

VIII Brussels Conference – Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region

CSSR Statement Ministerial Conference

27 May 2024

"This is an unofficial English translation of the original Arabic version written by the participants of the CSSR side event in the framework of the VIII Brussels Conference and is 'Not an Official UN Document'"

Ladies and Gentlemen

With each year, Syrians remain hopeful because they have international partners and friends who support a genuine political process that ensures security and peace; a process that lays the foundations for recovery and security in Syria and the whole region and brings an end to this decade-long war, societal fragmentation and divisions.

The political process stagnancy, the intractability of the operations of the Constitutional Committee and the expansion of the conflict-arena inside Syria does not mean to solely attribute the Syrian crisis to regional or international factors. The priority for Syrians will also remain to bear responsibility in this matter by being able to come together and unite over fragmentation. Thus, we believe in your ability to support and promote an approach of this kind.

We, as one of the teams of the Civil Society Support Room, perceive that our vision is directly aligned with several UN resolutions pertaining to the Syrian crisis especially Resolution 2254, which deals with the roots and depths of the Syrian issue, and we believe:

1. Establishing a safe, calm and neutral environment that ensures addressing the various problems through effective national dialogue, affirming Syrian ownership of the political and constitutional process, and building confidence through concrete and mutual steps taken by the parties to the conflict. The environment should include the aforementioned aspects and not tools of violence. This process will be realistic and tangible if it receives international support that respects the general principles of Resolution 2254.
2. Creating this environment is not a prerequisite or an impossible condition that must be met before any response. Rather, it must be viewed as a local and international pathway. Thus, a new international approach is required to address local issues through joint action that prevents the

spread of conflicts. National borders alone are no longer sufficient to keep problems exclusively within them. Hence, we realize the extent of our need to support and strengthen the Syrian National Dialogue to respond to all the gaps that resulted from a set of options and actions for new and pending files, including (migration, displacement, return, extralegal detention, and forced disappearance files).

3. This approach in international policy must act as an umbrella of protection and an evaluation tool that monitors the stages of conflict transformation, develops the concept of safe zones, and reduces conflict escalation. This approach leads to a cessation of targeting civilians, thus providing environments that support social cohesion, uncovers facts of violations, and achieves just community conciliations, which are all indispensable foundations for launching a sustainable peace process.

We believe that:

- 1- The three pillars and concept of the triple nexus are inseparable. Also, any response modality should be genuine and supported by a humanitarian approach guided by local community priorities. Ultimately, this approach should contribute to reducing violence and the war economy in favour of civilian inclusive economy, to begin a process of societal peace based on the foundations of justice and fairness.
- 2- If it is not protected by a safe, calm, and neutral environment, the triple nexus approach will not yield a sustainable return, even if well-balanced. However, achieving balance between the humanitarian and development responses alongside the peacebuilding process is also part of strengthening that safe environment. We find that in the absence of a safe and neutral environment, no response has created any good threshold for the reality of Syrians in various sectors, including education, health, water and food security, or even community cohesion. This underscores the necessity for impartial and neutral scrutiny of response methodologies, such as moving towards an approach of resilience and early recovery.
- 3- The integrated triple nexus approach is effective when it builds an internal balance between its three pillars within a safe and neutral environment that ensures that the interests and needs of local communities are met transparently. This is an area based on the distribution of powers between the center and regions and allows decentralization rules to begin to advance and engage effectively in the holistic response process.

- 4- We believe that providing a safe, calm, and neutral environment will foster the confidence needed for a dignified return, with adequate standards of protection. Issues related to migration, refugees, displacement, and dignified, safe, and voluntary return must be addressed in a way that tackles the harsh conditions on multiple levels, including infrastructure, services, and the loss of effective local production cycles. The absence of these conditions creates an environment that drives Syrians away, leading to new waves of migration.

Therefore:

- 1- The work sectors focused on human rights issues and peacemaking are just as important as those in the humanitarian and development response. They bring us back to the triple nexus and emphasize the importance of deepening the inter-partnerships between the specializations of the humanitarian and development fields and the peacebuilding sector. Civil entities understand their scope of work and their role in representing the broadest spectrum of the population's interests without exclusion or marginalization. They are not competitors in the political arena; instead, their foundation lies in expanded community partnership. Their aim is to provide the population with more options to improve living conditions and security, exercise freedoms (both individual and collective), and promote the institutionalization of governance and democracy.
- 2- After all this pioneering role of male and female activists, the legalization of civil volunteer work must be established at the constitutional and legal levels. This requires modern frameworks that open the public sphere and set work rules without any confiscation of freedom of formation, access, and implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we view Brussels IIIV as a renewed window of opportunity to emphasize international policies to articulate nuanced solutions that go beyond crisis management approaches. These policies should engage the underlying causes of the crisis. Establishing a safe, calm, and neutral environment based on the three pillars of the triple nexus, coupled with strengthening the civic sector and fostering deep partnerships with communities, represents a multifaceted approach that offers numerous solutions for sustainable response. This approach also equips civil actors to act on a do-no-harm basis and helps create more areas for the mobilization of local potential that has been disrupted by conflict.

Thank you for your attentive listening,