and host communities, closely aligned with private sector labour needs and accompanied by skills matching programmes. Details of how we will pursue this shared vision are set out in the documents in annex.

13. Participants agreed to continue to work towards the target of ensuring No Lost Generation of children, in Syria and in the region and increase efforts to reach the goal of getting all refugee children and vulnerable children in host communities into quality education with equal access for girls and boys. They committed to increase access to learning for 1.75 million children out of school in Syria itself. In this regard, it was also agreed to centre efforts on improving learning outcomes for boys and girls from the refugee and vulnerable host communities and to prevent drop out due to financial and non-financial barriers.

14. Participants highlighted the close links between protection, education and livelihood opportunities and welcomed host countries' renewed commitment to the protection of refugees, including through addressing those factors that place them in a situation of illegality. Humanitarian assistance to support the basic needs of the most vulnerable refugees, with a specific emphasis on children and women, must be strengthened. Participants recognised the critical role of resettlement as a protection tool for particularly vulnerable refugees, in order to offer, together with other legal pathways, safe and dignified access to safety beyond the immediate region. The importance of safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees, in accordance with international law and once conditions are in place, was recognised.

15. Reconstruction and international support for its implementation will be a peace dividend only once a credible political transition is firmly underway. It is vital that post-agreement planning progresses in order to be prepared to respond quickly and effectively when the conditions outlined in the UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué are in place. Participants therefore welcomed the work of the UN Inter-agency Task Force on UN post-agreement planning and its efforts to engage with relevant stakeholders and address international coordination, and took note of the principles for civilian stabilisation outlined at the London Conference. Damage and needs analyses are currently being undertaken by the UN, EU and World Bank, with a view to initiating a full Recovery and Peace Building Assessment when appropriate. Co-chairs and others reflected on ways in which Syrians and their neighbours could contribute to Syrian economic recovery and reconstruction once a credible political transition is firmly under way.

16. Participants acknowledged that reconstruction will be successful only in the context of a genuine and inclusive transition that

benefits all the Syrians. The legitimate grievances and democratic aspirations of the Syrian people need to be addressed to secure lasting peace. Reconciliation and transitional justice will also be an integral part of rebuilding the country on a peaceful basis.

17. The attached fundraising annex sets out the pledges made at this Conference. The co-chairs committed to track and report on delivery of pledges, in coordination with the UN. They also undertook to review progress on the commitments of this conference regularly at key international events during the year.

18. Today's conference has agreed on a comprehensive approach to the Syrian crisis. It underlined the need to continue to respond to the dire humanitarian situation by ensuring principled assistance and protection for those populations in need and support to the neighbouring countries. The scale of suffering is such that a political solution is more urgent than ever before. Investment of political efforts in supporting a resolution to the crisis is therefore paramount in securing a future for Syria and its people. Only Syrians can make the agreement that will secure peace. But the commitment of the international community and the region to supporting them in achieving that peaceful future is essential. Sustainable and inclusive peace in Syria for the Syrians remains the objective of all our efforts.

[Annex - Supporting the resilience of host countries and refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis - Jordan](#)

[Annex - Supporting the resilience of host countries host countries and refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis - Lebanon](#)

[Annex - Fundraising - Supporting the future of Syria and the region](#)

[Supporting the future of Syria and the region - Conference website](#)

[Supporting the future of Syria and the region – information about the conference in Arabic](#)

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press.office@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press