News Release

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Iran Foreign Minister Calls for Even-handed Approach to Peace in Syria

24 January 2014

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- Iran, Jordan and Turkey urge withdrawal of foreign fighters from Syria
- Concerns about the rise of sectarianism
- Little optimism that the end game in the Middle East is close
- The theme of the 44th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting is The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business
- For more information, visit http://wef.ch/Davos

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 24 January 2014 – Iran ' s foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called for an even-handed approach to peace in Syria that takes into account the realities on the ground and avoids what he described as solutions imposed from the outside. Speaking at the 44th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Zarif said: " Peace will not be achieved by taking sides and we must stop approaching the situation in Syria as a zero-sum game. "

Nasser Judeh, Jordan ' s Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, joined Zarif in calling for the withdrawal of all foreign fighters operating inside Syria. They agreed that only a political solution will end the fighting, the killing and the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding in the country and in surrounding states, which are hosting millions of refugees. The peace conference now under way in Geneva offers an opportunity to move towards a solution of what Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, described as one of the final episodes of the Cold War.

Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States, said that US diplomacy earlier in the crisis had been counterproductive. " The US articulated ambitious goals, but its actions were modest, " he said. He was critical of US calls for regime change without any follow-through. Zarif echoed criticisms of countries that he said had entrenched themselves in calls for the ouster of the Assad regime.

Zarif also said that Syria has become a magnet for terrorists. “ The flames being fanned in Syria risk engulfing everyone in the region, ” he said. He warned in particular about people “ with an affinity for the messages of the extremist groups ” .

Davuto ğ lu lamented the rise of sectarianism and warned of the dangers of outsiders going into Syria to defend places they claimed as of particular significance to their sects or religious groups. “ The heritage of Syria belongs to people of many religious traditions – Shia, Sunni and Christian, ” he said.

The Iranian nuclear file and peace in Syria have been pursued on separate tracks, said Ghassan Salamé, Dean of the Paris School of International Relations. “ These processes should no longer be tackled in isolation, ” he said. It is time to bring them together and thus create a new dynamic by simultaneously engaging countries on issues to which they accord different levels of priority.

Looking to the future, Haass saw little reason for optimism. “ We should be prepared to see the current situation get

worse in significant ways, ” he said. Davutoğlu was more positive, pointing to the way the scars of war in the Balkans have largely healed. “ Our focus must be on support for democratic change and new security arrangements. ”

Zarif said: “ There are no structural impediments to peace. We can prepare for a better future by opening our minds and our hearts, and avoiding old stereotypes. ” But his conclusions were clear: “ We have made some progress . . . but we are not yet close to an end game in the Middle East. ”

The Annual Meeting 2014 is taking place from 22 to 25 January under the theme The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business. More than 2,500 participants from 100 countries are taking part in the Meeting. Participants include more than 30 heads of state or government and 1,500 business leaders from the Forum ’ s 1,000 member companies, as well as Social Entrepreneurs, Global Shapers, Young Global Leaders and representatives from civil society, media, academia and the arts.

The **Co-Chairs of the Annual Meeting 2014** are **Aliko Dangote**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Dangote Group, Nigeria; **Kris Gopalakrishnan**, President, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII); Vice-Chairman, Infosys, India; **Jiang Jianqing**, Chairman of the Board, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, People ' s Republic of China; **Joseph Jimenez,** Chief Executive Officer, Novartis, Switzerland; **Christophe de Margerie**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Total, France; **Marissa Mayer**, Chief Executive Officer, Yahoo, USA and **Judith Rodin**, President, Rockefeller Foundation, USA.

Notes to Editors

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