Khatib highlights importance of concerted international effort to maintain global stability

By Alia Shukri Hamza

AMMAN — Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib on Monday warned of dire consequences if the conflict in the region is allowed to be hijacked by terrorist elements taking advantage of a collapse in regional power, noting that a concerted international effort was needed to help serve the cause of peace.

“Coalition of security conditions either in the Palestinian territories or in Israel will play a central role in terrorist elements and organisations, and therefore is dire consequences on the world security and stability,” Khatib told participants at a conference on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’s (NATO) Mediterranean Dialogue and the Broader Middle East Region.

“Consequently, there is a need for a much more concerted effort and cooperation between all of us,” he said, adding that NATO can assist both the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people, along with the international community, in building a sustainable security and institutions that are necessary to advance the welfare of their people.

“NATO is also called for greater cooperation between NATO and its Mediterranean partners, as all of us are partners in efforts to counter terrorism, enhance greater border security and deal with cultural misperceptions about each other. He suggested ways to develop relations between the alliance and its Mediterranean partners by advancing the more than a decade-old dialogue into a genuine partnership and by starting a joint public diplomacy effort that provides a better understanding of NATO’s transformation and current policies.

Khatib’s remarks were made at a one-day conference, organized by the Regional Centre on Counter-Terrorism in Amman and NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division — to discuss NATO’s role in the region, its aims and actions for the Mediterranean Dialogue and ways to develop this dialogue into full-fledged cooperation.

The conference seeks to develop a better understanding and awareness of NATO’s capabilities and its offer for greater security cooperation for the benefit of partner countries and subsequently the region and the world, according to organisers.

NATO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo told participants that the alliance’s basic aim of engagement across the Mediterranean was to build trust and to establish and understanding to involve more countries in a common struggle against terrorism and thus in increasing the chances to meet such challenges.

“NATO is not imposing anything on any of its Mediterranean Dialogue partners in its cooperation and work together in areas in which it has the experience and expertise and where our partners are prepared to define specific requirements,” Rizzo said.

“NATO wants to complement ongoing cooperation in and with other international fora, rather than to duplicate or complicate this cooperation,” he said, adding that over the past years the number of opportunities for concrete, practical cooperation under the Mediterranean Dialogue has more than doubled.

This cooperation, he added, ranges from a wide array of measures to counter terrorism and the field of border security to airspace management, civil emergency planning and counter-piracy operations.

“Countries such as Jordan — but other Mediterranean partners in our region are gathered considerable experience in participating in UN and NATO operations. We have introduced a number of tools and instruments to build on that experience and to further enhance the interoperability between our military forces,” Rizzo said, adding that Jordan has expressed interest in making use of a trust fund, for several areas including disman- tling landmines.

The trust funds, described as new opportunities under the partnership, are an instrument for supporting the develop- ment and funding by inter- ested nations and institutions, providing a forum and the opportunity for NATO partners to offer to help partner countries.

Other opportunities in- clude training countries participating in the dialogue to develop an individual country’s defence and reducing the risk of conflict and improvement in the region and the help in the push for reform and democratisation.

If we want to be more ef- fective in meeting the security challenges, it is vital that we further develop our common understanding of those challenges, the efficiency of our defence establishments and the ability of our military to work together,” Rizzo said.

NATO’s political role

Two sessions were held yes- terday, the first to discuss NATO’s transformation and the region’s operations and missions changing, while the second focused on the alliance’s role in promoting security in the Mediterranean and the Broader Middle East.

In the first session, participants tried to get a clearer image of the alliance’s position in the region and how it can influence a change in the region and help in the push for reform and democratisation.

NATO officials were asked if the alliance was looking for a new enemy after the end of the cold war and if Islam was the next target. Alliance officials were also asked why NATO does not take more a decisive stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and what role it can play in the region other than the existing one of training mili- tary and security personnel and offering logistical support.

On the Arab-Israeli con- flict, NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division Nicola de Santis said NATO has no specific role in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, adding that it was not on the agenda agenda and there was no specific role for NATO and the region could cooper- ate on before tackling the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He quoted remarks on the matter by NATO’s secretary general saying that NATO can only get involved if there was a final settlement to the question, if both parties asked for NATO’s help and if there was a UN mandate to do so.