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**Statement by Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey  
Feltman**

**After His Meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Muallim**

May 7, 2009

Damascus, Syria

My colleague, Dan Shapiro from the National Security Council, and I were pleased to join our Charge D' Affaires Maura Connelly for talks today with his Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Walid Muallim, Presidential Advisor Shabaan and Dr. Mikad here at the Foreign Ministry.

We noted in our discussions improvements in our ability to work bilaterally with the Syrians since our last visit here two months ago. To be sure, Syria and the United States share some mutual interests. Syria and the United States also have some differences in our points of view on certain important issues. We came here today as part of President Obama's commitment to use diplomacy, to use dialogue in order to try to see where we can move forward, where our interests overlap, and to see where we can try and work together to bridge the differences that remain in some of our policies. I would describe these talks today as constructive.

We also conveyed on behalf the U.s. Administration to Foreign Minister Muallim and his colleagues, President Obama's sincere commitment to pursue Arab-Israeli peace on all tracks, including on the Syria-Israel track. We look forward to continuing the dialogue here and in Washington as we seek to use this bilateral relationship to address differences and promote mutual interests.