



140611/03

# DECLARATION

Adopted at

## **Third European Union–League of Arab States**

### **Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting**

**Athens, Greece, June 10-11, 2014**

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union (EU) and of the League of Arab States (LAS), gathering on the occasion of the Third Ministerial Meeting between the EU and LAS on June 10 and 11, 2014 in Athens, Greece, at the invitation of H.E. Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, H.E. Dr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, and H.E. Salaheddine Mezouar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, and hosted by H.E. Evangelos Venizelos, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece;

Have adopted the following declaration:

1. The Ministers expressed determination to address together common political, economic, and security challenges with a view of sharing a better future for all.
2. The Ministers welcomed Euro-Arab co-operation as a means to provide an integrated regional response to strategic challenges, to ensure capacity building within the LAS institutional set-up and to further develop technical exchanges.

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## **STRATEGIC COOPERATION:**

3. The Ministers announced the establishment of an EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue, including exchanges on political and security matters, the exchange of regular meetings of the EU Political and Security Committee and the Arab Permanent Representatives and commended progress made in the field of early warning and crisis response, in particular the full implementation of the Early Warning & Crisis Response Project.

4. The Ministers stressed the importance of co-operation on humanitarian assistance issues through the exchange of information on crisis situations. The Ministers welcomed the Kuwait Arab Summit resolution to establish an Arab Mechanism for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance within the LAS Secretariat.

5. The Ministers condemned all acts of terrorism, particularly the terrorist attacks that occurred in their countries recently, which aim to undermine security and stability and lead to the deaths of innocent victims. They ensured the importance of the joint cooperation to face this phenomenon, which includes the threat posed by terrorist groups and foreign fighters. They agreed to share, as appropriate, assessments and best practices, as well as to cooperate in identifying practical steps to help address the threats. This will include counter-acting more effectively radicalization, recruitment, travel of terrorists and foreign fighters as well as dealing with fighters returning to their place of departure.

The Ministers also agreed to continue work on the comprehensive implementation of the United Nations (UN) Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre with the initiative of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, and ask for supporting this centre. In this regard, they welcomed the holding of the first international Conference on Combating Terrorism, in Baghdad in March 2014, as an opportunity to discuss and seek appropriate means and ways to promote international cooperation and combat terrorism at regional level.

6. The Ministers agreed to co-operate in combating transnational organized crime including the trafficking in human beings and drugs, and improving border security. The Ministers also called for the compliance with the UN Security Council resolution 2133 on the payment of ransom to terrorist groups.

7. Regarding the establishment of a Middle East as a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, the Ministers stressed the importance of implementing the outcomes of the 1995 NPT Resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 Action Plan, and expressed their hope that the postponed 2012 conference on such zone can be held, in accordance with the mandate and terms of reference agreed upon in the 2010 Action Plan, by the end of this year, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between the States of the region, thus contributing to a successful 2015 NPT Review Conference.

## **INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION:**

8. The Ministers encouraged further progress in the implementation of the EU – LAS General Secretariat Joint Work Programme (2014-2016), and work on an inter-institutional agreement.

9. They welcomed the launch of a Diplomatic Internship Programme in November 2013, as well as the "Training & Information Course on Euro-Arab Diplomacy".

10. The Ministers welcomed the strengthening of the relations between the European Parliament and the Arab Parliament, notably through inter-parliamentary co-operation. The Ministers encouraged both Parliaments to continue enhancing their relationship based on open and a regular political dialogue, and to sustain the ongoing political reforms. The Ministers also welcomed the multiple forms and levels of cooperation and learning going on between national Parliaments.

11. The Ministers agreed to enhance cooperation on translation and digitization of heritage, illicit trafficking of antiquities and cultural property, protection of World Heritage, and to support the full implementation of the relevant UNESCO conventions.

12. The Ministers undertook to further support the European Commission-LAS Liaison Office in Malta (ECLASLO), to play a bigger role in enhancing practical cooperation between the two sides.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION:**

13. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of co-operation between the EU and the LAS in the field of human rights. Ministers emphasized the importance to continue to promote and protect human rights and uphold all human rights for all, including the right to economic and social development, freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, and promote the values of tolerance and coexistence between different religions and reject the exclusion, extremism, incitement and dissemination of hatred and violence. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the activities of the International King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna. They underlined the necessity to respect religious diversity, promote dialogue between cultures and combat hate speech. The Ministers welcomed the decision on the establishment of an Arab Court of Human Rights. The Ministers emphasized the importance of inclusive, transparent and fair elections, in accordance with relevant constitutional and legal provisions.

14. The Ministers recognized the significant contribution that women make to the economy and the major force they represent for change and development in all sectors of society. Within this context, the Ministers underlined their willingness to promote women political, social and economic empowerment, and welcomed the steps towards the implementation of the regional programme "Economic and Political Empowerment of Women" in partnership with LAS, EU and UN Women.

15. The Ministers reaffirmed the important role of civil society and free media in participating in the democratic process of their countries in accordance with its relevant laws and regulations, rule of law and respect of human rights. The Ministers stressed the importance of cooperating with legally registered civil society organizations.

16. The Ministers stressed their will to reinforce institutional co-operation between business community, trade unions, chambers of commerce and other relevant civil society organizations from both the EU and LAS, and called for regular meetings between both sides that will provide an institutional frame to guide this co-operation in order to tackle common challenges in an era of globalization and multi-stakeholder policy approaches to share and exchange information of best practices with a service-oriented approach.

In this context, the Ministers expressed interest in exploring cooperation in transport, research and innovation, transfer of technology, petro-chemicals and information technology. They welcomed the holding of the Conference on “Europe and the Arab World: Fortifying Political, Business and Investment Ties”, held in Athens, on 5-6 May, 2014, with the participation of Ministers and representatives of both business communities. The Ministers stressed the importance of cooperation to reduce the impact of excessive food price volatility and the risk of food crisis.

17. The Ministers recalled the importance of regional energy cooperation to ensure secure and sustainable energy supply through joint international investment in that area, in accordance with their respective interest, in order to promote social and economic development and contribute to a transition to a low carbon and energy efficiency. They also stressed the role of energy as a key Euro-Arab cooperation factor to enhance beneficial mutual interdependence. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to enhanced producer-consumer dialogue.

18. They also recalled the importance of cooperation on climate change and environment and are determined to work together towards the adoption of a global, ambitious, fair and legally binding international agreement applicable to all parties in 2015, at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Paris, to reduce global greenhouse gases emissions.

19. In accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, the Ministers reconfirmed the importance of co-operation on the freezing and recovery of funds and assets that were misappropriated. They recognized the progress made, inter alia, in the framework of the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery, as initiated by the Deauville Partnership, which held its second meeting in Marrakesh, 26-28 October 2013.

20. The Ministers reconfirmed the importance of migration, mobility and employment for the development of countries of both parties. They considered that the serious social and human impact of irregular migration should be effectively tackled in a comprehensive way, including by addressing its root causes and among other means by ensuring an effective and concerted return policy between countries of origin, transit and destination.

21. The Ministers stressed that a better understanding between people will be facilitated through exchanges between their youth, and co-operation between their higher education institutions and research centers and welcomed the establishment of the Fes University in this regard. The Ministers encouraged universities, students, researchers, academic staff and youth organizations from LAS countries to fully use the potential of the new Erasmus + Programme and Horizon 2020. The Ministers welcomed the setting-up of the Arab–Euro Conferences on Higher Education (AECHE) as a forum of co-operation between European and Arab higher education institutions and look forward to further meeting between both institutions. They looked forward to the 3rd Arab European Young Leaders Forum taking place in Vienna from 23 to 25 June 2014.

22. The Ministers welcomed the ongoing work through the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) under the leadership of the co-presidency, which contributes to the socio-economic development of southern Mediterranean countries. They underlined the importance of implementing concrete projects on the basis of the rule of variable geometry and mobilizing the necessary resources for their completion based on a thorough case by case study.

### **POLITICAL ISSUES:**

23. The Ministers recognized the various political processes taking place in the Arab countries, welcomed the recent positive steps undertaken so far on the road to democratic transition in some of these countries, and agreed that each of them should be addressed individually. The Ministers also recognized the importance of underpinning commonalities bringing together the EU and LAS in order to jointly address common challenges as well as opportunities ahead.

24. The Ministers reaffirmed their shared position that a just, comprehensive peace in the Middle East is a strategic objective and vital for the stability and international peace and security. They reiterated the strategic importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and recalled inter alia the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union of December 2009, December 2010, and May and December 2012.

The Ministers commended the recent US brokered peace talks and called for the removal of obstacles that prevent further negotiations between the parties as well as the resolution of all issues related to final status (water, security, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem) to achieve a solution of two states living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of UN Security Council and other relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Roadmap, and the agreements previously reached by the parties.

The Ministers reaffirmed their shared position not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties, including with regards to Jerusalem. They stressed their common position that Israeli settlements, the separation barrier built anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territory, home demolitions and evictions are illegal under international law and constitute obstacles for peace and they endanger the viability of the two-state solution.

The Ministers welcomed the formation of the new Palestinian consensus government led by President Mahmoud Abbas in line with the Quartet principles set out in his speech 4 May 2011, and the restoration of unity between the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an important element for reaching a two-state solution. They called upon Israel to cooperate with the new Palestinian government.

The Ministers expressed their concern at the grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip largely caused by the closure imposed by the Occupying Power. The Ministers welcomed the Egyptian efforts that were crucial in reaching Palestinian reconciliation. The Ministers condemned all acts of violence against civilians and called for the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1860 and full respect of international humanitarian law.

The Ministers reaffirmed their concern regarding unilateral measures in violation of international law and international humanitarian law, including the settlement activities in occupied East Jerusalem, and in particular affecting the Holy Sites under the Hashemite Custodianship as reconfirmed in the agreement between HM King Abdullah II and President Mahmoud Abbas. They called for immediate cessation of all illegal acts as well as the immediate reopening of Palestinian Institutions in East Jerusalem. The Ministers commended the role played by HM King Mohammed VI, the President of Al-Quds Committee.

The Ministers also called to respect the rules of international law, international humanitarian law, human rights law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in respect of all Palestinian and Arab prisoners and detainees in Israel prisons. They called for the release of prisoners in accordance with previous agreements and the end of excessive use of administrative detention in contravention of international law.

The Ministers recalled that existing EU legislations in relation to settlements should be fully and effectively implemented. The Arab Ministers expressed their appreciation for the EU's commitment that –in line with international law- all agreements between Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip; and called on the EU to take further steps on settlements in line with its own laws as well as international obligations.

The Ministers agreed on the need to continue to support Palestinian state-building both politically and financially. The Arab Ministers commended the European Union Conclusions of December 2013 in which the EU reaffirmed its commitment to be fully engaged in post-conflict arrangements to ensure the sustainability of any peace agreement. The Ministers expressed grave concern at the recurrent financial crisis of the Palestinian government and called on Israel to take positive steps to enable sustainable economic development in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Area C and in the Gaza Strip.

The Ministers welcomed Palestine's commitment to democracy and human rights as expressed by its accession to relevant international treaties and conventions. The Ministers called on the Palestinian leadership to use constructively its accession to those treaties.

25. The Ministers expressed their deep concern at the dramatic situation the Syrian crisis has reached, resulting in more than a hundred thousand casualties and increasing numbers of displaced people and refugees both inside and outside Syria. They strongly condemned the continuation of bloodshed, abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. They called upon all the parties concerned to exert necessary and urgent efforts in order to reach an immediate cease-fire and the need to adopt an appropriate approach regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. They stressed the need for all those responsible for atrocities to be held accountable. They condemned the arbitrary denial of humanitarian access, stressing the urgent need to allow rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to all people in need both inside and outside Syria, and called for the full implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 2139.

The Ministers reaffirmed their respect for Syrian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and the rejection of existing foreign intervention. They stressed the need to resolve the crisis through a genuine political process in accordance with the Final Communiqué in Geneva of 30 June 2012. In that context, they praised the efforts of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi the UN LAS special envoy to Syria. With regards to the Syrian coalition, the Ministers recalled the respective positions of the LAS and the EU as expressed in their relevant resolutions.

Outside this framework, any election, presidential or other, conducted in the midst of a conflict and with millions of Syrians displaced from their home is an obstacle to the efforts aiming at a political solution.

The Ministers called upon the international community to assist the neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees, among which they pay tribute to the sustained efforts carried out by Iraq and Egypt. They also called upon the donor countries to honor to their pledges to support these countries. In particular, the Ministers called upon the international community to lend its financial and logistical support to Jordan in hosting more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees. The Ministers confirmed in this context to follow up on the outcome of the meeting of Syria's neighboring countries hosted by Jordan on 4 May 2014. They expressed appreciation to the State of Kuwait and HH the Emir of Kuwait for hosting the two donors conferences held in 2013-2014. The Ministers confirmed their determination to ensure that all refugees and displaced Syrian persons can return to their place of origin as soon as possible.

The Ministers condemned the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances and urged the Syrian regime to move the remaining chemicals from their stockpile to port as soon as possible. They called on all parties to the Syrian conflict to make every effort to ensure the OPCW's Fact Finding Mission can undertake its work safely, with unimpeded access to those areas where chemicals are alleged to have been used.

26. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the unity, stability, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. The Ministers called on all Lebanese parties and leaders to overcome their differences and to actively pursue national unity.

The Ministers underlined the importance of Lebanon to uphold its long standing democratic tradition, and working to ensure that presidential elections take place as soon as possible. The Ministers also stressed the importance of parliamentary elections being held on time in accordance with democratic practice.

The Ministers express their concern at the unprecedented effect the Syrian refugee crisis has on the stability of Lebanon, as well as on its economy and social cohesion. The Ministers underlined the importance of supporting efforts exerted by the international community, including the International Support Group for Lebanon, to help Lebanon mitigate the effects of the Syrian crisis, support the Lebanese Armed Forces which are faced with increasing challenges, and help the Lebanese Government and host communities in handling the heavy impact of the refugees' presence in Lebanon, while stressing the temporary nature of this presence.

The Ministers welcomed the efforts the Lebanese Armed Forces to protect Lebanon and ensure security throughout the Lebanese territory. The Ministers reiterate their commitment to support Lebanon's Government and institutions, and security forces, as well as their readiness to continue their assistance. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the convening of a conference to support Lebanese Armed Forces in Rome on 17 June 2014.

The Ministers also stressed the importance of the international community's obligations and Lebanon's continued commitment to the full implementation of all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular 1701 and 1757. The Ministers reiterate their support to the role of UNIFIL in supporting security and stability in south Lebanon.

27. The Ministers expressed their concern on the lack of progress towards resolution of the issue of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Smaller Tunb and Abu Musa and urged the Islamic Republic of Iran and United Arab Emirates to continue their efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful solution in accordance with international law, either through direct negotiations or by referring the issues to the International Court of Justice.

28. The Ministers welcomed the efforts undertaken in the framework of the democratic process in Libya and stressed their commitment to support the process of building state institutions.

The Ministers expressed their concern at the political and security situation in Libya. They took note of the decision of the Libyan Supreme Court, welcomed the determination expressed by the parties to abide by it, and underlined the importance of resolving institutional disputes through the impartial judgment of the judiciary. They confirmed their support to the process of Libya's national reconciliation and to the establishment of the principles of freedom, justice, equality and human rights. In this context, the Ministers welcomed UNSC Resolution 2146 and the conclusions of the second International Ministerial Conference on Libya, held in Rome on 6 March 2014, which comes within the framework of International efforts aiming at supporting the Libyan government to achieve security and stability. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the consultant meeting of the neighboring countries of Libya held in Algeria in May 2014.

Ministers welcomed parliamentary elections to be held on 25 June and the continuation of the fundamental work of the Constituent Drafting Assembly.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to assist Libya through interaction with the government under the auspices and coordination of UNSMIL. The Ministers also agreed on the importance of cooperation with the State of Libya in order to facilitate extradition of Libyan nationals in accordance with international law and relevant agreements.

29. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of preserving Yemen's unity, respecting its territorial integrity and rejecting any interference in its internal affairs. The Ministers welcomed the conclusions of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and expressed support to the Yemeni people in their aspirations for freedom, democracy and social justice, and to enable it to achieve comprehensive development. The Ministers called on the donor countries in the Friends of Yemen group to fulfil their obligations and commitments to enable the Republic of Yemen to face its challenges and to meet its developmental needs to ensure stability and complete the arrangements for the referendum on the constitution and then hold parliamentary and presidential elections. The Ministers stressed the importance of implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 2140, which supports the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and establishes a sanction regime against individuals and entities that threaten the peace, security or stability of Yemen.

30. The Ministers confirmed their support to peace building, reconstruction and development in Sudan. They appreciated the recently launched initiative of national dialogue and insist on the need to turn this into a comprehensive process that includes all parties and political forces.

The Ministers urged the armed movements that did not sign Doha document to sign it. They also appeal to donors to fulfil their pledges they have made in the reconstruction conference of Darfur in Doha in April 2013.

The Ministers expressed their deep concern regarding the economic situation of the country which hinders its development. They called for joint national and international efforts in order to address this challenge.

31. Regarding Somalia, the Ministers welcomed progress on implementing the New Deal Compact endorsed in Brussels in September 2013. Its implementation is led by Somalis for Somalis with support of member states of the League of Arab States, the European Union, the international community, the Somalia Federal Government and the regions. Ministers welcomed the Security Council's recent extension on the mandate of AMISOM and commended the efforts and sacrifices of the troop contributing countries to reduce conflict and increase stability in Somalia.

The Ministers also stressed the importance to implement the governmental framework of action, "Vision 2016", and achieve significant political progress for adopting a Federal Constitution in 2015 and holding general elections in 2016.

32. The Ministers welcomed the recent international community efforts and the contribution by countries of the region, including Morocco, towards more stability and security in the Sahel region. They agreed on the need for continued international engagement and they recognize their shared interest in ensuring that terrorism and violent radicalization be eliminated from the region. They reiterate their commitment to restore security and stability and to promote sustainable development.

The Ministers expressed concern about recent events in Mali and called upon the Malian government and the signatories of the June 2013 Ouagadougou agreement to commit fully to the national dialogue and reconciliation process, with the assistance of neighbouring countries, including Algeria and Mauritania. In this regard, the Ministers underlined the role of President of Mauritania, in his capacity as Chair of the African Union, in reaching a cease fire agreement.

The Ministers welcomed the declaration signed in Algiers on 9 June 2014 by the movements of Mali as an important step towards the settlement of the Malian situation on the basis of political and inclusive approach to establish peace, security and stability in the Sahel region.

33. The Ministers expressed their support for the Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and agreed on the need for a peaceful solution to the present crisis in full conformity with international law.

34. The Ministers agreed to hold their next meeting hosted by the League of Arab States in 2016.

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