



Joint Press Communiqué
by the Syrian Lebanese Higher Council
Damascus 07/03/2005
[Informal Translation]

Upon the invitation of the President of The Syrian Arab Republic Mr. Bashar Assad, His Excellency President Emile Lahoud headed an official delegation to the Syrian Arab Republic where the Syrian Lebanese Higher Council meeting was held and presided by both Presidents Assad and Laboud, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Syrian Lebanese Higher Council Mr. Nasri Al-Khouri.

Both parties confirmed that this meeting comes at a difficult time and while challenges are facing both countries, and reaffirms the determination of both countries to deepen the course of cooperation and coordination between them, as well as to carry on with the implementation of the Treaty and agreements signed within its framework, in an accurate and transparent manner, that achieves the joint benefit of both countries. Both sides confirmed their determination to rectify any shortcoming to this path, in the framework of the joint institutions established according to this Treaty, which remains the only suitable and legal framework to clear up difficulties and obstacles, and to plan for the future of these relations. This should be translated by concrete steps, proposals and behaviors reflecting the historical, popular, social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of these brotherly relations.

Both parties confirmed their commitment to the Taef Agreement and its mechanisms, and to the Treaty of Fraternity, Cooperation, and Coordination, as well as to related agreements. They renewed their attachment to common strategic constants in the face of current and future challenges, and their determination to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based of relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid process, and the principle of land for peace. Both parties confirmed their respect of all the resolutions of the International legality, including resolution 1559, and the necessity of implementing all of them without selectiveness and the use of double standards.

Then, both parties started discussing the different items on the agenda proposed by the Secretary-General of the Syrian Lebanese Higher Council in view of the report that he presented and took the following decisions:

First:

In compliance with the Taef Agreement, and article 4 of the Fraternity, Cooperation, and Coordination Treaty signed between the two countries on May 22, 1991, based on the commitment to the UN Charter, and in respect of the resolutions of International legality, the Higher Council decided the following:

- a. To withdraw Syrian Arab Forces present in Lebanon to the Bekaa, and the entrance of West Bekaa, in Dahr-el-Baidar up to Hammana – Mdeirej – Ain Dara line, before the end of the month of March 2005.
- b. The Joint Military Committee should within a period of one month, starting from the date of withdrawal of the Syrian forces to the Bekaa area according to point (a) draw up an Accord determining the volume and duration of the Syrian forces presence in the abovementioned areas, as well as the nature of the relation between these forces and the Lebanese state authorities in the places they are positioned.
- c. At the end of the period established by the Joint Military Committee according to point (b) both the Syrian and Lebanese governments will agree upon the completion of the withdrawal of the remaining Syrian Arab forces.

Second:

Conforming to article 6 of the Fraternity, Cooperation, and coordination Treaty the Council decided:

- a. To convene the Follow-Up and Coordination Commission to meet as soon as possible, presided by the prime ministers of both countries, to follow up and to review the activities of all joint



ministerial committees and to acquaint itself with what has been implemented during the previous stage and to approve it, as well as to regularly convene every six months.

- b. To call upon the Committee for Defense and Security Affairs to convene at the earliest possible date in order to reestablish the two defense and security committees, the two military and security follow-up committees, and the joint technical committees mentioned in the Agreement of Defense and Security. This committee should hold regular meetings every three months.
- c. To call upon the Foreign Affairs Committee to hold a meeting at the earliest possible date during which a joint follow-up committee would be formed and would set up a program for common action to deal with current challenges; this committee would hold regular meetings every two months.
- d. To call upon all other joint ministerial committees led by the Committee for Economic and Social Affairs to hold regular meetings and if the need arises to accelerate the pace of concluded agreements and the implementation of common projects.

Three:

To ask the Joint Labour Committee to formulate an action plan for the Bilateral Labour Agreement, to submit it to the Higher Council for adoption, within a period of three months.

Four:

To ask the Joint Financial Committee to submit to the higher Council, within three months, a plan for the creation of a unified customs barrier to study it and to take the appropriate decision in this respect.

Five:

To ask the Economic Committee to submit to the Higher Council its vision for achieving economic complementarity within a period of three months.