



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 18 November 2013**

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Subject: Council conclusions on the regional impact of the Syria crisis

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Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the regional impact of the Syria crisis, as adopted by the Council on 18 November 2013.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS  
ON THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF THE SYRIA CRISIS**

1. The EU reiterates its grave concern for the humanitarian, social, economic, political and security impact of the Syrian crisis on the entire region, especially Lebanon and Jordan. The EU is mindful of the unprecedented effects the crisis has on the stability of the neighbouring countries as well as on their natural and economic resources, educational systems, health care and labour markets.
2. The EU is gravely concerned with the fact that 9.3 million Syrians within Syria are in dire need of external assistance. In particular, it reiterates its concern for the fate of 6.5 million of internally displaced Syrians and of more than 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries, all in need of external assistance. The EU is gravely concerned about the impact of the upcoming winter on the most vulnerable and the polio outbreak inside Syria and urges for timely vaccinations, which require that all parties to the conflict grant full access to health teams participating in the polio immunization campaign throughout the country.
3. The EU commends the authorities and population of, most notably, Lebanon and Jordan as well as Turkey and Iraq for their support and extraordinary generosity towards the people fleeing the conflict in Syria, and recalls the importance of them maintaining the open borders policy. The EU recognizes the destabilizing impact this influx of refugees has on the host communities, especially in Lebanon and Jordan. It also commends other countries hosting an increasing number of Syrian refugees for their generous support to them. The EU encourages all these countries to uphold their international obligations.

4. The EU reaffirms its commitment as the largest donor in the context of the Syrian crisis to support governments, host communities and beneficiaries in countries with most refugees. It welcomes plans for a pledging conference in the beginning of 2014 (“Kuwait II”). The EU will do its utmost to further increase its commitment and calls on international partners to increase humanitarian and economic support to those most affected in Syria and the neighbouring countries. For their part, all donor countries should in accordance with the principles of burden sharing ensure the fulfilment of pledges already made.
5. The EU commends those countries that keep their borders open in order to provide a safe haven and protection for people fleeing the violence in Syria, including Palestinians. In recognition of the immense burden placed upon the neighbouring countries, the EU underlines the importance of supporting local host communities through social and economic measures to mitigate the impact of refugees, and to help financially the host countries to respond to the growing humanitarian needs of refugees. All parties should facilitate the delivery of aid based on humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.
6. The EU also recalls the need for increased humanitarian, development and macro financial assistance in the short and medium term across the region under a comprehensive response strategy to be based on a comprehensive joint analysis of needs from the UN and international financial institutions. The EU is committed to work closely with the national authorities, the United Nations, aid organisations, development actors and international financial institutions one of the main priorities being the reinforcement of local capacities in order to cope with the essential needs of both refugees and affected local populations.

7. The EU reiterates its grave concern about the restricted humanitarian access in Syria, which is also contributing to the outflow of Syrians, many of whom are also facing worsening food shortages, to the neighbouring countries. Therefore, the EU calls on all parties, and particularly the Syrian government, to immediately implement in full the UN Security Council's presidential statement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October in order to ensure the expansion of humanitarian relief operations, to lift bureaucratic impediments and other obstacles and to facilitate safe, unhindered and immediate humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance in the entirety of the Syrian territory, including across conflict lines and across borders from neighbouring countries. The EU calls on all sides of the conflict to allow for local ceasefires to facilitate humanitarian work and to respect all obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. All those violating these obligations must be held accountable.

The EU also calls on all parties, especially the Syrian government which holds the greatest responsibility for enabling humanitarian access, to commit themselves to fully opening up all besieged and encircled areas immediately and permitting civilians wishing to leave to do so.

The EU encourages the UN Security Council to explore the possibilities of a humanitarian resolution based on the UN Security Council's presidential statement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2013 in case the latter would not lead to improvement of the humanitarian situation on the ground.

8. The EU calls on all relevant parties to halt their support to all foreign fighters active in Syria who also have destabilizing effects on neighbouring countries.

The EU calls for a swift elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal. The EU will continue to support this endeavour, including to foster regional stability.

9. The EU underlines that the deteriorating spill-over effects of the Syrian conflict in the region make it all the more urgent to put an end to all violence in Syria and find a political solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The EU reiterates the importance of quickly convening the Geneva II Conference to this end. Recalling the October 2013 Council conclusions on Syria, the EU welcomes the recent positive stance of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) towards participation in the Conference as an encouraging step. Only a political solution that results in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria can end both the terrible bloodshed and the unprecedented threat to the regional stability.
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