

Adopt a 'common line,' UN negotiator appeals to Syrian opposition

22 November 2017 – Syrian opposition groups meeting in Saudi Arabia should do all they can to unify ahead of a fresh round of United Nations-facilitated talks in Geneva, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Wednesday.

The veteran negotiator was speaking to reporters in the Saudi capital Riyadh, at a meeting involving the principal opponents of forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al Assad.

After welcoming the “wide spectrum” of representation at the Saudi meeting, Mr. de Mistura noted the “very complicated environment” in which it was taking place – a reference to the [crisis in Syria](#) that has left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced millions.

Despite these obstacles, the UN Special Envoy called for the opposition groups to take a “common line” on their country’s future.

Their actions could help shape not one but two rounds of [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, Mr. de Mistura said.

The first discussions are due to begin next Tuesday, to be followed by a second session in December.

“We want to show, and we want to show through you, that this is the way the future of Syria can be decided,” Mr. de Mistura told all those gathered in Saudi Arabia.

He added that they had a chance to give “a new dynamic” to the UN’s efforts to secure peace in Syria, based on UN Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#). The measure calls for the Syrian Government and opposition to engage in formal negotiations on a political transition process “on an urgent basis” – something will be sure to figure prominently when intra-Syrian talks begin on Tuesday.

In his push “for real negotiations” based on resolution 2254, Mr. de Mistura explained that once back in Switzerland for the UN talks, he would be seeking progress on a new constitution and elections supervised by the United Nations.

The aim is to produce “credible, all-inclusive, non-sectarian governance” in Syria, he said, and to address the threat of terrorism in the war-torn country.

In addition, the UN Special Envoy insisted urged also to press for the release of detainees and missing persons, and humanitarian access to areas still under siege in the more than six-year war.