

## With international agreement on ceasefire monitoring, UN envoy praises Syrian delegations in Astana

24 January 2017 – The talks to strengthen the ceasefire in war-torn Syria ended today in Astana, Kazakhstan, with agreement on how to monitor the effort started last month and praise from the United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

“Let me commend Russia, Turkey and Iran for their decision to establish a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire,” Mr. de Mistura said, adding that the agreement is a “concrete step” towards implementation of Security Council resolutions on the issue.

In addition to representatives from the three countries, the two-day talks were the first time that Syrian opposition participated in the discussions alongside representatives of the Syrian Government.

Mr. de Mistura, who was a conduit for many of the discussions, praised the delegations noting that “it has required political courage from them to sit in the same room and listen to their respective demands.”

He added that both Syrian parties had told him that “their immediate priority was and remains to strengthen the ceasefire.”

With more than 650,000 people in besieged areas in Syria, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the ceasefire is expected to allow greater humanitarian aid to areas previously cut off by the fighting.

“The ceasefire can additionally help the fight of the international community against terrorism in Syria and the wider region,” Mr. de Mistura said.

In addition, the ceasefire is expected to help create “a supportive environment” for engagement between the Syrian parties ahead of the 8 February talks in Geneva, the UN Special Envoy noted, adding that he will head to New York to consult with the Secretary-General and brief the Security Council ahead of those talks.

The discussions in Switzerland will be held under the auspices of the UN and include issues of governance, constitution and elections in the context of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which endorsed a road map for a peace process in Syria.

“We cannot allow another ceasefire to dissolve because of a lack of a political process. Now is the time for the international community in all its dimensions to come together and support one integrated political negotiating process, as provided for in SCR 2254,” he said.