

Egypt: Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President Josep



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Dear Minister [of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Sameh Shoukry], dear friends, thank you very much for your warm hospitality and for the very important meeting that I had the honour and pleasure to have with his Excellency the President of Egypt [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi]. Thank you also for the good meeting we have just had.

I am delighted to be here in Cairo. It is my first visit as High Representative. Coming to Egypt to meet you and with President Sisi and other Ministers and interlocutors was a priority for me. I could not do it before, due to the constraints imposed by the coronavirus. But the coronavirus has only succeeded in delaying my visit. Here we are, trying to enhance our partnership.

This is a good opportunity to bolster this partnership, because we want to strengthen our relations. And we want to do so because we share many interests. We want to consult with you on many pressing regional issues, in the areas of energy, environment, migration, trade and security. We also want to work together in areas that are important for the well-being of the Egyptian people – water management, socio-economic development, education, and health.

In this regard, we spoke about the emergency package of support we prepared to face the consequences of COVID-19, which is hitting you, us and everybody much stronger than expected.

We also discussed how to best handle difficult issues, like human rights. Among friends, we should and we can talk about everything.

Maybe the most important aspects of this visit are the regional issues, because our neighbourhood – the Mediterranean – is in trouble.

We raised the situation in Libya – which I visited earlier this week, and where Egypt is playing a decisive role and I want to thank you for this role in pushing for and keeping the ceasefire in Libya.

On the Middle East Peace Process – and above all the agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which has prevented the annexation in the Jordan Valley this summer.

I think that we have to continue working on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, where the current developments are very worrying, and on the need for de-escalation and dialogue.

And finally, although it is a little bit far away from the European Union countries and much closer to Egypt, we are very much concerned and we shared comments and considerations about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, where we welcome Egypt's continued engagement in the negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan, and we hope that you will continue having this important role in order to use this vital resource for Egypt in an organised way.

Dear Minister [Shoukry], I am very much looking forward to continuing our discussions over lunch and also during your next visit to Brussels.

Q&A

Q. On the developments in Libya, at the political arena and in the field. Could you explain your vision on how the Libyan crisis will be resolved in the future in light of the consultations that took place this morning?

First, I want to praise the important role played by Egypt on the ceasefire. Without the Cairo Declaration this would not have happened. And without the important political pressure that you put, explaining clearly which were the red lines that you were not going to accept to be overpassed, maybe the ceasefire would not have come. This is very good news, because the first thing to stop a war is to stop fighting.

Now, for the time being, it is happening and we want it to last. And it will last according also to the pressure that Egypt and other Arab states will be able to put on both sides, but mainly on one side.

I think that there is a window of opportunity in order for the Libyan people to reach agreements among them – because the solution can only belong to the Libyan people – in order to decide how to organise their future.

We share the same will for every mercenary to leave Libya, to stop the foreign interference in the country, to stop the flow of arms and to give an opportunity to peace.

I think that on that, Egypt has a role that cannot be played by anyone else. Egypt alone will not be sufficient, that is why the European Union is also ready to contribute.

I have been [visiting Tripoli and Tobruk the past days](#). I had a long meeting with [President of the House of Representatives of Libya, Aguila] Saleh and I think that this window of opportunity cannot be lost and I am sure that Egypt and the European Union will work together to keep it.

Q. How concerned are you about the regional interference in Libya? The United Nations yesterday said that the arms embargo is ineffective. There are foreign fighters coming in from Turkey, Wagner mercenaries and 338 cargo flights as documented by the United Nations. On human rights, you talked with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Soukry as friends; can you tell us more about the human rights issues that you tackled together?

About the arms embargo, it is a reality that the arms embargo is not being fully respected. We can say that it is not respected by anyone.

We, the European Union, tried to do what we can do in order to enhance this arms embargo, using our capacity. We launched [Operation IRINI](#), which is a navy mission that has also a certain capacity of controlling what is happening in that area. The United Nations mandate to control the arms embargo only talks about controlling it by sea and air, which is what we are doing. We have had some success, sending to the United Nations technical bodies information about 500 hailings, which concerns both sides of the conflict. Now it is up to the [United Nations] Security Council to decide what to do with this information.

From our side, we try to control the arms embargo as much as we can, but we are perfectly aware that the flow of arms continues reaching Libya and, as far as this continues, it is going to be quite difficult to stop the fighting.

Of course we have been talking about human rights policy. You know that it is an horizontal policy, it is the line of our external relations, not only with Egypt, but with everybody. I perfectly understand that it is a very sensitive issue, but I think that we have to talk about it, putting on the table our worries and also sharing information. Because sometimes there are some considerations that are not exactly according to reality. I think that we have to continue doing so, every time that there is something that worries us, or every time that in Geneva they decide on a statement that puts things in a way that we disagree. We have to talk about it. That is what we have been doing today.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194450>