

NON-PAPER ON SYRIA **on behalf of Cyprus, Austria and Greece**

The fall of the brutal Assad regime is a significant historic milestone. The situation, however, remains fluid and requires close monitoring, not the least since it directly impacts the European Union, which shares a maritime frontier with Syria and because of past and continuous migratory flows.

Before this turn of events, the EU was frequently blamed for not playing a prominent political role in the Syrian crisis, notwithstanding its central role in humanitarian assistance for Syrians both inside and outside the country.

1. EU's role:

This is an opportunity for the EU to play a prominent role based on the following principles and aims:

- i. Respect for the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.
- ii. An orderly, inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition in the spirit of UNSCR 2254, free of foreign interference, leading to credible, inclusive, and non-sectarian governance based on democratic legitimacy that fully respects human rights.
- iii. Respect for the rights of women, and the rights of all religious minorities and ethnic groups.
- iv. Support for transitional justice and accountability as a means to reach national reconciliation.
- v. Pursue active engagement particularly with our regional Arab and aligned international partners.
- vi. Engage with the emerging government and all relevant stakeholders based on pragmatism and realism.

- vii. Prevent new migratory flows and ensure that there are conditions and perspectives on the ground for the return of those who had to flee.

2. Key considerations:

There remain key concerns that the EU should be mindful of, including:

- a) Syria's fragmentation, the polarization and disintegration of the society, will lead to the growing rise of radicalization, extremism and terrorism (resurgence of ISIS cells).
- b) The role of the Muslim Brotherhood and its impact on the region.
- c) The safety, and protection of the rights of women and all minorities in order to maintain Syria's diversity and social fabric. This is more important if social and demographic engineering takes place under the guise of "security" arrangements.
- d) Remaining vigilant about the risks of further migratory flows to Europe, as a result of non-inclusive participatory approach.
- e) An additional dimension has arisen through the spread of narcotics production (captagon), and the network of smuggling routes. A network has also been used for migration flows and arms smuggling.

3. Elements of engagement:

Proposed action steps to mitigate above concerns:

1. Immediate appointment of the EU Special Envoy on Syria. The EU must be present and seen to be present.
2. Active and pragmatic engagement and presence of EU and Member States in Damascus to closely observe the actions of the new authorities in place and to engage in dialogue at the appropriate level, thus transmitting our joint position. Any positive declarations

and messages by the new authorities have to be matched with concrete actions on the respect of minorities and human rights.

3. Remaining focused on implementing the essence of UNSCR 2254, via establishing an EU Support Mechanism that uses all appropriate EU tools, including setting up a dedicated EU Task Force. In this effort, we will continue to support the work of the UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen.
4. As the situation continues to develop, there is a need for in-depth discussion at EU level on the EU's position on Syria, including the updating of the EU draft Assessment Paper. This will guide EU humanitarian assistance and early recovery efforts.
5. We must remain engaged in the fight against terrorism, avoid the resurgence of ISIS and continue to support to our partners on the ground.
6. Discussion of the implementation of sectoral sanctions to broaden the scope of humanitarian exemptions and derogations. Assad's immobilized assets could be repurposed to finance Syria's reconstruction, ensuring that resources benefit the Syrian people. The aim must remain to address overcompliance and effectively assist with early recovery efforts based on conditionalities vis-à-vis steps towards a fully inclusive political transition and the respect of international humanitarian law and human rights law and the rights of all religious minorities and ethnic groups.
7. In the light of the above, the reconstruction of Syria, once the conditions are met should be a priority, both as a means towards restoring the unity and stability of the country and in ensuring the prospect of a brighter future for its people in an inclusive manner.
8. Support a renewed mandate of 2013 OPCW-UN Joint Mission on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons.
9. EU leading the efforts to fully operationalise the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria including via existing expertise (including forensic/archiving).

10. Incorporate into the EU approach specific EU funded projects for cultural heritage protection. Cooperate with UN agencies and international humanitarian partners to support educational and capacity building programmes for minority groups at the local community level.
11. Prioritize EU funded projects on trauma counselling for minors, preventing and combating SGBV.
12. Support as a matter of priority voluntary returns to Syria.

Table Briefings