

In Cairo, UN chief Guterres underscores political solutions to ease tensions in regional hotspots

15 Cairo RATING: 6 REGION: General (non-region specific) SUBJECT1: PS SUBJECT2: Select a 2nd subject. CRITERIA1 terrorism CRITERIA2: Enter a 2nd criteria/keyword. In Cairo, UN chief Guterres underscores political solutions to ease tensions in regional hotspots United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today reiterated his commitment to fighting terrorism but underlined also the importance of political solutions to the crises in Syria and the wider region, and put his weight behind the intra-Syrian negotiations expected to begin later this month in Geneva.

Speaking to reporters in Cairo after meeting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the Secretary-General praised Egypt as a “central player” and an “absolutely essential contributor” to finding a solution to regional problems.

He referred to the international talks on Syria held earlier this month in the Kazakh capital of Astana which resulted in an agreement on how to monitor the ceasefire effort started in December 2016.

“The Astana talks were an important contribution because they led to a ceasefire and we hope that the ceasefire will be maintained,” Mr. Guterres said, “but we consider that without a political solution, not only ceasefires cannot hold, but more than that the fight against terrorism will not be effective.”

“That is why we are so committed to make sure that the political process moves on and I hope that Geneva will be an important step in that direction,” he added in a press conference alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry.

Mr. Guterres also made reference to the Security Council, saying that it was “very important to recognize that the United Nations will be what Member States allow it to be.”



Secretary-General António Guterres (left) with Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry of Egypt address reporters at a press encounter in Cairo. Photo: OSSG

He stressed his personal commitment – echoing comments in Dubai days earlier – to reform the UN Secretariat and help to create “effective coordination and accountability” in the different UN bodies to strengthen the reputation of the United Nations at a global level.

During the press encounter, the Secretary-General also stated that there was

“no Plan B” to the two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians:
“Everything must be done to preserve that possibility.”

He also noted the situations in Libya and Yemen, calling for effective reconciliation and reconstruction to aid the people and the stability of the region.

Turning to Syria, Mr. Guterres noted that he has consistently said that the countries of the region that have been receiving so many Syrian refugees, as well as those from Iraq and from many other crises, the countries of the region – Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt – have not had enough support from the international community in general, from Europe in particular, both in relation to the refugees themselves and their living conditions and in relation to the host communities that share with them sometimes resources that are quite meagre.

Stressing that refugee protection is not only the responsibility of neighbours, but of the entire international community, The UN chief said it would be important to substantially increase the number of refugees that are resettled into Europe and other parts of the world in order to show effective solidarity with the countries of first asylum.