

STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE INTERNATIONAL
WORKING GROUP ON SANCTIONS
THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS, 20 SEPTEMBER 2012

1. The Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions ('the Group') held its fourth meeting in The Hague, the Netherlands on 20 September 2012. The meeting built upon and endorsed the outcomes of the meetings held by the Group in Paris on 17 April, in Washington, D.C. on 6 June, and in Doha on 19 July. The Netherlands, Tunisia and Canada co-chaired the meeting, the government of the Netherlands hosted it, and Dr Uri Rosenthal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered the opening address. Sixty countries as well as the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union were represented at the meeting. This underlines the international community's growing resolve to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria and to implement robust and targeted restrictive measures in order to increase pressure on the Syrian regime to end the violence immediately and to engage in an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition facilitated by the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi. Members of the Syrian opposition were also present.

2. The Group reconfirmed its mandate as endorsed by the Second Conference of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People in Istanbul on 1 April 2012, and reaffirmed its commitment to achieving greater effectiveness in the enforcement of the restrictive measures already adopted by states and international organisations. The Group reiterated its resolve to ensure that sanctions against the Syrian regime and its designated supporters are coordinated, effective and implemented robustly in order to hasten the end of the regime's oppression of the Syrian people.

3. The Group expressed grave concern at the continuing violence and the Syrian regime's campaign of brutal repression against its own citizens. It also called upon those countries, groups and individuals that are actively supporting the Syrian regime's ruthless efforts to suppress the political aspirations of the Syrian people to cease their support. The situation in Syria is deteriorating by the day, as mentioned by the Joint Special Representative, for whom the Group reiterated its full support.

4. The Group called on all members of the international community, particularly members of the UN Security Council, to take swift, responsible and resolute action in solidarity with the Syrian people and to increase pressure on the Syrian regime by implementing and enforcing measures to deny it access to the resources needed for its violent campaign against its own population. The Group reaffirmed its determination to support the just cause of the Syrian people. It emphasised that Syria's future must be determined by the Syrian people and that it will stand firmly by them until their rightful and legitimate aspirations are fulfilled.

5. The Group welcomed the increasing pressure placed on the regime by the wide range of sanctions adopted by different states and organisations. These measures have seriously affected the Syrian regime and have reduced its ability to crack down on the Syrian people, *inter alia* by cutting off major sources of income such as the export of several billion dollars' worth of oil income and by freezing the assets of government agencies involved in the violence. These resources are no longer available to the Syrian regime to finance the repression of the Syrian people.

6. The Group called for increased and sustained vigilance to tackle the regime's efforts to circumvent international sanctions, including seeking alternative markets for its crude oil, and urged international partners to resist purchasing Syrian oil products. The Group recalled the important role of neighbouring countries and commended neighbouring countries that have adopted sanctions against the Syrian regime, despite substantial economic consequences.

7. The members of the Group have adopted effective, proportional and coordinated sanctions that target the Syrian regime, and continue to improve implementation and enforcement of those sanctions already in place. The Group urges other countries to follow suit. In this regard, the Group

called upon all states to take steps to harmonise national and regional sanctions regimes 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 the Central Bank of Syria, the Commercial Bank of Syria and the Syrian International Islamic Bank to ensure their isolation from the international financial system. The Group also called upon 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.

8. The Group called on all states to impose a formal ban on military technical assistance and the shipment of arms to the Syrian regime and the provision of insurance and reinsurance for third-country arms shipments to Syria. It reaffirmed its strong commitment to continued information sharing on measures taken to step up pressure on the Syrian regime.

9. The continued efforts of the international financial and business communities are of vital importance for maintaining and increasing pressure on the Syrian regime. The Group called on the international financial and business communities to diligently comply with current and forthcoming restrictive measures against the Syrian regime and to draw and share lessons from best practices. Financial institutions and enterprises in those countries that have chosen not to join the international effort by imposing sanctions on the Syrian regime are particularly exposed to the reputational risk of continuing to deal with the Syrian regime. The Group urges these financial institutions and enterprises, some of which have been identified in the press, to also curtail the provision of any financial services and listed goods to the Syrian regime, consistent with the actions taken by the majority of the world's financial institutions and enterprises. Provision of such financial services and listed goods contributes to the Syrian regime's ability to oppress its population and damages the reputation of the institutions and enterprises involved.

10. The Group was briefed by experts on sanctions from the financial sector and discussed the practical implications of financial sanctions and ways of preventing the evasion of sanctions and identifying suspicious transactions. The Group considered ways in which governments and the financial sector can work together to put in place best practices for effective financial sanctions.

11. The Group called on all states to ensure strict implementation and enforcement of sanctions. It acknowledged that awareness of current sanctions is vital in this regard. To improve the efficacy of restrictive measures already taken by states, the Group has compiled a list of national competent authorities in different countries, where companies can acquire information on sanctions against Syria, which will be made publicly available.

12. The Group emphasised that by stepping up pressure on the Syrian regime and its accomplices through sanctions, it is expressing its solidarity with the Syrian people, who are facing the daily terror of the Syrian regime's crackdown. For this reason the Group stressed the importance of carefully targeted sanctions that affect the regime but spare the population. In this regard it underlined the importance of well-designed exceptions for humanitarian purposes.

13. The Group commended the courage shown by those who have defected from the Syrian regime and its armed forces. It affirmed its intention to promptly lift sanctions against such individuals, as appropriate. It called on all those working for the Syrian government, the armed forces or the financial and business community to distance themselves from the regime and support the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, or face further isolation from the international community and the international financial system.

14. The Group reaffirmed its readiness to support the future reconstruction of Syria and its commitment to review sanctions once the deadly repression by the Syrian regime has ended and a political transition is under way. The Group confirmed its readiness to coordinate this process with other actors, including the Friends of the Syrian People's Working Group on Economic

Reconstruction and Development, so that action can be taken to facilitate and support Syria's future reconstruction.

15. The International Working Group on Sanctions will establish ways to ensure continued coordination in between meetings and will hold its fifth meeting in Japan before the end of the year.