

Remarks to the Security Council on Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

António Guterres

Saidi al Raiis,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As salam alaikum.

I thank the Government of Kuwait for convening this discussion on “Issues of Priority to the League of Arab States and outcomes of the Arab Summit.”

I want to express my warm welcome to Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. We have been working together on many of the most difficult dossiers that our two organizations confront, and it is for me an enormous pleasure to see you sitting in the Security Council.

From day one, I have prioritized cooperation with regional organizations to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

We know that no single organization or country can address the complex challenges our world faces today. Global problems require global solutions, and that is why partnerships remain essential to maximize our impact on people’s lives and advance a global order based on international law. And our cooperation with the League of Arab States is pivotal.

I was honoured to attend the Arab League Summit in Tunis in March – and appreciate the Tunis Declaration reaffirmation of the “lofty universal values and purpose of the United Nations Charter.”

Our two organisations share a common mission: to prevent conflict, resolve disputes and act in a spirit of solidarity and unity.

We work together to expand economic opportunity, advance respect for all human rights and build political inclusion.

Today, we recognize an expectation from the peoples of the region – indeed from people around the world -- for a new social contract for education, jobs, opportunities for young people, equality for women, respect for human rights and a fair share in national wealth.

We understand the impulse for a more inclusive vision rooted in cooperation, respect and dignity.

We appreciate all efforts to help break the vicious cycle of conflict while establishing a new security architecture.

Within the challenges [faced] by the region, lies the opportunity to build on the words and intentions of the charters of our two organizations for action that will bring real change to the peoples of the Arab world and beyond.

In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, we maintain our collective commitment to the vision of two States, based on relevant UN resolutions, long-held principles, previous agreements and international law.

As I have said before, there is no alternative to the two-state solution. There is no Plan B.

Ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-state outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace.

In Syria, deadly escalation in the country's northwest has displaced hundreds of thousands, and if continued could result in broader humanitarian catastrophe for the three million people residing in greater Idlib.

After more than eight years of violence, Syria's conflict continues to take a devastating toll on the country's civilian population, impose burdens on neighbouring states, and threaten international peace and security.

I reiterate my appeal for full respect for international humanitarian law, which must prevail in all circumstances, including in combat against terrorism.

The alarming violence in Syria is a stark reminder of the urgent need to forge a political path to a sustainable peace for all Syrians.

This will require an inclusive and credible political solution, based on Security Council resolution 2254 in its entirety, including the convening of a constitutional committee that is credible, inclusive, and balanced.

The support and active engagement of the international community, including the Member States of the Arab League, will be essential.

And, of course, any solution must respect the territorial integrity of Syria, including the occupied Syrian Golan.

Regarding Libya, I would like to thank the League of Arab States and its Member States for its continued support to the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and my Special Representative, including through the Libya Quartet.

However, I remain deeply concerned about the impact of the armed clashes on the country as well as on the region. There is no military solution, we need to work towards a ceasefire and a return to the negotiating table.

I welcome Iraq's sustained and active outreach to strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries.

Conversely, Iraq needs the continued and sustained support from the region and the international community to help rebuild the country and overcome the trauma and impact of Da'esh.

Iraq's Arab neighbours have a critical role to play.

The United Nations will continue to assist the Government of Iraq, including through stabilization and reconstruction support, as well as in facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation on border security, energy, environment, water, and refugees.

The League of Arab States is vital in supporting Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity.

Let us do more to help Lebanon -- a country significantly affected by regional developments and the generous hosting of large numbers of refugees -- in strengthening state institutions and upholding its international commitments and remain stable and secure.

In Yemen, we continue to work towards a resumption of negotiations leading to a sustainable political solution.

Every effort is being made to address the extraordinary suffering on the ground in what remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Implementation of the 2018 Stockholm Agreement will not only significantly improve humanitarian access, it will also pave the way toward a lasting political solution.

All these efforts require patience, good faith and a continued commitment by all of us to preserve and to build on gains.

I note with deep concern this morning's security incident in the Strait of Hormuz. I strongly condemn any attack against civilian vessels. Facts must be established, and responsibilities clarified.

If there is something the world cannot afford, it is a major confrontation in the Gulf region.

In Somalia, the international community must remain united to support political progress and the development of security institutions. The League of Arab States is a key partner -- both as an organization and through its individual members -- for political support and economic development.

Sudan is going through a delicate transition. The United Nations is working with regional partners, especially the African Union, in supporting this process with the objective of enabling the Sudanese parties to reach agreement on an inclusive, civilian-led transitional authority.

On all these efforts and more, we continue to invest in building our engagement with regional and sub-regional organizations, including through regular consultations and collaboration.

Such activities with the Arab League include our biennial General Cooperation meetings, sectoral meetings, capacity building exercises and staff exchanges.

With this in mind, I am pleased to inform you that the UN Liaison Office to the League of Arab States in Cairo will become operational this very month.

I am very grateful to the government of Egypt for its support and hospitality.

I fully expect this Liaison Office -- the first funded by the UN regular budget -- and will improve the effectiveness of cooperation between our two organizations.

I intend to continue this fruitful engagement and deepen our collaboration to advance the vision set out in the UN Charter, in the interest of the peoples we collectively serve.

As we look ahead together, you can continue to count on my full and active support.

Shukran.