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## Syria and the coming of a new world order

By Wang Hui

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After months of delay and much international mediation, the date for the Geneva II Middle East peace conference has been set, rekindling hopes for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis. On Nov 25, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced that the conference would be held on Jan 22, 2014, in Geneva where the Syrian government and opposition will meet at the negotiating table for the first time since an armed conflict broke out in the country in March 2011.

Geneva II is aimed at achieving a political resolution to the conflict through a comprehensive agreement between the government and the opposition for the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué, which was adopted after the first international conference on the Syrian crisis on Jan 30, 2012.

The Jan 22 conference reflects the common aspiration of all the countries - that the Syrian conflict should be resolved as soon as possible through peaceful means. The UN has offered a negotiating platform where belligerent Syrian parties and their regional and international supporters could sit down, peacefully air their views and search for a political solution acceptable to all sides.

The bloody conflict in Syria has cost more than 100,000 lives and left more than 2 million as refugees. There is every reason for the parties involved and the international community to seize the hard-won opportunity and work for a positive result.

With the precise agenda for the meeting and the complete list of the participants still to be decided, efforts are still needed to ensure that the UN offer does not go begging. The warring parties in Syria and the regional players who exercise influence over them should understand that the future of Syria and the well-being of the Syrian people are at stake. Geneva II could well be the last chance to keep the warring sides in Syria on the political negotiations' track.

Iran and Turkey want a ceasefire in Syria before Geneva II, which makes perfect sense because it would give time to the two sides to prepare for and hold face-to-face talks at the conference. So the other countries involved in the preparations for the talks should make extra efforts to ensure that a ceasefire is indeed declared before the conference.

China, on its part, will continue working to make Geneva II a success. Speaking in Bucharest on Nov 26, Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged all sides in Syria to increase communication, remove obstacles, build mutual trust and seek consensus.

China has been maintaining contact with all sides in Syria and encouraging them to commit themselves to a political solution to the protracted crisis, for which Geneva II is the best platform. The humanitarian situation in Syria can be improved only after the crisis is fully resolved, said Wang, who was accompanying Premier Li Keqiang on an official visit to Romania.

By pushing for political resolutions, China has been playing a constructive role in the Syrian crisis as well as the Iranian nuclear issue. As a country committed to world peace and stability, China is ready to shoulder more international responsibilities. Its continuous efforts in this regard have helped shape the concept of a new world order in which the overriding principle would be peace, mutual development and win-win cooperation.

The breakthrough in the Iranian nuclear issue and the progress made in resolving the Syrian conflict should give people an idea about how the world order would shift in the future. It may be too early to say that using force and imposing sanctions to resolve regional and international conflicts have become outdated, but the room for mediating political resolutions to burning regional and global issues is certainly bigger.

After the end of the Cold War, the theory of hegemonic stability has become increasingly unpopular. As American scholar Robert Geohane said in the 1980s, post-hegemonic cooperation is possible. The trend of reconciliation that has emerged in the Middle East shows cooperation, instead of confrontation, should be the defining theme of the new world order.