

Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias intervention at the Ministerial Segment of the 5th Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the Region” (30.03.2021)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the EU initiative to organize the fifth Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” co-chaired by the UN. It is indicative of the importance attached to the crisis and of our joint efforts to reduce the consequences of the ongoing tragedy of the Syrian people.

Since the civil war in Syria officially broke out in 2011, the devastating armed conflict has taken an enormously high toll in civilian casualties. It has torn the Syrian nation apart, reduced the country to rubble and set back the standard of living by decades.

Gross human rights abuses and extensive violations of international humanitarian law added to an already appalling situation that generated massive human flows. Seven million people have been internally displaced, the largest number worldwide, while another 5.6 million Syrian are refugees to neighboring countries. The corona-virus pandemic has pushed another 1.4 million people into food insecurity.

Syria is still the theater of a merciless proxy war. Syria should cease being the playground for foreign interests and agendas that have nothing to do with the welfare and future of the Syrian people and the country itself.

Having entered its 11th year, the Syrian crisis remains a major cause of concern and constitutes a factor of instability for the broader region. The resurgence of radical extremism only renders the overall picture even grimmer. Humanitarian assistance, shelter, healthcare, food, water, education and protection are still urgently needed, especially in the North. The economy has collapsed.

Greece, from the very first moment of the crisis, has received thousands of Syrian refugees, providing them with social and

humanitarian assistance. To this day, we continue to carry a burden far exceeding our capacities.

Greece, as sincere proponent and active supporter of peace, security, stability and development in the broader region of Eastern Mediterranean, is fully committed to the efforts for reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis. One that will preserve the unity, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, in line with UN SCR 2254.

Only such a solution will guarantee the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons, while securing the withdrawal of all foreign troops. As stated, time and again, there can be no military solution to the conflict. Sustainable peace and stability can only be achieved through an inclusive Syrian-led and owned political solution that will respond to the concerns of all segments of Syrian society.

To this end, we reiterate our full support to the efforts of UN Secretary General Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Geir Pedersen. We hope that, under his wise guidance, the Constitutional Committee will be able to find its way towards concrete results as soon as possible.

Today's Conference reconfirms the firm commitment of the international Community to stand by the Syrian people and offer them some relief and hope.

In this spirit Greece, in a symbolic gesture of solidarity to the ongoing efforts, is ready to pledge, again this year, a symbolic contribution.