OSE Geir O. Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria presser

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, UN Geneva, nations’ flags flying, a beautiful day.
2. Medium shot, UN Geneva Press Room III, a mask-wearing UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen arriving, journalists (also masked) seated apart from one another, typing on laptops. Mr. Pedersen is followed by his spokesperson Jenifer Fenton (masked); both sit apart at podium. Press photographers take photographs of the Special Envoy.
3. Wide shot, UN Geneva Press Room III, showing UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen sitting at podium, flanked by spokesperson Jenifer Fenton with a Press photographer seated nearby checking his camera.
4. **SOUNDBITE (English)** — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “I told the Security Council that, and I said that many times, that when I meet with Syrians from across the board, they all express to me a deep, deep frustration about the lack of progress on the political front. And as I said, the meeting here in Geneva of the Small Body of the Constitutional Committee will of course not change that, but if it is handled correctly, it can start to build confidence, and it can be the beginning of something that can send hope also to the Syrian people. And this is indeed my hope.”
6. **SOUNDBITE (English)** — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “I was very pleased when I listened to the Members of the Security Council on Wednesday to hear that they were unanimous in their support for the work we are doing and for the meeting of the Small body of the Constitutional Committee that will start here on Monday. And as I have said many times, if
we are to be successful, we also need the support of the international community.”

7. Medium shot, journalists sitting at table, one has his mask lowered, Press Room III, Palais des Nations.

8. SOUNDBITE (English) — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “Obviously, they will all be tested – they are all tested - before they arrive in Geneva, and they will be tested on arrival in Geneva. Then, of course, they will all be wearing masks.”

9. Medium close-up, journalist’s hands shown typing and laptop screen showing notes of Special Envoy’s comments, Press Room III, Palais des Nations.

10. SOUNDBITE (English) — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “We need to see progress when it comes to abductees, to detainees and we need information on missing persons. This I think could perhaps be the one key important development that could help to build trust and confidence and I repeat my strong appeal to the parties on this again.”

11. Medium close-up, rows of empty chairs in foreground, journalists to rear, Press Room III, Palais des Nations.

12. SOUNDBITE (English) — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “Then of course it’s the issue about the ceasefire holding in Idlib in the northwest; I’ve asked that this could be strengthened by what I call a nationwide ceasefire in line with Security Council Resolution 2254. This is something I still believe is extremely relevant. And then of course, it goes without saying that at this this very critical time for the Syrian people, with the economy, with the economic collapse, with the pandemic, that everything is done that is possible from the international community to support the Syrian people.”


14. SOUNDBITE (English) — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “I’m confident that in my dialogue with the two co-chairs, that the two co-chairs will be able to handle the challenges of the meetings. You know, obviously in the meeting we had late October with the (larger group) of 150, it went very well, there were obviously very different narratives, very different perspectives.”

15. Medium shot, journalists seated in foreground, UN Special Envoy to rear, Press Room III, Palais des Nations.

16. SOUNDBITE (English) — Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria: “I’ve been informed that there will be in Geneva during this time most probably, representatives from Russia, Iran and Turkey - the so-called Astana Three - and I believe also from the United States. There may also be others that will be here. But let me emphasise that the Constitutional Committee is of course, the work of that, is of course completely independent.”
Ahead of fresh talks in Geneva, UN Syria envoy appeals for progress on detainees, wider ceasefire

Success in next week’s UN-led talks aimed at securing a peaceful future for Syria depends on making progress on a series of thorny issues, UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen said on Friday, in an appeal to belligerents to extend a fragile ceasefire and release detainees.

Speaking in Geneva, the UN negotiator also urged the international community to show the people of the war-torn country that they have not been forgotten, after almost a decade of war that has reduced large swathes to rubble and likely claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Their “frustration” about the lack of progress on a politically agreed end to the fighting was clear, he told journalists, two days after addressing the UN Security Council in New York.

“I told the Security Council that, and I said that many times, that when I meet with Syrians from across the board, they all express to me a deep, deep frustration about the lack of progress on the political front. And as I said, the meeting here in Geneva of the Small Body of the Constitutional Committee will of course not change that, but if it is handled correctly, it can start to build confidence, and it can be the beginning of something that can send hope also to the Syrian people. And this is indeed my hope.”

The convening on Monday of the Small Group of the Syrian Constitutional Committee brings together 15 representatives from Syria’s Government, 15 from the Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC) and 15 more civil society participants, known as the “middle third”.

A larger group of 150 delegates is also part of the process, but only the smaller group is meeting in Geneva on Monday for a week.

Both bodies meet on the basis of an agreement between the Government of Syria and the opposition to implement a key part of Security Council resolution 2254 (from 2015), which called for setting a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution.

Monday’s gathering will be the first time that delegates will have met after a hiatus of nine months, caused by differences over the agenda which were resolved by March – and then by COVID restrictions – Mr. Pedersen said.

He added that he had been “very pleased when I listened to the Members of the Security Council on Wednesday to hear that they were unanimous in their support for the work we are doing and for the meeting of the Small body of the Constitutional Committee that will start here on Monday. And as I have said many times, if we are to be successful, we also need the support of the international community.”

Highlighting the difficulties associated with conducting the meeting amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Special Envoy insisted that necessary precautions will be taken to avoid transmission of possible infection by delegates.

These include moving the venue of discussions to a room with capacity for 200 people, four times the number expected, and ensuring physical distancing. “Obviously, they will all be tested – they are all tested - before they arrive in Geneva, and they will be tested on arrival in Geneva,” Mr. Pedersen said. “Then, of course, they will all be wearing masks.”

In order to make substantive progress during discussions, the Special Envoy insisted that there needs to be “progress when it comes to abductees, to detainees and we need information on missing persons. This I think could perhaps be the one key important development that could help to build trust and confidence and I repeat my strong appeal to the parties on this again.”
Addressing other matters was also crucial, he continued, including the “ceasefire holding in Idlib in the northwest; I’ve asked that this could be strengthened by what I call a nationwide ceasefire in line with Security Council Resolution 2254. This is something I still believe is extremely relevant. And then of course, it goes without saying that at this this very critical time for the Syrian people, with the economy, with the economic collapse, with the pandemic, that everything is done that is possible from the international community to support the Syrian people.”

Highlighting the Syrian-led nature of the constitutional discussions, with the co-chairs of the Government and opposition effectively presiding side by side as co-chairs, the UN Special Envoy noted that the October session had featured some “shouting and screaming”.

But he added: “I’m confident that in my dialogue with the two co-chairs, that the two co-chairs will be able to handle the challenges of the meetings. You know, obviously in the meeting we had late October with the (Larger Group) of 150, it went very well, there were obviously very different narratives, very different perspectives.”

In parallel with the Syrians’ discussions, Mr. Pedersen underscored the keen international interest in the proceedings.

“I've been informed that there will be in Geneva during this time most probably, representatives from Russia, Iran and Turkey - the so-called Astana Three - and I believe also from the United States. There may also be others that will be here. But let me emphasise that the Constitutional Committee is of course, the work of that, is of course completely independent.”