



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Subject : Syria – Council Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Syria as adopted by the Council on 15 October 2012.

SYRIA – COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
(FAC, 15 October 2012)

1. The European Union stands by the Syrian people in its courageous struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The use of force by the Syrian regime against civilians, including by heavy weapons and aerial bombardments, has reached unprecedented levels and can only exacerbate further the violence and endanger the stability of the whole region. The EU recalls that the priorities should be to end oppression, stop all violence, deliver humanitarian aid for all those in need, prevent further regional instability and be prepared for the post-conflict period.

The EU underlines that those whose presence would undermine the political transition should be excluded and that President Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

2. The European Union remains deeply concerned by the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. The EU strongly condemns the shelling by Syrian forces of the Turkish territory, particularly on the border town of Akçakale on 3 October. The EU calls on all to prevent escalation. The EU calls again on the Syrian authorities to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries.

3. Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against further militarisation and radicalisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which can only bring further suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact in the region. In this regard, the EU expresses concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. The intensification of violence and the recent series of terrorist attacks demonstrate the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability in Syria. In this regard, the EU is deeply concerned about the increasing influx of weapons into Syria and calls on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country.

The continuation and escalation of the crisis in Syria poses a threat to the wider regional stability.

4. The EU reiterates its full support for the endeavours of Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and stands ready to strengthen its cooperation with him. The EU emphasises the need to focus international and regional efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through a political solution and calls on key actors in the region and all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities and support Brahimi's efforts.

The EU looks forward to the next meeting of the Friends of Syrian People Group to be held in Morocco to maintain international pressure on the Syrian regime.

5. In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and of the approaching winter, the EU recalls the moral imperative to step up assistance to all affected populations throughout Syria and neighbouring countries. The European Union expresses solidarity with the affected populations and neighbouring countries that have welcomed the refugees. The EU will continue to provide assistance and calls on all donors to increase their contributions to the latest UN appeals for funding humanitarian assistance and refugee assistance. The European Union urges donors to report their assistance and coordinate with the United Nations (OCHA) in order to maximise the effectiveness of the aid effort. All parties should allow full and safe access for the delivery of humanitarian aid in all parts of the country, and respect international humanitarian law. The European Union urges all parties to the conflict to respect in full their legal and moral obligations to protect civilians.

Particularly alarmed by the dramatic and growing difficulties in the access in Syria to medical services, the EU urges all parties to commit themselves to respect in full the inviolability of all medical facilities, medical personnel and vehicles in respect of applicable international humanitarian law.

6. The EU is appalled by the deterioration of the situation in Syria and in particular by the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. In line with the UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria adopted on 28 September, the EU calls upon all parties to put an end to all forms of violence and to take special measures to protect vulnerable groups such as children, as well as women and girls subject to gender based violence.

The EU welcomes the extension of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its strengthening through the nomination of two new members, Carla del Ponte and Vitit Muntarbhorn. The EU reaffirms its support to the Commission's investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to hold to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the definition of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU underlines the importance of documentation of the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations and recalls that all those responsible must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry including by granting it full, immediate and unfettered access to the whole Syrian territory.

7. The EU recalls that an inclusive and coordinated opposition is essential to start a political transition. The EU continues to urge all opposition groups, inside and outside Syria, to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria and to build upon the agreement on the "National Pact" and on a "Common Political Vision for transition in Syria". The EU will continue to work closely with the League of Arab States and facilitate further dialogue initiatives to complement its efforts to encourage the opposition towards forming an inclusive common platform. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.
8. The EU commits to strengthening its support in building the capacity of civil society to participate in a future Syria, in line with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for a more free, open and inclusive political system involving all Syrians. In this context, the EU also acknowledges the importance of the work of the local civilian bodies throughout Syria.

9. The EU approved today additional restrictive measures against Syria. The EU stands ready to engage with those seriously committed to a genuine democratic transition. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the fourth meeting of the International Group on Sanctions which was held in The Hague on 20 September. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.
10. The EU commits to working closely and comprehensively with international partners on planning to ensure the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria once transition takes place. In this respect, the EU underlines the importance of the establishment of a transitional body. The EU welcomes the second meeting of the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development of the Friends of the Syrian People which was held in Berlin on 4 September 2012.

The EU expresses concern about the destruction of Syrian cultural heritage.

As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU stands ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by contributing to a post-conflict needs assessment, mobilizing assistance, institution building, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition.

11. Issues related to pressure created on the EU external borders will be addressed by the next Justice and Home Affairs Council.