



# *IFE-EFI STATEMENT*

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

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## **SYRIA GENEVA TALKS**

### **SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEMOCRACY CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY WITH EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN RIGHT FROM THE START**

The fourth round of the Geneva Peace Talks between the Syrian government and opposition parties under the auspices of the United Nations begins on 23rd February 2017. The focus of the meeting is said to be on governance, a new constitution and elections.

“In order for peace to be just and sustainable, the equal participation of women and women’s rights defenders at the negotiation table and throughout the transitional process is a must, in order to ensure that women’s rights and gender equality are on the peace negotiation agenda right from the start!” said Lilian Halls French, Co-President of the Euromed Feminist Initiative.

The UN special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has said that the agenda of negotiations would be based on 2015 Security Council resolution 2254 endorsing a peace process in Syria, with the following aims:

- Establishing credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance
- Setting schedule and process for drafting new constitution
- Holding free and fair elections within 18 months pursuant to new constitution administered under UN observation

Emerging from a bloody conflict and authoritarian regime, Syria has opportunities to build democratic system in respect of human rights, the rule of law and gender equality. However, democracy demands equal participation and sharing of power, duties and responsibilities. The recognition of equal rights and duties defines citizenship. Therefore, affirming constitutional equality makes women and men full citizens and defines gender equality as a key feature of the State.

Euromed Feminist Initiative supports the Syrian advocacy for a transitional period long enough to allow for a participatory and inclusive constitution building process, civic education, awareness-raising and public consultations. Such a process has also come to be seen as a norm under international law, necessary to ensure constitutional legitimacy and true national ownership of both women and men.

*Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI advocates for gender equality and women’s universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination*