

Joint Statement of the United States and the Russian Federation, as Co-Chairs of the ISSG, on Cessation of Hostilities in Syria

February 22, 2016

The United States of America and the Russian Federation, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and seeking to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis with full respect for the fundamental role of the United Nations, are fully determined to provide their strongest support to end the Syrian conflict and establish conditions for a successful Syrian-led political transition process, facilitated by the UN, in order to fully implement the Munich Statement of the ISSG on February 11th, 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2254, the 2015 Vienna Statements and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

In this regard, and in furtherance of the February 11th decisions of the ISSG, the United States and Russia, as co-chairs of the ISSG and ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, announce the adoption on February 22, 2016, of the Terms for a Cessation of Hostilities in Syria attached as an Annex to this statement, and propose that the cessation of hostilities commence at 00:00 (Damascus time) on February 27, 2016. The cessation of hostilities is to be applied to those parties to the Syrian conflict that have indicated their commitment to and acceptance of its terms. Consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the statements of the ISSG, the cessation of hostilities does not apply to “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

Any party engaged in military or para-military hostilities in Syria, other than “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council will indicate to the Russian Federation or the United States, as co-chairs of the ISSG, their commitment to and acceptance of the terms for the cessation of hostilities by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26, 2016. In order to implement the cessation of hostilities in a manner that promotes stability and protects those parties participating in it, the Russian Federation and the United States are prepared to work together to exchange pertinent information (e.g., aggregated data that delineates territory where groups that have indicated their commitment to and acceptance of the cessation of hostilities are active, and a focal point for each side, in order to ensure effective communication) and develop procedures necessary for preventing parties participating in the cessation of hostilities from being attacked by Russian Armed Forces, the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition, the Armed Forces of the Syrian government and other forces supporting them, and other parties to the cessation of hostilities. Military actions, including airstrikes, of the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Russian Armed Forces, and the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition will continue against ISIL, “Jabhat al-Nusra,” and other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council. The Russian Federation and United States will also work together, and with other members of the Ceasefire Task Force, as appropriate and pursuant to the ISSG decision of February 11, 2016, to delineate the territory held by “Daesh,” “Jabhat al-Nusra” and other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council, which are excluded from the cessation of hostilities.

In order to promote the effective implementation of the cessation of hostilities, the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, co-chaired by the United States and Russia, has been established under UN auspices, including political and military officials from the co-chairs and other Task Force members; the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE) serves as secretariat. The primary functions of the Task Force are, as provided in the ISSG Statement of February 11, to:

- a) delineate the territory held by “Daesh”, “Jabhat-al-Nusra” and other terrorist organizations designated by the United Nations Security Council;
- b) ensure communications among all parties to promote compliance and rapidly de-escalate tensions;
- c) resolve allegations of non-compliance; and
- d) refer persistent non-compliant behavior by any of the parties to the ISSG Ministers or those designated by the Ministers to determine appropriate action, including the exclusion of such parties from the arrangements of the cessation of hostilities, and the protection it affords them.

The United States and Russia are prepared, in their capacities as co-chairs of the Ceasefire Task Force and in coordination with other members of the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force as appropriate, to develop effective mechanisms to promote and monitor compliance with the ceasefire both by the governmental forces of the Syrian Arab Republic and other forces supporting them, and the armed opposition groups. To achieve this goal and to promote an effective and sustainable cessation of hostilities, the Russian Federation and the United States will establish a communication hotline and, if necessary and appropriate, a working group to exchange relevant information after the cessation of hostilities has gone into effect. In addressing incidents of non-compliance, every effort should be made to promote communications among all parties to restore compliance and rapidly de-escalate tensions, and non-forcible means should be exhausted whenever possible before resorting to use of force. The United States and Russia as co-chairs of ISSG Ceasefire Task Force will develop such further modalities and standard operating procedures as may be necessary to implement these functions.

The United States and the Russian Federation together call upon all Syrian parties, regional states and others in the international community to support the immediate cessation of violence and bloodshed in Syria and to contribute to the swift, effective and successful promotion of the UN-facilitated political transition process in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, the February 11 Statement of the ISSG, the 2015 Vienna statements of the ISSG, and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

ANNEX

TERMS FOR CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN SYRIA

The nationwide cessation of hostilities is to apply to any party currently engaged in military or paramilitary hostilities against any other parties other than “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

The responsibilities of the Syrian armed opposition are set out in paragraph 1 below. The responsibilities of the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and all forces supporting or associated with the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic are set out in paragraph 2 below.

1. To take part in the cessation of hostilities, armed opposition groups will confirm – to the United States of America or the Russian Federation, who will attest such confirmations to one another as co-chairs of the ISSG by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26 2016 – their commitment to and acceptance of the following terms:

- To full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015, - including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process;
- To cease attacks with any weapons, including rockets, mortars, and anti-tank guided missiles, against Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and any associated forces;
- To refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire;
- To allow humanitarian agencies, rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access throughout areas under their operational control and allow immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need;
- To proportionate use of force (i.e., no greater than required to address an immediate threat) if and when responding in self-defense.

2. The above-mentioned commitments will be observed by such armed opposition groups, provided that the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and all forces supporting or associated with the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic have confirmed to the Russian Federation as co-chair of the ISSG by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26, 2016 their commitment to and acceptance of the following terms:

- To full implementation of UN Security Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015, including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process;
- To cease attacks with any weapons, including aerial bombardments by the Air Force of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Aerospace Forces of the Russian Federation, against the armed opposition groups (as confirmed to the United States or the Russian Federation by parties to the cessation of hostilities);

- To refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire;
- To allow humanitarian agencies, rapid, unhindered and sustained access throughout areas under their operational control and allow immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need;
- To proportionate use of force (i.e., no greater than required to address an immediate threat) if and when responding in self-defense.

The Russian Federation and the United States, as co-chairs of the ISSG and ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, are prepared to work together to ensure effective communications and develop procedures necessary for preventing parties participating in the cessation of hostilities from being attacked by Russian Armed Forces, the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition, the Armed Forces of the Syrian government and other forces supporting them, and other parties to the cessation of hostilities.

All parties further commit to work for the early release of detainees, particularly women and children.

Any party can bring a violation or potential violation of the cessation of hostilities to the attention of the Task Force, either through the OSE or the co-chairs. The OSE and Co-Chairs will establish liaison arrangements with each other and the parties, and inform the public generally about how any party may bring a violation to the attention of the Task Force.

The United States and the Russian Federation as co-chairs confirm that the cessation of hostilities will be monitored in an impartial and transparent manner and with broad media coverage.

Source: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/253115.htm>