

Syrian Arab Republic

Positions for the League of Arab States

I. Economic Integration Among the Arab states

The Syrian Arab Republic is dedicated to the promotion of economic integration and reform within the Arab League. Syria is “actively seeking foreign investment, particularly in agriculture, oil and gas, industry, electricity distribution, telecommunications and tourism.”¹ In order to attract investors to its market, Syria “offers freedom to expatriate profits and various tax incentives for up to seven years.”² Syrian interest in investment and economic integration can be traced back to 1977 with Syria participating in foreign investment deals with countries in the Gulf region.³ Recently, “Syria has adopted the gradual shift into the social market economy and depended on partnership among the national economy sectors to be partners in the development process.”⁴ Syria’s commitment to economic integration on the regional level, and its hope that regional integrity will ensure a strong role for the Middle East as core actor in the international arena is the driving force behind Syria’s willingness to invest in regional economic treaties.

Syria has approached the issue of economic integration by taking a lead role in promoting trade among not only Arab states but also throughout the international community. Under the leadership of President Bashar al-Assad, Syria opened the 57th session of the Damascus International Fair July of this year. This fair hosted 45 Arab and foreign countries. Prime Minister Muhammad Naji Otri stated, “Syria has made progress in the process of liberating trade with balanced openness to the world economy through joining a number of free trade agreements and signing several trade and economic accords as well as entering strategic partnerships with Arab and Foreign states to develop the Syrian economy and increase resources.”⁵ This is an example of Syria’s commitment to shift its economic policy to promote inclusion rather than exclusion. Again, these actions have shown that Syria is committed to being a key participant in trade among Arab and foreign countries alike and seeks to establish lasting and meaningful business relationships with these countries.

Capital Intelligence and the International Monetary Fund state, “the [Syrian] government should focus on implementing changes that would quicken its transition to a market-based economy.”⁶ Drawing upon existing economic treaties such as the Council for Economic Unity, the Agadir Agreement, and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), Syria proposes the implementation of a Pan-Arab motion towards economic integration of the LAS through reform of the existing systems that the Arab League member states have currently ratified. Through this approach, economic integration can be implemented with haste and more effectively. In addition, Syria hopes that these reforms will move the LAS to become more involved as an unified economic front with other regional players outside of the League itself.

II. Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Syrian Arab Republic has seen an increase in the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW), particularly after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Syria believes that a majority of this increase is due to the influx of thousands of Iraqi refugees seeking safe haven from the insurgent violence. As a result of the Iraqi insurgent violence, Syria has become an unwilling conduit for the trade of illicit SALW. In addition, it has been implied, through the use of unreliable sources, that Syria is facilitating this illicit activity. This is an issue of particular importance to the people of Syria because of the fact that the country is in the process of becoming one of the major centers of economic prosperity in the Middle East. Therefore, Syria realizes that it is in its interest to develop means of combating this global issue.

Syria has approached the issue of illicit trade of weapons as one of national importance. Syria believes that the primary means of this facilitation of illicit trade of SALW is through its transport. Syria has shown a commitment to controlling the transport of illicit SALW by ensuring the security of its 370-mile border with Iraq. Syria has reiterated that they want to work with Iraq to secure its border.⁷ Syria has taken very aggressive steps to ensure

¹ Mutual Evaluation Report – 1.1 General Information <http://www.banquecentrale.gov.sy/money-laundering/re-eg.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Principal Commercial and Political Characteristics - <http://www.infoprod.co.il/country/syria1d.htm>

⁴ Syrian Arab News Agency – SANA - <http://www.sana.sy/eng/24/2010/07/15/298448.htm>

⁵ Damascus International Fair opens activities... Otri: Syria witnesses wide reform progress <http://www.sana.sy/eng/24/2010/07/15/298448.htm>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Syria wants to work with US forces to control Iraq border” <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/worldhotnews/read.php?newsid=30022582>

security on its borders. For instance, between June and October 2005, Syria increased border posts from 547 to 557.⁸ In addition to taking measures to ensuring the security of its borders, Syria has gone on the offensive, diplomatically, with countries that may themselves be either directly or indirectly financing the illicit trade of SALW. At a UN General Assembly session on the Kimberley process, Syria attacked Israel for its trade in “conflict diamonds.”⁹ Syria’s Ambassador to the UN Bashar Ja’afari said, “Israel exploits trafficking in diamonds in Africa and other countries in the world in order to fund transactions to sell arms and to promote internal troubles in certain countries, thereby involving children in armed conflict.” Thirdly, Syria has created several laws pertaining to the possession, sale and transport of SALW. For instance, Legislative Decree No. 51 of 24 September 2001 states that all citizens must have a permit in order to possess weapons and ammunition. This decree also required the revocation of all permits for military rifles and ammunition.¹⁰

Syria believes that this problem is both regional and international in scope and that it requires a corresponding response. However, the right of every State to manufacture small arms for its defense, the right of peoples to self-determination and to use all methods necessary to combat foreign domination must be respected and adhered to in order to develop an effective means to combat this problem.¹¹ Syria would like to see the committee develop a plan of action that focuses on implementing international mechanisms pertaining to border control. Syria feels that this approach is one of the strongest because it encourages state-to-state and regional cooperation while respecting the doctrine of state sovereignty.

III. Developing a pan-Arab Response to Requests for Extradition and Repatriation of International Criminals

“Extradition is an important component of transnational criminal law enforcement.”¹² The Syrian Arab Republic recognizes the growing importance of extradition and repatriation in the global climate of international relations. Syria has been intimately involved in both extradition and repatriation. For example, Syria has been involved through the Arab League with Sudanese repatriation. “The Arab League opened a number of projects and facilities to encourage voluntary repatriation in West Darfur State” in which Syria’s “permanent representative at the Arab League”, Yousef Ahmed, played an active role.¹³ Syria is committed to engaging its neighbors in order to establish the most effective judicial process in dealing with these issues while simultaneously promoting state sovereignty.

The Syrian Arab Republic recognizes the problems inherent in extradition of criminals, especially those accused of terrorism and other activities condemned by international law. Syria also understands the necessity of compliance between states to ensure the success of international legal orders that provide stability and justice under international law. Syria looks favorably upon treaty-based alliances dealing with extradition and repatriation. In order to ensure that state sovereignty is fully recognized, Syria will continue to comply with international treaties that ensure order is maintained through extradition of international criminals.

The Syrian Arab Republic requests that the Arab League construct “framework for inter-state co-operation” that is “comprehensive enough to take into account the multi-faceted nature of organized crime,” especially those linked with non-state actors.¹⁴ “Extradition and mutual legal assistance tend to be regulated either by treaties or through the “soft-law” of transnational economic blocs and communities.”¹⁵ The Syrian Arab Republic looks favorably upon the continued use of treaties with a standard set by the Arab League in order to regulate the minimum requirements of such regional co-operation. Repatriation of international criminals should be treated with care. As some repatriation cases have failed previously in other member states, The Syrian Arab Republic requests the formation of a tribunal in order to hear extradition requests and handle disputes that treaties are inept to solve in order to encourage a more pan-Arab response. This body should take into account the many facets of extradition and should seek to repatriate international criminals in conjuncture with state and regional laws allowing for the most realistic and beneficial synthesis.

⁸ “Syria shows off its security on the Iraq border” <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9877430/>

⁹ “Syria attacks Israel’s ‘conflict diamond’ leadership role” <http://www.syria-today.com/index.php/january-2010/495-news/5247-syria-attacks-israels-conflict-diamond-leadership-role>

¹⁰ Programme of Action Implementation Support System <http://www.poa-iss.org/CountryProfiles/CountryProfileInfo.aspx?CoI=188&pos=1000>

¹¹ Coordinating Action on Small Arms Mechanics http://www.poa-iss.org/CountryProfiles/CP_PressRelease.aspx?CpC=81

¹² The Yale Journal of International Law, A Comparative Analysis of the United States’ Response to Extradition Requests from China, M. Bloom

¹³ Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) - <http://www.sana.sy/eng/22/2010/02/13/272761.htm>

¹⁴ Inter-state Co-operation, http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/Other/ahsi/Goredema_Botha/pt1chap5.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.