

**Speech by H.E Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Before the Security Council Summit on Syria
21st September 2016, NY**

Your Excellency Mr. John Key, the Prime Minister of New Zealand and Chair of the Security Council

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and government,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Mr. John Key, the Prime Minister of New Zealand for convening this meeting, and by expressing my deepest condolences to the UN peacekeepers, who were targeted by a cowardly attack whilst trying to fulfill their duty to bring humanitarian assistance to civilians in besieged areas.

We are not here today to merely examine the heartbreaking tragedy in Syria, which we have all been following on a daily basis for the last five years. The point is for us all to undertake our responsibility, as member states of the Security Council, charged with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, and to find a practical and swift formula to stop the bloodshed in Syria, and to bring to an end five years of failure to reach a unified vision for a comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis — one that rescues our brethren in Syria from their extended ordeal.

Five years have passed, and the bloodshed in Syria has not stopped. With hundreds of thousands of Syrians killed and millions of refugees and displaced persons, the political solution remains evasive and out-of-reach. Syria continues to suffer the rapacity of regional and international parties that have sought to exploit its predicament to achieve narrow interests, thereby furnishing a thriving environment for vicious terrorism, which threatens to hijack the future of Syria and aggravate its people's plight.

Consequently, allow me to speak frankly about what I believe to be the root causes of the problem and the inherent flaws in the previous attempts to contain this crisis. For an honest and critical reading of our experience with the Syrian crisis over the past five years, is imperative to overcoming our differences, and moving forward to save Syria and its people. I would like to hereby summarize my remarks in three key points:

First, any honest and fair reading of the previous attempts to deal with the Syrian crisis thus far gives way to an inevitable conclusion — we have become overly preoccupied with the symptoms rather than the root causes of the problem. We continue to be consumed in a recurring debate on reaching interim arrangements — ceasefires or cessation of hostilities to reduce the killing and destruction in Syria, or attempts to alleviate the ensuing humanitarian

disaster, and so forth. We have failed, however, to move forward towards addressing the core problem, which is the absence of a just and comprehensive political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria, preserves the unity and territorial integrity of Syria and the institutions thereof, and prevents this country from descending into further chaos, which would only benefit terrorist organizations.

In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement on the cessation of hostilities that was reached a few days ago by Russia and the United States. We consider it an opportunity, one which we might not get again, to stop the bloodshed in Syria, notwithstanding some serious violations. Refusal of several local parties to abide by the cessation of hostilities, and failure of some of the regional sponsors to encourage them to act responsibly, remain a major problem that must be overcome.

But this agreement in itself is not enough, and must be complemented with an immediate resumption of political negotiations aiming at reaching a just, final and comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis. I hereby call upon the UN envoy Staffan De Mistura, to invite all parties to the next round of negotiations as soon as possible.

Second, there can be no doubt that the broad outlines of any political solution in Syria are quite obvious. Transforming such outlines, however, into practical measures on the ground requires upholding the principles of national unity and territorial integrity of Syria, and maintaining equality among all its citizens from across the political and social spectrums, with the single exception of the terrorist organizations, which can not have a place in Syria that we hope to see.

Yes, there should be no place for terrorism in Syria, and no room for attempts to re-brand the terrorist organizations. We totally reject any attempts to circumvent Security Council resolutions that designate those organizations as terrorist organizations.

Third, it is therefore important that we recognize that we are running short of time. Every day that passes by with Syria's wound still open, offers yet another opportunity for terrorism to flourish, and for sectarianism to undermine the foundations of the nation- state in Syria and the Levant.

So, let me be absolutely honest with you. Lost is any bet on a military resolution to the Syrian Crisis. And disillusioned is any bet on a role for terrorist organizations in the future of Syria.

Mr. President,

Our experiences during Geneva and Vienna meetings, and with the Security Council Resolution 2254, have proven beyond any doubt that finding common ground among the key stakeholders of the Syrian crisis is not impossible, and that we can make significant progress towards a political settlement in a record time, should there be a political will.

Moreover, Egypt's experience in hosting an all-inclusive conference for the various moderate

Syrian opposition groups in June 2015 (Cairo conference 2), which brought together Syrians from across the political spectrum, has shown that they can agree on comprehensive documents that included a doable roadmap for the transition from the current plight in Syria. The Cairo conference documents were produced by Syrians, without any interference from a non-Syrian party, clearly demonstrate that it is possible to find a Syrian solution to the crisis. You must have all noticed that these documents were the foundation upon which every subsequent effort, Syrian or international, to put forward a practical political settlement was premised.

The road ahead is, therefore, clear; the implementation of the cessation of hostilities should ideally develop into a comprehensive cease-fire in Syria, which would in turn guarantee the free passage of humanitarian assistance to the civilians in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. As I trust you all know, Egypt has had a successful experience in delivering humanitarian aid twice to more than five besieged areas in Syria, thanks to our open channels of communications with all the different parties and stakeholders. Thus, as we continue to count on the commitment of all parties to the agreement of the cessation of hostilities as a necessary step towards easing the humanitarian tragedy and delivering aid to those affected by the conflict, we reaffirm our readiness to provide all kind of support to this endeavor.

However, the revival of serious political negotiations remains, as I said, a necessary condition for the cessation of hostilities to hold out, and for the humanitarian access to continue. History has taught us that no ceasefire arrangements have ever endured without a political prospect that addresses the root causes of the crisis. Syria is no exception.

Mr. President,

Egypt's vision for a solution in Syria is based on two pillars: The first is to preserve the national unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian state and to prevent the collapse of its institutions. The second is to support the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people in rebuilding their own state, through an acceptable political solution that represents them all, and furnishes an enabling environment for reconstruction efforts.

From this perspective, we value the efforts of the UN Special envoy, Staffan De Mistura, and we support his work for the resumption of political negotiations immediately and without delay. We re-affirm in this context, the importance of including representatives from the Syrian government along with all opposition groups without any discrimination in the negotiations, as per stipulated by the Security Council resolution 2254.

We have no more time to lose. Every day that passes means that more blood will be spilled and more innocent Syrians will continue to suffer.

Egypt remains keen on communicating with all parties of the Syrian crisis, and is committed to working with our partners in the region and the international community to provide every kind of support for the much-needed political solution in Syria. It is our collective responsibility to

restore hope to the people of Syria. And it is about time for us to shoulder this responsibility and tackle the root causes of the problem, immediately and without any delay.