



**UNA-UK**

United Nations Association – UK  
3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL

t. 020 7766 3454, f. 020 7000 1381  
saad@una.org.uk  
www.una.org.uk

Rt Hon. William Hague MP  
Secretary of State  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

17 May 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

As Chairman of the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK), I am writing on behalf of our national membership to ask for vigorous support from HMG for the efforts just starting on a conference on Syria.

At UNA-UK's recent Policy Conference, we debated the prospects for, and potential consequences of, military intervention, including the provision of arms to opposition groups. Whilst the appalling suffering of the Syrian people, and the increasing instability in the region, rightly require governments to consider all options, we strongly feel that military intervention offers no real hope of breaking the stalemate.

Over the past 12 years, the world has seen too many instances of intervention resulting in unintended consequences, and external involvement carries with it major implications for legitimacy and post-conflict responsibility. Iraq and Afghanistan have hammered home the lesson that to rely on force without a workable political plan is a recipe for deep and prolonged trouble. Moreover, although the regime is discredited and unacceptable, it is unlikely soon to be dislodged by force.

The delivery of lethal weaponry to opposition groups to create a better balance with the strength of the regime would invite escalation. It is also highly likely that weapons would end up in the wrong hands. The purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty, which the UK campaigned hard to achieve, was surely to prevent transfers in cases such as this one.

What we need now is to focus on creating a mechanism for a solution. This should include doing more to look after the growing number of Syrians who are displaced and dispossessed, and to support those who are working on transitional arrangements. We must also seek to engage the Alawites, Christians and other minorities and ensure that their protection is part of any agreement. And with no obvious successor government in sight, we need to do all we can to prevent a vacuum that could lead to a protracted civil war. In Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia and Libya, where the vacuums were filled by semi-responsible attempts to create government, the chances of disorder are very high. Syria cannot reach even their minimum levels of progress without strong and coordinated outside assistance.

The US-Russia initiative offers an opportunity to move in this direction. In the Western Balkans, both before and after Dayton in late 1995, it was the structure and continuous activity of the conference format, with its contact groups, financial aid mechanisms, secretariats and UN involvement, which created both political weight and practical results.

The political point of a conference-in-continuity is to create the framework for a solution inside Syria even if the parties ignore it for a while. Exhaustion will inspire alternatives, and time and lives will be saved if those alternatives have been shaped.

We realise that difficult forms of compromise will be necessary to bring together all the stakeholders in a new Syria, but the situation calls for an effort of this magnitude. We hope to see the UK fully involved in it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeremy Greenstock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock  
Chairman, UNA-UK