

**Group of the Friends of the People of Syria, Paris 6 July**

**Joint Nordic-Baltic Statement**

Addressed by Mr Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

We give our full support to the holding of this meeting of the Friends of the People of Syria. The worst scenario we now have to work to avoid is an all-out sectarian civil war which could spread to the neighbouring countries and affect the whole region. In such case no Syrian can win, nor is there anyone else who will benefit from the violence. This meeting has to send a strong message that the destiny of the Syrian people is not irrelevant for the international community. It concerns all of us.

The highest priority is to put an immediate end to the killings and violence which has seen more than 16 000 people killed, mostly civilians including women and children. We strongly condemn the continued disregard for civilian lives by the Syrian regime. Others too have been responsible for serious human rights violations. Perpetrators of serious international crimes must not go unpunished. The United Nations High Commissioner for the Human Rights has recommended that this situation should be referred to the ICC.

In blatant disregard of the UNSC resolution 2043 and Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's six point plan, the violence has continued and the UNSMIS operation has been forced to suspend its work. For the mission to be effective, all parties must respect their commitment to the Annan plan and if need be, the mission could be strengthened and provided with all the necessary resources to fulfill its mandate.

Reaffirming our full support to Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's work, we welcome the efforts to bring stronger action to ensure the implementation of the Annan Plan at the 30 June Action Group Ministerial in Geneva and the proposal to establish a transitional governing body. This transitional governing body must be built on a stable basis and provide for an orderly transition of powers to a government able to have the trust and support of all the communities and groups which make up the Syrian society. Those responsible for most severe crimes cannot be included in a transitional governing body.

This process will also require the common actions of the Syrian opposition on the basis of a commitment to a democratic and inclusive society where all Syrians can live confident that their individual human rights will be respected as well as the rights of the community they belong to. We call on the Syrian opposition to put aside their differences and unite their efforts to achieve this goal.

For Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's work to succeed it must have strong and unified support of the whole international community. Countries with close ties to the different parties in Syria should raise the level of pressure. All countries must refrain from providing weapons and support for violent action and use their influence in order to persuade all parties to stop the killing and start talking. Moreover, legal and illegal flow of arms to Syria has to stop. As members and partners of the European Union we have set out our position on Syria clearly. We are implementing rigorous sanctions and restrictive measures against the Syrian regime. We will continue to expand the sanctions as long as the violence continues. We call on all member states of the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution imposing strong binding sanctions on the Assad regime.

The immediate humanitarian situation is deteriorating. We call again for the Syrian authorities to allow unimpeded access for all those in need of humanitarian assistance. The needs of the growing number of refugees searching shelter in Syria's neighboring countries have to be answered by the international community as a whole. We reconfirm our increased commitment to the humanitarian efforts.

To conclude, let me reiterate that we need clear unanimity and rapid steps also in order to prevent the ever more likely radicalization and spillover of the Syrian crisis into the broader region. Therefore we call on all members of the UN Security Council to unite and increase the international pressure to reinforce the plan of Kofi Annan and to allow for a political process to begin.

On behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, I would like to express my appreciation to France for hosting this meeting of the Friends of the People of Syria.