

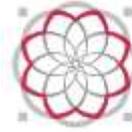
**Position paper by the Arab Network of NGOs for development (ANND)
in partnership with
Démocratie & Entraide en Syrie-Ghosn Zeitoun, the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR), Cercle
des Economistes Arabes (CEA)**

Samir AITA, Brussels, March 27, 2017

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"Supporting the future of Syria and the Region" April 4,5 2017 in Brussels***

Following several studies and advocacy meetings on the situation of Syria and of neighboring countries resulting from the conflict and the severe humanitarian crisis, the above CSOs (ANND, Ghosn-Zeitoun, SCPR and CEA) advocate the following issues to be put forward to the Ministerial conference:

- **Better equity and better coordination of current humanitarian aid inside Syria.** Recent meetings organized by the UN show lack of coordination between the main aid agencies, and insufficient equity between the different zones in Syria (Opposition controlled, regime controlled, SDF controlled, etc) and within each zone. EU need to engage in improving humanitarian aid, directly or through its funded NGOs, along with UN guidelines of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence (UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of 1991). The aid should strongly participate to the creation of a reconciliation environment and to the resilience of the population with real interest for supporting cease-fires and peace. A special attention is necessary that the humanitarian aid does not contribute to develop criminal war economy.
- **Imbed humanitarian aid to refugees in a regional development perspective.** The EU current aid addresses the sustainability and resilience of the refugees and the hosting communities, both suffering from the consequences of the conflict. However, the efforts made are much below the needs in education and health. School enrollment of Syrian children is still a major issue in all neighboring countries, as well as higher education and vocational training. Also, the efforts currently made to formalize the informal and indecent conditions of work of the refugees and hosting communities are largely insufficient. They need to be imbedded in a larger development scheme that could enhance cross-border cooperation between sub-regions fostering peace. Incentives for the return of the refugees should be designed in this perspective.
- **Dialogue on Reconstruction as a driver for Peace.** Syria is presently suffering severe physical and psychological damages after 6 years of conflict and war. Recovery and reconstruction are much beyond the capacities of the country, which finance and resources, including human resources, have been depleted. Creating a dialogue involving Syrians from all sides, with the international community, on recovery and reconstruction shall bring hope for the return of the refugees and IDPs and for the future of the country. It could ease the present lengthy negotiations for stopping the war and initiating a transition towards peace and stability.
- **Lifting general sanctions.** It has been demonstrated that the general sanctions imposed on Syria had encouraged smuggling and fueled war economy. More importantly, they contributed to the deterioration of the economic conditions of the population in all areas, and impeded refugees from participating properly in economic life in neighboring countries. The lifting of the general sanctions at an early stage shall also drive towards peace. Of course, this should not preclude direct sanctions and judicial procedures against war criminals on all sides.
- **A transparent and inclusive dialogue on recovery and reconstruction.** With the lessons learned from other post-conflict recovery and reconstruction where the EU was involved, such



as in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, the early and official establishment of a dialogue on the major issues to tackle is essential. This dialogue must be inclusive of all Syrian social actors and be transparent to the international CSOs. Not only the relief organizations should be involved, but also Syrian economists, think tanks, the business community and political organizations, from all sides and Syrian regions.

- **Recovery and Reconstruction managed by Syrians.** One of the main objectives of the dialogue on recovery and reconstruction is the design of Syrian managed scheme, taking into account the lessons of other countries, such as Lebanon and Iraq, and that peace will not eliminate the struggle of regional powers on Syria. The assistance of the EU, the World Bank and other international organizations is to be designed to support a Syrian led mechanism. The transparency and inclusiveness of the dialogues on recovery and reconstruction is also essential in this regard.
- **Rule of law essential for recovery and reconstruction.** No equitable recovery and reconstruction can be imagined without the rule of law during transition. One of the main items to be included in the dialogue on recovery and reconstruction is then insuring the implementation of rule of law, and check and balance schemes between the different institutions. This does not concern only the legal aspects and the respect of private property and public goods during reconstruction, but also the solutions to the law abuses especially during the conflict.
- **Target Priorities in support for Reconstruction towards re-unification of the country and its economic mechanisms.** Most aid efforts inside Syria had been targeting resilience and self-sustainability at the small local level, and the recovery of Syria imagined as a bottom-up process. This is while the country economy is based on an integrated and interacting value chain between the different regions. This concerns not only the infrastructures (water supply, waste treatment, electricity providing, land-, train- and air-transportations, etc) which had largely suffered from the conflict, but also the mechanisms of the value chain of the economy (agricultural and industrial production, especially in Aleppo region, cement factories, oil refineries, basic services, etc). The recovery and reconstruction are then to be discussed within comprehensive regional planning schemes.
- **Combatting war and criminal economy.** Criminal economy has developed during the conflict, including the production and smuggling of drugs; the markets being predominantly outside Syria. This issue should be targeted in the recovery and reconstruction dialogue and planning efforts. International collaboration should be enhanced to dismantle the war and criminal economy. Schemes should be designed to replace the criminal economic activities for poor communities by valued productions.
- **Transition from aid support to decent work.** The encouragement of men and women refugees, IDPs and local communities to be involved in economic activities, in decent work conditions, is essential for the transition to come for recovery and reconstruction. The more this involvement is promoted and implemented at an early stage, the easiest the transition could be to the productive participation in recovery and reconstruction.
- **Returning the combatants to the civil life.** A large number of Syrians has been involved in the fighting on all sides of the conflict. Designing schemes for the dismantling of combating groups and the return of the combatants to civil life and production is an important side of the recovery and reconstruction planning efforts. Of course, this should go in line with the reform of the military and security apparatus and with the international support for the return of foreign combatants to their countries.