

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 29 October 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of briefings provided by Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on the situation in the Middle East (Syria) convened on Tuesday, 27 October 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefing and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Vassily Nebenzia  
President of the Security Council



**Annex I****Statement by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria,  
Geir Pedersen**

Today, I am briefing the Security Council from Beirut.

As we mark this month 20 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), let me recall the central role that Syrian women must play, and are indeed playing, in the political process mandated by resolution 2254 (2015) as members of the Constitutional Committee, as advisers to me and my Office, as members of technical bodies and within wider civil society.

Syrian women's rights leaders have said to me that further efforts for the full, direct and meaningful participation of Syrian women are essential, and reminded me that the process and its outcomes must serve the interests, priorities and aspirations of Syrian women in their diversity of needs and experiences.

I have heard from the Women's Advisory Board and other women leaders that what is needed above all is a credible and inclusive political process that ends the conflict and the deep suffering of the Syrian people and that brings about sustainable peace with the meaningful participation of Syrian women, and that has women's safety, basic needs, dignity, rights and equality at its core. I will continue to do everything I can to help facilitate this.

I have said from the outset of my mandate, nearly two years ago, that the conflict cannot be resolved solely by constitutional reform or a new constitution. But progress in the Constitutional Committee could be a door-opener to a deeper and wider process, if two things happen: first, if the Committee works continuously and credibly in accordance with its mandate; and secondly, if that work is accompanied by other steps by the Syrian parties and international players to build trust and confidence, step by step, and gradually develop a wider political process to implement resolution 2254 (2015).

It is particularly important for the Constitutional Committee to proceed in accordance with the agreement that established it, which was circulated, let me recall, by the Secretary-General to the Security Council as document S/2019/775 and which guides the Committee. In particular, the co-Chairs should in consensus proceed with agendas and work plans in a way that enable all issues to be considered, without making consideration of issues dependent on agreement on other issues and without preconditions. And the Committee should work expeditiously and continuously to produce results and continued progress without foreign interference, including externally imposed timelines, and focus exclusively on its mandate to prepare and draft for popular approval a constitutional reform.

As Council members know, we were not able to convene a fourth session of the small body in October as we had hoped and there was no agreed agenda for it. The co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Government took the position that the third session agenda — focusing on national foundations and principles — should remain the agenda for a fourth session. The co-Chair nominated by the opposition Syrian National Council took the position that the agenda for the fourth session should focus on the preamble, constitutional principles, rights and freedoms, the rule of law or the structure of the constitution.

As facilitator, I proposed over a month ago a bridging compromise, which the co-Chair nominated by the Syrian National Council accepted, but the co-Chair nominated by the Government did not. However, in my discussions in recent days in Damascus there was some valuable narrowing of the differences, with a variant explored that, if properly clarified, could provide a way out and enable consensus

between the co-Chairs on the agenda for the next two meetings. I have been in communication with both co-Chair Kuzbari and co-Chair Al-Bahra today as finer points are clarified. We have no agreement yet and of course nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. But if we are able to find an agreement within the next two days, it should be possible to meet in Geneva sometime during the month of November.

Beyond the Constitutional Committee, there are positive elements on which we could build a wider process. Some key stakeholders have signalled that they see the military phase of the conflict as ending, renewing attention and focus on the political process. Front lines have not shifted in around eight months. And the number of civilians killed in recent months has, according to monitoring groups, been at the lowest levels since 2011.

A political deal to implement 2254 (2015) is indeed the way to restore Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and meet the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians. Without that, dangers will only accrue — and the last month reminds us of this.

Monday saw a targeted air strike on a training camp of Faylaq Al-Sham in the north-west — an armed opposition group represented in the Syrian National Congress, the Constitutional Committee and the Astana meetings, which is reported to have suffered a very large number of casualties. Today, armed opposition groups and listed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham have retaliated with shelling and rocket fire into Syrian Government-controlled areas, claiming to have inflicted casualties. These dynamics can unravel the precious calm achieved through positive Russian-Turkish cooperation — cooperation which already faces challenges, given that joint patrols have remain stalled for over a month. I appeal to both Russia and Turkey to work to contain the situation.

Incidents in northern rural Aleppo continue, including a truck bomb in Al-Bab that reportedly killed more than a dozen civilians and injured more than 60 civilians, as well as an attack on a fuel market in Jarabulus that some media attributed to a missile attack, causing civilian casualties.

We have also seen recurring kidnappings and assassinations in the south-west, targeting a broad spectrum of political, military and civic actors and underscoring the ongoing fragility of the reconciliation agreements brokered over two years ago.

Tensions have continued among the five foreign militaries active in Syria, which have regularly resulted in confrontations, including further air strikes attributed to Israel this month.

Security Council-listed terrorist groups remain a significant danger across Syria and have stepped up their attacks of late, in particular in the central desert region where fighting between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Syrian Government forces resulted in multiple casualties on both sides.

This month saw the mufti of Damascus killed by an explosive device on 22 October, in an attack that remains unclaimed.

Yet despite all these incidents, the front lines are not changing, and it ought to be possible to work towards a nationwide ceasefire while ensuring that the significant continuing dangers posed by proscribed terrorist groups are addressed cooperatively and effectively and in line with international humanitarian law.

Syrians remained displaced in the millions. A serious and cooperative effort is needed involving all key players to create the conditions that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has indicated are important for

safe, dignified, informed and voluntary return — and indeed, an effort to create a safer, calmer, more neutral environment in Syria. And, frankly, now is precisely the time when one of my key priorities — addressing the fate of tens of thousands of detained, abducted or missing Syrians — should be energetically acted upon.

Under-Secretary-General Lowcock will brief the Council on the dire humanitarian situation. But let me also note that ordinary Syrians are paying a bitter and unprecedented price given the economic devastation resulting from a decade-long conflict and its repercussions, internal and external. A recent spate of agricultural fires and fuel price hikes have only added to the many factors causing suffering and to unprecedented food insecurity. The backdrop of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the imminent winter will no doubt augment these challenges. At a time of severe economic stress, it remains important to continue to avoid and mitigate effects on ordinary Syrians of targeted sanctions measures.

And let us recall — as resolution 2254 (2015) does and as the agreement to launch the Constitutional Committee explicitly affirmed — that the culmination of a political process would be free and fair elections, pursuant to a new constitution, administered under United Nations supervision, to the highest international standards, with all Syrians, including in the diaspora, eligible to participate.

In short, a wider and more credible and effective process is plainly needed. Relative progress in establishing the building blocks of a ceasefire came about because of the concerted efforts of some key international stakeholders, demonstrating that reaching compromises is indeed possible. We need a process that extends this cooperation and is inclusive of all issues and all players, a process that can address the range of elements contained in resolution 2254 (2015). This needs to be underpinned by mutual and reciprocal measures, pursued and supported meaningfully by all.

I had substantial and wide-ranging discussions on all of these issues when I met with Syrian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Walid Al-Moualem in Damascus. We discussed the need to take stock of where we are in the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and explore whether new and different approaches can be taken. I have also discussed this with opposition Syrian National Council President Al-Abdah today. I will seek to deepen my dialogue with the Syrian parties and key players in the months ahead in reviewing where we stand on resolution 2254 (2015), seeking to identify how best to develop a wider process.

## Annex II

### Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock

I will focus today on five areas: first, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak; secondly, violence and insecurity affecting civilians; thirdly, the humanitarian impact of the economic crisis; fourthly, humanitarian access; and fifthly, the assistance being provided by humanitarian organizations across Syria.

Where cases of COVID-19 in Syria are confirmed, they are overwhelmingly the result of community transmission. Ninety-two per cent of officially confirmed infections cannot be traced back to a known case. As in other many countries, the scale of the outbreak is therefore likely to be far greater than the confirmed cases — currently at about 13,500 — suggest.

Health-care facilities in some areas are reported to be unable to absorb all suspected cases. Also, as in many other countries, some are suspending surgeries or adapting wards to take in more patients. We are particularly worried about the densely populated areas: urban centres, such as Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, and crowded displacement camps, settlements and collective shelters in the north-west and north-east.

Eighteen cases have so far been confirmed among health workers and distribution staff working at Al-Hol camp. Another five cases have been confirmed among camp residents. Testing, as in most of the country, is extremely limited, so the only thing these figures really tells us is that COVID-19 has taken hold at the camp. Some 65,000 people remain at Al-Hol, 94 per cent of whom are women and children.

In the north-west, confirmed cases have increased sixfold over the past month, with cases also rising in displacement camps and settlements. Health care workers increasingly fear being overwhelmed. We are monitoring with particular concern the COVID-19 outbreak in Al-Bab in Aleppo governorate. Some 30 per cent of the confirmed cases in the north-west are in the Al-Bab area.

The rapid spread of the virus there is not surprising. Water shortages have affected 185,000 people in the area since 2017, when the supply from the Ayn Al-Bayda pumping station stopped. Shortly after, Al-Bab became — and has remained — one of the top four subdistricts reporting water-borne diseases.

The United Nations COVID-19 response in Syria requires an additional \$211 million, including to maintain health supply lines; improve water and sanitation in displacement camps, shelters and settlements; and to make schools safer for returning students and teachers.

My second point is on violence and insecurity affecting civilians and aid workers.

Shelling in front-line areas in the north-west, as well as air strikes in Idlib, have continued. Shelling on Jorin village in north-western Hama governorate killed 20 civilians in a single day on 24 September.

Yesterday's air strike in the Armanaz subdistrict, which Geir Pedersen has also referred to, reportedly hit an area close to displacement camps. This is the third time air strikes have been reported in Idlib over the past week, with reports of at least five civilians injured, including three children.

An alarming degree of insecurity has also continued in the Idlib, Afrin and Azaz to Jarabulus areas. On 6 October, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Al-Bab city killed at least 18 civilians, including five children, and injured at

least 62, including 11 children. Among the injured are three non-governmental organization staff who work in the local COVID-19 referral system.

On 15 October, two Syrian aid workers and their driver travelling from a project site in Salqin city were injured by shrapnel resulting from a drone attack on another car travelling in the area.

Violence directed against civilians, including humanitarian workers, is unacceptable and must never be normalized. They must be protected.

Relocations of displaced people from multiple camps and collective shelters in north-eastern Syria are under way and more have been announced by local authorities. This includes relocations from collective shelters to Tala'h camp near Hasakah city. I stress that all such movements must be fully informed and voluntary.

My next point is on the humanitarian impact of the economic crisis.

Food prices, while relatively stable in August and September, remain more than 90 per cent higher than six months ago, with a year-on-year increase of 236 per cent. That leaves many families unable to afford basic goods.

The impact of the economic downturn is hardest on the most vulnerable. Recent assessments in the north-west point to an increase in child marriage, linked to deteriorating socioeconomic circumstances. The more desperate a family's situation becomes, the more they are forced to make previously unthinkable choices.

Bread shortages are being reported in a number of regions, especially in the south. Syria used to produce enough wheat to meet domestic demand, but current wheat-flour production falls short of national consumption by around one million metric tons.

Seasonal wildfires have been among the factors limiting food production. More than 35,000 hectares of agricultural land are estimated to have burned this year. That will have a long-term impact on food production and the livelihoods of at least 40,000 families.

The fuel crisis is also affecting civilians in a serious way, as well as hindering aid supply lines. People are queuing for hours — in some cases days — for fuel in some areas. Several aid convoys have been delayed in recent weeks due to the lack of fuel.

Turning now to my fourth point, humanitarian access, technical teams have been able to conduct maintenance and rehabilitation work at the Allouk water station since late August. The resulting increase in pumping capacity, although still limited, will benefit almost half a million people in Hasakah. But water shortages continue to be reported in the area, and it is important that regular access to the station for both maintenance workers and humanitarian staff is established and sustained.

Staying in the north-east, the distribution of 85 metric tons of medical supplies from the last World Health Organization cross-line overland shipment to reach the region, in July, was completed last month. Council members may recall that that shipment was originally intended for cross-border delivery from Erbil, back in January. It has now reached the north-east in reduced quantity and at greater cost.

All hospitals in the north-east that previously depended on United Nations-supported cross-border operations have now received medical items from cross-line deliveries on at least one occasion. There has also been some progress in reaching the primary health centres and mobile medical units.

But focusing on single instances of access does not paint a full picture. Cross-line assistance, so far, is simply not delivering at the scale or frequency required to meet the current health needs in north-eastern Syria.

Let me illustrate that through a few examples. One of the hospitals received cross-line supplies in the form of 450 gowns in April. But they got nothing else and have had nothing at all since April. Another hospital reports that cross-line deliveries have covered only 2 per cent of the types of essential pharmaceuticals needed in its maternity wing. A third hospital reports that its maternity wing has received no cross-line supplies at all.

At the primary health-care level, 20 facilities report that cross-line deliveries have supplied less than 20 per cent of the types of medicines they need, and in quantities that will last them less than two months. Out of 13 items of personal protective equipment needed, those 20 facilities received just 1 item through a cross-line delivery, and even that will last less than a month.

Turning to Rukban, where 12,000 civilians continue living in unsustainable conditions, the United Nations continues its efforts to deliver life-saving assistance to those who wish to remain. But, again, there has been no meaningful progress since I last updated the Council (see S/PV.8770).

I also want to say a few words on access to education. Around 100 schools in Hasakah were closed by local authorities in August and have not reopened, even as other schools in the governorate reopened in September. Senior United Nations staff in the region are talking to the relevant people in the hope of making progress. I do hope that will be possible, in everyone's interests.

Humanitarian agencies have continued to address the logistical and operational challenges resulting from the reduction to one authorized border crossing into north-western Syria. The trans-shipment hub at the remaining authorized crossing at Bab Al-Hawa has been expanded, doubling its physical size to meet the increases in demand, while also ensuring compliance with COVID-19 physical distancing measures for staff.

On the Syrian side of the border, roadworks are under way on the route leading into areas previously serviced through the Bab Al-Salam crossing. The aim is to complete the most urgent road repairs ahead of the winter season. There are, however, very significant challenges.

My final point is on the assistance humanitarian agencies continue to provide across Syria. The Syria Humanitarian Fund, which my Office administers, last month made its largest ever allocation, in the amount of \$40 million, in support of projects across 93 Syrian subdistricts. Those projects are intended to help 1.3 million people.

The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund is also preparing its next allocation for north-western Syria, which will prioritize life-saving winterization assistance. Humanitarian agencies plan to reach 3.1 million people across Syria with such assistance during the imminent winter season. Donors have been supporting this effort, with over 70 per cent of funding for the winterization response received, but a further \$24 million is still needed.

Council members will recall the horrific scenes of last winter, when military operations in the north-west displaced almost 1 million people over the course of 3 months, with many families fleeing on foot and sleeping in the open in the freezing cold. Most of these families are still displaced. Many of them are in shelters that will not protect them from the winter weather.

Our colleagues on the ground are working tirelessly to get families in all of Syria the supplies they need before temperatures drop. To do that, they need resources, they need access, and they must be protected.



## Annex III

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Philippe Kridelka, on behalf of Belgium and Germany**

I will make this statement on behalf of Belgium and Germany, the humanitarian co-penholders. We want to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen for their briefings today, and we extend our gratitude to all humanitarian and medical workers in Syria. They are at the forefront of every humanitarian disaster, they are front-line fighters against the pandemic, and they deserve all our respect, assistance and protection.

In his latest report about the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2020/1031), the Secretary-General states that he is alarmed over the daily impact of attacks harming civilians, including humanitarian workers. The military conflict continues, yesterday's air strike in Idlib took place in close vicinity to an internally displaced person camp, and we simply cannot accept that such events continue to happen on an almost daily basis.

Victims of attacks included humanitarian workers, for example from the Red Crescent and Syria Relief and Development, whose representative, Amany Qaddour, asked the Council in July (see S/2020/758) to share the risk humanitarian aid workers are exposed to. Therefore, we must lend our full support to the Secretary-General's appeal for a nationwide ceasefire.

The Secretary-General has also reminded us that there can be no business as usual in Syria as long as impunity for serious violations of international law and abuses of human rights persists. We agree with the Secretary-General that accountability for these violations and abuses is both a legal requirement and central to achieving sustainable peace in Syria. Let me recall the conclusion of a recent report — it is crucial to demonstrate that there are consequences for unlawful attacks to deter future atrocities and to show that no one can elude accountability for graves crimes.

Regarding access issues, Mark Lowcock just told us that he is concerned about winterization. Even if the capacity of the only remaining humanitarian border crossing of Bab Al-Hawa has been enlarged, travel on the roads in north-western Syria remains difficult. During the weeks to come, more trucks will use these roads and conditions will deteriorate further.

As humanitarian co-penholders, we simply do not understand and are not willing to accept the logic behind the closure of Bab Al-Salam, the logic behind limiting access for humanitarian aid, or the logic behind putting humanitarian workers at additional risk. That logic is an insult to hundreds of thousands of children dependent on our help.

Meanwhile, the shortfalls in the north-east, particularly in the delivery of health care, continue to exist. Many health facilities simply do not receive what they need and cannot provide the same assistance to patients they could when the border crossing at Al-Yarubiyah was still in use for the delivery of urgently needed medical supplies. The pandemic only serves to make things worse.

Years of war and chronic mismanagement of the economy, exacerbated by the pandemic and the devaluation of the Syrian pound, have led to significant food insecurity. Acute and chronic malnutrition — children are the most vulnerable victims — will become more widespread. The World Food Programme — rightfully, this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner — and other humanitarian agencies are already

asking for more funding in order not to be forced to cut food rations. Food assistance has reached 5.4 million on average each month, and the number is on the rise again.

Access to water is another problem. In previous sessions, we mentioned the problems around the Allouk water station and urged all parties to cooperate for an urgent and sustainable solution. Other areas, like Al-Bab in northern Aleppo, are likewise affected. 185,000 people are suffering from water shortages and have to rely on insufficient and unsafe sources. The high number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in the region can be linked directly to insufficient access to sanitation.

Given that testing capacities for COVID-19 remain very low, it is safe to assume that the official numbers represent but the tip of the iceberg. The destruction of health facilities and the shortage of health workers dramatically imperil any response.

All this indicates that not less but more attention to the humanitarian situation in Syria is needed from the Security Council. As co-penholders, we deplore that attention is limited by combining political and the humanitarian sessions, as today. And we reject attempts to convey the impression that the situation on the ground is somehow normalizing. The facts and numbers we have just heard are testament to the contrary. And finally, only a political settlement in line with resolution 2254 (2015) can put Syria back on track towards peace.

## Annex IV

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Philippe Kridelka**

I would like to start by thanking the Special Envoy for his briefing and his lasting engagement. I will make three points.

One year ago, the Constitutional Committee was launched. Today, a mere three rounds have taken place. We appreciate the fact that these were the result of the Special Envoy's engagement and hard work. And we appreciate the fact that the third round took place in an overall constructive climate, despite the many challenges, and precious time lost due to the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Yet, we are also deeply concerned. The absence of much discernible progress on content and the obstructive attitude of the Syrian authorities, often down to the logistics of the date and agenda of the next round, instil but little confidence. Although it is positive that the number of issues has been narrowed down following the Special Envoy's recent mission to Damascus, tangible progress must now be made urgently. We therefore urge all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to fully engage in the context of the Constitutional Committee, including in its upcoming meetings, and to regard this process as a major opportunity. We also call on all actors to exert their influence over the parties in order to engage closely and cooperatively in order to reinvigorate the wider political process.

The current dynamics on the political level, until recently, took place against the backdrop of a relatively calm situation on the ground. However, this weekend in Idlib we witnessed the shattering of the relative calm that had existed in the north-west since the Russian-Turkish ceasefire arrangement of March, in one the most devastating attacks on record. This is of deep concern, as it may unravel quickly the relative calm and further stall the political process. In the south, a growing number of kidnappings and targeted killings leads to increasing volatility. We urge all parties to refrain from violence anywhere in the country, reduce tension and exercise maximum restraint. We also once again underline that any counter-terrorism action should respect human rights and international humanitarian law. The United Nations should play a central role in the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, as well as in its monitoring.

Given the protracted state of the Constitutional Committee, tangible progress must urgently be made regarding the other elements of resolution 2254 (2015). If the Syrian authorities want to normalize the situation in Syria, at least confidence-building measures should be undertaken.

Sadly, here, too, progress made regarding the release of political prisoners and missing persons has been far too limited. Access to detainees has been restricted.

Women — who have been victims of violence, including sexual violence, and who have borne the brunt of this war — have been deprived of access to their properties. They have been unable to access necessary documents to prove their administrative status and their ownership.

Victims are denied their quest for justice. Belgium fully supports all accountability initiatives, including the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, and its support for criminal proceedings in national and international courts.

Finally, it is clear that the situation in Syria is far from stabilized. Quite to the contrary, to think that the current situation allows for a safe, dignified or voluntary return is blatantly to deny the reality on the ground in the country. It is up to the Syrian authorities to put in place the conditions that allow all Syrian people to live their lives in peace and dignity. A first step in that direction should be genuine engagement in a political process in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015).

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**Annex V****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

China steadfastly believes that a political solution is the only way out of the Syrian conflict and calls on the international community to scale up humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. We support the United Nations in continuing to play a leading and coordinating role in this regard. Today I would like to highlight four points.

First, we should adhere to the principle of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned solution, and redouble our efforts to push forward the political process.

China welcomes the consensus achieved at the third session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee. We appreciate Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to prepare for the fourth session, including his recent visit to Damascus. We hope the parties concerned will maintain close contact with the Special Envoy and advance the political dialogue on the basis of existing consensus, so as to achieve tangible results as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected and defended. The work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee must remain independent and free from foreign interference and manipulation. Propositions or actions that go against the fundamental interests of the Syrian people will not enjoy wide support and will go nowhere.

Secondly, we should stabilize the security situation across Syria to create conditions for the political process and humanitarian operations. Since March, the situation on the ground in north-west Syria has been generally stable and calm. The relevant parties have made great efforts to maintain the ceasefire arrangement. China calls on the Syrian parties to heed the ceasefire appeals from the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy and to encourage the Astana process to continue playing an important role in that regard.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Syria is still faced with multiple challenges and risks. Foreign occupation has caused turbulence in Syria and the region beyond, and the terrorists are seeking to take advantage of the pandemic to expand their operations and control. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/1031), many armed groups are systematically targeting civilians, and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant cells have stepped up their attacks and insurgency. The international community should help and support the Syrian side in coping with those security challenges, combating terrorism and defending national security and stability.

Thirdly, we should improve local humanitarian conditions through the use of holistic measures. The economic situation in Syria is still very fragile, and the Syrian Government has taken a host of measures to address the difficult situation of its national economy. The international community should take concrete steps, fulfil its pledges of assistance and support Syria in developing its economy, rebuilding its infrastructure and improving people's livelihoods. Humanitarian assistance should not be accompanied by preconditions or be used as a tool to pressure the Syrian Government.

China supports the United Nations in implementing and promoting cross-line and cross-border humanitarian operations. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently completed its delivery of medical aid to north-east Syria by land from Damascus, and the World Food Programme-led logistics cluster has expanded

the trans-shipment hub at the Bab Al-Hawa crossing point. Those efforts and that progress should be fully recognized. We encourage the United Nations to strengthen its dialogue with the Syrian Government and local authorities so as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-line operations, simplify procedures in cross-border operations and make relentless efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

Fourthly, we call for the immediate lifting of unilateral coercive measures against Syria. Such measures have severely weakened Syria's economic foundation and resources-mobilization capacity and hindered the Syrian people's access to medical supplies and services. Vulnerable groups, including women, children and internally displaced persons (IDPs), bear the brunt of its impact. China urges those countries responsible to respond to the appeals of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, heed the call of the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations and immediately lift the unilateral coercive measures against Syria. The Security Council should look seriously into the negative impacts of such measures, listen to the concerns of the illegally sanctioned countries and push for the alleviation of the impact and the finding of ultimate solutions. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should also pay close attention to this issue and provide analyses and recommendations in the relevant reports.

Before I conclude, let me talk briefly about the coronavirus disease. In recent days, we have seen a surge of confirmed cases in many countries and regions, and there is a risk of a second wave of coronavirus globally this fall and winter. As a vulnerable country, Syria is suffering deeply from the pandemic owing to lack of health-care resources and limited testing and treatment capacity. According to the Secretary-General's report, there are signs of a high degree of community transmission in Syria, and densely inhabited districts, in particular IDP camps, are faced with greater risks. The international community should strengthen support for the Syrian Government and the WHO in taking more proactive measures to prevent the spread of the virus and save lives.

China has provided medical assistance to Syria. We will continue to help Syria to prevent and contain the virus and support the Syrian people in overcoming the pandemic at an early date.

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## Annex VI

### **Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

We thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and Special Envoy Geir Pedersen for their reports.

As always, we wish at the outset to recognize and honour the men and women who work every day to meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people and to continue advance the political process. We know that achieving results in an environment of such mistrust is a very difficult task.

But despite the profound differences between the Syrian parties, the sacred goal of fulfilling the aspirations of the people rests only upon them. There must be a starting point to the process of finding a solution to the multiple challenges that the population continues to endure after 10 years of conflict. We need to be able to find that point about which we can later say, “That was the point that changed everything” — the famous point of no return. I remember that in December 2018, in his last report to the Council (see S/PV.8434), the then Special Envoy spoke about that.

Despite our optimism last month, it seems to the Dominican Republic that, when it comes to giving the Syrians a political process with concrete results, we have lowered the bar too much. This is very unfortunate. Where is our ambition? I will be very brief.

Almost a year after the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, while it is true that it has been a platform on which the parties have established a dialogue, we also regret that it has exhibited such limited substantive progress. The impact of the pandemic has certainly played a role in delaying the meetings. But we believe that there is an underlying problem, and that is the apparent disengagement, lack of commitment and ambition on the part of the parties. It is the only explanation we see for the inability of the parties to agree on the agenda for their work. This cannot continue. We encourage the parties to maintain a spirit of engagement and commitment to the constitutional conversation and to put aside issues that may keep them away from that conversation.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we remain concerned about the millions of Syrians who suffer from food insecurity, including malnutrition. We are also extremely concerned and share the grief of the families of the hundreds of health workers who have died from the coronavirus. We commend the work of the World Health Organization, non-governmental organizations and all doctors, nurses and first responders who risk their lives without having the necessary protection against the virus.

We advocate for greater support to the population, whose purchasing power is not enough to buy masks, gloves or other protective equipment. In Syria, these items are a luxury.

We share the views of other colleagues about the delicate and fragile security situation in the north-west of the country. We condemn in the strongest and most forceful terms the attacks perpetrated against civilians and humanitarian workers. Those responsible must and will pay for their crimes.

In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering commitment to principled humanitarian action that is sustained and timely and based on the ever-growing needs of the population, and to a transparent, credible and inclusive political process that advances with firm strides and positive results until it meets the aspirations of

the people, who, despite the circumstances, have not given up. The families of the missing have not given up. Syrian refugees have not given up. Syrian doctors have not given up. The children will not give up. Let us not give up on them.



## Annex VII

### Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings on both the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. It is certainly regrettable that the Syrian Constitutional Committee was unable to meet this month in Geneva, especially given that this week marks the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Committee.

Unfortunately, however, there have been little to no results from the whole process. The Committee's meetings in Geneva have not become regular, and the Syrian regime's representatives are resorting to delaying tactics. We conclude that there is no real will in Damascus to move forward with the new constitution or to engage genuinely in the political process. Plans for holding presidential elections next spring without a new constitution only confirm that assessment. It would be a clear violation of resolution 2254 (2015) and its road map to achieving peace.

Estonia reiterates that meaningful progress on the issue of detainees and missing persons is another crucial element of resolution 2254 (2015), which could also serve as a confidence-building measure between the Syrian regime and its legitimate opposition. The release of arbitrarily detained people, respect for human rights and the holding of free and fair elections are the cornerstone of national reconciliation.

Looking at the situation on the ground, we remain cautiously optimistic about the Russia-Turkey ceasefire agreement of March, which largely seems to be holding. That truce continues to provide the local population in Idlib a much-deserved break from violence. However, we deplore yesterday's Russian air strikes in the northern part of Idlib, which violate the ceasefire and underline its fragility. We call on the parties to de-escalate the situation.

While the military situation is hopeful, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to affect Syrians across the country, with at least 12,000 cases and 500 people dead. Health facilities and human resources have been nearly depleted due to conflict, and the capacity to cope with the pandemic remains extremely limited.

Like other Council members, Estonia deeply appreciates the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in providing aid to millions of Syrians every month. We call on all parties immediately to provide unimpeded, safe and sustained humanitarian access to all parts of Syria.

Since August, reportedly more than 100 schools have closed in north-east Syria. Estonia deems it imperative that children regain access to quality education and continue the learning process in order to prevent a "lost generation".

We welcome the overwhelming support of the largest international donors to Syrians. The European Union and its member States' contributions have enabled a scaling-up of critical programmes to support host communities and refugees in dealing with the impact of COVID-19 as well as to alleviate the suffering of Syrians inside the country.

The fourth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region", hosted by the European Union and co-chaired by the United Nations earlier this summer, generated pledges totalling more than €12 billion, of which €4.5 billion has already been contributed for 2020.

**Annex VIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Pedersen for their interventions. It has to be said that they do not bring us any good news.

Despite the efforts of the Special Envoy, the political process is completely deadlocked. One year after its creation, the Constitutional Committee's record is almost nil. The masks are coming off, and we should not delude ourselves: this process has become an end in itself, allowing the regime and its supporters to gain time. That is regrettable, but it is so, despite the commitment and patience of Geir Pedersen. The regime's refusal to engage in good faith in the negotiations has gone on too long. It is more urgent than ever that the parties finally start substantive discussions on the constitution. I therefore encourage Mr. Pedersen to work on all elements of resolution 2254 (2015), in response to the call made by the Small Group on Syria Ministers on 22 October.

A neutral and secure environment must be put in place as a matter of priority. That requires not only progress on the detainee issue but also a nationwide cessation of hostilities, in accordance with resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2254 (2015). France condemns the resumption of bombing in the south and west of Idlib and calls on the regime and its allies not to launch a new offensive. We are also very concerned by the resurgence of Da'esh in Syria, where action by the international coalition remains more necessary than ever.

At the same time, work must be done to prepare for free and fair elections, under the supervision of the United Nations, so that all Syrians can participate, including internally displaced persons, refugees and those from the diaspora. France will not recognize the results of elections that do not comply with the provisions set out in resolution 2254 (2015). We will not be fooled by the regime's attempts to legitimize itself.

The humanitarian situation remains disastrous, and international law is being trampled underfoot. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, must be an absolute priority. We strongly condemn the indiscriminate attacks carried out by the regime and its allies, which have targeted the population as well as civilian infrastructure.

The number of civilian casualties continues to rise. Those serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law will not go unpunished. France will ensure that they do not go unpunished.

It is essential to guarantee full humanitarian access, particularly to the province of Idlib and southern Syria, but also to the north-east, where there are alarming obstacles to the delivery of medical aid. We deplore the progressive reduction of crossing points for the delivery of aid. This is all the more serious in the context of the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic and worsening food insecurity as the Syrian population prepares to face the harshness of a new winter of war.

In the absence of any significant progress on the political front, France and its partners will not deviate from their stance on sanctions, reconstruction and the return of refugees. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of sanctions by the European Union against seven new Ministers of the Syrian Government. Those sanctions specifically target individuals who are guilty of human rights violations or who take advantage of their links with the regime and the war economy. The

instrumentalization of the sanctions issue to mask the responsibility of the Syrian regime in this tragedy does not deceive anyone.

The Small Group Ministers also pledged on 22 October not to finance the return of refugees if it does not take place in accordance with the standards set by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The conditions for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian refugees are not yet in place. Only a credible political process will allow returns, and the United Nations will have to monitor such returns. No conference can achieve that. We will oppose any attempt to politicize the subject of refugee return to the detriment of the refugees' interests.

**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

I will start with the most recent development, the Russian air strikes in Idlib yesterday, which is the gravest breach of the ceasefire since March. *The New York Times* reported today on the civilian victims of that attack. If this proves true, it is unacceptable and another violation of international humanitarian law. Mr. Lowcock mentioned the attacks that the brave humanitarian aid workers faced. I want to highlight and praise what they are doing under very difficult circumstances and condemn those unacceptable attacks.

On the humanitarian situation, I would like to add to this morning's headlines from the United Nations spokesman. Doctors say that the coronavirus disease is rampant in the refugee camps of Idlib and the north-west of Syria. As we predicted, it is aggravating the humanitarian crisis. Mark Lowcock described the dire situation. Russia and China bear a huge responsibility for the humanitarian situation after they vetoed the additional crossing points, which would have greatly facilitated humanitarian aid. How inhumane can one get?

On the political track, we thank the Special Envoy for his briefing and for calling a spade a spade. It is clear who is blocking the Constitutional Committee and the political process: the responsibility clearly lies with the Al-Assad regime. These delaying and obstructionist tactics are simply detestable. Russia should finally use its influence to cut military aid and stop its support so that the Syrian regime finally plays ball. The tactics are clear. They want to waste time until the presidential elections in 2021. The regime should not have any illusions. The elections will not be recognized if they are held under the present circumstances. There is no alternative to a real substantive political process.

With regard to the return of refugees, that is not possible under present circumstances. We are still very far from achieving the prerequisites for safe, voluntary and dignified returns, as defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Coming back to the sanctions issue, we have not seen a single example where targeted European Union sanctions have prevented humanitarian aid. We will therefore continue those sanctions. We have to target the people who are responsible for the killings and torture in Syrian prisons. We all know the Caesar pictures. We are all obliged to sanction and hold accountable those responsible for dropping chemical bombs on the population. These sanctions do not have economic repercussions. They target specific persons, and that does not block humanitarian aid. We are always inspired by Nelson Mandela, who asked for sanctions to remain in place until the end of apartheid. Without accountability, there will be no reconciliation or moral or physical reconstruction. I would encourage the Special Envoy to engage more on that issue.

We are deeply concerned by the latest report from Human Rights Watch, which investigated dozens of air and ground strikes on civilian targets in Idlib between April 2019 and March 2020. The report concluded that those attacks by the Syrian regime and Russia were apparent war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. There has to be a follow-up to the findings of the report and those of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Board of Inquiry, which all came to similar conclusions with regard to violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in

Syria. The evidence for these crimes is overwhelming and should be heard in the proper venue — at the International Criminal Court.

We must not tolerate impunity for the most serious crimes in Syria. Whoever commits crimes against humanity or war crimes should not feel safe anywhere and will be held accountable. As long as the referral of these crimes to the International Criminal Court is vetoed, we will use all available means to make sure that those responsible are ultimately prosecuted and are preserving evidence and referring cases to national jurisdictions where possible. We therefore call on the Security Council to finally live up to its responsibility to join the fight against impunity in order to ensure that those responsible for torture and killing in Syrian prisons and for other crimes and atrocities are held accountable. National reconciliation and sustainable peace in Syria will not be possible unless there is truth, justice and accountability for all crimes and atrocities committed during the Syrian conflict.

**Annex X****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

We thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and Special Envoy Geir Pedersen for their briefings.

My delegation is following with serious concern the increased coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases across the country. We also note with concern that the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1031) indicates that 92 percent of the confirmed cases are not traceable. With limited health-care facilities, it is very challenging to manage all of the confirmed and suspected cases, including preventing the widespread transmission of the virus among communities. In addition, more health-care workers are reported to have contracted the virus, thus further reducing the capacity on the ground.

The already vulnerable Syrian people are not only facing the pandemic, but also dealing with the impact of an economic downturn, accompanied by increased food insecurity and the risk of acute malnutrition, not to mention having to live every day surrounded by the threat of violence in certain areas of the country. In that context, my delegation wishes to highlight three pertinent points.

First, despite these challenges, enhanced humanitarian responses are crucial. Indonesia is pleased to note that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners are continuing to address the logistical challenges following the reduction of the cross-border operation.

We were fully aware that the operation with the one remaining border crossing would not be perfect, however we hope that with several adjustments, such as the expansion of the hub and the United Nations-funded road rehabilitation project, more humanitarian aid can be delivered through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing. All cross-border and cross-line modalities should be explored, particularly in the north-west and north-east. These humanitarian operations must definitely be increased, and the remaining gaps addressed ahead of the winter season.

We would also like to stress the crucial needs of the people in the Al-Hol and Rukban camps, including by addressing the water shortages around Al-Bab, in northern Aleppo, and the regular disruption of the Allouk water station, which affect many people in Al-Hasakah governorate. Once again, Indonesia echoes the appeal of Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and urges all relevant parties to ensure immediate, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian convoys to all areas and populations in need across Syria. We call for no politicization, only saving lives.

Secondly, sustaining calm is one of the vital priorities. We are alarmed about the ongoing violations of the ceasefire agreement in the Idlib de-escalation zone. Although the ceasefire largely continues to hold, tensions risk leading to an escalation. We regret recent military activities in Idlib and urge all parties to cease attacks.

We echo the Secretary-General's call to establish a nationwide ceasefire, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015), and to contain destabilizing incidents. The Syrian people at least need a non-violent environment to effectively address their current situation of an economic crisis and a pandemic.

Humanitarian activities depend on all parties' firm commitment to respect the ceasefire agreement and exercise maximum restraint, as well as to abide by international humanitarian law in order to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Thirdly, it is imperative to advance the political process, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015). In that regard, we thank Special Envoy Pedersen for continuing his active engagement with all key parties, including during his recent trip to Damascus. I echo what Special Envoy Pedersen stated earlier with regard to the Constitutional Committee — that it is important for Syrian parties and international players to build trust and confidence step by step and gradually develop a wider political process to implement resolution 2254 (2015), while at the same time making sure that all parties are aiming for substantive and concrete results for the sake of the Syrian people.

Indonesia believes that, at this stage, the Constitutional Committee needs to advance its substantive work, facilitated by the United Nations. We therefore sincerely hope that the Committee's next meeting, in Geneva, will soon materialize.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that continued, good-faith cooperation and dialogue among all Syrian parties are key, and that we must always respect a Syrian-led and -owned political track.

## Annex XI

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

We thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings. We believe that combining Security Council meetings on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria serves not only the goal of optimizing the Council's programme of work but also the need to comprehensively assess the situation in the country, where, with the help of a number of our colleagues, those two tracks have long been intertwined due to the politicization of humanitarian issues.

We thank the Special Envoy for information on the results of his visit to Damascus and the discussions he had there, including those related to the work of the Constitutional Committee. This is a Syrian-owned and -led process. It is important to give Syrians the opportunity to negotiate without interference from the outside. The work of the Constitutional Committee should not be subject to any deadlines. We hope that, through the mediation of the Special Envoy, the work of that body will continue in line with the agenda agreed by the Syrians.

For quite some time, the situation has been more stable in the areas of Syria under the control of the legitimate Government. That is happening despite measures of political and economic pressure on the Syrian people from certain Western States. Idlib, controlled by the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists, and the territories in the north-east that are illegally occupied by the United States, remain zones of instability. In the Idlib de-escalation zone, the implementation of the Russian-Turkish agreements continues, although terrorists constantly stage provocations. It is obvious that achieving lasting stabilization in Idlib and other Syrian provinces is possible only if the terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams (ISIS), Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and their accomplices are neutralized.

I listened very carefully to the statement made by Mr. Heusgen today, as I always do. I could comment on every sentence he made, but I will not be doing so because my statement would take too long. But I would like to refer to just one thing. There is a classic Russian novella by a master of Russian literature, Mikhail Bulgakov, called *Heart of a Dog*. It is about a dog that was turned into a human by genius medic Professor Preobrazhenskiy. It is set in the period following the Russian revolution, with the Bolsheviks already in power. Professor Preobrazhenskiy — an old-world, old-regime character — and his assistant sit at a lunch table, and the Professor says: "I implore you not to read Soviet newspapers before lunch because they lead to indigestion". Similarly, I implore Mr. Heusgen not to read *The New York Times* before Security Council meetings on Syria. We have already had occasion to comment on certain *New York Times* articles. We read so much false information on Russia in *The New York Times* that we are not surprised that he used that source today. However, we strongly discourage him from doing so in future.

Given that there are no hostilities except counter-terrorism in the country, we increasingly question why our Western colleagues are calling for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria. Who are they trying to protect? With whom do they propose we conclude such an agreement?

We have seen an increase in terrorist activities in other parts of Syria, including in the north-east. The recent release of 600 ISIS members from custody by the Kurdish Administration is worrisome. The dangerous consequences of such a step are obvious. We already receive information about an increase in terrorist acts on behalf of radicals who infiltrate areas controlled by Damascus and fight the Syrian army.



Foreign occupation and attempts to tear the Kurds away from the multi-confessional Syrian State are fuelling separatist sentiments and contribute to the regrettable radicalization of the population and growth of tribal conflicts in the region. For our part, we consistently advocate the unity of Syria and respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We note the efforts of the Syrian Government to rebuild the country after the conflict and create normal living conditions for its citizens, including refugees. No matter how much the opponents of Damascus try to prevent it, people want to return, and do return, home. Nobody talks of forced return. People do it voluntarily. It is a fact that cannot be denied.

In that regard, it is necessary to intensify the efforts of the international community to provide comprehensive assistance to all Syrians wishing to return to their homeland and to create appropriate conditions for them, including restoring basic infrastructure and communications, building housing and continuing humanitarian demining. It is a laborious process, requiring considerable financial resources. But such work needs to be started. It would be an excellent example of the approach promoted by a number of States to better integrate humanitarian work with development assistance.

An international conference on the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the restoration of peaceful life will be held in Damascus on 11 and 12 November in order to form a holistic picture of the situation of Syrian refugees in the region and the parameters of their return to their places of permanent residence. Invitations were sent to a wide range of States and international organizations. The forum will provide a platform for substantive dialogue with all stakeholders on all issues related to providing assistance to Syrians returning to their homes.

Unfortunately, we are forced to say that, due to anti-Syrian bias, a number of colleagues immediately started to discredit this humanitarian initiative. We are receiving clear signals about the refusal of a number of Western States to even discuss this topic, despite the fact that the task of creating conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees and the rehabilitation of the affected areas is inscribed in resolution 2254 (2015). Even with this issue and with the Secretary-General's appeal to lift unilateral coercive measures, our colleagues seek a selective approach.

We must search for mutually acceptable solutions, but, unfortunately, that is not happening. We see only increasing pressure on Damascus, the imposition of more sanctions, the illegal occupation of territories and profiting from and pillaging sovereign natural resources in the north-east. The needy population of Syria, most of whom live in Government-controlled territories, is deprived of that income.

Against the backdrop of illegal unilateral sanctions, the country is completely deprived not only of the opportunity but also of the right to sustainable development. Furthermore, the double standards in the application of sanctions, on the one hand, and the irresponsible pollution of the environment in the north-east — with far-reaching consequences for the health of a vast number of Syrians living in these territories — on the other hand, are evidence of increasing cynicism. We are disappointed that the United Nations continues to ignore this issue.

We note with satisfaction the progress in United Nations humanitarian deliveries from inside Syria, including through cross-line routes. This proves that the Government of Syria is fulfilling its obligation to provide humanitarian assistance to the population of the country, including in the areas out of its control, in a non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner. This is happening despite numerous oft-repeated accusations and assertions that there is no alternative to the cross-border mechanism. This was never a surprise to us, however, as we have

always known that this cross-border issue was just a political game. Incidentally, we would like to ask Mr. Lowcock what happened to the cross-line convoy that since April was supposed to have been sent to Idlib.

In conclusion, we would like to inform the Security Council that, on 16 October, 27 Russian children, aged from 2 to 13, were returned to Russia from the Al-Hol camp. After the easing of quarantine measures caused by the pandemic, the flight that transported them was the third of its kind. In total, since 2017, 102 Russian minors have been brought back from Syria to our country. Considering the north-east administration's plans to disband the Al-Hol camp, we draw the attention of our colleagues to the growing need for their countries to repatriate their citizens.

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**Annex XII****Statement by the Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jamesha Prince**

I thank the President for convening today's meeting, and Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their thorough briefings.

The political and humanitarian situations in Syria are clearly interconnected. The country's humanitarian issues will not improve in the absence of peace and stability, which can be achieved only through a credible, balanced and inclusive Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process. To this end, it is crucial that the momentum of the Constitutional Committee be sustained. We look forward to the convening of the next session and hope that the Chairs will reach an agreement on the agenda soon, so that the discussions may recommence without delay. The Committee can certainly assist in facilitating the wider political process. We therefore reiterate the need for the engagement of all relevant parties, including women, to ensure a sustainable and equitable peace for all Syrians. In this vein, we reaffirm our support for the continued efforts of the Special Envoy.

We welcome the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1031), and we note, with regret, the violations of the ceasefire, recorded almost daily, in the north-west of Syria. Hostilities undermine the ceasefire agreement, harm civilians, obstruct the urgent humanitarian response and destroy objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. It is imperative that parties to the conflict respect the agreement, and we remind them of their obligation to strictly comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accountability for acts committed in violation of the law must remain a high priority.

We remain concerned about the outstanding issues involving detainees and missing persons. We echo the call for the release of all arbitrarily detained civilians, particularly women and children. Furthermore, the families of those who are missing deserve to know the fate of their loved ones. These actions will also certainly contribute to confidence-building and reconciliation within Syria, in furtherance of the political process.

Syria's worsening socioeconomic condition, exacerbated by the severe economic downturn and the global pandemic, is alarming. The country is battling food insecurity, and basic commodities are out of reach. Our concern for the Syrian people is heightened as winter approaches, bringing with it a plethora of new humanitarian needs and challenges. We therefore continue to support the cross-border mechanism and urge all parties to work in partnership to scale up the critical humanitarian response, utilizing all available modalities and in line with humanitarian principles. We further appeal for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures, which may adversely affect the humanitarian response and the country's already burdened economy.

With regard to internally displaced persons, we emphasize that their return to their places of origin or resettlement in new areas must be voluntary, safe, dignified and fully informed. Furthermore, we renew our call for the international community to contribute to Syria's reconstruction efforts. Without this assistance, internally displaced persons and refugees will have nothing to return to, and civilians will be forced to remain without essential infrastructure.

Syria will be able to emerge from this conflict and start the lengthy process of recovery only with the steadfast support of the international community. We must therefore adopt a pragmatic and holistic approach when discussing the complex matters affecting the country and its people.

**Annex XIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings on the situation in Syria.

South Africa is deeply concerned at the recent increase in hostilities and violations of the ceasefire agreement in the Idlib de-escalation zone. This increase in violence jeopardizes the already fragile ceasefire in the area. We call on all parties to strictly adhere to the provisions of the ceasefire agreement and refrain from actions that may further inflame tensions in the region. South Africa reiterates its full support for a complete and immediate nationwide ceasefire across Syria, as previously called for by Special Envoy Pedersen and in line with the appeal of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire.

As we have mentioned before, South Africa remains concerned about the continued presence of armed forces in Syria and the need for external interference to come to an end, especially in terms of the provision of support to these armed groups. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected.

South Africa continues to support the critical work of the Constitutional Committee and applauds the continued efforts of the United Nations and Special Envoy Pedersen in this process. The Committee plays an important role in providing a platform for all sectors and groups within Syrian society to voice their views and engage in dialogue on the future they want and deserve.

Thanks to its own democratic transition and Constitution-building process, South Africa understands that progress cannot happen overnight. Trust and relationships take time to build. However, we must also acknowledge that the Syrian people want change. We therefore encourage the parties to reach consensus on the agenda and agree to a date for the fourth round of Constitutional Committee discussions. Additionally, we call on all parties to the Constitutional Committee to actively engage in constructive and genuine discussions on the agreed agenda.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock's briefing on the stark reality of the humanitarian situation in Syria is of great concern. Let me take this opportunity to commend the dedication and work of all humanitarian actors operating in Syria, particularly in the light of the challenging circumstances these workers and the Syrian people face each day.

Continuing violence, a deteriorating economy, the impact of unilateral sanctions, the impediments brought to the fore by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the after-effects of a nine-year conflict have all contributed to a humanitarian situation in dire need of assistance. The cost of food and basic essentials puts them out of reach for most Syrians, which is exacerbated by the additional expense of masks, gloves, sanitizer and other personal protective equipment.

It is therefore critical that humanitarian assistance, both through the cross-border mechanism and from within Syria, is made available to all those who require it. With regard to the cross-border mechanism, the closure of the Bab Al-Salam crossing point has led to decreased access to the northern parts of Idlib and Aleppo. It is expected that the needs in these and other parts of the north-east will escalate as winter approaches; accordingly, humanitarian assistance and access must also increase. We call on the Syrian Government to further facilitate scaling up the cross-line humanitarian assistance provided by the relevant humanitarian agencies.

South Africa reiterates its call for the safe, unimpeded and impartial delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance to all who require it, in line with the provisions of international humanitarian law and the need to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers. In addition, we urge all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, particularly schools, health facilities and water and sanitation facilities.

The grave humanitarian and economic situations have been exacerbated by the imposition of unilateral sanctions on Syria. At a time when we have all acknowledged the dire situation Syrian civilians face, the added burden of unilateral coercive measures is unacceptable. The Council has heard from some of its members that economic measures have no impact on the humanitarian situation, without their offering credible information to support this claim. We therefore call on the Secretary-General to include in his reports to the Council an overview of the effects and impact, both direct and indirect, of unilateral sanctions on the humanitarian situation in the country.

In conclusion, the situation in Syria can be resolved only through negotiations and dialogue. We call on all parties to spare no effort in striving for the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). Additionally, we welcome the combined briefing of the political and humanitarian situations in Syria, as we have long stated that these two tracks are interlinked. Progress in either track cannot be made independently of the other, given that, when there is no progress on the political front, the humanitarian situation further deteriorates, leading to increased loss of life and destruction.

An alternative to war must be found. We call on the five foreign military forces in Syria to respect the sovereignty of the country, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, whose seventy-fifth anniversary we all celebrated yesterday. We urge Special Envoy Pedersen to continue with an upsurge in — and enhanced — diplomacy between Syrian political stakeholders, so that they may overcome differences, build trust, ensure inclusive and transparent processes, get consensus on an agenda and prepare for a potentially difficult, protracted — and yet bloodless — political and constitutional dialogue. We appeal for no foreign interference. Special Envoy Pedersen can count on South Africa's support on the road ahead.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

I thank Special Envoy for Syria Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. My delegation also takes note of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Syria pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions (S/2020/1031).

I wish at the outset to reaffirm Tunisia's consistent position: in resolving the Syrian crisis and putting an end to the suffering of the Syrian people, there is no viable alternative to reaching a political settlement in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Until a political solution has been reached, efforts must continue to be scaled up to ensure the delivery of principled life-saving assistance using cross-line and cross-border modalities, with a view to addressing the growing needs and aggravated fragility and vulnerability resulting from the economic downturn and the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

We are deeply troubled by the impact COVID-19 has had on various aspects of Syrians' livelihoods, including food, health care and education, as well as, clearly, the enjoyment of their basic rights. We are particularly disturbed by the dramatic levels of food insecurity, including water insecurity, in Syria, which are likely to drive hunger, poverty and conflict and hinder COVID-19 prevention measures.

Tunisia praises the widening scope of the United Nations and its specialized agencies' operations in Syria, encompassing rehabilitation of hospitals, schools, roads and water, electricity and sanitation infrastructure, as part and parcel of the humanitarian response to the crisis. We emphasize the importance of strengthening early recovery efforts and building Syrians' resilience through the rehabilitation of basic-service infrastructure and the delivery of sustainable assistance for livelihoods, as appropriate. Such efforts require additional joint and coordinated humanitarian and development programmes by United Nations agencies and endowing them with sufficient funds.

We further stress that delivery of life-saving aid and COVID-19-prevention and -response measures would be more efficient if they could rely on the cooperation of all parties and on respect for international humanitarian law, international human rights law and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2532 (2020), thereby enabling safe, sustainable and unhindered access for humanitarian aid, including medical aid, and the protection of civilians and humanitarian and medical workers. In the light of growing tensions, violence and preliminary signs of relapse into conflict, particularly in north, north-east and south Syria, it remains paramount that calm be restored through the full and lasting implementation of a ceasefire in the country, pursuant to the appeal of the Secretary-General and Special Envoy Pedersen.

Tunisia looks forward to the convening of the fourth round of the Constitutional Committee talks in the near term in Geneva. We hope that Special Envoy Pedersen's discussions with the Syrian parties will lay the common groundwork for enabling the desired progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee and the political process in the broadest sense. We urge the Syrian parties to put the interests of the Syrian people first, exercise flexibility and search for commonalities so that an agreement on the date and agenda of the fourth round of talks may be reached.

We are deeply concerned about the growing menace in Syria of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), which has purportedly taken control of new swathes of territory in Syrian Al-Badiya. It has become increasingly evident that, a

year after the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, this terror organization is regaining strength in a way that threatens the territorial integrity of Syria and the stability of the region.

Tunisia reiterates the pressing need for coordinated and determined counter-terrorism efforts, in accordance with international law, in order to eradicate Security-Council-listed terrorist organizations, restore regional peace and stability and enable a solution to the Syrian crisis to take hold in the long run. We would also like to underline that the void in Syrian owing to protracted conflict, economic collapse and a highly consequential outbreak of COVID-19 disease is enabling wider forces of instability to stretch across the Middle East, North Africa and beyond.

Finally, we reiterate that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. The only lasting way forward is a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated political settlement in line with resolution 2254 (2015) that meets Syrians' legitimate aspirations, safeguards Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, ends terrorism and foreign intervention and restores peace and stability in the country and the region.



**Annex XV****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen**

Let me thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings today. We once again express our full support for their tireless work on Syria and commend the ongoing efforts of United Nations actors to address the needs of the Syrian people in dire circumstances on the ground.

I am also grateful to the humanitarian co-penholders for the statement delivered by the Belgian Ambassador (annex III). I want to agree with him that we should ensure that we focus separately on the humanitarian situation going forward in our programme of work.

Let me also, at the outset, express some concern about reports of a significant Russian air strike on opposition fighters in Idlib province yesterday. That appears to be the largest-single attack in Idlib since the 5 March ceasefire came into effect. We call on all parties, particularly the principal actors, to refrain from escalatory actions, which risk undermining the fragile ceasefire.

This Friday, 30 October, marks one year since the Constitutional Committee first convened. When it was first launched, the Security Council expressed its determination in its presidential statement S/PRST/2019/12, of 8 October 2019, that this would be the beginning of the political process to end the conflict in line with resolution 2254 (2015) that met the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians.

But since 30 October, the Committee has convened on only two further occasions — once in November 2019 and once in August this year. In that time, not only has no substantial progress been made, it appears that it remains difficult even to get the regime to agree to attend meetings. This month should have seen a further round of talks, and we regret that the regime's insistence on an agenda not in line with the Committee's mandate has meant that this has not happened.

Without a new constitution, free and fair elections, with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate, cannot take place, as envisaged in resolution 2254 (2015). Elections that do not meet those requirements will deny millions of Syrians the opportunity to take part in deciding the future of Syria and to share in ownership of the political process, as endorsed by the Council.

Unfortunately, there appears to be an equal lack of progress on other aspects of resolution 2254 (2015). The release of arbitrarily detained persons has not happened in any meaningful number despite the continued calls of the Security Council and the United Nations. The conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees have not yet been met, not least because the regime continues to threaten the security of returnees. On that, I want to echo the remarks of my United States colleague and to say that the United Kingdom will not attend any conference, especially in a non-neutral location, such as Damascus, that intentionally ignores this fundamental requirement and that denies the participation of those whose return it purports to discuss.

It is clear that humanitarian assistance still does not reach those in need. The Secretary-General's report of 14 October (S/2020/1031) makes clear that nearly two thirds of health-care facilities in north-eastern Syria, which depended on cross-border aid, have not been reached by cross-line aid in 2020. We commend the United Nations efforts in north-western Syria, including urgent road repairs and scaling up the Bab Al-Hawa operation, to help reduce the damage caused by the needless removal of Bab Al-Salam from the cross-border aid resolution. That aid access is desperately needed. Most of the almost 1 million people who fled the Russian-backed



regime offensive on Idlib last winter are still displaced, living in squalid makeshift camps and, as November nears, the Secretary-General's report confirms that 3.1 million people require additional winterization support. News of fuel shortages, which delayed aid convoys in Homs and Hamah in September, are of grave concern as temperatures drop. We are also still deeply concerned about the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Syria. Water is urgently needed, including in Al-Bab, to enable the good hygiene that helps prevent the disease from spreading and health-care facilities are necessary to treat those affected. Some are already unable to absorb all suspected COVID-19 cases. The United Kingdom has committed £33 million — \$43.1 million — in addition to address COVID-19 in Syria. But the 24 attacks this year affecting health care and killing 13 health workers only add to the pressure and worsen the humanitarian situation.

Such attacks highlight again — if we needed it to be highlighted again — the need for a political settlement, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), to resolve the crisis. Let me therefore end by urging all those with influence in Damascus to press the regime to engage meaningfully.

**Annex XVI****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank Mark Lowcock for his briefing on the continuing dire humanitarian situation in the country. I also want to thank the Special Envoy, on behalf of my Government, for his efforts on Syria. We at my delegation are grateful for the updates from his recent travels to Damascus to revive the United Nations-facilitated political process.

The only legitimate path to securing a peaceful future for the Syrian people is the internationally agreed road map for a political transition outlined in our resolution 2254 (2015). In our view, today the Security Council must make clear to Damascus, Moscow and the Syrian people that there is no alternative solution to the Syrian conflict.

The United States Government will remain unwavering in calling for the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and that resolution's calls for an inclusive Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

The lack of progress on the Constitutional Committee that we heard just described is both regrettable and unacceptable. The Al-Assad regime has unilaterally stymied any progress in the Constitutional Committee despite agreeing to the Special Envoy's Terms of Reference and Core Rules of Procedure for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee facilitated by the United Nations in Geneva (S/2019/775, annex).

At present, from what we are hearing, the co-Chair of the Committee representative of the regime refuses to agree to an agenda or date for any subsequent meeting. Over the past year, every member of the Council has expressed support for the Committee's work. We believe that it is now time to tell the Al-Assad regime that enough is enough. The Constitutional Committee must move forward with regular substantive meetings without further obstruction by Damascus.

The United States Government calls on all parties to the United Nations-facilitated political process, which means the regime and the Syrian opposition, to adhere to specific principles, including committing to Syria's unity, independence, territorial integrity and non-sectarian character, the principle of protecting the rights of all Syrians and, finally, the principle of ensuring unimpeded United Nations humanitarian access throughout the country. In order for the parties to move beyond previous discussions of first principles and directly address constitutional reforms, the Al-Assad regime must actively participate in the organization and conduct of future Constitutional Committee meetings.

We believe that the Council must do everything in its power to prevent the regime representatives from continuing to block agreement on an agenda as we move into the final months of 2020. The United States Government is concerned that the Al-Assad regime's goal is to further derail the Committee's work into 2021, when, as all members know, Syria is scheduled to hold presidential elections in April. We believe that the regime's hope is to invalidate the work of Special Envoy Pedersen and our calls, the Council's calls, for a negotiated political transition. Syria is wholly unprepared to carry out elections in a free, fair and transparent manner that would include the participation of the Syrian diaspora. That is why we need the Constitutional Committee to work and why we need the United Nations to accelerate its planning to ensure that Syria's upcoming elections are credible.

The United States urges Special Envoy Pedersen to take any measures that he thinks are appropriate to facilitate the parties' efforts consistent with the United

Nations parameters and principles and also to identify to the Council who is blocking progress. We ask the Special Envoy to press the Syrian regime to act in accordance with the agreements that it has made on the agenda so that the next session can be held as soon as possible, with continued regular meetings throughout the end of the year.

We expect the United Nations and the Syrian parties to work on concrete deliverables on other confidence-building measures. Those measures would include elements such as the unilateral release of arbitrary detainees who are languishing in overcrowded regime prisons. They could include the restoration of property rights and the allowance of regular United Nations aid deliveries to all parts of Syria, as well as preparations to support free and fair elections, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

The cornerstone of peace in Syria and a negotiated political solution is a permanent, verifiable, nationwide ceasefire. Once again, the United States calls for the 5 March Idlib ceasefire agreement to be fully upheld by all actors on the ground in the north-west — Russia, Turkey, Syria and Iran. The Council must continue to demand the regime's agreement to uphold a nationwide ceasefire.

Let me shift to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. I again thank Mark Lowcock for his briefing. The United States delegation salutes the brave work of the United Nations and all the humanitarians working to help the Syrian people. The attacks on humanitarians in the north-west in the three separate incidents that Mr. Lowcock described are very troubling, and we want to express our sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones to that violence.

The recent air strikes against civilians and humanitarians in north-west Syria about which we just heard are only one of many examples that demonstrates without a doubt that Syria remains a country at war. The regime's failure to address the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), coupled with the continued politicization of United Nations aid deliveries, cannot just be ignored, and neither can it be rewarded with reconstruction projects, capacity-building or the normalization of relations with Damascus. Therefore, the United States calls on the United Nations to fully uphold its principles and its parameters and maintain its focus on humanitarian relief operations inside Syria until a political agreement is reached.

Conditions inside Syria, I believe as we heard, are not yet conducive to the safe facilitation of the large-scale return of refugees. That is the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is also the position of the United States Government and of the other major donors that provide the overwhelming majority of funding to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

Therefore, the United States calls on the Al-Assad regime to stop targeting Syrians who have returned to regime-held areas and signed reconciliation agreements, and we call on the Al-Assad regime to create the conditions that would allow for the safe, voluntary, dignified and timely return of refugees to the country.

We believe that it is important to be clear about the United Nations assessment of conditions for returns because that must be our guiding principle, not Syria's or Russia's political priorities. The Russian Ministry of Defence announced plans to host a conference in Damascus next month on international refugee returns, as many members know. It is the strong belief of the United States that such a conference is counterproductive and that it is totally inappropriate for any military organization to manage refugee returns in Syria — be it Russia or any other.

The conference does not address in any way the root causes of the conflict that has created millions of refugees in Syria. The conference aims to discuss refugee

returns, which is completely premature given the lack of conditions on the ground for any large-scale refugee returns. Prematurely encouraging refugee returns will lead only to instability and a revolving door of displacement. We also note that the conference was not coordinated with the United Nations or with the countries that are hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees, such as Germany and Turkey.

In April, the Secretary-General's board of inquiry report for north-west Syria (S/2020/278, annex) found it highly probable that the Syrian Government and its allies, meaning the Russian Ministry of Defence, were responsible for conducting attacks that damaged hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, wreaking further devastation on the Syrian people.

The Russian Federation formally withdrew from its deconfliction arrangements with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs last year, and that placed hospitals, civilian internally displaced person (IDP) camps and medical workers in its crosshairs, with a devastating effect throughout north-western Syria. Quite frankly, the United States Government does not believe that the Russian military is a credible host for convening a meaningful discussion on the returns of refugees.

For those reasons, the United States will not attend the conference. We strongly urge the United Nations and all others to also forgo attendance at this conference, which has been orchestrated by those responsible for the refugees fleeing in the first place.

Aid deliveries to areas recently back under Al-Assad's control in the south-west and the Damascus suburbs, as well as the north-west and north-east, are still insufficient, as we have heard, to meet humanitarian needs and respond to COVID-19. Thousands of civilian residents of the Rukban IDP camp have been denied humanitarian access to the United Nations for 13 months due to non-approvals by the regime and by Russia.

We therefore call on the Al-Assad regime and Russia to immediately allow unfettered humanitarian access to the camp, including United Nations humanitarian deliveries and a needs assessment mission into Rukban so that the United Nations can work to find solutions for those remaining in the camp.

Let me end by saying that the Trump Administration and the United States Government will continue to pursue a whole-of-Government approach, including through the implementation of the United States Caesar Act, to maintain the economic and diplomatic isolation of the Al-Assad regime until that regime makes concrete and irreversible progress towards a political resolution of the conflict. That is the only way forward to protect the Syrian people and ensure that they have the future they deserve — a future that they control.

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**Annex XVII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their informative briefings on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. I would also thank all United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers for their hard work on the ground at this very challenging time. I welcome the representatives of Syria and Turkey to our meeting today.

Millions of Syrian people are still suffering on a daily basis. Their predicaments will not lessen without breakthroughs on the political and humanitarian fronts. The situation can worsen with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading, the economic crisis deepening and winter coming.

My delegation would like to reiterate our grave concern over the continued impact of instability on civilians in various parts of Syria, causing death and injury to nearly 300 civilians during August and September. We strongly condemn targeted attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and civilian objects.

In addition, the further deterioration of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation is alarming, especially when the insurmountable impact of the pandemic continues to worsen as 92 per cent of cases are untraceable and the health care system is increasingly desperate.

At today's meeting, please allow me to emphasize the two greatest needs of the Syrian people.

First, they need a viable political settlement of the decade-long crisis. The only way to do that is through a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process, facilitated by the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), in full conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and with full respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of Syria.

My delegation welcomes the resumption of meetings within the framework of the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led Constitutional Committee in late August. In order to find a sustained solution and ensure long-lasting stability, we look forward to further and more frequent discussions among Syrian stakeholders in a most constructive manner. We fully support the facilitating role of the United Nations and the Special Envoy, as well as all viable diplomatic engagement in this regard.

To facilitate the political process, a calm situation on the ground is pivotal. We therefore urge all parties to the conflicts to exercise restraint and refrain from violence, as well as continue efforts to counter terrorism in line with their obligations under international law, including humanitarian law.

Secondly, while the search for a political solution is under way, the humanitarian situation needs to be improved with a view to alleviating the misery of the Syrian people. Two vital factors that are of great importance are: first, to ensure timely, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access; and, secondly, to facilitate humanitarian response in all parts of Syria.

Given the remaining logistical and administrative difficulties, my delegation takes note of the efforts made by the United Nations and various parties to ensure the continuation of humanitarian assistance for people in need. These efforts include cross-border operations throughout the north-west and cross-line deliveries to the north-east. We call for stepped-up efforts to address gaps in this regard.

We urge all parties in Syria to create the most favourable conditions for effective humanitarian operations and call on the international community to continue its support during this critical moment. Assistance should be strengthened to increase COVID-19 response capability, fight food insecurity and provide adequate winter supplies.

In the light of the COVID-19 impact, we also call on concerned parties to address the reported issues regarding the situation in various camps of internally displaced persons, water shortages in Al-Bab city and so forth.

## Annex XVIII

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

My delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for your successful stewardship of the work of the Security Council this month and for your country's stances that are based on the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The events in the Middle East and the Mediterranean regions prove, day after day, the validity of what we have been confirming over the past nine years. We have repeatedly drawn the Council's attention to the fact that some Member State Governments exert feverish efforts to destabilize the security and stability of our countries in order to serve their narrow selfish interests, as well as aggressive and intrusive agendas. These events also demonstrated once again what we have alerted to regarding the lack of wisdom among decision-makers in some Western capitals, including those of the three permanent Western Member States of the Council. In order to achieve their agendas, these decision-makers are ready to sell their souls to the devil and to personally supervise infamous investigation mechanisms and committees at the expense of the security and stability of my country and the blood and well-being of its people, and at the expense of the Charter, credibility and role of the United Nations.

We have repeatedly drawn the Council's attention to the danger of deploying terrorism, its entities and criminals, regardless of the masks it hides behind, and the need to not tolerate its sponsors and investors. We were speaking in good faith for the benefit of all humankind, yet Western States turned a deaf ear to our warnings.

Today we can all see, unfortunately, the effects of those clumsy Western policies, where the monster turned against its creators. Erdoğan's terrorism-sponsoring regime is no longer content with performing the tasks assigned to it, namely, promoting Islamist — not "Islamic", as deceivers always claim — movements and sponsoring them in many countries in the region, and has limitlessly supported terrorist organizations and transnational terrorists who infiltrated into my country through our northern borders. Rather, Erdoğan saw himself as a new Ottoman sultan whose armies and mercenaries could invade neighbouring countries in the Middle East and Europe without any legal or moral deterrent, as if time stopped at the years preceding the era of the League of Nations, the Charter of the United Nations and the repertoire of 100 years of international legal treaties, instruments and moral values.

Erdoğan's regime has expanded its military interventions, serious crimes and support for terrorism beyond the borders of my country to many countries in our region and its neighbourhood. This includes Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Somalia, Greece, Cyprus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and others, and may think of ways to come through the doors of Vienna again. These are serious threats to international peace and security and could never have happened without the protection provided by the member States of NATO to their Turkish ally, which is similar to the patronage and immunity they granted to the Israeli occupation over the past seven decades.

We have repeatedly called on the Council to hold the Erdoğan regime accountable for its violations of international law, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions and its treaty obligations, and for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against my country, which began with the violation of the Adana Security Agreement, concluded between the two countries in 1998. Erdoğan's regime should be held accountable for recruiting, supporting, training and arming thousands of local and cross-border terrorists who were brought by this regime and its allies from more than 100 countries, according



to the reports of the United Nations and the Council's specialized committees, and providing them with political, military and media support. Erdoğan's regime started integrating these terrorists into its forces, launching acts of aggression and occupying large parts of the north of my country, stealing and plundering the wealth and natural resources of the Syrian people, including antiquities, oil and gas, factories, machinery and agricultural crops. It is also instigating forced displacement and demographic change, imposing Turkification and using drinking water as a weapon against civilians. Furthermore, this regime, along with its affiliated terrorist groups, have intentionally set fire to large areas of land cultivated with wheat, barley, olive trees and citrus fruits, depriving their owners of their only source of livelihood.

We regret that the Security Council did not show solidarity, at least, with the Syrians who were affected by the arson attacks that recently occurred in large areas of several governorates in my country. Of course, Western States would have filled the corridors of the United Nations with cries and called for meetings to be held urgently if those fires had erupted in the areas controlled by the terrorist organization Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham/Jabhat Al-Nusra or areas of the American or Turkish occupation.

In addition to the aforementioned crimes of the Turkish regime, that regime has disavowed its obligations and commitments according to the outcomes of the Astana meetings and the Sochi understandings regarding Idlib region, and has built the so-called separation wall on parts of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and manipulated the sites of the stones marking our common temporary borders. Moreover, it tried to exploit the refugee issue to blackmail Europe and conclude transactional deals with it, in addition to transferring foreign terrorists and mercenaries, whom some call the "moderate armed opposition", from Syria to Libya, while that regime is currently trying to rob the energy sources in the Mediterranean.

My delegation reiterates that the crimes of the Turkish occupation will not in any way change the legal reality of the lands it occupies and their being an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic, and neither will they lead in any way to prejudice the legal and sovereign rights of the Syrian Arab Republic, or represent a precursor to any future bilateral demarcation of borders.

The American Administration and its partners in the European Union continue the policies of economic terrorism and collective punishment of peoples through the unilateral coercive measures that they impose on my country. These measures aim to suffocate civilians and deprive them of food, medicine, basic medical equipment and fuel, and to prevent reconstruction and the return of the displaced, in great disregard of international law and the Charter of our Organization, and the calls made by the Secretary-General and senior officials of the United Nations and the Human Rights Council about the need to lift these measures, especially in the light of the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the need to respond to it.

I would like to inform the Council of the Syrian Government's decision to hold an international conference on refugees, in Damascus on 11 and 12 November, in which representatives of Member States and the United Nations and its specialized agencies will be able to participate either, in person or virtually. The conference aims to follow up on the call made by my Government in 2017 for the return of Syrian refugees and displaced persons, and its request at that time that the international community and the United Nations support the return process, create the appropriate environment and provide basic services to the returnees — a call that the Governments of some countries sought to obstruct by placing a veto on reconstruction and imposing unfair politicized conditions on humanitarian and development work in my country.



We look forward to the participation of countries that believe in and uphold international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in this conference and their support for the efforts of the Syrian State and its allies to improve the humanitarian situation and livelihood and provide support to facilitate the dignified and safe return of Syrians to their homeland, villages and homes.

My country renews its demand to end the illegal presence of the United States occupation forces in my country and to stop the support it provides to its terrorists, separatist militias and illegal artificial entities, and their prescribed theft of Syrian oil, gas, agricultural crops and related crimes aimed at depriving the Syrian State of its basic resources, thereby prolonging the suffering of Syrians and obstructing a political solution.

The Syrian Government has always engaged in the political process. We have participated openly in talks in Geneva, consultations in Moscow and meetings in Astana. We have upheld the outcomes of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi, including the formation of a committee to discuss the constitution. We have had serious and constructive conversations with the Special Envoy for Syria in the lead-up to the formation and convening of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. We hope that the Committee will succeed.

Success, however, is possible only if there is no external interference whatsoever in its work by any party. Since the start, the Committee has been independent. It is up to the Committee to decide its methods of work and its recommendations. The whole process from beginning to end must be exclusively Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. Syrians have the sole right to determine the future of their country.

Two days ago, the Special Envoy, Mr. Geir Pederson, visited Damascus, where he held meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and the co-Chair of the national side in the work of the Constitutional Committee. While Mr. Pedersen spoke about his impressions of these meetings, I would like to emphasize that the Syrian side stresses the importance of the success of the Committee's work, which requires respecting the rules of its procedures that have been agreed upon, including not allowing any external interference or pressure to impede its work. In addition, some countries' attempts to set unacceptable timetables will not serve the responsible work of the Committee, which relates to the present and future of Syria.

We reiterate to those who do not want the work of the Committee to advance that the Committee is its own master and is the one that adopts the proposals that it arrives at through a discussion that reflects the will of the Syrians, and the Syrians alone, and we do not see an alternative to the deliberations of the Constitutional Committee in all its stages under Syrian leadership and ownership, because the Syrian people are the only ones concerned with determining the future of their country.

The more I listen to my Western colleagues in these meetings, the more I become convinced that the amount of absurdity in their speeches, the amount of hypocrisy in their interpretations and the confusion in their countries' wrong policies towards my country all deem it necessary to add the psychiatrist Freud to the list of briefers. Perhaps that could help us diagnose the state of schizophrenia in their language and the unreality in their political analysis.

We have said it over and over, an opponent can never be a judge and an arsonist can never be a firefighter. The last thing one can think of, after the victory over the crime of apartheid in South Africa, is offending the great patriotic leader Nelson Mandela by employing his moral integrity to serve an immoral and illegal issue, such as starving people and denying them food and medicine, development and reconstruction.

**Annex XIX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu**

I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen for their briefings.

Since the previous Syria humanitarian meeting (see S/2020/915), the number of cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the north-west has increased dramatically. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that over 13 per cent of current cases are among medical health workers, and another 7.5 per cent among other workers involved in the health sector. These figures justify our concerns regarding the shortage of protective equipment among doctors and nurses. The increase in confirmed cases comes with an increase in testing capacity, as two additional laboratories became active in Jarablus and Afrin, bringing the total in the north-west to three.

The indiscriminate military offensive by the regime displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, squeezing millions into a narrow area along our borders. Given the dense living conditions across the region, one of the primary reasons for the increase in COVID-19 cases remains the difficulty of physical isolation. It is not surprising that half of the cases detected are in northern Aleppo.

The failure of the Security Council to reauthorize the Bab Al-Salam crossing point limited cross-border humanitarian operations. With resolution 2533 (2020) we lost the most direct, effective and highly monitored route to reach 1.3 million people in northern Aleppo. This resulted in the further deterioration of the health situation. Unfortunately, we will witness further increases in cases among the population in this particular area. I repeat our call to the Security Council to immediately consider reauthorizing the Bab Al-Salam crossing point within the cross-border mechanism.

Two weeks ago, on the International Day of the Girl Child, we emphasized the need to empower girls and celebrated the power of young women around the world. In Syria, women, girls and children, in general, remain prisoners of an endless horror, under the rule of the murderous regime and terrorist organizations. In the north-west, nearly 1.5 million people, 80 per cent of whom are women and children, live in more than 1,100 camps in extremely difficult conditions. As winter is imminent, our priority should be to provide shelter to these people and address their basic needs. We expect donors to pay attention to the grave humanitarian situation on the ground and channel additional contributions.

We must also focus on the deteriorating situation in the Al-Hol camp, where 40,000 children from more than 60 countries continue to suffer in lamentable conditions. Long-term solutions are urgently needed and these children, like all children affected by conflict, have the right to be safeguarded, including with family reunification and repatriation to their home countries.

With the multiplier effect of COVID-19 vis-à-vis the humanitarian situation, access to safe water should be a priority throughout Syria. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that only 57 per cent of water stations in the north-west are functioning, of which only 80 per cent are disinfecting water.

In Al-Bab, where 30 per cent per cent of COVID-19 cases in the region are detected, hundreds of thousands of people have been affected by the water disruption of the pumping station since February 2017. The Secretary-General, in his latest report (S/2020/1031), highlights that since then the population has been reliant on alternative, insufficient and unsafe sources.

As for the Allouk water station, in the north-east, I would like to repeat once again that sustainability of the water station relies on the supply of electrical power without interruption. The local population has borne the brunt of the deliberate and regular disruption of electric lines by the Kurdish Workers Party/Kurdish People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) terrorist organization since last year. Electric supply to the region still remains only 29 per cent of that actually needed.

While we exert the utmost effort to respond to the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian crisis, we also pursue our endeavours for advancing a political solution in line with the resolution 2254 (2015); maintaining calm on the ground; enabling the return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner; and denying safe haven to PKK/YPG and Da'esh and eradicating terrorist organizations from Syria.

Turkey, as an Astana guarantor, played a leading role in the establishment of the Constitutional Committee and wholeheartedly supports its work. We deeply appreciate the facilitation role of Special Envoy Pedersen and continue encouraging the opposition to constructively engage with the Committee. The next round of the Constitutional Committee should be held as soon as possible. We reiterate our call for accelerating the work of the Committee in a constructive and results-oriented manner.

Turkey remains fully committed to ensuring a lasting ceasefire in Idlib. Preserving the ceasefire in Idlib is essential for protecting civilians, ensuring unhindered humanitarian access, enabling the return of IDPs and advancing a substantial and results-oriented political process. We are taking the necessary military measures to maintain calm on the ground. Ceasefire violations and provocative actions to the detriment of the relative calm should be avoided.

The terrorist organization PKK/YPG is one of the major obstacles to stability and peace in Syria. The PKK/YPG poses a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Syria and to the national security of Turkey. My country will continue to firmly stand against the PKK/YPG's attempts to gain legitimacy under the guise of so-called "Syrian Democratic Forces", as well as against its efforts to consolidate power throughout the north-east by oppression and economic incentives.

In the last 12 months alone, the PKK/YPG carried out over 250 terrorist attacks, resulting in the death and injury of hundreds of Syrian civilians. The terrorist attack in Al-Bab on 6 October, which killed over 20 civilians, was one of the starkest examples of the PKK/YPG's bloodthirsty campaign. The international community can no longer remain silent in the face of these brazen terrorist attacks against civilians.

The PKK/YPG continues its attempts to infiltrate areas cleared of terrorists by Turkey. The terrorist organization goes as far as releasing Da'esh detainees when it serves its interest. It also takes steps towards usurping the natural resources of Syria, engaging in so-called oil contracts with third parties.

We will continue our resolute fight against all terrorist groups, including the PKK/YPG and Da'esh, that target the security and stability of Turkey and Syria.

There is a clear path forward for a genuine political solution that ensures the implementation of all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015). Let me recall the formula of resolution 2254 (2015): a negotiated political settlement; and elections under United Nations supervision, with the participation of all Syrians inside and outside of the country, with a new Constitution.

As the country hosting the most refugees in the world, Turkey is now home to 20 per cent of the pre-war population of Syria. These people will be the ones

who will rebuild their country with the hope of achieving a brighter future for future generations.

Towards that objective, Turkey maintains dialogue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and neighbouring countries alike, guided by the principle of the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Syrians to their country. Unilateral initiatives that neglect these principles and exclude key players and Syrians have no credibility, other than attempting to support the regime's agenda to suppress the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

We reiterate once again our unwavering, principled support for the Syrian people's aspirations to live in dignity, and our determination to continue doing our utmost for their well-being. As to the delusional remarks of the shameless regime representative, these are nothing but futile efforts to divert the international community's attention from the regime's well-documented record of crimes against humanity, its inhuman cruelties against the people of Syria and its enormous destruction in Syria. He is not a legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and therefore not worthy of my reply.

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