

# **POLICIES AND SOLUTIONS**

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## ***Panel 2***

Paul Salem: Ladies and gentlemen, let's get started with the second panel, please. In the first panel in today's meeting on Syria, we had a very, very sobering, very realistic, very moving and very important communication about the dire circumstances inside Syria, the many tragedies taking place, the extent of the devastation, the humanitarian level, the economic level, infrastructure. We've heard a description of the many types of assistance that are needed. We've heard also about some of the programs and some of the institutions that are engaged in that. We also heard an intense prioritization of the need first to deescalate and end this conflict. The level of destruction so far has surpassed anything else in this century and compares to some of the biggest disasters in the past century. If this continues for months, for years to come, there might be nothing left to save. We might be talking not about a post-Assad Syria or a post-crisis Syria, but sort of a post-Syria Middle East, where a country really has torn itself apart. The impact on Syria's population and civilians has been much described. The impact on neighboring countries, like Lebanon and Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, as well, has been amply described as well. It was an excellent morning panel and we have also, I believe, an excellent second panel this morning to help us focus a bit on the political process that finally has gotten underway in Geneva. This for maybe a couple of years was a regional and international proxy war. In some aspects perhaps, we're seeing the beginnings of a regional international proxy effort to bring this conflict to an end and we're very lucky to have with us one of the people very much involved in this process, who came recently from the meetings in Geneva, Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, to my immediate right. Mr. Feltman, Ambassador Feltman, is the Under-Secretary-General and Head of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations. He also had, as you know, a long career in the U.S. Foreign Service, where he was at the end of a long career where he served in Beirut and Israel and Iraq. He was Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; knows the region extremely well and cares deeply about the region, as well. We will hear from him first, but that will be followed by remarks by Anne, Ms. Anne Richard. Ms. Richard is the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration. We heard a lot in the first panel indications of gratitude to what the U.S. and members of the international community are doing. We're eager to hear more from Ms. Richard, who also has a long career in rescue and relief activity, about what the U.S. and her department is doing, what the ideas are, also moving forward. From the European Union, or the European Commission, which has been a big player, also, in the relief effort, we're lucky to have with us Mr. Encho Gospodinov, who is Special Advisor to the EC Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, International Cooperation and Crisis Response. Mr. Gospodinov is deeply involved in the donor effort in Europe relating to the Syrian crisis and also has a long history previous to that with the International Red Cross and a lot of experience on the ground and fieldwork in various countries as how to best address the types of crisis we're seeing. Last, but certainly not least, we're very lucky to have with us Dr. Najib Ghadbian. Dr. Najib is a special representative to the United States for the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution

and Opposition Forces. He, too, can give us his insights about perhaps what the Geneva process may or may not have gotten started, what are some of the visions moving forward and how that might impact the humanitarian situation. So let me turn the podium first over to Ambassador Feltman to hear his views about the political process underway, what he might expect in the near future and how that could positively impact humanitarian relief inside Syria. Jeff? I think they can see you better up here.

Jeffrey Feltman: Thanks, Paul.

Paul Salem: Thank you.

Jeffrey Feltman: Thank you very much, Paul, and I want to thank the Middle East Institute for inviting me. It's really wonderful to be back in a familiar environment and to see so many friends and former colleagues, including on this panel and, also just a personal note, with my wife living in Washington, it's very considerate of MEI to do this on a Friday so that I can have dinner with my wife rather than on Amtrak by myself. So thank you. Today concludes my 19<sup>th</sup> month of service in the United Nations and in that time, there's been no issue that has absorbed my attention more than the Syrian catastrophe. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's outrage over the violence and the atrocities and his frustration with the divisions of the international community are palpable in all of our discussions. The UN, I have learned, is a highly decentralized organization compared with the U.S. government and there are many different parts of the United Nations that are working to respond to the multidimensional Syria crisis and in my brief remarks today, I want to highlight four areas where the UN is responding and then perhaps in the discussion afterwards, we can go into a bit more detail in the one in which I am most involved, which is the political track. In the four areas that I will note, yes, there's been some progress. But in the United Nations, we recognize that any gains we have pale in comparison to the needs. All of us in the international community need to do more to save Syria's civilians. Please note that my list of the four areas is my own. It's not a UN reckoning and it's not exhaustive about what the United Nations is doing. I will not, for example, go into what are really the heroic efforts of the independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which is established by the Human Rights Council, to investigate alleged violations of human rights and to establish accountability. The first of the four areas I want to raise is something you discussed in the first panel, which is humanitarian relief. Those efforts focus on both the refugees outside Syria and the communities and governments that support them and on the Syrians and the Palestinian...the displaced Syrians and Palestinian refugees inside Syria who need help. Multiple UN actors are involved. The statistics, as I'm sure you've heard, are just staggering. I mean, 9.3 million people in need, including 6.5 million internally displaced and 2.4 million refugees. There are more than 2.5 million people in hard-to-reach areas with limited access to humanitarian

assistance and we suspect that estimate might be low. In a particularly outrageous violation of internal humanitarian law, nearly a quarter of a million people are trapped in areas besieged either by the government or opposition forces. The international community has responded generously, including through the January 15<sup>th</sup> Donor Conference in Kuwait and I want to thank the United States for being the top donor of humanitarian assistance. American officials also have helped us to mobilize other donors. But let's be frank. The needs continue to outstrip the resources available and security conditions and bureaucratic obstacles continue to hinder relief efforts. We asked the U.S. to use its leverage with the opposition forces to protect civilians, to provide full and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need and to protect humanitarian workers and convoys and, yes, we are delivering that same message to those with influence on government forces, who are responsible for most of the deaths and destruction. The second area of focus is the UN's joint work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, OPCW, in eliminating Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons and chemical precursors. There's a lot of coverage in the media right now of the discussion at OPCW Headquarters in The Hague regarding the midyear deadline for the destruction of all those stockpiles. All of us recognize that to meet that deadline, the pace of removal needs to be accelerated. But it's worth remembering that this is truly an unprecedented endeavor and operations taking place during war focus on out-of-country destruction with the unique international effort at sea and an equally unique joint mission structure. The third area is support to neighboring countries to try to help protect them from the spillover of the Syria conflict and this goes beyond the humanitarian relief efforts to refugees that I've already mentioned. The Syria crisis poses security and political challenges to the broader region. Secretary-General just visited Iraq, for example, to discuss with a wide range of Iraqi officials the need to find ways to ameliorate the impact of the Sunni Shia divide that the Syria conflict has dangerously deepened. We're most active in trying to help the neighborhood insulate itself from political insecurity aspects of the Syria crisis in Lebanon. There the UN has worked in partnership with President Suleiman to establish an international support group for Lebanon that has several tracks and capitalizes on an asset that we have in dealing with Lebanon that we do not enjoy with Syria and that is Security Council unity on behalf of Lebanese stability and security. The fourth area is the political negotiating track that Dr. Salem mentioned in the introduction. I accompanied the Secretary General to Montreux for the January 22<sup>nd</sup> International Conference and I participated in the first four days of the talks between the two Syrian delegations in Geneva that followed Montreux and that were facilitated by Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the Secretary-Generals of the United Nations and of the League of Arab States. Those talks, as you see in the news, pause today with the intention to resume on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Now it should be patently obvious in looking at the horrors in Syria that the costs of trying to impose a military solution on Syria are obscenely high. But getting momentum behind a political track has proven difficult, because the divisions inside Syria are mirrored by divisions in the region and in the

international community. Tools that might be available to the United Nations to prod parties to negotiations, tools such as arms embargos or travel bans or sanctions, remain locked away and unavailable. Only Security Council unity can unlock those tools. That need for unity is one reason why it's so important that we build on the broad support behind the 30 June 2012 Geneva Communique and the Russian American agreement forged between John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov, to use that Communique as the basis of negotiations between the Syrian government and the opposition. The goal of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi have stated repeatedly is to end the violence and build a new Syria based on the action plan in that Communique, including the establishment by mutual consent of a transitional governing body with full executive powers. The Montreux event was designed to demonstrate to the Syrian government and the opposition that the doors to anything other than a political solution were locked, that the two sides could not escape, but must sit down together. Then the Geneva talks under Lakhdar Brahimi's mediation were designed to focus on how to implement the Geneva Communique, which is the basis for the talks. As Lakhdar Brahimi's daily media briefings in Geneva have indicated, this has been tough. I do not believe that any of us expected a significant breakthrough by now, only 10 days after Montreux, the first time that the Syrian government and opposition sat together in the same room and were sobered by the reality that probably not a single Syrian civilian was saved this week through the talks in Geneva. Still, this process is an investment in getting to a political solution and ending the violence and promoting a transition to a new Syria. Mr. Brahimi travels today to the Munich Security Conference to brief the Secretary-General, Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov on what's needed to help achieve more progress in the next round of talks. Let me conclude by saying that while I firmly believe it is better to have these talks than not to have these talks, better still will be when such talks start to have a positive impact on the ground. Unfortunately, I must candidly acknowledge that 10 days after Montreux, we are not yet there on that point. We're still very much at the beginning--Lakhdar Brahimi described [it] in the press comments just an hour or so ago as a modest beginning--but just the beginning phase of a process that we're pursuing urgently on behalf of the goal to save Syria's civilians and to protect the region. Thank you.

[applause]

Paul Salem: Thank you, Ambassador Feltman, and I'm sure in the discussion session there will be a lot of questions further about how you see the political situation moving forward, but thank you very much for that. I'd like to call Ms. Anne Richard to take the podium. Thank you.

Anne Richard: Thank you, Paul. Thank you for everyone coming out today to pay attention to this crisis, a crisis that deserves attention and deserves solutions more

than anything else. I'd like to thank MEI and the fabulous Wendy Chamberlin, who leads it, as well as Kate and Paul, who are doing so much for today's conference and also my friends with IRD, whom I'm delighted to see here today. After seeing you overseas and in hospitals and in clinics and visiting you on the ground, it's great to see you all here in my town, in Washington. So, good to see you, Uma and Jeff and others, and thanks to AECOM for organizing, also. I think you heard this morning from the first panel, so this will not come as news to you, that the U.S. leads the world in contributions for the humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis. Congress [and] the American people deserve great credit for their generosity. This demonstrates our commitment and leadership. And just recently, I was with the Secretary in Kuwait at the Kuwait Pledging Conference. This was the second time this had been held and the U.S. was one of the largest donors. Our \$380 million pledge to kick off 2014 was among the largest and we are the top donor in terms of providing \$1.7 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance since the crisis began. This is a combination of funds from my bureau, the Population Refugees Immigration Bureau, the State Department and also our colleagues at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The Secretary's presence there, himself, also seemed to help and I was told by colleagues from the United Nations and other governments that it helped rally other donors and increase the amounts given. So, that's great. I'm very appreciative to him for attending. And part of what we're trying to do through conferences like the Kuwait Conference is bring new donors to the table, so that it's not always the Europeans and the U.S., the Japanese, Koreans, Canadians, Australians, but that the Gulf States themselves take a greater interest. And so I'm very appreciative, also, that the role played by Kuwait before hosting two conferences now and they were the largest donor each time at the conference and doing so much, to be out in front and supporting these multilateral efforts that we contribute to, that we believe in, that we believe bring professionals to the crisis to do the best we can in responding. So we are doing a lot, but unfortunately, it's not enough and, uh, we need to push as much humanitarian aid into Syria itself as possible using all channels. UN flights, as happened in December, from northern Iraq into Syria are good, but trucks coming in by road would be better. It'd be cheaper; we'd get more things in and the great frustration for us is that the regime is starving its own people, its own innocent civilians and doing everything from violating international humanitarian law to just bureaucratic hassles that keep aid workers from getting to where they need to get. So, all of the humanitarian aid in the world won't make a difference unless there can be access to the people who need that help, unless we can get to them and get to them safely and as we know, the regime is employing the sort of surrender or starve tactics that are appalling. So we are looking for the regime to ensure immediate unfettered access to the more than two million people in hard-to-reach places in Syria and the 250,000 people, more or less, who are in besieged cities or parts of cities. We would like to see immediate approval by the regime of the UN's full list of proposed convoy movements and evacuation of people. Letting them come out or letting only the women and children

come out is not an alternative to getting humanitarian assistance in. Most recently, some aid got into Yarmouk, the Palestinian camp in Damascus, but it's not enough and if that aid can get in there, it ought to be able to get in other places, too. In this crisis, we see incredible bravery and courage on a daily basis and this is by aid workers. Aid workers who work for international organizations, I know, I mean Awad spoke in the first panel coming from UNHCR, which is one of the best non-governmental organizations, and also local groups like the volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. In fact, if you look at who's doing the most on the ground, it's mostly Syrians, as is the case in all crises. It's mostly the citizens themselves who are helping themselves and so we have to help them. I wanted to mention a few trends that we see globally in humanitarian response that are definitely manifest in this crisis. One is urbanization, urban refugees, urban displaced. Most of the refugees who are fleeing to the neighboring countries are not living in camps. Even though you'll see photos of camps, the big Zaatari Camp in Jordan or the well-stocked camps that the government of Turkey has generously set up in southern Turkey, two-thirds of the refugees are living in cities and in towns in neighboring countries and all, most of the refugees in Lebanon are living in, uh, wherever they can and what this means is that the refugees can sometimes be invisible and dispersed among local people in poorer communities. So we have to find them and identify them to help them, but we also have to make sure we don't just help the refugees. We have to help the refugees; we have to help their hosts; we have to help the poor citizens who are straining their own services to help refugees, but we also have to help the governments themselves. Another concern is violence against women and girls. In this day and age, we know that this will happen any place people are on the move, in jeopardy, fleeing, and so we are working with our partner organizations to develop ways to protect women and girls from violence and also to respond quickly in the sad situations when that happens. And one of the ways we're doing that is that Secretary Kerry has announced the Safe from the Start initiative to make sure that all our partners are good at taking the steps right at the onset of a crisis to prevent bad things from happening and using the best know-how that we have. An example of what I'm talking about is the UN Population Fund has reached 75,000 Syrian women with counseling sessions in reproductive health issues and perhaps most importantly, safe spaces where they can go in case they feel that they are in danger or that their children are in danger and UN Population Fund has established 31 women safe spaces in countries neighboring Syria. Another initiative that I think deserves our support and potentially has ability to breakthrough some of the, um, uh, noise that surrounds the conflict and reach the hearts of Americans and other publics, is the No Lost Generation strategy that has been brought forth by UNICEF, UNHCR, World Vision, Save the Children and others, and the idea is to be alert to the fact that half of the refugees are children, that children are displaced. Children are traumatized. I meet children who've come across the border - I've done this several times now - with their families from Syria into Jordan and in talking to them, it's very clear this has upset their whole world and they have witnessed terrible

things and so Syria will not have a future unless its children and its youth are educated. They just can't be sort of lost for several years in the, in this key moment of their lives. So we support these organizations and others that are trying to find ways to help children get an education, to get into school or to get something approximating an education, to get vocational training for youth who otherwise would be idle and subjected to all sorts of bad influences or to help university students get back into, you know, some sort of higher education, so that they can be part of the solution for Syria. We've also seen in the response to the crisis extremes of weather. You know, uh, you know, at this point, I'm happy to say that a lot has been done to deal with harsh winters that refugees and displaced deal with in this region, but no sooner do we have that taken care of, than we really can't rest, because the broiling sun will be out in the summer and mark my words, for people who are living in tents or containers, that can be a tough, a tough situation. I guess the good news is that camps and aid flowing in can help people survive and over the short term, that's really what they want to do. But the longer this crisis goes on, the longer, more elusive pieces, we have to do things so that people have a life, that they have a chance for thriving. They have a chance for contributing and giving back. Finally, we must continue to support the neighbors, these countries that are doing so much, whose schools have gone to double shifts, whose hospital beds are filled with Syrians. They need our support if they are going to maintain their open borders and we must, as members of the international community, share their burden and I'm, I... I didn't want to go on too long, because I'm very eager to hear your questions and I also think you will hear some of this echoed at lunchtime by Administrator Shah. We work very closely with USAID on this. So thank you for your attention.

[applause]

Paul Salem: Thank you very much for that sort of description of very important aid that the U.S. is giving and some of the experiences, challenges and successes that you've had. We'd like to hear from our European colleague, Mr. Gospodinov. If you would like to take the podium, please.

Encho Gospodinov: Thank you, Paul. I would like, also, to thank the organizers of this meeting as it's, it's... it's so obvious that it's so timely so important as every morning we wake up with this troubling news from the Middle East, especially from Syria. So dear colleagues and friends, I'm sure you, you heard it already, a lot of statistics and figures and dramatic stories from Syria. I want to say that we at the European Union and the European Commission and the member states especially, we are taking the conflict very, very seriously and we are equally troubled by seeing what's going on there. As our American friends mentioned, we, the Europeans, also take pride of what the Europeans have been doing and are still doing as a collective donor [inaudible 2:03:40]. The member states that are commissioned together since the beginning of the conflict, we have provided \$3.5 billion U.S. dollars for this

conflict. But, again, as, as Anne said, no matter how much we give, the needs are actually much bigger and, and more dramatic. Let me mention few trends and challenges as we see them from, from Brussels and from the point of view of a donor. First and foremost, the issue of access. This is one of our major concerns and as Commissioner Georgieva said during the meeting in Kuwait, without access, money means nothing, and it's true. Access to victims of the conflict inside Syria, but also access of those in need, access of the refugees and IDPs to the services the humanitarian actors provide is equally important. The daily life in Syria is tragically difficult for thousands of people and they need medical assistance. They need protection. They need more or less normal life, provided the context. So it's equally tragic to see those peoples suffering, but at the same time, we must also remember the tragedy inside the hearts of the humanitarian workers while trying, very often in vain unfortunately, to reach the most vulnerable, to reach the wounded and as I have been doing this job for many years, I can tell you that there is nothing, nothing more discouraging or sad for a person from the ICRC or the Red Cross Society or a UN agency or other NGOs, when you are sitting on 10 or 15 trucks of medicaments and you are not able to deliver those lifesaving medicaments to people who are probably only five or 10km away from your warehouse. Donors also need to define what kind of access they need. Are we happy with partial access or we need full access, which I believe that's what we need, because sometimes we hear that number of visas that have been issued additionally to the UN staff or ICRC or other colleagues, but this is not enough. Our issuing visas is only one step that, that the humanitarians need, but not, not everything that we actually want in order to reach the people in need. The second issue that troubles us very often is the issue of the safety. Safety for all humanitarian workers who carry out their duties. The erosion of the international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions, the disrespect of the mission of the UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent field teams and those of other NGOs is a shocking element of the daily routine in Syria. As you know, so far, 34 representatives of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 14 UN staff have been killed. There are some abducted also, humanitarian workers. At the same time, we must remember that we cannot push the field staff, be they UN or ICRC or Red Crescent people, ex-pats or locals, to take unnecessary risks. I can tell you that I have attended several funerals of my colleague when I worked with the International Red Cross and I can tell you, it's not a big pleasure to look at the eyes of the parents of our lost colleagues. It's a bit... it's another tragedy. Then the lack of access and safety for humanitarian personnel impacts also on the key principles of the humanitarian aid, namely the impartiality and neutrality. For us this is an equally important issue and we hope the political leaders and field commanders will pay due attention to this factor and I do hope that in Geneva, these important issue are being or will be discussed. Four: balance between providing aid to internally displaced and the refugees on the one hand versus assistance to the host families in local communities and it has been mentioned several times by my colleagues so far. I think this is, uh, this deserves serious attention because for those of you here in this



room who probably were like me, working in former Yugoslavia, will recall the tension between the local communities hosting huge number of refugees and at the same time, you can imagine when an agency delivers assistance to the refugees and the host family living together under the same roof getting nothing, you can imagine what happens in the hearts of these people. So this is something that we have to remember and work on it. And this goes especially for Lebanon, where my colleagues who spoke before me also mentioned the vast majority of people live with local communities and host families. It was mentioned already the issue of the Palestinian refugees in Syria and also we have refugees from Afghanistan, from Iraq, from Somalia. This is an issue that also concerns and troubles us, too. Six: another of our concern is the funding. Even if we here in this room, the European Union or the United States of America and other countries that are more fortunate than others, no matter how much we give, the fact of the matter is the funding base of the support we are looking for is still fairly narrow and I agree with my colleagues that we really need new donors. There are a number of Gulf countries that probably would like or could have done and will be doing more. As if you take only the UN appeal for 6.5 billion, you may add... billions. Sorry. And you may add probably one billion more from all other international organizations and NGOs and, and, uh, this is, this is really a very serious amount of money, but I must say that we, uh, we feel sometimes the fatigue. We feel sometimes we get the questions for how long this will go and provided also the context, the economic crisis, the fiscal discipline many governments are trying to impose. In this very specific situation and in many parts of the world finding fresh donors and fresh money is, is very important. Last year, the European Union and the Commission and its member states provided seven times more than what we pledged in, in, uh, during the first Kuwait meeting. Now, we have during the Kuwait 2, we have pledged \$753 million. Again, I'm afraid that's not going to be enough. We'll do more, of course. We'll try our best, but, um, we do hope that new donors will join us. Also, one of the colleagues mentioned here something that we consider very important. We do need more implementing partners inside Syria. We know it's not easy. We know even for experienced and solid players like ICRC and the UN agencies, they are doing their best, but without the local partners, without investing in their capacity, plus in the capacity of building of our partners, this is something that we are thinking seriously of. These were the issues that are mainly of a political nature. Let me mention very briefly, as time is flying, the number of issues of sectarian [sic] or technical character. One issue is the looming health crisis in Syria due to the conflict and limited numbers of health doctors in Syria with solid operational capacity. The disruption of routine vaccination, the destruction of public health facilities and hospitals, the deterioration of water and sanitation services have resulted in emergence of epidemic and communicable diseases while volatile security conditions and attacks against medical staff and of facilities prevent an adequate health response. Equally important as, as, um, Ms. Richards mentioned, the, the danger of losing a generation in Syria is very, very, um, uh, sorry... are knocking on the door, unfortunately and, and we take this very seriously and we, we

are supporting all members of this initiative to try and invest in, in education of the, of the young, uh, generations of, of Syrians that will need to rebuild their country once the peace has been achieved. Social economic and a demographic consequences, especially for Lebanon. This has been mentioned already. We also, we are also very, very concerned. I think the Lebanese people are showing enormous courage, hospitality, creativity to host. I'm afraid almost one million refugees that may hit the country by the end of this year. Currently 800-something thousand. So, the social fabric, the demographic structure of Lebanon may be seriously affected and we as donors also keep an eye on this process. Linked to this is the urgent need to strike the right balance between emergency and development. I remember, again, we spent billions in former Yugoslavia. Same we did in, uh, in the 11 countries when tsunami hit in 2004 and five and very often you know how quickly the emergency aid disappears, but then if we don't do anything in the field of development, we have done very little. Verification of the most needy, tracing unregistered refugees without residence permit in Lebanon still remains a technical problem and our implementing partners are telling us that some 50% of the refugees in Lebanon will have their visas expire by mid-2014 and the information that I have shows that a visa renewal costs about \$200. So, for all these issues, we have to, to find coverage. We also need a comprehensive response strategy for Syria and we are very encouraged to hear from our UN partners that this may be ready by, by, by the spring this year, because with the, with the changing nature in the conflict, we have to, to apply certain flexibility but also long term view in order to know what to do in the future. Finally, let me reiterate that European Union, the European Commission and the member states remain committed to helping those in need, based on the needs and the humanitarian principles and if you'll allow me, I'll recall what Dr. Henry Kissinger used to say about European. "I can tell you that European does have a name and a phone number when it comes to humanitarian assistance." Thank you very much.

[applause]

Paul Salem: Thank you very much, Mr. Gospodinov, for sharing those priorities and suggestions and agenda items. I'd like to turn the floor to Mr. Ghadbian for his perspective.

Mr. Ghadbian: Thank you, Paul, and thank you for the Institute for this timely conference. I was asked to address what the Syrian Coalition is doing on fact on the humanitarian front and to give our perspective as maybe how to explore some ideas to end this tragedy. I will spare you the numbers. We've heard them in the morning. Some of my other colleagues have contributed to that, but I would make two points. The first, this is a humanitarian catastrophe by choice. It's not a natural disaster. It's not a tsunami. It's created and sustained by a regime, which in fact decided to put down a popular uprising, which started peaceful, like other countries, and the regime continues to systematically deny access to certain areas, populations, which in fact

account to another crime against humanity and/or crime added to a record in fact of war crimes and crimes against humanity. One of those is the use of chemical weapons. Another is the torture and killing of political detainees. We all heard about the latest report that documented 55,000 pictures belong to 11,000 political prisoners. Added to the use of all kind of heavy weapons against civilian areas, the use of barrel bombs, which in fact did not stop for a single day while Geneva was going on. So, this is an interesting situation. This is a regime that got away with so many crimes against humanity, but because it was number one, smart about it, doing it by installment and second, because the international community allowed it to do it. It's the paralysis of the international community to protect Syrians that's really made this possible. What is the, ah, we, we're, we're in the opposition, in the coalition doing about these issues? Many of us found, in fact, ourselves from day one forced to deal with the humanitarian issues. We are, many of us, political activists, but the scope of the humanitarian tragedy forced us to address that. Going back from the early, in fact, days of the opposition activism when we started a series of conferences to try to be a voice for the Syrian people, into the formation of the Syrian National Council, which preceded the formation of the Coalition, I could tell you in the Syrian National Council, and I was a founding member of that group, the first installment of assistance we got from a friendly country \$15 million, 90% of it immediately was allocated for humanitarian relief that was needed in areas like Homs, Daraa, etc., etc. The same thing when the Coalition was formed with the help of many, many countries, which we are grateful, we again, one of the first institution we created was the Assistant Coordination Unit, which we felt needed immediately to be able to work with the international donors, to reach again many, many Syrians who were living, um, in, in, difficult, um, and in fact inhumane conditions. The second, maybe important, composition of the Coalition was a group called the Local Councils. These are groups that were created in different provinces, the 14 provinces of Syria, in order to work with the ACU, to work with the international donors, to provide humanitarian relief, to provide some basic services and basic governance to those areas. So, the Coalition's commitment to those areas, in fact, and in order to put this into perspective and put the question of maybe, you know, the opposition should do more to address these issues, we should, you know, understand this issue that most of those people who are suffering, the more than 130,000 fallen heroes and their families, there are more than 10 million displaced or refugees. These are our base. These are the Syrian people who are in fact calling for change and they were punished, because they decided to take action. So, to us, our commitment to the wellbeing of these groups is unquestionable. Our commitment to specific programs like allowing relief aid to any area is something, again, it's in our best interest. Beside, of course, it's, uh, it's the right thing to do. Our commitment to the implementation to the Security Council presidential statement on humanitarian access, has been in fact many times not only, um, uh, been expressed, but shown to be the case. Let me say a few words about Geneva and then end with maybe two or three points about recommendations. As we went to

Geneva and this is something we were committed to do. We were committed to a political solution. We supported every initiative presented by the Arab League, by many countries to find the political solution to this conflict. We kind of asked that maybe two issues can be considered as confidence building measures. The first we requested that the regime would grant humanitarian access to, you know, specifically the Old Homs and the more than 260,000 people in cities living under siege and that's something basic. This is an obligation that, in fact, that the regime should do. It's not subject to negotiations and I'll come to address that point. The second, we ask that the regime release the women and children prisoners and by the way, it's my understanding that in one of the sessions, um, between the two sides, that Mr. Jaafari would represent the regime in New York, denied that they have any women and children prisoners and we in counter by presented them with the names, you know, where about, the addresses of all of those prisoners. Of course, like they deny chemical weapons was used; as they deny that this whole thing is nothing but a conspiracy against the regime and this is nothing but a, uh, uh, you know, a terrorist war against the Syrian regime, because if it's standing on, on issues like the Palestinian and so on and so forth. So, again, we went there with these two requests and the regime in the first three days tried to bargain and negotiate about these issues and to us, our positions, these are non-negotiable issues. These are something that the regime could do right away to show its political, its commitment to a political solution. Of course, they refuse even to allow 12 convoys, 12 convoys into Homs, which they agreed to before, um, in front of Mr. Kerry and Lavrov. They tried to say, "Okay. Only three trucks," and then they said, "No. We would allow women and children to evacuate, but not the men." And the trick here is very important. By so doing, they would say the rest of the men are terrorists and then they go and, you know, erase the rest of, you know, erase the rest of the town. The other issue, of course, that would contribute into creating, their policy of creating sectarian cleansing in a very sensitive area so they could continue on with their policy of maybe, you know, creating some kind of a sectarian enclave in the future. So, as far as Geneva, even though the first really week of the negotiations and maybe Mr. Feltman can say more, have not really produced any substantive progress, but I think they're holding by themselves were important and I would say from our perspective, in the Coalition, we came out good of these, of these negotiations. We showed our commitment to a political solution, to ending the conflict, to finding immediate relief to the, um, the people living under, um, these again, inhumane circumstances, and to releasing political prisoners. So, we will continue, in fact, to be engaged as long as we find there's, in fact, any, um, like worthwhile outcome might come out of that. But let me say that we find it difficult, in fact, to continue to attend rounds which will not lead to any substantive, in fact, or, or improvement of these conditions like in the areas under siege and I think this is something we need to be very clear about. Um, the... what's, what's needed from our point of view? Let me just suggest a few ideas and end here. I think what's needed the most is to put an end to Assad's brutal campaign against the Syrian

people. In the morning, we heard from Jomana how all of the great work of many of the Syrian American and many of the international, um, and, and in fact, uh, friendly, uh, countries doing in terms of providing aid, is always disrupted by the continued use of violence by the regime. So I think this is a priority. This is absolute priority. Allowing an immediate and unfettered access is another priority and I think like we've seen with the chemical weapons, it took the work of the Security Council, but it really took the resolve of the Obama Administration to use the credible threat of the use of force on the table, which finally forced the regime to give up its chemical weapons, um, the arsenal and I would suggest to you that if we need to solve the other two issues, the humanitarian tragedy and reach a political solution, we might need something, same resolve we've seen with the chemical weapons from this country, from the European countries. As Ms. Richards mentioned, the U.S. is a leading country on humanitarian issues. We want the U.S. and the European Union to be leading countries on finding a political solution and yes, we'll try to work with the Russians, but if that doesn't work, I think the U.S., other countries that are more responsible and care about humanitarian issues, they might need to consider more forceful course of action. I would say that it's my understanding that in New York, some of our friends might be presenting, in fact, a UN Security Council resolution within a week if Russia does not use its leverage over the regime to allow some access to some of the areas like Homs and Ghouta. So we definitely support that and, and we'd like to see more action. While we're doing this and pursuing political solution, which would create transitional governing body that is responsible, that is committed to human rights, committed to international law, committed to respecting international humanitarian laws, there are, of course, always the immediate need of many of my colleagues mentioned, especially as far as providing food, medicine, medical equipment and so on and so forth and, of course, dealing with especially providing education, psychological care for, for children. I would end by saying to really address this question of the humanitarian catastrophe of the century, which is an outcome of a conflict, we need to put an end to the conflict, to the siege, to the shelling, to the Assad Mafia. Thank you.

[applause]

Paul Salem: Thank you very much, Mr. Ghadbian. Before I turn to the audience for questions and please, you know, think of the questions you would like to pose. Let me pose a couple of my own. Ambassador Feltman, there's been a lot of progress just to get the parties this far, to have a Geneva conference, which only weeks before was a question mark whether it would take place or not. You've indicated that there are a lot of tools that are still locked up because the Security Council is not yet moving unanimously on this. Do you see a momentum change, both in terms of the positions of some of the main players, the highlighting of the humanitarian urgency? If you want to sort of conclude with this session with looking ahead and expectations and things that we might or might not see, do you see things in the international

arena and perhaps in the regional arena from your perch in the United Nations moving in the right direction that could activate the Security Council in important ways and if so, how? For Najib, I wanted to ask, every negotiation requires, you know, somebody on the other side that might at some point become a partner. Obviously, the Assad leadership, the family, the regime, as you say, perhaps is, is or is not serious about this, but the many people in the system, in the regime, in the military, perhaps people who have chosen the regime for now over others, are there, is there a strategy? Is there, uh, you know, a reaching out to other partners within the media orbit, within the regime orbit that could be part of a solution either centrally or locally, in different neighborhoods and different areas? Finally for Anne and Encho, the emphasis on not losing a generation, which, which obviously when one looks forward, one looks at that. What more can you tell us either about other success stories and other cases where the children of refugees were effectively saved from being lost? How can that be done? Is that already... are such efforts already underway in Lebanon and Jordan or perhaps in some areas in Syria? Is there any, you know, good news there from other countries and could that be a defining aspect of the aid in 2014 in order to save the future for Syria? Let me turn to Jeff first, if you'd like to share some remarks.

Jeffrey Feltman: Paul, thanks.

Paul Salem: It will come on. Just speak.

Jeffrey Feltman: Okay. Paul, Paul, thank you. You know, I'm an American. I like to be, I like to be optimistic and I like to look at the glass half full rather than half empty, but I don't want to exaggerate this. I do see some, I do see some positive trends. When I, when I look at the unity that was developed around the, the threat of serious chemical weapons, when I think about the work done to get to the, to the Humanitarian PRST, the work done to build momentum before the Kuwait Conference and when I listen to the statements made by 40 countries, 40 plus countries plus three international organizations at Montreux, I heard convergences. Convergences that I think we can build on, but I don't want to overstate this. The differences are enormous between the Syrian parties on the ground and between some in the regional international community. Montreux was interesting, though, because you had countries as varied as China, Russia, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the list goes on, talking about the need to use the Geneva Communiqué as the basis for negotiations. That was, in fact, the basis for the invitation. The invitation to the Secretary-General to the Syrian parties, to the other participants in Montreux, stated clearly that the, that, um, acceptance to the invitation means you accept the Geneva Communiqué. Well that was emphasized over and over and over again by speaker after speaker after speaker. Um, the only exception frankly being the Syrian government, was emphasizing more security issues. But that convergence of international views is something I think we can build on. I would encourage all of you

to look at what Lakhdar Brahimi said today in his, in his press conference. Under the rules of the Geneva talks, Lakhdar Brahimi's the only person that is to speak officially about the talks. The two Syrian sides obviously give their own views to the media, but the only official commentary on the talks themselves of what happens inside the room is Lakhdar Brahimi. So I'm going to paraphrase him, rather than give you my own views, as part of abiding by the rules. But he talked about convergences that despite a very difficult week came out. Things like the two sides agreeing to talk about all aspects of the Geneva Communique. That wasn't obvious that was going to happen at the beginning of the week and I tell you from sitting in the room. The agreement on some broad principles. These may... this may sound self-evident but things like the fact that the Syrians themselves, not any outsiders who may be participating, have to decide on Syria's future. The commitment to Syria's territorial integrity, unity, diversity of conventional and ethnic make-up. These are... these are general principles, yes. But there are things that Mr. Brahimi explained to the press today, he heard from both sides today, and they're things that he can build on. So yes, I do see some positive trends, Paul, to answer your question, but I don't want to underestimate the differences that still have to be overcome in order for those positive trends to really translate into change on the ground.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Thank you, Jeff. And Najib?

Najib Ghadbian: It's a difficult question, Paul, to really answer, because we are dealing with a regime that's, um, it's hard to believe that they would come to negotiate their departure. I mean, and that's really the essence of the Geneva Communique. It's the creation of a transitional governing body with full executive authorities, which would mean including and there was more elaboration on this by even Dr. Brahimi, the powers of the army, intelligence, military and so on and so forth. Nonetheless, I think it is, as Mr. Feltman said, this is the first time that we have a framework. We have some basis for a political solution and the other side, despite all of its denials and, you know, skewed interpretation, um, they kind of, uh, they came and accepted part of that. One of the weaknesses facing those who came to Geneva is that I think none of them are surely decision makers. I think they were, uh, on Skype with the Presidential Palace the whole time. At least somebody can listen to what they're saying and to what the opposition was saying, and in that sense, again, from our point of view, and, and, we do see that, uh, the uh, departure of Assad, the sooner this happens, the more it opens a door for a true political solution for national reconciliation. The difference between us and the other side is that we believe the other side, um, does exist, has a, you know, its own reasons to support the, the, the regime and we're willing to work with anyone. Our only criteria for those who are not acceptable as part of the transitional government body is those who have not committed crimes against humanity and we accept the Human Rights Council designation, the commission for that. So I think that's, that's a huge difference. While the other side still sees us as terrorists and agents of, you know,

foreign countries and so on and so forth. But as you said, as suggested in your question, by making that case to the Syrian people, that we in fact look forward to creating a new Syria that's committed to democracy, pluralism, to protecting the rights of every citizen in Syria based on equal citizenship and the rights of minorities and respect for women's rights, I think the other side for the first time should see that there is in fact a possible, uh, you know, solution and, and we hope, again, we will find partners from, from the other side who are committed to the same, um, you know, principles, even including one of the principles Mr. Feltman mentioned.

Paul Salem: Any comment, Anne, on saving a generation? How it, has it been done anywhere else?

Encho Gospodinov: Well I would like to mention few, a few things as Commissioner Georgieva was very enthusiastic in supporting this No Lost Generation initiative in, in Kuwait and we discussed in, in Brussels with my colleagues. I will, I will mention a few, a few details. One field where we can do much more, provided we, we have good programs, is the field of education, which so many refugee children in, in Lebanon, in Jordan and Turkey, in Iraq and, uh, I, one of the major problems even if it's kind of hidden now and quiet, it, it will explode in a few years when we have hundreds of thousands of children without future, sick many of them, um, jobless in the future and I can tell, we went through this in former Yugoslavia. You will remember that the conflict started actually in, I think, '91, 1991 in June in Slovenia and ended up in, in Kosovo at the end of the summer in 1999. Almost a decade. You imagine how many, uh, children were affected in those independent countries now, in former Yugoslavia and we, we asked ourselves at that time what we can do and we started together with a, with a number of private companies organizing education in the refugee camps, healthcare that would give, uh, the kids safe future. Finding teachers. We involved companies like IBM, training the children in the refugee camps, making them computer literate and, and vast majority of these, of the former children then are now very active members of their societies today. So, um, in this field, I think we can do, we can do a lot. Otherwise, the, uh, today's children of Syria, tomorrow might be a wave of unhappy, jobless, sad people that, uh, that would, would destroy their future and the future of Syria. So, in this context and context of protection, psychological support, extremely important. Finding psychologists to work in the camps, be they professionals, uh, working together with the UN agencies or the, uh, experienced NGOs or volunteers. Work of volun... the volunteer work is now of importance, of huge importance to find young people to work together with the professionals in the refugee camps. This is something that we don't talk very much about, but this is really important and, um, health, nutrition. Also equally important. But I believe my colleagues from the UN agencies and, and, and, and other implementing partners that we have, will come up with, with reasonable, uh, uh, and well-designed programs to, to help these young people that are expecting



our, not only our money but also our creativity to help them in the most, in the best possible way. Thank you.

Paul Salem: Anne?

Anne Richard: I'd like to add a few things and I agree with my colleague that the importance of education, even during an emergency, even when you're thinking, "Okay, let's just deliver the basics." The importance of education for children should not be underestimated in giving them a safe space, hope for the future, a place to go that frees up their parents to do things, a place to color and draw and, and talk about their fears and what they've seen is very, very important. Secondly, we should be doing more to protect women and children from violence and this is why this Safe from the Start initiative that the Secretary has endorsed is so important, I think. You know, there's an appalling situation where young girls, refugee girls, are, are seen as potential child brides by men in the region and that young boys are seen as potential child soldiers and so having enough staff to be on the scene to stop that sort of thing from happening, to encourage parents not to marry off a daughter, but instead to make sure she gets to the camp school is very, very important. The psychosocial piece of it is very important. It's not the type of counseling that would happen in a, in Washington, DC if a kid had some emotional problems. It's more a group dynamic that has proven to be, even in very basic settings, to make a big, big difference to communities that they can understand what's happening to them, to their children, that the children can understand what they're going through and can, can respond appropriately. And then also what I would like to see and what I've seen in other situations is a greater American public mobilization. What has been the most successful that I have witnessed in recent years was the whole Safe Darfur movement that brought together university students, with the faith based community, with you know, members of Congress all coming together and, and the public really taking an interest in staying on top of the situation and taking action about it. We haven't seen that with this crisis, apart from the Syrian American communities. One of the things I did recently was arrange for Zeenat Rahman, who's my colleague. She's the Secretary's Global Youth Ambassador, to come with me to Jordan to meet with Syrian youth living in Jordan and then she came with us to Kuwait. She met with UNICEF officials, with Save the Children and she could potentially be a very big help to me in trying to make sure that this issue is just not lost in all of the many interesting aspects of this crisis, interesting and worrisome aspects of this crisis. So she is helping me to reach out and also to reach out to more, uh, Americans who are younger than I am, to try to get them to care more about this and I think that has a lot of potential.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Let's turn to the audience now for some questions. I'll urge my panelists take notes of the questions and answer the bits that you want to

answer. Let me start with the young man over there. If you could stand up, wait for the microphone, introduce yourself and ask the question.

Man: Thank you. Muhammad Gangnam, Director of Governor Relations and Senior Political Advisor with the Syrian American Council in Washington, DC. I have a question for Mr. Feltman. The first round of Geneva 2 negotiations only got Syrians 600 food baskets the regime allowed into the ref-, the Yarmouk Camp, for Palestinian refugees. Although perhaps 60,000 baskets there would barely last a month. How many rounds of negotiations do you think it will take for civilian populations under siege to be granted humanitarian access, bearing in mind that these things should have been granted before the start negotiations and did the United Nations bringing up the recent incessant barrel bomb campaign that intensified especially over the past two days with the regime. Thank you.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Thank you. To the left here? Lady at the very back, please stand up to get the microphone. Microphone? We're not hearing her. Go ahead.

Women: Okay. Can you hear me?

Paul Salem: Yes.

Woman: Okay. My name is Sarah Samaha. I'm with the Arab Student Association at American University. Most of this table here actually are. My question is to Ms. Richards. You mentioned the university initiative and how university students can help to raise public awareness, American mobilization, things of that nature. So I was just wondering if any of you panelists had any advice for us university students that are looking to raise awareness for the cause for the Syrian crisis. Thank you.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Over there in the back? Lady at the back, next to the... yea. I know you need that. I'm trying to get it there to you.

Woman: Thank you. My name is Nadia Billbassy with Al Arabiya television. My question's for Ms. Richard. You said that the United States is the largest donor of humanitarian aids to the Syrian people. Can you explain to us the mechanism or just tell us how do you deliver this aid? Because my understanding, if it goes through the UN, it's under the, um, the supervision of the Syrian government and as you know, it's been accused of holding aids from certain areas. And does your aid goes to independent NGOs and to rebel-held areas? And to Mr. Feltman, let me just very quickly say, I want to ask Mr. Ghabbian a question. Will the United, United Nations issue a united, a Security Council resolution to force the Syrian government for delivering aids to besieged areas, should the Geneva talks does not result into any serious...

Paul Salem: Thank you.

Nadia Billbassy: Thank you.

Paul Salem: Let me go to the very front here. Okay. Stand up, please, so they that they can get you the microphone.

Mounzer Sleiman: Thank you very much.

Paul Salem: Yea, it's on.

Mounzer Sleiman: Is it working?

Paul Salem: Yes.

Mounzer Sleiman: To Ambassador Feltman.

Paul Salem: Could you introduce yourself to the audience, please?

Mounzer Sleiman: Yea. Mounzer Sleiman with Al Mayadeen TV. The focus of the negotiation in Geneva, it seems to me it's not in the right track. Why the United Nation would not focus on the vision of future of Syria and force both parties to come up with that instead of insisting on the issue of dividing power or shedding power now prior to that interim government, how it's going to rule Syria. So is that any possibility that UN can redirect the negotiation toward that?

Paul Salem: Thank you.

Mounzer Sleiman: To Mr. Al-Ghadbian...

Paul Salem: Yea, but briefly, please.

Mounzer Sleiman: Yea. Briefly. To Mr. Al-Ghadbian, the missing part of your presentation is to give us some idea about opposition. The opposition many times they say they control 60 to 70% of Syria, but we don't see except the extremist's organization on the ground practicing their Sharia law or their own law while there is no single place that opposition present to the city and people their example of the future Syria they would like to accept.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Two quick questions in this round. The lady there?

Kate Phillips-Barrasso: Hi...

Paul Salem: Please stand up, so someone can see you. Thank you.

Kate Phillips-Barrasso: Kate Phillips-Barrasso with the International Rescue Committee. This sort of dovetails with some of the other questions that were asked. But, barring a political solution and humanitarian access being one of the primary ways that we can help the Syrian people, I'd like to hear more from the speakers on what the mechanisms for getting humanitarian aid into Syria are. We've heard about a variety today. One is sort of case-by-case negotiations, like we've seen in Geneva this week, on getting assistance into homes. We've referenced the presidential statement from last October, which offered us some hope that we would see movement, although I'd argue there's been very... it's really been a trickle of aid that has actually been getting into besieged communities and hard-to-reach communities or as several other people have asked, a possible binding Security Council resolution that takes an additional step and a bolder step towards trying to increase that trickle. I'd like to hear a little bit more detail in terms of what the most viable mechanism is to increase that assistance...

Paul Salem: Thank you.

Woman: ... barring a political solution.

Paul Salem: Thank you. One more question. The gentleman there, please stand up.

Man: To build on the previous question, or the one before the previous question, the credibility of the *itilaf*, among Syrian people, legitimacy, is an issue. Do you think Geneva affected that or positively or negatively?

Paul Salem: Thank you. Let's turn to the panel, starting with Anne and then moving this way. Pick and choose the ones you want to respond to and be brief, so we can have another round.

Anne: I would welcome university students from the American University and other top flight universities to do more and to do it in the ways that you know better than I. But part of it is, you know, the answers are out there in terms of all the Twitter feeds right now that are linked to No Lost Generation. So, I believe the, the, the, uh, Twitter handle is Children of Syria hashtag. The hashtag. Uh, and so, uh, I know that if you go to Save the Children, if you go to World Vision, if you go to the International Rescue Committee or IRD and say you want to help mobilize your fellow students, they will do that. They will be helpful, uh, or UNICEF, USA for UNICEF or the group that supports UNHCR here in the U.S. and I'd love to see you do it. On terms of how aid gets into the country, we pursue all channels to get aid into the country. We'll try almost anything to get aid into the country and we don't have a problem getting aid to whole big chunks of the country and we deliver humanitarian aid based on need,

not based on political affiliation. So some of it goes from Damascus out. Much of it is funded through these UN agencies working with partners like the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The UN has been successful in setting up hubs that is helping aid to get to other parts of the country and we know that non-governmental organizations, local organizations are trying to get aid further and further into hard-to-reach areas. The problem is that there are still places where people have not gotten aid for months and they're very dangerous places and they have the right as innocent civilians to get aid. So, we have agreement from all sides that this ought to happen, but and yet it doesn't happen and the problems don't seem to be today that all sides are refusing to let it through. It seems that it's really more that the regime could make a decisive difference. Does the regime have too heavy a hand on the United Nations in Damascus in determining how aid gets out? That's something that I worry about on a daily basis. I am satisfied that there is a lot of aid getting to people in need who need it, to millions and millions of people. People in regime-controlled areas; people in contested areas; people in areas that go back and forth where the battle lines are shifting. But it's still not enough. So, we...that's why it has come down to these key areas. That's why they have become, these humanitarian issues are suddenly hopped over and are on the political, um, uh, talking points. It's because it... we don't want to treat them as a negotiating tactic, as you were raising, but certainly if, if there's to be any goodwill, there ought to be more done to help innocent civilians. Kate Phillips-Barrasso of the International Rescue Committee, was asking about what more can be done. You know, in reference to the presidential statement from October 2<sup>nd</sup>, that really for me was a common sense document that showed all the many ways more could be done. The fact that that hasn't happened, that there hasn't been much forward momentum on this, that there's been really minor steps taken, I believe they were called baby steps earlier. That is a major disappointment. I don't feel we need more than what we currently have. We just need it to happen and that's my great frustration.

Paul Salem: Thank you, Anne. Encho?

Encho Gospodinov: While I do agree with my colleagues that it's a very sensitive issue and, again, based on my field experience, the balance between a strong desire of a humanitarian agency or an actor to go to the most dangerous places and bring the stuff, is half of the story. The other half is the risk you take as a head of delegation or an agency to protect your staff and what happens that if you deliver a truck or two, but on the way back, you lose five or six people of your people. Then what are you doing that, to explain this to your headquarters and how you actually damage your future operations when you may be able to reach even more people? It's a big dilemma and it's a very difficult issue when you have to decide it in the field.

Paul Salem: Thank you. Mr. Ghadbian?

Najib Ghabbian: The two questions addressed to me, the other side of the opposition, the extremists, terrorists. I think the regime's narrative of they're trying to fight terrorism was tremendously weakened a couple of weeks ago when local populations in many of the liberated areas as well as all brigades of the Free Syrian Army, including moderate Islamists, turned big time against ISIS, the Acleda-affiliated group in Syria and let's be clear. From the beginning, we believed that this particular group - ISIS, was a regime-created organization. The genesis of it is those who were trained by the Syrian regime to go kill Americans in Iraq. Some of you know the story. Some of them came back. They were in prison. They were released a year ago, more than a year ago. This is not to say that there aren't, you know, maybe young people among these organizations who are driven to come and fight dictatorship and, and help other fellow Muslims, etc., and they're brainwashed into that. But this organization, its tactics, the way it's been attacking the Free Syrian Army, practices of imposing its extremist vision on, in the liberated areas, really played into the hands of the regime and finally people had enough. They turned against it and they pushed it from these areas. So, we are actually fighting on two fronts. We are the one who are fighting terrorism in addition to the actual terrorism of the regime. The regime is the embodiment of terrorism. This is, I mean, its history. All of you who've dealt with this regime, you know better. From Iraq to Lebanon, to, to, to, you know, again, I don't want to go on to this. And I think that's why you've seen the regime totally isolated in Montreux. I mean, nobody really buys, buys, buys its, its, its, you know, its discourse anymore. So, but at least let me say again, reiterate that we are committed to the pluralistic democratic Syria that respects international human rights and humanitarian laws and, and, and that's the vision we want to have for Syria. As for as the question of the Coalition going to Geneva, it was a difficult decision and in fact, because the Coalition is made up of different groups, there were some who are not very supportive, not because they don't believe in a political solution. I think some wanted to see more conditions that could make this conference likely to succeed. That was the difference within the Coalition itself. But I think from the point of view of many of us, we believe this is the right thing to do, so we decided we should go there. We went there. The least we could go and make the case before the Syrian people that we are here to make, you know, to find a political solution along the line identified by the Geneva Communique, which certain understanding and interpretation, which were in fact supported by the core group of the Friends of Syria, the 11 countries, in the London Communique, which provided certain definitions like this eventually mean there is no role for Assad, that this is should be within a timeframe, that there should be some confidence building measures, some of the things I mentioned. So I think we were equipped with that in addition to support actually from the Arab League to go and pursue a political solution. I think the first week, the outcome of the first week was positive. We established, I think, communication with many Syrians providing feedback and most of the feedback has been very, very positive. I think the next

challenge now is to show that those, as you mentioned, Paul, that there should be in fact some improvement on the ground to allow us to continue this path.

Paul Salem: Thank you, Najib. Ambassador Feltman?

Jeffrey Feltman: Thanks. To make a general comment, follow up with, following up on what Dr. Ghadbian just said. You know, again, I, can't talk about what happened in that room, but imagine the scene. You have the Syrian government sitting on one side; you have the Syrian opposition sitting on the other side. They're not talking to each other. They're talking to Lakhdar Brahimi. So each side is talking to Lakhdar Brahimi, but the other side's hearing. This is unique in the three years of this conflict where both sides are hearing what the other side... each side is hearing what the other side is saying and to address your question, they did talk about their vision. They did talk about the future of Syria. The conference is... the conference is a political conference. It is based on the proposal by the initiating states, the Russian Federation, the United States, for conference to talk about implementation of the Geneva Communique. I urge you all to read that Geneva Communique again. It talks about principles of transition. It talks about the democratic aspirations that the Syrian people have. It talks about human rights. The de... you know, there are lots of details. The establishment of transitional governing body, we've talked about. But it's a document that it broad enough on ending the violence and moving to transition that allows each side to provide visions on how each sides sees the implementation. So I certainly am glad to hear you say that it was a positive experience for the opposition to be there, despite the fact that the actual tangible results are quite modest. But it was significant to be in that room and to watch them, each side talking to Mr. Brahimi about each side's views of the future for, future for Syria. Going back to what I said earlier, this is a political process. This is a political conference. The goal is to end the conflict, move to a transition. The fact that these humanitarian issues came up in the discussion, doesn't mean they didn't come up elsewhere. It doesn't mean that the UN folks on the ground weren't working on it. The people in New York weren't working on it. This is the... but it shows the importance of them, that the humanitarian actors wished us, wished Mr. Brahimi, to also use the opportunity of the presence of these delegations to push the humanitarian agenda as well. But that is...but that's not the only venue or even the primary venue for the humanitarian discussions. In terms of a Security Council resolution, Secretary-General has said repeatedly that he wants to see unity and action in the Security Council on humanitarian issues, as well as on the political issues. We in the Secretariat, don't write Security Council resolutions. Security Council resolutions are written by the members themselves of the Security Council. We would be supportive and hope to see Security Council unity on which we can, on which we can build and operate, but it's not up to the Secretariat. But our views are clear that we hope to see Security Council unity behind some of the political, humanitarian issues that we've discussed. Thank you.

Paul Salem: Thank you, Ambassador Feltman. I'm sure we still have a lot of questions, but we do have to break for lunch and you can, I'm sure, pose your questions directly to the panelists. I want to thank our four panelists for an excellent panel.

**Panel ends**