



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

H.E. The Chairman of the  
Senior Officials Committee of the  
League of Arab States

Helsinki, 20 October 2014

Excellency,

I am pleased to respond to the points recently conveyed by Ambassador Al-Assad on behalf of the Arab League Senior Officials Committee. I have consulted with the Conveners, and they support the following.

Smaller group consultations which I proposed to you were intended as continuation of the Geneva consultations, aimed at addressing the core outstanding issues identified in Geneva and Glion, with the goal of moving from the broad ideas identified in those meetings to negotiating a specific agenda for Helsinki that could be delivered to the capitals for approval.

The proposal for a new format reflected that we have reached a point in our collective efforts where we must transition to the actual negotiation and conclusion of an agreed agenda and modalities. The purpose of the meeting in Nicosia – a venue with good flight connections from the Middle East region - was to facilitate agreement among the parties toward holding the Helsinki Conference as soon as possible. Smaller group discussions, to be followed by a meeting of the larger group, were not intended to limit the participation of any states, but represent a common and widely used diplomatic method to reach agreement on difficult issues. I will, of course, honour any decision made by the Arab League on participation.

All discussions, papers, and outcomes of previous meetings remain valid. The aim of the next round of consultations is to utilize all previous proposals to bring closer the views expressed in previous meetings, and to set on paper a provisionally agreed formulation of an agenda and modalities that all sides can accept. I expect all participants to bring their best ideas, and an openness to meld them into a practical agenda that will allow us to hold the Conference as soon as possible. I am prepared to facilitate this drafting process with specific language suggestions which I have discussed with the conveners.

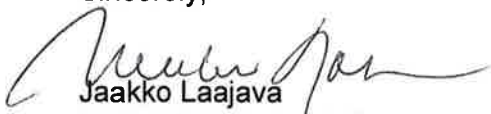
Iran must, of course, remain involved. Iran has been invited to all rounds of informal consultations and I brief Iran regularly.

I also appreciate the reminder regarding the Arab League's criteria, which the Conveners and I keep always under consideration.

In view of the observations of Ambassador Al-Assad I am pleased to return to the tested format of informal consultations in Glion and Geneva and organize a meeting for all, including the conveners, in Geneva on 2 – 3 November, 2014. I have the pleasure to enclose an invitation to an informal meeting addressed to you, Excellency, and to H.E. Dr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the Arab League.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Jaakko Laajava  
Under-Secretary of State  
Facilitator