

Beat: Politics

PARIS ATTACKS - TO THE PRESS - SERGEY LAVROV TO JOHN KERRY & UN SPECIAL ENVOY

VIENNA, AUSTRIA - NOVEMBER 14, 2015

PARIS - MOSCOW - VIENNA - WASHINGTON DC, 15.11.2015, 08:02 Time

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RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEY LAVROV: (Via interpreter) Thank you, John. Ladies and gentlemen, today's meeting was begun with a minute of silence for the victims of Paris terrorist attacks. We remembered victims of these atrocious Paris attacks as well as the victims of Beirut, Ankara bombings, and Egypt bombings.

And today, it is absolutely clear for me that yesterday's atrocities in Paris can leave no one, no skeptic, doubting that terrorism cannot be justified, and it cannot also be justified that we stand idly by.

I also held today a couple of bilateral meetings with my colleagues, and I have a feeling that there was a growing understanding that there is a terrible need for efficient, comprehensive, international coalition to fight ISIS and other terrorists, as President Putin has said. And there are no prerequisites in this regard.

As for our work regarding Syrian reconciliation, John has already said the main points. We have reiterated the principles that we have achieved on the 30th of October in Vienna, what the stakeholders see as the Syrian future. We have reiterated that Syrian future will be decided by Syrian people alone. This regards also the destiny of Mr. Assad and any other politician in this country.

The last time when we met on the 30th of October in Vienna, we decided to do our homework on two areas. The first point is political process and acceleration of the beginning of this process. We have concluded some specific steps that we're tasking our UN colleagues and Mr. de Mistura with, that is, to gather the opposition and the government no later than the 1st of January. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has already informed Mr. de Mistura on the composition of their delegation. And today, Mr. de Mistura has the task to find the composition of the Syrian opposition delegation, which should be representative and reflect the whole spectrum of political forces.

One and a half year ago, efforts were taken to unify the opposition by our Egyptian colleagues. We also conducted some meetings in Moscow. And today, other representatives of the Syrian Support Group made the initiative to help Mr. de Mistura gather around an opposition delegation. And we welcome the efforts and will help in every way possible to gather the opposition and the government around the negotiation table.

As John has said, this will be a Syrian-led process and the Syrians will decide which country they will live in. At the same time, we have outlined as a timetable two occasions. The first point is that within six months the Syrian delegations should decide on the joint opposition, the so-called unity government. And then the Syrian people should decide on the "" a new constitution, and according to this new constitution the elections will take place, and all this within 18 months.

That falls within the logic of the Geneva communique of the 30th of June, 2012, where it is stated that Syrians should decide on all the political reforms according to the mutual consent principle. Right after the Geneva communique was adopted, we tried to launch such a political process, but there were a lot of opponents at that point who said that external players "" who said that Syrian cannot "" the Syrians cannot agree between themselves so the mutual consent is impossible. We used to retort that we should at least try; and today, today I am happy to say that we managed today to at least start launching this political process.

And the second point of homework which we agreed upon on the 30th of October is trying to find a unified, common list of terrorist organizations. We have mutual agreements, as John has said, that ISIS and al-Nusra Front are terrorist organizations, but other terrorist groups should also become the legitimate goal that we should fight together with.

Since the 30th of October, many participants of this group have drafted their own terrorist lists. And today, we have asked Jordan to coordinate the common list of terrorist groups which would be agreed upon in the UN Security Council. Russia would actively participate in this process. In the capital of Jordan, Amman, we have launched an information center also to fight terrorism and will try to do that.

We all want to stop violence in Syria and the majority of delegations today were for an immediate ceasefire; but unfortunately, not all of them were prepared for that. That is why today we reiterated our commitment to create conditions for a ceasefire and will continue to work in the political vein. And we have acquired information today from the UN secretary general that he has already tasked UN to plan the monitoring mission. We're prepared to work on that.

We decided to accelerate efforts on humanitarian assistance, to accelerate efforts on access to those in need, and all that within the context of political process and to find agreements between those in the field. I mean governments and the armed groups, opposition groups, which are not terrorists.

Overall, I am satisfied that the International Group for Syrian Support has taken place. We are grateful to our colleagues for supporting our proposal to let the secretary general of the League of Arab States to take part in our group, and he has already done that today. And we also managed to make headway on our linked proposal to include the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also to take part in this group.

I find this fundamentally important because many tried to speculate on the Syrian conflict and tried to incite hatred among the Muslims. That is why I am convinced that the participation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will provide consolidation efforts and to affect positively this conflict.

.....TO BE CONTINUED WITH CONCLUSION OF UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ENVOY STAFFAN DE MISTURA

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Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-6339/paris-attacks-to-the-press-sergey-lavrov-to-john-kerry-und-un-special-envoy.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Ruby BIRD (Journalist/photographer/Director)

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