



Plenary sitting

B8-0331/2017

15.5.2017

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the EU strategy on Syria
(2017/2654(RSP))

Victor Boştinaru, Elena Valenciano, Knut Fleckenstein, Neena Gill
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the EU strategy on Syria
(2017/2654(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria,
 - having regard to the Joint Communication of 14 March 2017 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative (VP/HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission entitled ‘Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria’ and to the Council conclusions on Syria of 3 April 2017, which together make up the new EU strategy on Syria,
 - having regard to the EU-sponsored conference of 4-5 April 2017 on the Syrian conflict and its impact on the region and to the related declaration of its co-chairs,
 - having regard to the declaration of 6 April 2017 by the VP/HR on behalf of the EU on the alleged chemical attack in Idlib (Syria),
 - having regard to the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and to the UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015),
 - having regard to UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,
 - having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution 71/248 on International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 of 19 December 2016,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU has repeatedly stated that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that only a Syrian-led, inclusive transition can put an end to the unacceptable suffering of the Syrian people;
- B. whereas President Jean-Claude Juncker mentioned the need for a EU strategy for Syria in his state of the union address of September 2016; whereas, in October, Parliament called on Vice-President / High Representative Federica Mogherini to ensure that a new strategy on Syria is aimed at facilitating a political settlement in Syria, including monitoring and enforcement tools to strengthen compliance with commitments made within the International Syria Support Group (ISSG);
- C. whereas the aim of the EU strategy on Syria is to outline how the EU can play a more visible and effective role in contributing to the lasting political solution in Syria, within the existing UN-agreed framework and support post-agreement reconstruction once a credible transition is underway; whereas, while being clear that reconstruction can only begin after a political agreement, reconciliation efforts should start as soon as possible

and be supported by the EU with the aim of securing long-term stability; whereas establishing the truth, promoting accountability and transitional justice, as well as amnesty are all essential in this context;

- D. whereas the ceasefire that came into force on 30 December 2016 is not being respected with several violations and major incidents taking place, such as the chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun presumably committed by the regime and the bomb attack against buses carrying evacuees out of besieged towns near Aleppo; whereas scores of civilians, including children, were targeted and continue to suffer in this brutal civil war;
 - E. whereas neither the UN-brokered peace negotiations in Geneva nor the complementary negotiations in Astana have produced tangible results so far; whereas the Syrian opposition representatives suspended their participation in the last round of talks in Astana in protest against the continuation of air raids in rebel-held areas and Iranian participation; whereas Russia, Turkey and Iran signed a memorandum on setting up de-escalation zones in Syria that was not endorsed by the Syrian opposition;
 - F. whereas the EU has demonstrated its commitment to helping alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the conflict; whereas the Brussels Conference on ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’ agreed a holistic approach to handling the Syrian crisis, with additional financial assistance to respond to the humanitarian situation; whereas the situation in the country continues to be critical with over 13.5 million people in need in Syria, out of which 4.7 million live in besieged and hard-to-reach areas and 6.3 million are internally displaced;
1. Welcomes the EU strategy on Syria and the outcome of the Brussels Conference that ensured pledges amounting to EUR 5.6 billion, including EUR 1.3 billion from the EU, the largest donor to the crisis; urges all participants to fully honour their commitments and to maintain their support in the future;
 2. Firmly believes that the EU needs to engage more actively and to leverage its important post-conflict financial contribution in order to play a significant role in the negotiating efforts under the existing UN-agreed framework and to ensure the political transition, developing a distinctive policy that aims at bringing the parties closer together and intensifying its efforts on areas in which the Union can have an added value;
 3. Supports the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Syrian state and desires a democratic future for the Syrian people; appreciates the on-going efforts of the VP/HR to reach out to the key actors in the region with the view to ensuring political transition, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction; reiterates its position that a Syrian-led political process which will lead to free and fair elections, facilitated and monitored by the United Nations and held on the basis of new constitution, is the only way to pacify the country;
 4. Urges all parties to respect the ceasefire, to immediately stop targeting civilians, and to avoid any action that can have a negative impact on the peace efforts;
 5. Condemns in the strongest terms the atrocities and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the regime with the support of Russia and Iran backed-militias, as well as the human rights abuses and violations of

international law by non-state armed groups, in particular ISIS/Daesh and other jihadist groups; reiterates its call on the UN Security Council to refer these war crimes to the International Criminal Court, and stresses its position that all those responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights law must be held accountable; encourages all states to apply the principle of universal jurisdiction in tackling impunity and welcomes steps taken by a number of EU Member States to this end;

6. Condemns unconditionally all chemical attacks, including the most recent in the town of Khan Shaykhun, and stresses the need for thorough, impartial investigation and accountability; welcomes the UN General Assembly decision to establish an international, impartial and independent mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria since March 2011; regrets, on the contrary, the fact that the UN Security Council failed, due to another Russian veto, to adopt a resolution condemning the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack; stresses Syria's obligation to comply with the recommendations of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon's (OPCW) fact-finding mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, by providing immediate and unfettered access to and recognising the right to inspect each and every site;
7. Urges the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran to use their influence on the Syrian regime to accept and actively pursue a reasonable compromise that will put an end to the civil war and pave the way for an inclusive and genuine transition; calls on the EU and its Member States to continue supporting the moderate opposition, identifying and isolating radicalised elements and promoting reconciliation; encourages the members of the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) to continue engaging in the UN-brokered talks in Geneva;
8. Notes the recent memorandum on setting up de-escalation zones in Syria and supports the intent to reinforce the ceasefire, halt the regime's air force flying over the de-escalation areas, and create conditions for humanitarian access, medical assistance, the return of displaced civilians to their homes and the restoration of damaged infrastructure; highlights, however, the concerns expressed by the opposition that the deal could lead to the establishment of zones of influence and to the division of Syria; highlights the importance of eliminating any ambiguity with respect to groups not covered by the ceasefire and calls on all parties, including Turkey, to ensure that the memorandum does not facilitate the targeting of forces allied to the moderate opposition or those fighting on the side of the international coalition against ISIS/Daesh; underscores that international monitoring of implementation must be ensured and supports more UN involvement, including in the monitoring of humanitarian access;
9. Believes that the EU strategy should have also reviewed aspects concerning the fight against ISIS/Daesh and other UN-listed terrorist organisations, highlighting and focusing on the political and socio-economic root causes that have facilitated the spread of terrorism and identifying concrete actions to tackle them; considers, furthermore, that ways for contributing to the preservation of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-confessional character of the Syrian society should have been elaborated;

10. Recalls that the early establishment of confidence building measures (CBMs), including fully unhindered humanitarian access throughout Syria, the delivery of basic public services (electricity, water, health care), the end of all city sieges, and the release of prisoners and hostages, is of crucial importance; welcomes the agreement among the Syrian Government and rebel groups to allow the evacuation of four besieged towns; urges all parties to support and facilitate the adoption of a comprehensive agreement on CBMs;
11. Expresses satisfaction that the role of civil society, including women's organisations, was recognised as a key part of a lasting solution; recalls the fact that the EU must promote and facilitate adequate involvement or consultation of civil society and women in the peace process, in line with the Comprehensive Approach to EU Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on women, peace, and security; insists that women's human rights need to be reflected in the new constitution of Syria;
12. Notes with regret that the devastating civil conflict has set the country back decades in terms of social and economic development, forcing millions of people into unemployment and poverty and entailing considerable destruction of health and education services, and large-scale displacement of Syrians and brain drain; points out, therefore, the importance of increasing the non-humanitarian assistance aimed at strengthening the resilience of people within Syria and restarting the economy; considers, furthermore, that as soon as the conflict is over, incentives for skilled Syrian refugees to return and contribute to the reconstruction efforts should be provided;
13. Fully supports the target of ensuring a 'No lost generation of children' initiative in Syria and in the region, and calls for additional efforts to reach the goal of getting all refugee children and vulnerable children in host communities into quality education with equal access for girls and boys; highlights the need to recognise the often informal education in refugee camps and to support the psychological rehabilitation of these traumatised children;
14. Believes that the EU must start developing a concrete plan for its involvement in the reconstruction of Syria and aim at inclusive, joint efforts with key international organisations and financial institutions, as well as regional and local actors; supports, in this respect, the political dialogue conducted by the VP/HR with key actors from the region under the EU regional initiative on the future of Syria; highlights, however, the importance of ownership of the post-conflict reconstruction process by the Syrians themselves;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the EU Member States, the United Nations, the members of the International Syria Support Group and all the parties involved in the conflict.