

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NORDIC AND BALTIC  
COUNTRIES AT THE FRIENDS OF SYRIA MEETING IN  
TUNIS 24 FEBRUARY**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden in addition to my own country Denmark.

The situation in Syria seems to be rapidly deteriorating. The Assad regime has lost all legitimacy. President Assad should step aside to allow for a peaceful political transition.

The double veto in the UN Security Council was a critical setback that has led to a sharp increase in violence with dire consequences for the civilian population in Syria.

Therefore this is a very timely meeting, and I thank the League of Arab States and the Tunisian Government for the initiative. We warmly welcome the appointment of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy of the Syrian crisis.

Let me take this opportunity to briefly make six points:

First, we condemn the indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population and the systematic human rights violation carried out by the Syrian authorities. This must stop immediately.

Second, it is imperative that the international community redoubles its effort to identify a broad and inclusive approach for a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis. We urge Russia and China to take part in this collective endeavour, as further international disagreement will only prolong the bloodshed in Syria. All members of the UN Security Council must assume their responsibility.

Third, we commend the League of Arab States for their leadership on this issue and welcome the League's plan for a peaceful and Syrian-led transition and political solution to the crisis. This plan represents the most credible effort to find a viable way forward. As the regional actor closest to the situation, the Arab League should continue to be in the driving seat, in close coordination with the UN.

Fourth, we are witnessing a humanitarian crisis in several parts of Syria. Access for humanitarian aid is to a large extent blocked by the Syrian authorities. Our statement from this meeting should clearly underline the Syrian authorities' responsibility to allow free and unimpeded access by the UN and humanitarian agencies to carry out humanitarian assistance to those in need. We call for all fighting parties to implement daily ceasefires, as requested by the ICRC and Syrian red crescent, in order to facilitate immediate humanitarian access. We applaud the tremendous humanitarian efforts made in neighbouring

countries to help Syrian refugees. We stand ready to assist in the humanitarian efforts, financially and in other ways.

Fifth, and last, it is important that the Syrian opposition includes all peaceful and democratic representatives from the various parts of Syrian society. Efforts should be made to develop a broad and inclusive body representing all opposition groups, both inside and outside Syria. The opposition urgently needs to express a shared vision and set of constitutional principles, in order to be ready to contribute to an orderly, inclusive and peaceful Syrian-led transition towards a democratic Syria.