

## **Press Statement**

An IBSA delegation comprising of Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Mr. Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, Under Secretary General for Africa and the Middle East of the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil and Mr. Dilip Sinha, Additional Secretary for International Organizations, Ministry of External Affairs of India, called on H.E. Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, President of Syrian Arab Republic and H.E. Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syrian Arab Republic on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2011, to discuss the current situation in Syria and the way forward.

The President reassured the delegation of his commitment to the reform process, aimed at ushering in multi-party democracy, including through revision of the constitution. He said that political reforms were being finalized in consultation with the people of Syria and the national dialogue would continue to give shape to the new laws and to arrive at a suitable model for the economy. The process of revision of the constitution would be completed by February/March 2012. He acknowledged that some mistakes had been made by the security forces in the initial stages of the unrest and that efforts were underway to prevent their recurrence.

Foreign Minister Mr. Moualem briefed the delegation about the prevailing situation in Syria, the reasons behind the unrest and violence and explained the steps taken by the Government to bring the situation under control. He said that there are 3 categories of opposition in Syria: the economically disadvantaged sections; intellectuals and academics; and armed groups. He outlined in detail the political reforms that are in the process of being implemented and said that free and fair elections to the Parliament will be held in Syria before end 2011. He recalled the statement of the President of Syria to rewrite the Constitution of Syria, if considered necessary.

In recalling the adoption of UNSC Presidential Statement of 3 August, the visiting delegation reaffirmed the commitment of India, Brazil and South Africa to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. They expressed grave concern at the current situation in Syria and condemned violence from all sides. They regretted all loss of life and were concerned over the humanitarian impact of the violence. They called for an immediate end to all violence and urged all sides to act with utmost restraint and respect for human rights and international human rights law. In noting the establishment of an independent judicial committee to investigate the violence, the visiting delegation stressed the importance of ensuring the credibility and impartiality thereof, to which Mr. Moualem responded that once the report of the committee becomes available, those responsible for the violence would be held to account.

They urged the Government to positively consider the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 29 April 2011. They stressed that it is essential for the Syrian Government not to lose momentum and to continue the process of national dialogue and political reforms with the aim of effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the population. This will contribute to the full exercise of fundamental freedoms by the Syrian people, including that of expression and peaceful assembly. They expressed the hope that opposition groups will cooperate in this process.

Mr. Moualem reiterated that Syria will be a free, pluralistic and multi-party democracy before the end of the year.

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