

**COMMUNIQUE BY THE FRIENDS OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SANCTIONS**

SOFIA, BULGARIA 26 FEBRUARY 2013

1. The Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions ('the Group') held its sixth meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 26 February 2013, under the mandate given by the Ministerial meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People in Istanbul on 1 April 2012. The meeting was hosted by Bulgaria and co-chaired by the UAE and Australia. On behalf of the host government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, H.E. Nickolay Mladenov, delivered the opening statement. 56 countries as well as the League of Arab States and the European External Action Service were represented at the meeting. Also present was the Syrian Economic Task Force, which acts on behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces. The Group welcomed the participation of four new countries. The participating nations further underlined the international community's determination to ensure coordination and effective implementation of sanctions against the Assad regime in Syria in order to exert strong pressure on the Syrian regime and to bring about an end to the violence and enable a democratic transition. The Group called upon all like-minded countries, which favour the introduction of sanctions against the Syrian regime by the United Nations to voice their support for and sign up to the Declaration on Sanctions.

2. The Group is committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria. The Group reaffirmed its unwavering support for the rightful and legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for a peaceful, democratic, pluralistic, and inclusive society, free of any sectarianism or discrimination on any grounds, and committed to stand by them until their aspirations are fulfilled. In this regard, the Group expressed its full support for the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi, for his assiduous efforts to bring about an end to the conflict and achieve a peaceful transition. The Group urged all countries active in promoting a solution to the crisis to support these efforts, which should be based on the principles included in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 and on UNSC resolution 2042. The Group recalled the chairman's conclusions of the fourth ministerial meeting of the Group of the Friends of the Syrian people, held in Marrakech on 12th December 2012, particularly its call to increase pressure on the Syrian regime, isolate it from the international community, and deprive it of resources, such as oil proceeds and assets, used for financing the killing, and its call for the effective implementation and enforcement of these sanctions as an appropriate means to deter repression against the Syrian people, and put an end to violence in the country.

3. The Group also noted that the on-going crisis continues to endanger regional security and stability and expressed its concerns regarding the impact of the conflict in Syria on neighbouring countries. The Group deplored the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation, called upon the Syrian regime to grant full and unimpeded access for all the affected civilians to humanitarian assistance, and urged the international community to respond to appeals by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to provide urgent financial support to address the growing humanitarian needs of the Syrian population, both for the civilians in Syria affected by the conflict and for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, which are bearing the major burden in this regard.

4. While the responsibility for the violence lies with the Syrian regime, the Group condemned all terrorist acts in Syria, which undermine the objectives of the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces and further aggravate the conflict in Syria. The Group recalled that all those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes must be held accountable.

5. The Group called on all members of the international community, especially members of the United Nations Security Council, to take swift, responsible and resolute action, including by introducing sanctions against the Assad regime with the view of depriving the regime of resources and instruments essential to its campaign of violence. The Group will continue its outreach efforts in order to expand participation in the Group's meetings.

6. The Group welcomed the targeted and coordinated sanctions implemented to date by many of the Group member countries and organizations and noted that these measures have been effective in restricting the Assad regime's ability to gain access to much needed revenue and material support. The Group steadfastly maintained that such measures are targeted at the Assad regime and all those supporting it and reaffirmed that it will continue to ensure that humanitarian and other assistance to the Syrian people will not be impeded by sanctions.

7. In the light of the Group's goal of financially weakening the regime, the Group reaffirmed that by cutting off revenue previously derived from the export of oil and other goods, by freezing the assets of those involved in or supporting the repression of the Syrian people, and by preventing the transfer of weapons and other military equipment and related goods to the Syrian regime and those groups seeking to undermine the goals of the legitimate opposition, it aims to end the Syrian people's suffering expeditiously.

8. The Group reiterated its call on all states to impose an embargo on Syrian petroleum products and a ban on the provision of insurance and reinsurance for shipments of Syrian petroleum products. The Group encouraged its members to refrain from purchasing Syrian phosphates, a considerable source of revenue for the Assad regime.

9. In this regard, the Group commended the efforts of Syria's neighbours to impose sanctions against the Syrian regime, despite adverse effects on their own economy and called for other countries, including those neighbours of Syria that have not implemented restrictive measures, to impose similar sanctions.

10. The Group underlined that strong sanctions impose tangible consequences and make clear to the Assad regime and those countries, groups and individuals that are actively supporting the Syrian regime, that they are expected to cut their ties or face isolation. The Group further called for all members of the international community to apply and enforce targeted measures to disrupt the ability of the regime to receive weapons. The Group's members also committed to refrain from the printing or provision of currency for the Syrian government and called on all members of the international community to also cease providing this kind of economic support to the Assad regime. The Group reiterated its call on all states to impose a ban on arms shipments and military technical assistance to the Syrian regime and on the provision of insurance and reinsurance for third country arms shipments toward the Syrian regime and other supplies and to ensure that all those responsible for human rights violations

have their assets frozen and their travel curtailed. The Group commended the courage shown by those who have defected from the Syrian regime and committed to promptly lift sanctions against them, as appropriate. Sanctions against the regime must be effectively monitored and regularly modified to ensure that policy objectives are properly met.

11. The Group called on all states to take steps, in their own capacity, by imposing, at a minimum, an asset freeze on senior Syrian regime officials involved in the repression, as well as an asset freeze on, and restrictions on transactions with banks tied with the Syrian regime such as the Central Bank of Syria, the Commercial Bank of Syria and the Syrian International Islamic Bank.

12. The Group committed to take steps to prevent the Assad regime from acquiring and using technology that enables the regime to illegitimately disrupt communications, monitor or track individuals in Syria. The Group urges companies in all countries to cease providing such technology to the Assad regime. And the Group reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that individuals in Syria can seek, receive and impart information, and are able to communicate within Syria and abroad.

13. The Group appealed to the international financial and business communities to diligently comply with relevant measures against the Syrian regime. The Group strongly encouraged institutions and enterprises in those countries that have not joined the international sanctions regime to refrain from engaging in business with entities affiliated with the Syrian regime and responsible for and contributing to the violence and repression in Syria, or be exposed to a severe reputational risk.

14. The Group encouraged financial regulators to remind financial institutions of the need to exercise vigilance over transactions potentially related to prominent public figures connected to the Assad regime in order to prevent flight of regime-related assets. The Group endorsed the exchange of information between member countries to help identify and address questions related to individuals and entities subject to sanctions.

15. The Group agreed that the National Coalition of Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, in close coordination with and support by the international community, must prepare for transition in Syria. The Group welcomed the efforts by the Coalition to include representatives of all sections of the Syrian society regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender based on its commitment to the respect of the principles of human rights, inclusivity and democracy. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to take the necessary steps to enable transition, including overturning certain restrictive measures, once a credible democratic transition is initiated in order to eliminate obstacles to the recovery and development of the Syrian economy. The Group expressed its intention to closely coordinate this effort with the Friends of the Syrian People International Working group on Economic Recovery and Development. The Group called upon members to be prepared to swiftly review and lift sanctions, including in key economic sectors, where appropriate, in a coordinated manner when a credible and irreversible transition process moves forward, in order to eliminate obstacles to the recovery and development of the Syrian economy and facilitate efforts to rebuild the country, including through the recovery and return of assets misappropriated by the Syrian regime and its affiliates.

16. The Group opposed the extension of any financing in the form of loans or credits to the Assad regime and urged those that may be providing such financial support to cease immediately. Members of the Group declared their readiness to work with a future government of Syria to the extent possible to address Syria's debt in accordance with internationally established processes, in coordination with the Friends of the Syrian People Economic Recovery and Development Working Group.

17. The Group committed to continue sharing information on measures taken to increase the pressure on the Syrian regime. To that end, the Group has established ways to ensure continued coordination between meetings, thanking in particular the Netherlands and the United States for maintaining a list of current sanctions regimes being implemented by the members of this group and the list of competent authorities in charge of implementing domestic sanctions regimes (<http://www.government.nl/IWGS>).
