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Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN MESSAGE TO ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT, WARNS OF SYRIAN CONFLICT'S

CONSEQUENCES FOR NATIONAL COHESION, REGIONAL STABILITY

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the League of Arab States Summit in Doha on 26 March:

I am pleased to convey my greetings to all participants in the twenty-fourth Regular Session of the League of Arab States Summit. I thank Qatar for hosting this important event.

During last year's Summit in Baghdad, I appealed to world leaders to "listen to the people". The people of Syria stood up in peaceful and popular protests two years ago to appeal for their universal rights and freedoms. This call was answered with brutal force by the Syrian authorities. Today the world is watching the consequences with horror.

Indiscriminate air, missile, artillery and bomb attacks against civilian areas continue. Radical elements are taking hold. Those responsible for serious abuses must face justice. The spillover effects of the conflict are evident in Syria's neighbouring countries.

We must inject urgency towards reaching a political solution while there is still time to prevent Syria's destruction. The goal is difficult, but clear: an end to violence; a clean break with the past; and a transition to a new Syria in which the rights of all communities are protected and the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians for freedom, dignity and justice are met. In the face of sceptics and those who favour other solutions, United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi continues efforts to help the Syrian people resolve the conflict through peaceful and political means.

I urge the members of the Arab League to consider the consequences of the prolonged conflict in Syria and the deeply disastrous effect this is having on the lives of the Syrian people, the cohesiveness of the country and the stability of the wider region. In the name of peace, I urge you to reflect long on the actions taken today and their consequences.

Syria is facing a humanitarian crisis, with over 3 million people displaced from their homes. The United Nations is doing its utmost to deliver aid to the Syrians in need. We will continue to do so. It is crucial that the pledges made during the Kuwait Conference on 30 January are honoured.

In Yemen the path of peaceful dialogue has been chosen. The National Dialogue Conference is the most inclusive and participatory process in the history of the country. I hope that all Yemenis will seize this opportunity to build trust, ensure justice, promote human rights and contribute to the country's security, development and prosperity. The United Nations remains fully engaged with all sides to keep Yemen's transition on track.

We are entering a critical period with regard to the Palestinian question. If we are to salvage the two-State solution and realize Palestinian aspirations to live in freedom and dignity in an independent State of their own, side-by-side with Israel in peace and security, all of us must act decisively and with concerted purpose. Last November, the United Nations General Assembly voted to

accord Palestine the status of non-Member observer State. That was a strong reaffirmation of this goal. The Arab Peace Initiative remains an important framework for any future peace.

I must note that the viability of the two-State solution is increasingly at stake in a context of accelerated illegal Israeli settlement construction and deep financial crisis on the Palestinian side. The immediate priority is to de-escalate tensions and stabilize the situation of the Palestinian Authority. Your generous political and financial support, including to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), is critical.

In Somalia, the recent progress we are witnessing is truly remarkable. Security Council resolution 2093 (2013) is a recognition of the political progress made following the end of the transition last August. It is a call to action on the defined peacebuilding and State-building goals. The League of Arab States has a unique role to play.

Sudan and South Sudan have also made steady, though slow, progress towards the resolution of their post-secession issues. It is necessary for the two parties to implement the series of agreements they have signed recently.

Regarding Darfur, the United Nations remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. I acknowledge the vital role played by Qatar in supporting the achievement of a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement for Darfur and the requisite financing for its implementation.

The Arab League is undertaking significant reforms to meet the many new challenges. I wish you all the best in this important effort. A more effective and efficient Arab League will continue to be a reliable partner of the United Nations. The United Nations Secretariat has answered the League of Arab States call for strengthening our partnership and cooperation mechanisms. We stand ready to work closely with the League and its members on all fronts in the years to come.

I wish this important meeting all success.

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