



Déclarations officielles de politique étrangère



Official speeches and statements of may 10, 2016

1 - Syria - Ministerial meeting in «Paris format» - Statement by M. Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development

Ladies and gentlemen,

I took the initiative of bringing together today several of my colleagues from the International Syria Support Group, in the so-called «like-minded» format of countries which clearly support the opposition, namely the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Jordan. They were all present or represented, which shows how committed they are to this effort to achieve peace in Syria, and we know that's an extremely difficult struggle.

We were also joined by Mr Riad Hijab, General Coordinator of the High Negotiations Committee and representative of the Syrian opposition. I also had the opportunity to see him last week in the framework of a so-called «E3» meeting - Germany, the UK and France - in Berlin at the invitation of my colleague Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a meeting in which the United Nations negotiator, Mr Staffan de Mistura, also took part.

This is a critical moment in the Syria crisis, and we must combine our strengths and our energy to rekindle the peace efforts. What's at stake is the whole process we began in Vienna. That process depends on some simple principles which the international community, and first and foremost the members of the Security Council, have signed up to.

However, for several weeks we've been seeing those principles undermined by the Syrian regime:

- the truce, which has been declared, has been violated many times by the regime, and everyone can see the tragic pictures from the city of Aleppo, a city which is being completely destroyed - it's obvious in many districts -, leaving a very large number of civilian victims;

- on the ground, we've achieved very little progress in terms of access to humanitarian aid. The regime is blocking convoys and has authorized the United Nations to deliver humanitarian aid to only 25% of the people who need it;

- in Geneva, in the political negotiations, the regime has shown no desire to make any progress towards the transition: it's made no concrete proposals.

So active efforts by the international community are essential, and that's the whole purpose of the meeting we've just had. Let me add that this meeting of the «like-minded» [countries] isn't a substitute for the discussions of the

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International Syria Support Group, ISSG, which is tasked with following up the negotiations. The group, under the aegis of the United Nations, is co-chaired by the United States and Russia. But the aim of our meeting today was to prepare this forthcoming ISSG meeting, which is due to be held in Vienna next week.

It's about being effective and checking the points of convergence and the diagnosis we have of the situation and also of the priorities we must mobilize on.

This forthcoming meeting will be fully attended and will also bring together the Syrian stakeholders and Iran, and I hope we'll be able to make progress next week.

Along with our partners, we'll express the desire for the inter-Syrian negotiations to resume as quickly as possible. And in order to enable people to return to the negotiation table, all violations of the truce must cease immediately, and there must be significant progress in delivering humanitarian aid to besieged populations.

Our goals are known:

- to silence the weapons, except [those used] to combat the terrorist groups recognized as such by the United Nations - and the fight against Daesh [ISIL] and al-Nusra has to go on, there mustn't be any ambiguity on this point - and get concrete guarantees on this truce being maintained.
- to implement the obligations of international law to protect civilians;
- to relaunch the negotiations to implement a political transition which allows Syrians to adopt a new constitution and organize elections. It's this work which must be done in Geneva and which is unfinished today. It's the only way, and we must continue mobilizing with all our strength. That's the purpose of this Paris meeting, to enable peace to return - because there are too many victims, more than 400,000 people killed already -, Syria to be rebuilt and refugees to return to their country.

John Kerry, who, on the United States' behalf, co-chairs the ISSG with Russia, presented to us the statement adopted today jointly with our colleague Sergei Lavrov. This statement tackles precisely the points I've just mentioned. We consider it to be positive, and our common goal is for this statement to be implemented and complied with by everyone as soon as possible.

Finally, following our meeting, I'd like to pay tribute to the courage of Mr Riad Hijab, the representative of the opposition, who did me the kindness of coming once again to Paris and accepting my invitation. We know the sense

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of responsibility he has and admittedly it's difficult for the opposition to justify a return to Geneva without there being concrete developments on the ground.

We're committed to doing everything in our power for this to happen, because we really don't want the opposition to leave Geneva - it has done this symbolically, even though it has kept a delegation there, which shows its desire to make progress. But we also want to help make a success of political construction, of a transition bringing together both acceptable forces from the regime - to avoid in any way breaking up the Syrian state and avoid the situation we're seeing in Iraq - and the opposition. I think it's important for this opposition, represented by Mr Hijab, to play a role and be able to justify it here to those who have elected their leaders. This is the whole purpose of the mission and the struggle we're involved in, and there will be no slackening of efforts, because even though we've increased the number of meetings these past few days, we'll do so again if necessary, because we've only one goal: peace. Thank you for listening./.

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