

Syrian parties should join next round of Geneva talks 'without preconditions' – UN envoy

27 September 2017 – The United Nations is set to convene the next round of the [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva by the end of October or in early November, the UN mediator told the Security Council today.

“The time has come for the focus to return to Geneva, and the intra-Syrian talks under the auspices of the United Nations,” said UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, urging the Government and the opposition to assess the situation with realism and responsibility to the Syrian people and prepare to participate in the talks without preconditions.

Mr. de Mistura said the Government should show a genuine interest in having negotiations about credible, inclusive local and central governance, a schedule and process for a new constitution, and UN-supervised elections.

For its part, the opposition should show its unity and readiness to speak in one voice, he said, urging opposition groups to seize the opportunity presented by Saudi Arabia to convene a conference for them to overcome differences.

“Let me caution both sides and their backers against illusions of victory or dreams of shortcuts,” he said. “There is no substitute for an internationally supported process based on a comprehensive and inclusive approach that also helps Syrians to re-discover a modicum of trust and social cohesion after the bitterest of conflict.”

Following the 10-15 July round of the UN-facilitated talks, the envoy said the conference ended with incremental progress but no breakthrough.

Intra-Syrian talks focus on the “four baskets”: a credible non-sectarian transitional government; a future constitution; early and free parliamentary elections within 18 months; and a united war against terrorism within Syria.



Mark Lowcock, new UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. UN Photo/Mark Garten

Also briefing the Council on the humanitarian situation there, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said “Syria continues to face deep and difficult challenges, and the Syrian people remain trapped in a cycle of violence that must be broken.”

Following a comprehensive UN review, Deir ez-Zor and the 93,500 people in the city are being removed from the list of those besieged, he said, explaining

that after three years of besiegement by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), Syrian Government forces in early September gained road access, marking the end of costly airdrops.

Now an estimated 419,920 people remain besieged in 10 locations across Syria. Of these, 95 per cent are besieged by the Government, two per cent by non-State armed groups, and three per cent by both non-State armed groups and the Government of Syria. "These sieges must be lifted," said Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

So far in September, 9,000 people in the three besieged towns of Foah, Kefraya and Yarmouk have been reached, and 25,000 people were reached in East Harasta, Misraba and Modira. In total, under the August and September access plan, the UN has reached 280,500 of the 1.23 million people it requested to provide assistance to, he added.

France must bring counter-terrorism law in line with international rights obligations – UN experts

27 September 2017 – Warning of possible "discriminatory repercussions," especially for Muslims, two United Nations rights experts expressed concern over a new law that may perpetuate the emergency measures France introduced in 2015 – establishing a permanent state of emergency.

"The normalization of emergency powers has [grave consequences](#) for the integrity of rights protection in France, both within and beyond the context of counter-terrorism," said the Special Rapporteur on the protection of human rights in the context of countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, today in a statement calling on France to honour its international human rights commitments and obligations while debating the new draft law.

The draft law "to Strengthen Internal Security and the Fight Against Terrorism" was approved by the Senate on 18 July and is currently being debated by the National Assembly.

On 22 September in a letter to the French Government, Ms. Ní Aoláin drew attention to several provisions of the draft that may adversely impact people's rights to liberty and security as well as freedoms of movement, peaceful assembly, expression and religion.

Echoing these concerns, the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Michel Forst, reiterated his fear that, if adopted, the law would impair rights to liberty, security, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and others.

“As France is strengthening its fight against terrorism, the draft bill includes a number of security measures, which will incorporate into ordinary law several restrictions on civil liberties currently in place under France’s state of emergency,” Ms. Ní Aoláin pointed out.

She underscored that both regional and international human rights institutions affirm that the means open to the State to regulate terrorism by law are limited by its compliance with international human rights standards. The duration of the state of emergency must be time-bound, revised regularly, and meet the criteria of necessity and proportionality.

The two UN experts expressed concern about the vague wording in certain provisions of the draft bill – particularly the definitions of terrorism and threats to national security – that gives the authorities powers that may be used in an arbitrary manner and non-judicial officers – specifically prefects and police officers – broad discretion and a wider scope for control practices, which may have discriminatory repercussions for French residents, particularly Muslim.

[At Security Council, UN official urges greater cooperation for more effective aviation security](#)

27 September 2017 – Highlighting multifaceted threats to aviation security in the context of international peace and security, the head of the United Nations civil aviation body urged greater cooperation among Member States, at all levels, to make global aviation security more effective.

“We must find a way to identify and judiciously share essential elements of information necessary to implement appropriate measures at the proper level,” Fang Liu, the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), told the Security Council today at its meeting on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

In her briefing, Ms. Liu informed the 15-member Security Council on the new ICAO Global Aviation Security Plan, which focuses extensively on the threat of terrorism to civil aviation and aims to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of global provisions, and the sustainable implementation of preventative measures.

The Global Plan, which she referred to as a major milestone for civil aviation security contributing to the UN global counter terrorism strategy, has five priority areas: enhancing risk awareness and response; establishing a better-defined security culture; improving technological resources and fostering innovation; improving oversight and quality assurance; and

increasing cooperation and support.

“It will only be by virtue of sustained political will, especially at the highest levels of governments and industry, that the [Global Plan] will succeed,” the IACO chief added.

Also in her briefing, Ms. Liu spoke of threats from cyber space; Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), especially in conflict areas; and improvised explosive devices in portable electronic devices.

Concluding her remarks, the head of ICAO also urged the Security Council to allocate a portion of the counter terrorism funds as well as to encourage UN Member States to increase their contributions to aviation security projects, in particular for capacity building and training to enhance the effective implementation of ICAO Standards.

[North Africa set to adopt 5-year plan to boost youth employment – UN labour agency](#)

27 September 2017 – With a youth unemployment rate at 28.8 per cent – twice the global average – countries in North Africa need to adopt a broader, more concerted response to tackle the crisis, the United Nations labour agency warned today.

“Arguably the [single biggest global development challenge](#) in the decades to come will be the need to integrate hundreds of millions of young people into the labour market,” International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) Director-General Guy Ryder told a two-day international conference in Geneva, which is expected to adopt a new five-year action plan to enhance youth employability in the sub-region.

An ILO [press release](#) issued today said that in North Africa, only 16.6 per cent of young women and 46.8 per cent of young men are economically active, meaning that they are employed or seeking work.

Among those active, 29.3 per cent – 24.1 per cent for young men and 44.4 per cent for young women – are unemployed; and around 25 per cent of working youth are estimated to be living in poverty.

“In order to fill the youth employment gap in the North African region, we call on social partners, governments, workers and employers’ organizations together with development partners, to renew their commitment and action on youth employment,” ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy Deborah Greenfield said at the event, calling for a strong policy response to reverse these

trends.

Young workers are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. What's more, North Africa has one of the largest gender imbalances in labour market participation.

At the conference, which ends today, representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia, as well as development partners and major stakeholders are expected to adopt "Roadmap for Youth Employment in North Africa."

[Sustainable tourism can advance global development, UN agency highlights on World Day](#)

27 September 2017 – On World Tourism Day, the United Nations underscored the potential of sustainable tourism to advance economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainable development.

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"This year's celebration comes at a very special time," [said](#) Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) at the official UN celebration of the Day in Doha, Qatar, pointing out that 2017 is the UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

"[It is] a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come together and promote travel and tourism, as one of the most effective transformative human forces of the 21st century," he added.

Noting the connection between air transport and tourism, he stated: "Both are a force for development and have major responsibilities in building a better and more sustainable world. Both are interlinked, as over half of the people travelling the world today arrive to their destination by air, thus the economic impacts of tourism and aviation are linked."

Acknowledging global challenges, such as climate change, migration and security, the UNWTO chief said, that 2016, 1,235 million travellers crossed international borders in one year. That was almost one-sixth of the people of the world making an international trip every year, "and while doing so, tourism is bringing tremendous benefits to communities, economies and societies."

Generating \$3.2 billion of spending worldwide every day, tourism creates one-tenth of jobs globally, represents 10 per cent of world's gross domestic product (GDP) and is 30 per cent of world trade in services. As the third largest export industry, travel and tourism fuel UNWTO's long-term forecasts showing that by 2030, the number of travellers will reach 1.8 billion.

"But beyond the numbers and the economic benefits, travel and tourism is today a major contributor to a transformation that slowly and gradually is bringing us together, as humans, like never before, in a fast, globalized world," he stressed.

Breaking down stereotypes and enabling people to celebrate rich cultural diversity, is "tourism's greatest contribution to a better world," according to Mr. Rifai.