

Syria: UN-supported talks delayed until 20 February to give opposition time to unite

31 January 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Syria today said that he asked the Security Council to postpone the UN facilitated talks that had been scheduled for 8 February in Geneva until 20 February, in order to give the war-torn country's opposition time to unite and participate as one group.

"We want to give a chance to this Astana initiative to actually implement itself," Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura told reporters at the UN Headquarters in New York, referring to the talks held last week in the Kazakh capital on solidifying a ceasefire in Syria, which had been brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey.

He said that in Astana, the Syrian Government, the opposition and the three guarantors of the ceasefire agreed on a mechanism – a group of experts – to monitor the truce, adding that a technical follow-up meeting on the creation of the mechanism is scheduled to take place in the Kazakh capital on 6 February with the participation of the UN.

He explained that the delay of UN-supported intra-Syrian talks would give time for the ceasefire to solidify, give the Government a chance to consider concessions, and give a chance for the armed groups to come as "one unified opposition."

Mr, de Mistura said he will issue invitations for the Geneva talks around 8 February.

He reiterated that his work is guided by UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which endorsed a roadmap for a peace process in Syria, including issues of governance, constitution and elections.