



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 30 April 2021 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 the 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 China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland (on behalf of Ireland and Norway), Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 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 Wednesday, 28 April 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 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 briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex 1****Briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen**

The Syrian Women's Advisory Board is meeting in Geneva this week, for the first time in person in a year. I thank the Swiss authorities for enabling this. Board members have been very active in providing me and my team with vital information from the ground and counsel on the political process. Though they represent different views and backgrounds on many issues, they continue to find ways to work together and even reach agreement often. In their diversity and commitment, they capture what many Syrians experience and they focus on what many Syrians want to achieve for their country.

Let us not forget that, in addition to challenges facing all Syrians, many women have also experienced sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, and trafficking. And with men killed and injured in large numbers, more women than ever are heading households, against the backdrop of violence, terrorism, displacement, instability, destitution and pandemic.

When I met the Board on Monday, members voiced a shared fear of Syria's permanent division and worries that differences among external actors would perpetuate the Syrian conflict. But they also spoke with hope and determination for a renewal of the political process, for a lasting calm across the country and for a new constitution that guarantees the rights and freedoms of all in Syria. They want to see an end to the conflict as a whole and a sustainable peace achieved with the meaningful participation of Syrian women, with women's safety, basic needs, dignity, rights and equality at its core.

I want today to sound a warning to all — a warning to prioritize the proactive search for a settlement of the Syria conflict. Despite more than a year of relative calm by Syrian standards, this month reminded us of the potential for the situation to further disintegrate or rapidly deteriorate.

There has been a significant escalation in north-western Syria. This has included strikes on a United Nations-supported and notified hospital in western Aleppo, close to densely populated internally displaced persons camps and on the Syrian-Turkish border where United Nations cross-border humanitarian deliveries take place, as well as shelling on residential areas of western Aleppo city.

On 22 April, air strikes inside Syria were attributed by the Syrian Government to Israel for the second time in a month. The Syrian Government then activated its air defence system and Israel claimed that a missile emanating from Syria then struck Israeli territory. Israel said it then carried out further strikes inside Syrian territory.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continued to ramp up the scale and reach of attacks in central and north-eastern Syria — in one instance cells reportedly kidnapped dozens of civilians from rural Hama. Afrin, Tell Rifaat and Ayn Isa have all seen a steady rise in hostilities. Tensions in normally peaceful Qamishli flared into violent confrontation last week, causing civilian casualties and displacement. And the south-west remains perennially unstable, with abductions, killings, detention, widespread criminality and troop movements that bring the spectre of imminent escalation.

It is all too easy to become immune to these kinds of developments and the dangers they could lead to. A nationwide ceasefire as per resolution 2254 (2015) is essential, as is a cooperative approach to eradicating listed terrorist groups.

I worry about the economic destitution facing the Syrian people in the context of a decade of conflict and destruction, corruption and mismanagement,

war economies, the Lebanese financial collapse, the pandemic and sanctions. While the Syrian pound recovered some value this month, against a backdrop of Syrian Government measures, food prices remain at historic highs and inflation has not abated. 12.4 million are now food insecure, an increase of 4.5 million in the last year alone. Fuel shortages remain a key concern as well.

Under-Secretary-General Lowcock will highlight the humanitarian implications of this destitution and of flaring coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in some quarters and fresh cuts to water access for almost half a million people in Al-Hasakah. Let me also stress, as he will, the fundamental importance of full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of Syria, through intensified cross-line and cross-border deliveries. The Secretary-General stressed in his briefing to the General Assembly that a large-scale cross-border response for an additional 12 months remains essential to saving lives. I appeal to the members of the Council to focus on achieving consensus to that end.

I also appreciate and continue to appeal for continued donor support to the pillars of the humanitarian response plan: humanitarian assistance, protection, resilience and access to services.

The diverse civil society that I continue to engage with via the United Nations Civil Society Support Room have conveyed shared concerns at the deteriorating situation for most Syrians. In a recent joint message delivered by some members at the Brussel conference at the end of March, they drew attention to the devastating impact of 10 years of war on Syria's social fabric and the ongoing displacement and deteriorating situation for refugees. They called for increased humanitarian and livelihoods programmes and the application of all humanitarian exceptions to sanctions regimes. They stressed the need for progress regarding the thousands who remain detained, abducted or missing and called for a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Let me here reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal regarding the importance of avoiding and mitigating any effects of sanctions measures on the capacity of Syrians to access food, essential health supplies and COVID-19 medical support.

Allow me to stress again the importance of unblocking progress on detainees, abductees and missing persons. As long as this file remains largely frozen, many Syrians will be unable to even begin to think of moving on, and Syria's social fabric cannot begin to be restored. I know first-hand the heavy toll this issue takes on families, through frequent contacts with family associations, women's groups and ordinary Syrian citizens. Together with my Deputy and supported by dedicated staff, I have engaged directly with the parties to this end, and we are continuing to do so.

My office also participates in a working group, together with Iran, Russia and Turkey, and with the International Committee of the Red Cross as an observer, though this group has met only once in 14 months. Notwithstanding a modest number of detainees and abductees released in one-for-one simultaneous release operations, neither track has produced real progress. Specific ideas have been offered, including concrete procedures for clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, but these need to be operationalized. I reiterate my appeal for the Syrian Government and all other Syrian parties to carry out unilateral releases of detainees and abductees and to undertake meaningful actions on missing persons at a scale that is commensurate with the scope of this tragic issue. The coming Eid Al-Fitr would be the obvious occasion for this kind of action.

If this highly internationalized conflict is to move towards resolution, we need a more constructive and comprehensive international diplomacy on Syria to try to unlock progress step for step. I have spoken about this with the Syrian parties, and

I will continue to do so in future engagements. I have also spoken about it in recent engagements with key interlocutors in Russia, the United States, Turkey, Iran, the Arab World, Europe and others on the Council. I appreciate that key international interlocutors are expressing interest in this idea. At the same time, it is clear that mistrust and a desire for others to move first are prominent elements in the minds of many.

I understand this. But there are ways to overcome these concerns. A new means of international discussion or a new international format could bring all of those stakeholders who can put something on the table to the table. Exploratory consultations could help test possibilities and bridge the gaps of mistrust that hinder such an effort. Key players could identify with realism and precision the mutual and reciprocal steps they can take and what they would seek in order to promote progress on resolution 2254 (2015). Well defined packages without ambiguity and parallel implementation and verification, as relevant, could help. There are no guarantees that common ground would be found, but I am convinced that it could be. There is enough at stake and enough common interest for us to try. We must begin to lay the groundwork for such an effort, conscious that it will require time and effort to come to fruition. With a relative, albeit fragile, calm on the ground and many capitals understanding the need for a way forward, we need to explore what is possible. We should not lose further time in exploring this seriously.

We take note that a presidential election in Syria has been scheduled for 26 May. The election has been called under the auspices of the current Constitution and is not part of the political process established by resolution 2254 (2015). The United Nations is not involved in this election and has no mandate to be. The United Nations continues to stress the importance of a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Syria. In this regard, resolution 2254 (2015) mandates the United Nations to facilitate a political process that culminates in the holding of free and fair elections in accordance with a new Constitution, administered under United Nations supervision to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate.

Let me turn finally to the Constitutional Committee and preface my remarks with two points of context.

First, the Committee is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. It was established and empowered by the agreement of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Negotiation Commission, as facilitated by the United Nations — namely, its terms of reference and core rules of procedure. The Committee operates in accordance with the terms of reference and core rules of procedure. Committee members confirmed this in a code of conduct they adopted by consensus. I appeal to the co-Chairs and all Committee members to respect the terminology in the terms of reference in their official dealings. I also appeal to them to adhere to the code of conduct in public statements.

Secondly, I have been clear that, in the interests of the Syrians themselves, a sixth session of the small body of the Committee needed to be carefully prepared. Assurances need to be in place to ensure that it implements the terms of reference, restores and builds some trust and confidence, and makes progress on the Committee's mandate to prepare and draft for popular approval a constitutional reform. In other words, a sixth session needs to be different from what has gone before — with some clear goals, credible working methods, enhanced co-Chair cooperation and a future workplan.

I have worked patiently with the co-Chairs to facilitate proposals between them and exchanges with me to find consensus on how such a session could take place. Since my last briefing, terminology not consistent with the terms of reference

and genuine differences on methodology led to an impasse that I assessed could not be overcome by further exchanges between the co-Chairs. I shared with both co-Chairs on 15 April a compromise bridging proposal, building on good ideas that each had included in their proposals and asking each to compromise. Let me note that it was regrettable that confidential elements of ongoing discussions found their way to the media. I am convinced that this proposal, if implemented, would help the Committee to move gradually forward on its work. I have also recently engaged the middle third civil society committee members.

Just before this briefing, I received a formal response to my proposal from the co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Negotiation Commission. I was informed by the co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Government that a formal response would be received next week. I will await having both co-Chairs' responses in hand and my engagement with them before further commenting. For now, let me say that the United Nations stands ready to convene a sixth session as soon as logistically possible once co-Chair agreement is in place.

The Constitutional Committee is part of what must necessarily be a broader process to implement resolution 2254 (2015) — the kind of process that a step-by-step process can help unlock. That broader process is needed to gradually create the kind of safe, calm and neutral conditions in which a consensual and broadly supported constitutional reform could take hold in Syria. These are the same conditions needed for safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian refugees and for the kind of elections resolution 2254 (2015) mandates. We cannot get there all in one go. But there are steps that could be taken to generate some movement, and it requires constructive international diplomacy to identify and implement them. I am open to any suggestions or advice, but I see no other path than this to help the Syrian people to navigate out of their terrible crisis and towards a better future that meets their legitimate aspirations and restores Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity.

## Annex 2

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

I will cover five points today: first, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19); secondly, the economic crisis; thirdly, the protection of civilians; fourthly, humanitarian access; and finally, the assistance humanitarian organizations are providing across Syria.

Let me start with COVID-19, which Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, said I would address. As I have said before, since testing across the country is so limited, there is a high degree of uncertainty over exactly the scale of the pandemic in Syria. But from the available information, it is pretty clear that the virus spread is, again, rapid but also accelerating. The number of new cases recorded by the Ministry of Health in March was twice the number recorded in February. Hospitals in Damascus, including intensive care units, are now full.

In northern Syria, new cases have been confirmed in displacement camps, including at Al-Hol and Al-Roj. Both those camps lack the resources to treat COVID-19 patients.

At the United Nations, we are doing what we can to provide support, including by enhancing surveillance capacity, providing personal protective equipment and providing training for medical workers, as well as supporting the roll-out of vaccination campaigns.

Last week, the first deliveries of vaccines from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) arrived in Syria, and additional deliveries are expected throughout the year. The supplies from COVAX should cover around 20 per cent of the population, but that is obviously not nearly enough. It is a vital first step to protect medical workers and those most vulnerable, but more vaccines will be needed as soon as possible.

Let me just make the obvious point that the vaccine doses that reached north-west Syria were delivered, like all United Nations humanitarian assistance there, through the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing. It is really not clear how future such deliveries could reach north-west Syria unless the Council confirms reauthorization of United Nations cross-border access. And Geir Pedersen has made an appeal to the Council today in that regard, reinforcing what the Secretary-General has already said. I, of course, endorse those appeals, too.

Next, I turn to the economic crisis. The exchange rate has again been volatile; in fact, it has appreciated over the last month or so. It is now around 3,400 Syrian pounds to the United States dollar on the informal market. That compares with 4,700 Syrian pounds to the dollar at a low point in March.

One consequence thereof is that there are, in some places, some reductions in prices for staples, such as rice and sugar, many of which are imported, obviously. But food prices overall remain at historically high levels. In fact, in Al-Hasakah, subsidized bread prices doubled this month. So, across the country, our food-security assessments still show the situation is getting worse.

Most Syrian households — more than half of them — report not having sufficient, or sufficiently nutritious, food. That is an increase of more than 70 per cent as compared to last year. And the proportion is — it will come as no surprise — much higher among people who have been displaced and among returnees.

Ongoing fuel shortages are increasingly affecting humanitarian operations as well. Several field missions were cancelled this month because there was not enough fuel to conduct them.

My next point relates to protection. Geir Pedersen touched again on the violence we have seen recently. Two more aid workers were killed in Syria this month. The two volunteers for the national non-governmental organization (NGO) “Al-Bir Wa Al-Ehsan Ras Al-Ain” were killed in an armed attack on 17 April on their way back from a humanitarian assistance project in Deir ez-Zor.

I again condemn this and all similar attacks. Humanitarian workers in Syria deliver life-saving aid under the most challenging circumstances and at great personal risk. They really must be protected.

Also, in the north-east, we are monitoring with concern the increasing tensions in and around Qamishli and Al-Hasakah cities. Last week, clashes in Qamishli killed at least three civilians, including two children, and injured many others. At least 15,000 people have been displaced.

Turning to Al-Hol, a security operation that concluded on 1 April resulted in the detention of more than 100 camp residents. That exercise also forced the temporary suspension of some humanitarian services. Insecurity at Al-Hol continues, however, and at least two more people have been killed since that security operation. As the Secretary-General has said, we are seeing a collective failure to protect women and children at Al-Hol and other camps and places of detention in north-east Syria. Tens of thousands of children are growing up in desperate and really scandalous conditions. So, again, I join the Secretary-General in urging relevant Member States, rapidly and safely, to allow for the voluntary repatriation of their nationals, as required by international law and standards.

Objects that are indispensable for civilians’ survival must also be protected, and I and others briefed the Council on that yesterday (see S/2021/415).

I want to update you on the situation at the Allouk water station. The water supply has again been interrupted almost consistently for the past two weeks. That affects close to half a million people in Al-Hasakah, including in Al-Hol camp. The United Nations has now recorded more than 20 such interruptions over the past year.

Humanitarian agencies are trucking more than 3,000 cubic metres of water every day to the area, but this is not enough to meet people’s essential needs, particularly as the area battles, like many other parts of Syria, increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. I therefore call again for a sustainable solution to keep water flowing at Allouk. Any solution must include safe and regular access for technical teams to the station and to the electrical installations that it relies on.

My next point relates to humanitarian access. In north-west Syria, millions of people remain pressed up against the border in an active war zone, dependent on aid that is delivered across the border from Turkey. Our data show those people are worse off now than they were nine months ago.

Every month, the cross-border operation reaches some 2.4 million people, who depend on it for food, medicines, shelter and other vital supplies. A failure to extend the cross-border authorization would sever this lifeline. I made my appeal to the Council on that earlier in my briefing, alongside Geir and the Secretary-General.

We cannot, under current conditions, substitute for the cross-border channel. We are continuing to engage with the parties to deploy a first cross-line humanitarian convoy into north-west Syria. A revised concept of operations for that convoy and the delivery was presented in March. It has not yet been rejected, but nor have the operational details of the proposed mission been agreed by everybody. Consultations therefore continue to try to address parties’ reservations, including on the question of how aid would be distributed once the convoy reaches the places intended.

In the north-east, hostilities in and around Qamishli and Al-Hasakah, which I mentioned earlier, are affecting operations as well. Twenty-five trucks containing

food rations have been stuck at a checkpoint outside Qamishli since 23 April. That kind of disruption is really unacceptable, and another example of the challenging operating environment humanitarian organizations face in north-east Syria.

While the United Nations has scaled up cross-line deliveries, needs continue to outstrip our ability to respond. Many medical facilities remain short of the necessary supplies and equipment, as I articulated last month in more detail (see S/2021/315). Overall, the situation has worsened since the removal of the Al-Yarubiyah authorized border crossing in January 2020.

Let me turn now to Rukban. Preparations are under way for United Nations-supported voluntary departures to Syrian Government-held areas. This month, the Government approved the use of Al-Dweir, in rural Damascus, as a COVID-19 quarantine centre, and that does pave the way for those who choose to leave.

The assessment in the camp itself is, meanwhile, pretty dark. There has been no humanitarian assistance delivered to the estimated 12,000 people in Rukban from the Government-held areas since December 2019.

Geir touched on the issue of sanctions. I again echo what he said. I note again the public assurances by the United States and by the European Union that their sanctions programmes do not ban the flow of humanitarian supplies to Syria, and that they are committed to fully and expeditiously applying humanitarian exemptions.

Unfortunately, we see the impact of sanctions on humanitarian operations in the form of overcompliance with the measures put in place, including in the financial sector. More than half of the international NGOs that are operating out of Damascus have reported serious problems with their banking requirements this year. I therefore encourage the relevant Member States to work closely with the NGOs and the banks alike to try to resolve these problems.

Finally, I will say just a few words on the assistance we are delivering through the United Nations and the agencies we work with across Syria.

At the fifth Brussels conference, to which Geir eluded, co-chaired by the United Nations and the European Union on 30 March, pledges of \$4.4 billion were made to provide assistance in Syria and the region this year. Those contributions help us sustain what is a massive humanitarian operation coordinated by the United Nations in Syria. It reaches currently around 7.7 million people every month all over the country.

But much more is needed. Humanitarian organizations were aiming to deliver assistance to 12.3 million people in Syria this year. It is really vital that they receive the additional resources and the access necessary to enable them to do so.

**Annex 3****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: English and Chinese]

I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings. In addition to their briefings and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/390), I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the United Nations should continue its good offices and adhere to the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process. The international community should step up its efforts to seek a political solution and push for a swift end to the Syrian crisis. China calls on all parties in Syria to closely engage and consult Special Envoy Pedersen and reach consensus on the arrangements for the sixth round of Constitutional Committee meetings as soon as possible. In its work, the Constitutional Committee should remain independent and free from outside interference. China has noted Syria's announcement that it will hold general elections next month. China calls on the international community to respect the sovereignty of Syria and the choice of its people. The future and destiny of Syria must be determined by the Syrian people themselves.

Ending external occupation and eliminating terrorist forces are necessary security conditions for a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Many Council members are concerned about terrorist activities within Syria and the risk of their spillover. The international community should work together, in accordance with international law and Council resolutions, to combat terrorist forces in Syria.

Secondly, the international community should enhance the relevance of humanitarian relief in Syria and effectively alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. The complex humanitarian challenges facing Syria today are highlighted by soaring food prices, oil shortages and the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). United Nations agencies need to scale up food aid and help Syria maintain its agro-infrastructure, such as water and power supplies. China supports the United Nations in providing vaccines to Syria through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, and China's shipment of COVID-19 vaccines arrived in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on 24 April. Hopefully, the timely injection of vaccination will help curb the spread of the pandemic in Syria.

Impacted by unilateral sanctions and economic blockades, Syria is suffering from a severe shortage of oil, and many gas stations have been forced to shut down because of low fuel supplies. China urges the countries concerned to heed the calls of the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the broad membership to immediately lift unilateral sanctions against Syria.

Thirdly, the United Nations should respect the status and the role of the Syrian Government and continuously improve the delivery of humanitarian relief to Syria. China welcomes the positive progress made in cross-line humanitarian relief operations. In March, the World Health Organization delivered over 470,000 medical treatments through the cross-line modality to civilians in the north-east. According to the Syrian Government, the Syrian side has approved the cross-line humanitarian deliveries to its north-west, but the United Nations convoy has yet to make the trip. The Syrian Government wants to know exactly what has hindered the cross-line deliveries to the north-west, who is to blame and what to do next. These issues and concerns deserve attention and warrant a response.

We hope that the United Nations, by making full use of existing border crossings, will continue to scale up cross-line humanitarian-relief operations and open up cross-line transport routes throughout Syria as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that China remains committed to playing a constructive role in taking forward the political process, restoring peace and stability in Syria and alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people.

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**Annex 4****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 the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

Our briefers highlighted multiple challenges that Syria will face today and in the near future. On the humanitarian front, millions of people have been deprived of their homes and livelihoods. The spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) resulted in another set of problems, putting in danger the most vulnerable groups and hampering the overall humanitarian response. Unfortunately, the promises of replacing cross-border deliveries with cross-line aid still fall short. Cross-line aid is dysfunctional, irregular and unreliable. This is a fact that cannot be overlooked.

In this light, maintaining cross-border aid deliveries in July remains our utmost duty. Sustainable, long-term, cross-border humanitarian response ensures that all Syrian people will receive necessary food items, medicine and COVID-19 vaccines. Reaching a nationwide ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need are imperatives during the pandemic. I express my gratitude to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for its continued efforts on the ground in Syria, where 4.9 million people were reached with assistance in February and March. I thank OCHA for its dedication and professionalism.

The economic situation remains fragile, as corruption, warlordism and intra-communal fighting continue across the country. The safe and dignified return of refugees is still not possible. Broader regional dynamics are also at play. The weakening of neighbouring economies has resulted in substantial losses for Syria, where businesses have historically been strongly interlinked with those in Lebanon and elsewhere.

Looking at the political front, numerous challenges persist. The Syrian Constitutional Committee talks in Geneva have not enabled genuine dialogue. The proposed presidential elections in May further undermine the political process.

The legitimate claims of the Syrian opposition must be taken into account when looking at the future of Syria. Estonia and other European Union member States support free and fair elections in Syria, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), under United Nations supervision, with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate. Anything else would be considered yet another farce.

As the Constitutional Committee keeps underdelivering, Estonia encourages the Special Envoy to explore additional confidence-building measures, which could bring the Government and its legitimate opposition closer to each other in the interest of all Syrian people.

Most importantly, we believe that meaningful steps with regard to arbitrarily detained people could benefit the conflicting sides. I reiterate the call of Estonia and the European Union concerning the need to create an international mechanism to locate missing people or their remains. There must be accountability for the many war crimes and crimes against humanity, and an end to impunity. We demand the release of all arbitrarily detained people, especially women, children and the elderly.

Estonia and the European Union remain committed to finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria. We encourage all international actors to support the Syrian people in achieving those aims, which are set out in resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

**Annex 5****Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank the Special Envoy, Geir Pedersen, and Mr. Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

The Syrian conflict is far from over. France is concerned about the continuation of hostilities across the country. The risk of a resurgence of Da'esh is worrying. The chronic instability in the areas recaptured by the regime is proof that there will be no lasting stabilization without a political solution.

As the month of Ramadan has begun, France reiterates its call for a nationally verifiable cessation of hostilities under the auspices of the United Nations, in accordance with the calls made by the Secretary-General and the resolutions of the Security Council.

Indeed, the humanitarian situation is worsening every day. More than 12 million Syrians are food-insecure. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to spread. In the north-east, the number of cases has increased by 57 per cent in one month. The first shipment, last week, of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility is positive. It is essential to ensure equitable access to the vaccine, including in the north-east and the north-west.

International humanitarian law must be respected by all, not only in terms of the protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, but also with respect to ensuring full humanitarian access. The systematic blocking of aid by the regime shows that there is no alternative to the cross-border mechanism. France is determined that the mechanism should be renewed for 12 months, wherever it saves lives, in accordance with the Secretary-General's call.

Progress in the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) must be made in order to overcome the current deadlock. It is time for the Constitutional Committee to finally work on drafting the constitutional reform. The regime must demonstrate its willingness to participate in good faith in negotiations.

France urges the Special Envoy to work on the implementation of the other aspects of resolution 2254 (2015) and to report on them, clearly indicating to the Council where the bottlenecks lie.

We must now prepare for the holding of free, inclusive and transparent elections, under United Nations supervision and in which the diaspora will be able to take part, as provided for in resolution 2254 (2015). France will not recognize any validity in the elections planned by the regime to take place at the end of May. They will not meet the criteria previously listed and will be held under the sole control of the regime, without international supervision. Progress should also be made on the issue of those detained in regime jails and of missing persons. Nothing can justify the lack of progress in that respect.

There can be no peace without justice. France, along with its partners, will tirelessly pursue its fight against impunity for the crimes committed in Syria. The Secretary-General's latest report on violations committed against children once again establishes the overwhelming responsibility of the regime and the forces supporting it, especially for attacks on hospitals and schools.

France will continue to support international mechanisms to fight impunity and will pursue its efforts in the framework of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The adoption a week ago by a large majority of a decision to take measures as a consequence of Syria's failure to comply with its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention is an important step. The actions taken in courts across Europe are also aimed at bringing to justice the perpetrators of the crimes committed by the regime.

In the absence of a credible political settlement, France and its partners will remain steadfast in their position on reconstruction, normalization and sanctions, and will continue to work with all those who want a political solution to the crisis.

**Annex 6****Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their comprehensive briefings today.

The political track has not seen any major development since our last discussions. The Special Envoy has a continued engagement with all important stakeholders to push for an early convening of the sixth meeting of the drafting body of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. The outcome of that meeting will be crucial to the credibility of the political process. It is therefore important that all three groups have a clear understanding of the procedure and the topics. In that regard, we welcome the proposals made by the Special Envoy. We hope that all three sides will cooperate with the Special Envoy to agree on the modalities of the next meeting. An agreement on the procedure to be followed in the meeting is necessary.

As we have said before, the Syrian conflict is both deeply politicized and internationalized. We have major foreign Powers involved with stakes in the conflict. We also have several independent parallel political tracks. We welcome those parallel initiatives while underscoring the centrality of the United Nations-led political process. The parallel tracks must feed into that process. In that regard, we support the engagement of Special Envoy with all stakeholders.

For the United Nations-led political track to move forward, we need cooperation among all major stakeholders in the conflict. Constructive international diplomacy is the need of the hour to bridge existing divides by focusing on mutual and reciprocal steps. That has become difficult to achieve in the current context, since there does not seem to be any degree of understanding among the major stakeholders. We would like to underline again that there cannot be externally imposed solutions to the conflict. The polarization has only hardened the resolve of all sides, which seem to be acting at cross-purposes. We believe that there must be unity of purpose focusing on helping the people of Syria. If we are serious about achieving progress, we need to have greater convergence of views and act to strengthen the hand of the Special Envoy. If we do not act now to save the United Nations-led political process, that process may become marginalized.

The Syrian conflict and the division between the stakeholders have been taken advantage of by terrorists, which has contributed to the rise of terrorism in Syria and neighbouring countries. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/390) dwells on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We express our serious concern over the increased terrorist activity on Syrian soil. Further, it is a matter of deep concern for all that the mercenaries are finding their way into other conflict zones, including in Africa. That needs to be addressed with a high degree of seriousness. It is imperative that all parties adhere to their international obligations to fight terrorism and terrorist organizations in Syria, as designated by the Security Council.

India firmly believes that long-term security and stability in the region can be achieved only by preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We also remain convinced that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirm our commitment to advancing a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Today's briefing has once again highlighted the dire humanitarian situation in Syria. The decade-long conflict has had a devastating effect on the people of Syria. We are deeply concerned at the alarming statistics provided at the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs briefing last week. An estimated half-million people have died, millions have been displaced, both internally and externally, the health infrastructure has collapsed, and children have been deprived of basic education. Women, children and youth have especially been deeply impacted. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further aggravated the humanitarian situation. The economic crisis in Syria has pushed its people to the brink of disaster. We hope that the announcements made at the fifth Brussels donors conference last month will bring some respite to the population affected.

Let me reiterate once again that there is an urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country without discrimination or politicization or any preconditions.

What we need immediately is an active engagement that is both consistent with Syrian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty and addresses the urgency of the prevailing humanitarian issues in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. There is also an urgent need for concrete steps to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of both cross-border and cross-line operations, in particular the delays in granting the requisite approvals to humanitarian aid convoys. We need both sides to make that happen.

As we have mentioned in our earlier statements on Syria, India has extended developmental assistance and human-resource development support to Syria regularly. These include lines of credit for developmental projects, supplies of medicine and food, artificial-limb fitment camps and capacity-building training programmes for Syrian nationals. Recently Syria also received a consignment of India's COVID-19 vaccines. We reiterate our steadfast commitment to continuing those initiatives in support of the people of Syria.

**Annex 7****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason, on behalf of Norway and Ireland**

Today I make this statement on behalf of the co-penholders of the Syrian humanitarian file, Norway and Ireland. My statement will be a little longer than usual, so I ask you to give us some forbearance. We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, and, of course, the Special Envoy, Geir Pedersen, for the briefings we have just heard.

We have heard the plain facts from Mark Lowcock just now, and we have heard from the Secretary-General about the immense scale of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the critical role of humanitarian operations in alleviating that need. The figures illustrate a catastrophic situation for many millions of Syrians. Nine in 10 Syrians now live in poverty, with 60 per cent of the population at risk of going hungry this year. Those are the worst numbers in the history of the Syrian conflict.

In spite of the fragile ceasefire in parts of Syria, violence continues to cause deaths and injuries to civilians, including children and humanitarian workers.

We note with great concern the appalling abuses outlined in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2020/525) and condemn the reports of grave violations against children.

As humanitarian co-penholders, we are notably concerned at the alarming reports of 137 verified incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including 49 attacks on humanitarian facilities, personnel and transports; 46 attacks on water facilities; and 42 instances of deliberate denial of humanitarian access.

We condemn the recent killing of two humanitarian workers in an armed attack in south-east rural Deir ez-Zor. That underlines once again the obligation of all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. We also urge all parties to heed the call of the Secretary-General for an immediate ceasefire and end to hostilities.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has exacerbated the suffering of the Syrian people, and we are especially concerned about the impact on vulnerable people living in densely populated camps with minimal access to essential health services. Hundreds of health facilities have been attacked and destroyed over the course of the conflict, leaving the country ill-equipped to cope with the surging toll of COVID cases. We welcome the allocation of vaccines to Syria through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, as well as the plans in place to distribute those vaccines during 2021. Humanitarian needs are particularly acute in the north-west, where 3.4 million people are in need. That is 21 per cent more than last year.

Ireland and Norway's position is clear: we support any and every modality that will ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

We fully support all efforts to put in place a cross-line support mission to north-western Syria. We call on all parties to engage constructively and in a spirit of compromise to ensure that this important mission can proceed.

We must be clear, however, that the size and scope of the United Nations cross-border operation required to meet the vast scale of humanitarian need cannot currently be replicated by cross-line convoys. The United Nations-mandated cross-border operation in north-west Syria reaches almost 85 per cent of people in need every month. Without that sustained and predictable access, civilian suffering in the

north-west would rise to levels not seen in 10 years of conflict, further driving the level of instability in Syria and the region.

Furthermore, many non-governmental organizations rely on United Nations operational support for logistics and procurement. Access to life-saving items such as COVID-19 vaccines is directly dependent on that operation. Finally, it is worth noting that the United Nations cross-border operation is one of the most heavily scrutinized and monitored aid operations anywhere in the world. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism guarantees the humanitarian nature of all deliveries and ensures a robust humanitarian operation based on transparency and accountability.

For those reasons, the provision of United Nations support through the border crossing at Bab al-Hawa, as a minimum, must continue. The immense humanitarian needs clearly demonstrate that resolution 2533 (2020) must be renewed.

Without the vital humanitarian assistance channelled through Bab al-Hawa, efforts to reduce hunger, build resilience and ensure access to health care will falter and fail. People are worse off now than 10 months ago, when the previous cross-border resolution was negotiated, including in the north-east after the closure of Al-Yarubiyah.

In addition, while we welcome the initial delivery of COVAX vaccines in Syria, without sustained access to critical supplies, COVID-19 will continue to spread within Syria and beyond its borders, and more lives will be lost. We simply must all work together to prevent such a catastrophe.

As humanitarian co-penholders, Norway and Ireland will continue to support all efforts to ensure that humanitarian assistance continues to reach all those in need in Syria. We will work closely with all of you on the Council in support of that objective.

**Annex 8****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

Given that this meeting combines both political and humanitarian agenda items, I will now briefly say a few words in my national capacity about the political situation.

I once again thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing today. We note with regret and disappointment the Syrian authorities' lack of substantive engagement thus far in the work of the Constitutional Committee and hope that the response the Special Envoy referred to this morning is a positive one. Despite his intense efforts, intransigence continues to frustrate the possibilities for real progress in the Committee. The results of the Committee's work continue to fall far short of the legitimate expectations of all the Syrian people.

On 22 April, the Secretary-General released his report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2021/390), documenting the terrible scale of grave violations committed against children. More than 2,700 children were verified as killed or maimed in that two-year reporting period alone. Ireland condemns the unconscionable violations against children committed by all parties to the conflict and urges all to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Those parties and those with influence over them must take immediate actions to protect innocent Syrian children.

Ireland calls on all parties to take concrete and effective measures to prevent and end child casualties in the conduct of hostilities. The recruitment of children simply must cease, and all children should be unconditionally released from the ranks of all armed groups.

The plight of families left to suffer without information about their missing loved ones is another cruel and a brutal form of collective punishment. It is especially concerning that persistently high numbers of children are detained for alleged associations with conflict. Children caught up in conflict must be treated primarily as victims. The parties must provide comprehensive information on, and access to, all detainees, particularly children. They must identify non-custodial alternatives for children and release them. Child protection actors simply must have access to detained children. We fully support Mr. Pedersen's continued efforts on detainees, abductees and missing persons.

In Ireland, we strongly believe in the centrality of education as a building block for progress of society. Attacks on schools and their use for military purposes are reprehensible and must end. Children in areas controlled by armed groups should have access to a recognized curriculum. All parties should remove practical obstacles to education in areas under their control. Every child should be allowed to enjoy their natural right to education, in accordance with their best interests and hopes for a better future.

Accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law is essential. Ireland commends 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 the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for their work in that regard. Their reports and others, including from civil society, testify to horrific crimes, including the bombing of hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure.

Ireland clearly condemns such acts, in particular the attacks carried out on the hospital near Atarib and on humanitarian infrastructure near Bab Al-Hawa on 21 March, as well as attacks against civil society and human rights defenders.

Finally, it is past time for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and call on the Syrian authorities to engage meaningfully within the Constitutional Committee and, importantly, with the wider political process, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). The Council should also insist that the Syrian authorities comply with their obligations under international law and end brutal policies so that the people of Syria can live their lives in freedom and without fear.

**Annex 9****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. Kenya welcomes joint meetings on the political and humanitarian situations and their combined insights into the condition of the Syrian people. The overriding interest of Kenya is in the safety, well-being and peace of the people of Syria.

Politically, Kenya reaffirms its unequivocal support for a Syrian-led and-owned dialogue intended to achieve a sustainable political solution to the protracted conflict. It is therefore regrettable that a return to discussions in the Constitutional Committee has gained no traction. We encourage such constitutional discussions, which, as stated by the Special Envoy, will be a significant door-opener and will demonstrate the commitment of the parties to a successful outcome. These discussions will raise the hopes of the people that at long last there may be an end to the nightmare that has engulfed so much of their country. As a crucial confidence-building step, the issues of detainees and enforced disappearances must be resolved.

On a positive note, we commend the Special Envoy's continued engagement with the diverse group of women on the Syrian Women's Advisory Board — a welcome step towards much-needed bottom-up solutions.

On the security situation, Kenya notes with grave concern the unabated mutual shelling and air strikes. It is important that all parties adhere to the nationwide ceasefire, renew their commitment to the cessation of hostilities and exercise maximum restraint. They should also adhere to their obligations under international law.

Kenya categorically condemns terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and firmly opposes all attempts to grant them legitimacy as political actors.

Kenya further notes that the interplay of foreign interests and geopolitical competition complicates the situation and serves only to derail the focus on the suffering people of Syria. It is important that the international community speak in one voice in the interest of the Syrian people.

We are gravely concerned about the growing frequency of deadly attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers. We reiterate the fundamental need to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as the need to hold all perpetrators to account.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, the fact that 13.4 million Syrian people are in dire need of aid is alarming. When compounded with the challenges related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the situation is likely to get worse.

The President of the General Assembly's visit to Syria early this month confirmed that the Organization's cross-border aid deliveries into Syria are critical and that they have made it possible for the United Nations to roll out vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. These vaccines will also be administered through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing. We understand, however, that the current needs exceed the ongoing humanitarian response.

In some situations, like the Allouk water station, primary water sources for hundreds of people have not been functioning for a while. Special attention should be paid to such critical infrastructure to alleviate suffering and possible waterborne diseases.

Furthermore, we must shed light on the potential for radicalization within camps. Kenya believes it is important for the Security Council to be seized of the importance of supporting terrorist disengagement programmes, which should be delivered at sufficient scale within the camps. In addition, we call on the countries concerned to repatriate their citizens from said camps and prioritize disengagement capabilities and capacity-building.

Faced with this grim humanitarian picture, the onus is on us, as the Security Council, to ensure that these vital principled humanitarian operations are unimpeded so that they can reach those most in need. The Government should also work towards a negotiated solution for aid to be administered in north-west Syria in order to meet the significant needs of the population.

As the vanguard of international peace and security, the Security Council should reaffirm the Syrian people by giving them hope and an opportunity to dream of a bright future free from conflict. That can be accomplished only by working together to facilitate the long-desired consensus towards a political solution and a constructive dialogue.

**Annex 10****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Alicia Buenrostro Massieu**

[Original: Spanish]

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

Mexico welcomes the Special Envoy's efforts to keep channels of dialogue with civil society open as an important and integral sector of Syrian political life. In that regard, we highlight the meeting convened in March jointly by the Office of the Special Envoy and the European External Action Service with civil society actors, who expressed their support for a political process facilitated by the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), the urgency of the cessation of military activities and respect for the unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

Regular elections are a fundamental element of every democracy. In that regard, we specifically recall the parameters set out in resolution 2254 (2015), which is very clear on the organization of elections in Syria. These must be carried out in accordance with the highest international standards on the basis of a new constitution and with broad citizen participation, including from the diaspora. Mexico calls for these requirements to be met.

The meetings of the Constitutional Committee also represent one of the main confidence-building measures between the parties. We call on the delegations representing the Government and the opposition to participate constructively and meaningfully in these deliberations. My country, Mexico, reiterates the importance of these meetings having credible goals, viable working methods and clearly defined timetables. We urge the co-Chairs to work together in a serious and committed manner to draft a work plan for the Committee's next meeting.

Another element covered by resolution 2254 (2015) is the release of detained persons. Mexico considers this issue and the investigation into disappeared persons to be central to the political transition. We could explore alternative avenues dedicated to clarifying these situations, such as the mechanism proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Accountability and the fight against impunity are the fundamental pillars of any political solution.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, the arrival of the first shipment of vaccines by the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility mechanism, as highlighted here, is an encouraging development. In order for the COVID-19 vaccination plans to develop effectively, humanitarian access needs to be secure, expeditious and unimpeded.

Given the challenge of providing services to mitigate the needs of the population, it is a priority for the members of the Security Council to focus on strengthening and expanding humanitarian access. Mexico echoes the Secretary-General in his most recent report (S/2021/390) in calling for the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism for another 12 months. Let us remember that, in the absence of the cross-border mechanism, there would be no way to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to north-west Syria, and it would be difficult to continue the food distribution carried out by the World Food Programme. All access modalities are complementary and necessary in order to save lives.

In conclusion, it is urgent to address the needs of the population and to take firm steps towards a political solution in Syria. The renewal of the border mechanism will undoubtedly contribute to alleviating the suffering of the population.

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**Annex 11****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi**

[Original: French]

I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings on the Syrian crisis. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey in this meeting.

After over a year and a half of its existence and five rounds of negotiations, the Syrian Constitutional Committee is struggling to produce tangible results to effectively start work on the future constitution of Syria. The parties involved are sticking to their positions, setting preconditions and becoming more radical as the country continues to spiral downward, causing more and more unbearable suffering for the people, who are tired of almost a decade of conflict.

My delegation shares the frustration and disappointment of the Special Envoy and all those who are genuinely working to find a negotiated and lasting solution to this crisis. We call on the Syrian parties to pull together and show a minimum level of compromise in order to break this deadlock and thus truly put the political process on track. Only an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue reflecting the will of the Syrian people will lead to a peaceful and long-term solution in Syria.

My delegation therefore endorses the call by Special Envoy Pedersen for the sixth session to be different from its predecessors — with clear objectives, credible working methods and enhanced cooperation by the co-Chairs.

We remain convinced that progress in the work of the Constitutional Commission and in the cessation of hostilities must go hand in hand with other aspects of the crisis, such as an end to external interference, including support for armed groups, and the plundering of Syrian resources.

The Niger takes note of the announcement made by the Syrian Government on the organization of presidential elections scheduled for 26 May.

On the security front, we are particularly concerned about the resurgence of hostilities in Syria, especially in the north-west. The Niger condemns the use of civilian facilities for military purposes, as well as the raids against them, like the recent attack on the Atarib Surgical Hospital, which resulted in the deaths of civilians and the closure of the facility. The increase in violent incidents, as documented and verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the de-escalation zone and elsewhere in the country, including in Al-Hol camp, are acts that will make the work of humanitarians increasingly difficult and dangerous and will add to the suffering of the civilian population, including women and children. However, we recognize the right of the Syrian Government to fight terrorism on its territory, especially in view of the rise in assassination attempts and attacks perpetrated by Da'esh against Government officials and the Government's critical facilities.

Finally, with regard to the humanitarian situation, the deliberate destruction of food stocks and/or convoys and the water supply system is unacceptable. The delivery of humanitarian assistance must not be hindered or held hostage to any geopolitical calculation, but rather must be carried out according to the principles of impartiality, independence, neutrality and humanity. At a time when Syria is going through its worst economic crisis as a result of the cumulative effects of almost a decade of war, unilateral sanctions and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we call on all concerned to show compassion, especially in this holy month, to allow for the

unimpeded and effective delivery of aid through border crossings and across border lines into Syria. In these circumstances, it is feared that, if the authorization for the delivery of humanitarian assistance is not renewed in July, the aftermath will be even more dire for the population.

Niger welcomes the start of vaccinations against COVID-19 in Syria, including in the north-west of the country. The World Health Organization must accelerate the delivery of the remaining quota allocated to Syria under the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access mechanism to allow for an effective vaccination campaign throughout the country. As the Syrian people continue to face this multifaceted humanitarian crisis, we urge the donor community to continue to assist the Syrian people in line with the commitments made at the fifth donor conference, which was held in Brussels last month.

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**Annex 12****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I make this statement on the Syrian political situation in my national capacity and will begin by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing.

We commend him and his team's tireless work with the Syrian parties — and the international community — to seek progress towards a political solution and the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). That is certainly not an easy task, but it is a very important one.

For Norway, it is particularly good to hear that the Syrian Women's Advisory Board was finally able to meet in person this week. We have supported the Board's work and inclusion from the beginning and would re-emphasize its critical role in the political process.

Even though there have been no new meetings of the Constitutional Committee since our last Council meeting on the political situation in Syria (see S/2021/265), we know that a great deal of work has been done. The two Chairs, their delegations and the middle third component of the small body of the Constitutional Committee have made efforts to move forward and prepare for the next meeting. We support Special Envoy Pedersen's demands for concrete results in the next round of negotiations. Further, we urge the parties to contribute to the process in good faith and in a constructive way. The constitutional process must move forward with the aim of starting the drafting of a reformed constitution for Syria. However, the constitutional process must be part of a larger effort towards a political solution in the country.

It is not enough that solely the Syrian parties negotiate. Broader international engagement is needed, in particular from those involved on the ground. We support the Special Envoy's call for a new international format to find a solution. We need a different dynamic to move away from the current stalemate, which is benefiting neither the Syrian people nor the region. We heard again today how extremely difficult the situation is on the ground. Although it is less violent than in earlier stages of the conflict, the situation remains fragile. Every week there is active fighting and violence.

Resolution 2254 (2015) called for a nationwide ceasefire — one that, sadly, is still very much needed — and we will continue to urge its full implementation. We remain concerned that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is still operating and able to carry out attacks. We are also concerned that the issue of arbitrarily detained persons remains unaddressed. The release of those arbitrarily detained, especially women and children, is crucial both for the sake of the Syrian people and for being a confidence-building measure. We call on the Syrian authorities to take steps to address this issue, as a measure of good will and in line with their international legal obligations.

The importance of an inclusive political process cannot be underestimated. Experience shows that the inclusion of those who are the most affected by a conflict leads to the best results. In this respect, the inclusion of women in all political talks is essential, and the role of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board remains vital. I would also like to highlight and commend the role being played by middle third component of the small body of the Constitutional Committee and the Syrian Civil Society Support Room, and the support of these two entities to the peace process.

Syrian elections have now been announced. According to resolution 2254 (2015), elections should be held based on a reformed constitution, agreed between the Syrian parties, and free and fair for all Syrians. In this respect, we would like to

have seen resolution 2254 (2015) honoured and elections held based on a reformed constitution. It is regrettable that the drafting of a new constitution has not yet started.

In closing, we know that progress on the political track is the key to a sustainable peace in Syria — a peace with human rights and rule of law at its core. A political solution remains vital to reducing the huge humanitarian needs, to development, to the return of refugee and to stability. We — and, above all, the people of Syria — need to see progress on this file. It is long overdue.

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**Annex 13****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

Before addressing the agenda of today's meeting via video-teleconference, I would like to express our concern over the fact that the Security Council is again using the online format to host a discussion of important issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, which we believe is unjustified. It is well known that the Security Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters is a safe environment. The Council held more than 10 in-person meetings there during the Russian presidency of the Council in October 2020. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation in New York today is far better than it was back then. Excessive precautions by some of our colleagues may cast an unflattering light upon us as compared to our colleagues in the General Assembly, who have been convened regularly — and in person — in the General Assembly Hall. Nothing prevents us from doing the same. With that in mind, we call upon the ongoing Vietnamese presidency, as well as the incoming Chinese presidency, to take practical steps to transfer our work to an in-person mode in the Security Council Chamber.

We thank Geir Pedersen and Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

The state of affairs in Syria remains complicated. Even though there is some relative stability holding on the ground, the country has seen a deterioration of its socioeconomic and humanitarian situation, prompted by the unyielding sanctions pressure imposed by the collective West. The direst of situations has come to pass in the north-west, north and north-east of the country— the territory that is outside the control of the Syrian Government. These areas are the responsibility of the de facto occupying Powers and local authorities.

We are concerned at the continuing inter-ethnic clashes in the trans-Euphrates region. Conflicts between Kurds and local Arab communities have escalated because of the foreign occupation of these areas. Israel's failure to stop air strikes on Syrian territory are a further destabilizing factor.

On the political track, we have not slackened in our efforts aimed at helping a successful inter-Syrian dialogue. We remain in close contact with Special Envoy Pedersen and the Syrian sides and encourage them to act constructively and look for mutually acceptable solutions. We hope the Special Envoy will soon be able to bring the Syrians together at a negotiations table in Geneva within the framework of the sixth session of the small body of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. We would recall that the process must be a Syrian-owned process; any interference or imposition of conditions is unacceptable and can only be detrimental.

Syria will hold presidential elections in less than a month. Despite all the difficulties, the Syrian authorities are making efforts to ensure that the State system functions well. It is disconcerting that some countries are opposed to the very idea of the imminent elections and have already labelled them illegitimate. We call for the cessation of creating a negative-information atmosphere around the upcoming vote, which has nothing to do with the work of the Constitutional Committee. Interference in Syria's internal affairs is unacceptable. It runs counter to the effective norms of international law, as Special Envoy Pedersen confirmed today.

We take note of the comment made by the former United States Special Representative for Syria Engagement, James Jeffrey, who held the post in the Trump Administration, which appeared in the media earlier in April. Mr. Jeffrey admitted that Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which is listed as a terrorist organization by the Security

Council, was an important United States asset in Syrian affairs and was the least bad option on Idlib. That is why Mr. Jeffrey thought this jihadist group was worth supporting. I believe that that says it all; these revelations are in fact a return to the logic of “good terrorists” and “bad terrorists”. It also shows how, when retired, politicians can disclose the true rationale of actions of some of our partners in Syria.

As for the humanitarian situation in the country, we welcome the delivery of the first imported batches of anti-COVID-19 vaccine in Syria last week. In this context, it is vital to ensure that the vaccine is fairly distributed among all those who need it. We trust that the Syrian Government will approach this matter responsibly.

Damascus has many times demonstrated its readiness to openly cooperate with the United Nations. The recent report of the Secretary-General on humanitarian developments in Syria in March and April this year (S/2021/390) clearly indicates that the number of permits to perform humanitarian activities issued to the United Nations personnel is rapidly growing. These permits enable the personnel to carry out humanitarian operations in Government-controlled areas, including through the World Health Organization operations in the trans-Euphrates region.

Much-needed medical assistance is reaching Syria’s north-east. But now an expanding fuel crisis is impeding the work of humanitarian staff on the ground — and this in a country rich with oilfields. Syria, the United Nations and its partner non-governmental organizations may end up in a conundrum — the incoming humanitarian aid risks being stuck in warehouses because there may be no fuel to deliver it to end-users. Ironically, the fuel in question is that which the United States occupation authorities are extracting from the Syrian subsoils in the north-east of the country to their own advantage. This threatens to undermine the work of mobile medical stations, about which Secretary-General Guterres speaks unambiguously in his report. Are we to blame the Syrians for that as well? Or will our Western colleagues have the courage to call a spade a spade?

With respect to the fifth donor conference in Brussels, which we will certainly hear praised today, its organizers vaunt the substantial donor contributions. But from the previous four donor conferences, we have seen that contributions are not the main index for assessing the value of these conferences. It could hardly be otherwise, since these conferences completely overlook the Syrian authorities, which is why the Syrian people receive so little of the funds raised. Indeed, these conferences pay no attention to the enormous serious problems that the country is facing in its recovery after 10 years of direct foreign interference. It is a pity that the statement section of the conference’s official website does not feature the address of the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Peter Maurer, who speaks about the devastated infrastructure of Aleppo and Raqqah and the sanctions that cause suffering for all Syrians and deprive them of access to basic services and food. Perhaps his statement is not posted because it does not fit into the paradigm of the tired headlines boasting about the generosity of Western donors.

Recently, Russia’s Defence Ministry rescued 44 Russian children by air from the Al-Hol and Roj camps for internally displaced persons. Work is now under way to repatriate another 120 children. In the light of the deteriorating security situation in these camps, the responsibility of States for repatriation of their nationals is growing. We call on colleagues to boost efforts on this track, ensuring appropriate conditions for their citizens, first and foremost women and children.

For an entire year we have seen no progress in the launching of a single humanitarian convoy from Damascus to Idlib. We consider this to be sabotage plain and simple, and we will take that into account when developing our position on the pending extension of the cross-border mechanism in July this year. If for political reasons our colleagues are unwilling to open a crossline humanitarian channel and

are ready to proceed solely via the cross-border mechanism, what commitment from the Security Council to the territorial integrity of Syria are we talking about? To be a party to such hypocrisy is to damage the image of the international humanitarian-response system, which is intended to coordinate efforts to save people's lives. We must not turn a blind eye to the fact that the terrorists in Idlib, resourced from the cross-border mechanism, are using the civilian population of the enclave as human shields and do not let people exit this area and head for the Government-controlled areas via the recently opened checkpoints.

## Annex 14

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

I too wish to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under Secretary-General Lowcock for their informative briefings.

The restoration of peace and stability in Syria can only be achieved through a credible and inclusive political process that reflects the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The success of this process requires an environment conducive to cooperation and reconciliation. Accordingly, the country's security situation is closely linked to the viability and advancement of the process.

We are therefore deeply troubled by the reports of continued violence and escalating tensions, particularly in the north-west, despite the appeals for a nationwide ceasefire. We implore parties to exercise maximum restraint and to commit to a complete cessation of hostilities to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to ensure a sustained humanitarian response. On this point, we underscore that all acts committed contrary to international law, including in the conduct of counter-terrorism operations, must be condemned by the international community. Accountability must remain a high priority.

Confidence-building measures are vital to the success of the wider political process. Consequently, the issue of missing and detained persons should be urgently addressed to foster goodwill. Further, conditions must be cultivated for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. These conditions naturally include the reconstruction of Syria's devastated critical infrastructure so as to enable access to essential services and reduce vulnerabilities. We once again appeal for the international community's assistance in this regard.

We remain supportive of the Special Envoy's determined efforts to facilitate the wider political process. We appeal to parties to engage constructively and in a spirit of compromise on the matter of the Constitutional Committee. We also reiterate that the meaningful participation of women in the negotiation process is imperative to ensure fair and balanced outcomes for all.

Syria's moribund economy has exacerbated the country's dire humanitarian emergency and remains a cause for concern. At the same time, the continued application of unilateral coercive measures has served only to intensify and prolong the anguish of the Syrian people. For this reason, we appeal again for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures to assist Syria in facing these seemingly insurmountable challenges.

The cross-border mechanism remains a lifeline for millions of Syrians in need of humanitarian aid. The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2021/390) reinforces this reality and emphasizes the need to preserve and scale up both the mechanism and the cross-line modality. This will optimize the humanitarian response and provide timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian assistance for the benefit of the Syrian people.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further complicated the humanitarian crisis. Those persons forcibly displaced by 10 years of war and who now reside in overcrowded IDP camps are especially at risk of contracting the virus. The efficient and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is therefore of critical importance. We welcome the impending vaccine roll-out.

Persons who live and work in IDP camps must be afforded protection, dignity and access to humanitarian aid. To this end, we remind authorities that activities

aimed at maintaining security in camps such as Al-Hol, where the security situation is worsening, must never result in a suspension of humanitarian access or violations of the rights of residents.

We urge parties to work together to achieve a sustainable solution to the issues surrounding the Allouk water station. Interruptions cannot continue, as they leave hundreds of thousands without its supply each time it ceases to function. Water should not be weaponized, and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population must never be rendered useless.

The international community must demonstrate respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This obligates the withdrawal of unauthorized foreign forces present in the country and regard for the perspectives of the Syrian Government in all discussions.

As this conflict rages on and the humanitarian situation deteriorates, lives are lost and are irreparably damaged. With over 13 million Syrians now in need of humanitarian assistance — almost half of whom are children — there is desperate need for a political resolution to this conflict. This is the only path to ensure lasting peace and stability and the protection of the Syrian people.

**Annex 15****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

I thank you, Mr. President, Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

At the outset, Tunisia reaffirms its unwavering position that the Syrian crisis can be resolved only by reaching a political settlement that is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned and facilitated by the United Nations, on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015), as that will end the human suffering of the Syrian people, meet its legitimate aspirations, preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and restore peace and stability to Syria and the region.

Tunisia looks forward to progress being achieved on the political track once the Constitutional Committee and its small body resume meeting regularly in Geneva, starting with its sixth round in the next few weeks, ensuring the continuity of its work. In that connection, we express our support for the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to further organize and structure the Committee's work.

We also urge the Syrian parties to put the interests of the Syrian people first by being flexible and seeking common ground in order to establish a solid basis for consensus on the contents of the Constitution and pursue the broader political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). More will have to be done to build the Syrian parties' trust with the support of the Security Council and the international community.

In view of the recent increase in tensions and violence in several parts of Syria, the establishment of a ceasefire throughout Syria remains both an urgent necessity and a long-term goal, in accordance with resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2254 (2015) and in response to the appeals of the Secretary-General and Special Envoy Pedersen. In this context, we once again call on all parties to mitigate tensions and work towards the restoration of overall calm in order to bring about the conditions needed to improve the humanitarian situation and to create the safe, neutral and stable environment required to move the political process forward.

We are deeply concerned about the proliferation of terrorist organizations and the rise in attacks perpetrated by those organizations in Syria in recent weeks. We stress that it is necessary to combat terrorist organizations that are on the Security Council lists in an effective, collective and coordinated manner and in accordance with international law. The effort to combat those organizations, in particular, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and the Levant Liberation Organization, which have taken safe haven in some parts of the country, is essential to any long-term political solution to the Syrian crisis and is a prerequisite to restoring security and stability to Syria and the region.

My country remains deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, which has affected various aspects of Syrian life. Over the last decade, the factors at play have become more complex and the suffering has intensified, causing interrelated crises in the areas of food, medicine, vital infrastructure, basic materials and living conditions.

We reiterate that it is necessary to intensify humanitarian relief efforts throughout Syria in order to meet the growing humanitarian need, address the risks of malnutrition and famine and contain the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic by using the various access methods available, including cross-line and cross-border access, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. We

therefore urge the parties concerned in north-western Syria to be flexible and find common ground in order to reach an agreement on facilitating the first cross-line humanitarian convoy in this drawn-out regional conflict.

We also reiterate that the parties must commit to ensuring that civilians, essential civilian and medical facilities and medical and humanitarian workers are protected; facilitating the prompt and unhindered delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to those in need without discrimination; and accelerating the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

We look forward to the promotion of efforts to recover from the crisis and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing links between humanitarian and development programmes, rehabilitating hospitals, schools, roads, water supply, electricity and sanitation, while providing decent and sustainable livelihoods for Syrians.

Lastly, Tunisia looks forward to a negotiated and consensual solution that will help revitalize the cross-border assistance system and allow a genuine collective will to coalesce in the Security Council, enabling it to overcome the stalemate on Syria and to make room to cooperate, seek common ground and put the interests of the Syrian people first, without politicizing the issue. We are convinced that reaching understandings within the Council on the humanitarian issue would have a positive impact on the Syrian political process and bring us closer to the settlement which we want to see.

**Annex 16****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations**

I thank our briefers: Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen. I would like to start by focusing on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

In February, the Security Council unanimously adopted and co-sponsored resolution 2565 (2020), on global distribution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine in conflict situations. We agreed on the importance of bringing the Security Council's full weight to bear on ending this appalling pandemic. We recognized the vital need for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. And we all acknowledged the negative impact that any impediments, including on logistics, supply and administration, could have on efforts to ensure that all people, no matter where they lived, have access to the vaccine.

With resolution 2565 (2021) in mind, the United Kingdom welcomes the first delivery to Syria of over 250,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine via the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility last week. This is a small, but important, first step towards realizing the ambition of resolution 2565 (2021) across Syria. Having pledged over \$700 million in support, the United Kingdom played a leading role in setting up the COVAX Facility. It is a vital tool towards ensuring the equitable access we all called for just two months ago.

As we heard today, over 50,000 COVID-19 vaccines arrived in north-west Syria via the mandated border crossing at Bab Al-Hawa last week. They will provide a vital lifeline to health workers on the front line. So we express our utmost concern at the predicted disruption, as outlined in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/390) and by Under-Secretary-General Lowcock today, to future vaccine deliveries in north-west Syria should the Security Council fail to renew the Bab Al-Hawa mandate. Such a failure would impede the global fight against COVID-19 and contradict the Council's own ambition, as set out in resolution 2565 (2021).

The United Nations has told us what it needs: a cross-border response for 12 more months. The life-saving aid currently provided via the crossing at Bab Al-Hawa also includes World Food Programme deliveries serving millions of people and facilitates operations by non-governmental organizations that run services in the areas of protection, health, water and sanitation.

The United Kingdom welcomes the United Nations continued efforts to establish access into the north-west inside Syria. But we need to heed the Secretary-General's warnings: even if deployed regularly, cross-line convoys cannot replicate the size and scope of the cross-border operation. The experience in Al-Yarubiyah, where needs and supply shortages have risen since the border crossing was closed last year, has demonstrated the importance of an "all modalities" approach driven by humanitarian needs on the ground. It is clear that the Council must heed the calls of Syrian people and humanitarians on the ground: the provision cross-border aid commensurate with humanitarian needs.

On the political track, we welcome the Special Envoy's ongoing efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution to the conflict. We join all other Council members in re-emphasizing that the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) is the only path to a sustainable solution to the crisis in Syria.

The core of that United Nations-facilitated Syrian-led process is the establishment of a new constitution, followed by free and fair elections, administered under supervision of the United Nations, pursuant to this new constitution. This sequence was deliberate and designed to find an inclusive way forward for Syria

based on dialogue and cooperation among Syrians. Holding presidential elections at the end of May under the previous constitution runs counter to this process and, at a time when the Special Envoy is attempting to convene a sixth round of Constitutional Committee talks, risks destabilizing his efforts.

Furthermore, elections that take place in the absence of a safe and neutral environment, in an ongoing climate of fear, when millions of Syrians depend on humanitarian aid, are displaced or living as refugees and are prevented from voting and running for office, do not confer political legitimacy, but instead demonstrate disregard for the Syrian people. Instead of prioritizing vanity elections, the regime should focus on actively and genuinely participating in the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

**Annex 17****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

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

The United States fully supports the work of the Special Envoy and his team to broker a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria. Unfortunately, after five rounds of negotiations and despite the Special Envoy's active diplomacy with all parties, the Al-Assad regime has blocked the drafting of a new constitution. Failing to draft a new constitution is a sad step backward for the Syrian people.

Last month, I told the General Assembly that we knew the Al-Assad regime would plan to hold elections in May. I warned that those elections would be neither free nor fair and would not be representative of the Syrian people. The failure to enact a new constitution is proof positive that the so-called election on 26 May will be a sham. As the Security Council has unanimously mandated, elections must occur pursuant to a new constitution and under United Nations supervision. The Al-Assad regime must take steps to enable the participation of refugees, internally displaced person, and the diaspora in any Syrian elections. Until then, we will not be fooled.

A new constitution, though, is only one part of the political solution the entire Council agreed on, including Russia. We can ask that the Special Envoy continue to brief us on his efforts towards a nationwide ceasefire and the release of arbitrarily detained Syrians. And as a reminder, the United States will not support any reconstruction aid that benefits the regime absent progress in achieving the political reforms called for in resolution 2254 (2015). While the Al-Assad regime runs their sham elections, the people of Syria, as Under-Secretary-General Lowcock reminded us today, continue to suffer.

The United States recently announced \$596 million in humanitarian aid for Syrians in Syria and the region. We encourage all to immediately fulfil their pledges and increase their support to the Syrian people.

Unfortunately, while vitally important, funds are insufficient to alleviate the suffering inside Syria. Right now, nothing could be more urgent to the Syrian people than receiving life-saving aid through the cross-border mechanism. But the Al-Assad regime continues to hinder and weaponize this delivery. And the need has grown even more dire since the Council failed to reauthorize the crossings at Bab Al-Salam and at Al-Yarubiyah.

Bab Al-Hawa remains indispensable to ensuring the delivery of food, shelter and medical supplies, including as part of the United Nations vaccination campaign for north-west Syria. Just look at the numbers: 4 million people inside north-west Syria depend on the 1,000 United Nations trucks that use the crossing each month. There is no alternative. Nothing can match the scope and scale of the United Nations cross-border humanitarian mechanism. In fact, it is quite clear that one sole crossing point is insufficient for the vast needs.

As Secretary Blinken told the Council last month (see S/2021/315), we strongly urge the reauthorization of Bab Al-Hawa for 12 months, and for the reinstatements of crossings at Bab Al-Salam and at Al-Yarubiyah. Should the United Nations lose access to cross-border mechanisms, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis in Syria will go from dire to disastrous. North-east Syria desperately needs more COVID-19 testing kits, and the World Health Organization is struggling to get those kits to those in need. There is simply no alternative vaccine distribution plan in north-west Syria. The United Nations plan hinges on the use of cross-border access.

Finally, we need to talk about the deep moral wrong happening in the Rukban camp. For 16 months, the camp's residents have been without medical aid because the Al-Assad regime and Russia will not allow the United Nations to make deliveries to these people in need. We urge the Al-Assad regime and Russia to allow unhindered humanitarian access to the camp. These people are not pawns. Aid cannot be politicized. The United States stands with these people and with all of the people of Syria. We demand that the Al-Assad regime adhere to a nationwide ceasefire. We call for a political resolution to the Syrian conflict. And in the meantime, we beseech the Council to support the Syrian people and give them access to the humanitarian aid they so desperately need.

**Annex 18****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their informative briefings. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran to this meeting.

First, on the political and security situation, we take note of the ongoing engagement between the Syrian parties and the Special Envoy to be well-prepared for the continuation of Constitutional Committee talks. It is important that parties engage constructively with a view to achieving substantial progress within the Constitutional Committee framework as well as advancing the broader political process. In this regard, our full support for the roles of regional and international actors, including the United Nations and the Special Envoy, remains strong. The facilitation of relevant international interlocutors through renewed diplomatic efforts is also indispensable.

The security situation has been relatively calm during the past year since the ceasefire in the north-west. However, it remains fragile, as sporadic security incidents still cause serious protection concerns, especially in the north-west, the north-east and the south. In order to further facilitate dialogue, we call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from actions that could lead to further escalation. We remind parties of their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2573 (2021), which was just adopted unanimously yesterday.

Secondly, on the humanitarian front, while the search for a comprehensive political solution is still ongoing, the humanitarian situation has shown no sign of improvement. Millions of Syrian people are still struggling to afford food, fuel and other basic goods amid the severe economic crisis and the pandemic. We therefore stress the importance of maintaining safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to enhance the humanitarian response in Syria, including by protecting related personnel, essential objects and services. All efforts and all appropriate channels need to be employed. The delivery of medical supplies, which are urgently needed in the north-east, should be strongly facilitated. We also call for greater coordination among parties in order to carry out the cross-line mission to the north-west.

As the coronavirus disease situation worsens, the delivery of vaccines to all areas in Syria is crucial. We welcome the recent shipment to Damascus and the north-west through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. We call for continued support for Syria in the fight against the pandemic. Our delegation also supports the appeal of the Secretary-General for the waiving of sanctions that hinder the humanitarian response to the pandemic. We reiterate our call for greater contributions to the COVAX Facility and broader and more equitable distribution of vaccines worldwide, including to populations in conflict and fragile settings.

We commend the heroic efforts of the United Nations and humanitarian and health-care workers on the ground to address the humanitarian situation in Syria. We welcome the financial commitments made at the fifth Brussels Conference. The continued assistance by the international community to the Syrian people is essential. It is also important to have coordinated international efforts in order to achieve the desired result.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate our position that a comprehensive political solution — led and owned by the Syrians themselves, facilitated by the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and in full adherence with international law and the Charter of the United Nations — is the only way forward.

## Annex 19

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

After 10 years of conflict, it has become crystal clear that the Syrian crisis has only one solution: a truly Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political process. This indeed was the *raison d'être* for formation of the Astana format, which has promoted a peaceful settlement of the crisis, including through supporting the establishment of the Constitutional Committee.

To that end, regular and close consultations by our Special Envoy on Syria with Mr. Pedersen, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, have continued. We will encourage the co-Chairs to commence the Constitutional Committee's next meeting soon. The Committee's work must continue according to its rules of procedure, without foreign interference or externally imposed timelines.

While a political solution cannot be achieved in isolation or overnight, the Committee's success must not be set as a precondition for assisting in reconstruction or the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

We express our concern over the recent reports on enhanced cooperation with terrorists by certain foreign forces in camps under their control and call for further efforts to uproot all terrorists and for the withdrawal of all uninvited foreign forces from Syria.

We also strongly reject abusing counter-terrorism efforts to support any separatist tendencies or illegitimate self-rule initiatives or violation of Syrian sovereignty.

Iran strongly condemns the occupation of parts of Syria, particularly by the United States, as well as Israel's acts of aggression against Syria, in the face of which the Syrian Government has a sovereign right to decide how and when to exercise its inherent right to individual or collective self-defence.

As the Secretary-General recently stated, "Syria is the world's largest refugee crisis". This indeed cannot be overcome only by providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and IDPs — in the long run, that is neither sustainable nor practicable. Discouraging the return of refugees and IDPs, as certain countries do, will only unnecessarily prolong their suffering, and it is counterproductive, and thus unacceptable. Instead, we applaud the approach of those countries that plan to take practical measures to expedite the return of refugees and IDPs. We stand ready to contribute to the success of such efforts.

Moreover, while the provision of assistance and having access to those in need is a must, however important, it cannot substitute for the ultimate solution, that is, to ensure durable peace, security and stability in Syria.

For several months, the debate about so-called "cross-line and cross-border access" has unfortunately further politicized the issues related to humanitarian aid and access. Instead, such efforts should have been used for the removal of inhumane unilateral sanctions, which have devastating socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences and mainly target the most vulnerable, who are already grappling with the adverse impacts of conflict and are suffering seriously from the coronavirus disease pandemic. Weaponizing food and medicine through sanctions is a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. They are unjust and unacceptable and must therefore be removed immediately.

Likewise, uninvited foreign forces, which are directly involved in the systematic looting of the much-needed oil of the Syrian people, must stop their shameful practice.

The international community has a legal and moral responsibility to ensure the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Syria and ending the sufferings of its people.

Finally, while supporting the ongoing dialogue within the Constitutional Committee, we note the announcement of the Syrian Government to hold, in accordance with the current Constitution of the country, the next presidential election on 26 May.

Iran is committed to a political resolution of this crisis and will continue assisting the people and the Government of Syria to restore the unity and territorial integrity of their country.

**Annex 20****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh**

[Original: English and Arabic]

I thank you for your initiative in organizing this meeting to jointly discuss the political and humanitarian issues related to Syria, which serves the goal of the Security Council properly using its time and resources.

During the past years, Western countries have burdened the Council by holding one meeting after the other on Syria. Those meetings did not aim to address the important issues related to Syria — such as combating terrorism on its territories, ending the illegal foreign military presence there, lifting the unilateral coercive measures imposed on its citizens, or facilitating the reconstruction and rebuilding of what has been destroyed by terrorism — but rather they aimed at waging hostile campaigns, making unfounded accusations and delivering provocative statements filled with dictates and conditionalities.

While those countries continue to escalate their hostile campaigns against my country, some European capitals recently witnessed many acts of manipulation of the pillars of international law, as we recently witnessed a show that took place in The Hague to exploit the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to adopt a hostile and dangerous decision against Syria. Before that, we saw another show staged in Brussels, that is, the holding of the fifth meeting of the so-called “Brussels Conference”. That event was held under the unacceptable exclusion of the Syrian Government, which represents the Syrian people and is vested with the authority to work with the United Nations and other international partners in order to meet its humanitarian and developmental needs.

It is regrettable that the United Nations co-chairs an event that perpetuates the politicization of humanitarian work, links it to conditions that altogether contradict its principles and ignores the real reasons behind the increasing human suffering. How does the holding of nine donor conferences align with the continued talk of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) about the deterioration of the living situation, the decline in food security indicators, the increasing numbers of people in need of humanitarian aid and the suffering of the displaced and refugees?

The answer to this is found first in the failure of many donors to fulfil their declared pledges; secondly, in the allocation of the largest amount of aid to neighbouring countries and regions outside the control of the Syrian Government; thirdly, in the spending of the bulk of the remaining funding on a United Nations office in Ghazi Aintab, which has no function other than distracting attention from the crimes of terrorist organizations and wasting time and money for purposes that do not conform to the goals of humanitarian work; and finally, in the deliberate disregard of the disastrous effects of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people and the accompanying plunder by the American forces that occupy the north-east of my country of Syrian wealth, foremost among that being oil and agricultural crops, and depriving the Syrian people of benefiting from it, which blatantly violates Security Council resolutions.

Syria has continued its constructive engagement with United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners to improve the humanitarian situation and deliver aid to those who deserve it. Two days ago, my Government sent two identical letters to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council containing its detailed observations on the contents of the seventy-second report (S/2021/390) of the Secretary-General on humanitarian affairs. In this regard, my delegation renews

its position rejecting the cross-border assistance mechanism, due to its violation of Syrian sovereignty and the grave defects that I explained in my previous statement.

Syria reaffirms its commitment to working according to the cross-line assistance mechanism and strengthening it in a manner that takes into account what was indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on repeated access for shipments of the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization to north-east Syria through that mechanism, as well as the decrease in, or stopping of, field visits and the movement of humanitarian aid convoys and mobile clinics across the lines and as a result of the unavailability of fuel caused by unlawful coercive measures. These are facts that some countries ignore and deliberately attempt to obscure.

One of the main challenges facing humanitarian access is the obstructive role of the Turkish occupation forces and their affiliated terrorist organizations. The clearest example of this is their failure to allow a joint convoy to reach the city of Atarib, in north-west Syria, for which the Syrian Government had granted the United Nations approval since April of last year. What is worse is preventing the Syrian Arab Red Crescent from operating in that area and replacing it with the Turkish Red Crescent, which does not have any legal jurisdiction to operate on Syrian territory. Even worse is the Turkish regime's use of drinking water as a weapon against civilians. This regime deliberately — 23 times — cut off drinking water coming from the Allouk station to the city of Al-Hasakah and its vicinity, for a period of 20 days, causing more than 1 million Syrians to suffer thirst and water deprivation. It is unacceptable that the Security Council continues to remain silent about these practices and ignores them. Rather, it should exert the necessary political pressure to find a sustainable solution to them.

The hand extended by Syria in support of efforts towards humanitarian access is matched by the blind intransigence of some countries to adhere to the cross-border access mechanism, which is clear evidence of their hidden political agendas by exploiting and employing them for this purely humanitarian issue to serve their anti-Syrian goals.

According to the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, millions of Syrians inside and outside the country will go to the polls next month to cast their votes in the presidential elections, for which the application period ended today. The list of applicants included 51 persons, among them seven women, competing to secure the necessary endorsement of members of Parliament. The holding of these elections within the constitutional time frame is based on the Syrian State's keenness to ensure the regularity of the work of its institutions and the determination to thwart external plots aimed at creating an institutional and constitutional vacuum and imposing what has been called "creative chaos" as an alternative, similar to what we have seen in other countries.

These presidential elections are an important constitutional and sovereign entitlement for the Syrian State that is consistent with its mission to ensure that its institutions carry out their constitutional duties and to move forward towards completing other duties, including liberating our land from the remnants of terrorist organizations, ending the illegal foreign military presence there, restoring security and stability to its citizens and rehabilitating its infrastructure destroyed by terrorism.

Some have been launching campaigns to disrupt this electoral process by mixing fulfilling this constitutional requirement with some of the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). What the statements of some countries included today is clear evidence of this confusion or, rather, the misinformation that they practice, which represents a flagrant violation of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States. Those countries must abide by their commitment to respect the Charter of the United Nations, stop infringing upon Syrians' right

to choose their President freely, responsibly and democratically and stop issuing provocative and hostile statements that do not serve the goal of restoring security and stability in Syria.

We are following the efforts made by Special Envoy Pedersen to organize the work of the sixth round of the Constitutional Committee, including the consultations that he conducted following his meetings in Damascus with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and with the co-Chair of the national delegation to the meetings of the Constitutional Committee. We will duly inform you of the results of the consultations that will take place in the coming days.

In this regard, my delegation reaffirms Syria's commitment to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process facilitated by the United Nations, as represented by its Special Envoy, in full respect of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. My delegation also stresses once again that the success of the work of the Constitutional Committee requires respecting the rules of its procedures that have been agreed upon, while rejecting any external interference in it or attempts to impose dictates about its work conclusions or artificial timetables.

## Annex 21

## Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Sinirlioğlu

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

This month, together with the President of the General Assembly, I visited Hatay, a town bordering Syria where the United Nations lifeline channels cross-border humanitarian operations to millions of people in need. Once again, I witnessed first-hand the provision of aid items and loading and monitoring procedures, showing the whole journey in full transparency. The United Nations has full control of the entire operation at four distinct levels — at the border, at warehouses in Syria, at distribution levels and after distribution.

During the visit, from the Turkish side of the border, we also observed the dire humanitarian situation unfolding in overcrowded camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria. Vulnerable people struggle to survive with the aid coming from the Bab Al-Hawa crossing point. Now they are waiting to get vaccinated, thanks to the cross-border mechanism. Some 50,000 vaccines were transferred into the region last week. It is estimated that, by next year, 20 per cent of the population in the north-west will receive vaccines through cross-border aid.

In Hatay, I also had an opportunity to meet and listen to Syrian refugees. They said,

“There is nothing left there but suffering, persecution and starvation. Unilateral attempts by the regime under the pretext of discussing the return of refugees are part of Al-Assad’s illusions. Syrian people ran away from death, and they do not want to go back.”

The monitoring mechanism established by the United Nations is unique and indispensable. It is simply not possible to replace this model. If the United Nations cross-border operations were to stop, we would lose one of the best scrutinized and most robust mechanisms in the world. If the mechanism were to stop, the only way out for the 2.7 million IDPs would be to escape Syria. Inevitably, that would result in new migration flows towards neighbouring countries and Europe.

There is no single argument that can justify the cessation of United Nations cross-border operations. The Syrian people want to see a united Security Council that is able to make the right decision. It is the Council’s moral obligation to renew the United Nations cross-border mechanism, with additional crossings, for 12 months.

Again, some countries are promoting only cross-line access. While Al-Assad is preventing aid from reaching regime-controlled areas, it is ironic to see these attempts aiming to divert the attention of the Council from its primary responsibility of extending the mandate of the cross-border mechanism.

Turkey continues to strongly support the settlement of the Syrian conflict through a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The Constitutional Committee opened a window of opportunity for a political solution. However, despite all the efforts and warnings, the Syrian regime continues its attempts to squander this opportunity. During the latest rounds, the regime blocked the work of the Committee with unreasonable requests and suggestions aiming to undermine and disregard the opposition. The fact that the regime has been making proposals contradicting the rules of procedure shows its lack of serious engagement with the process.

If held, the next rounds should yield concrete results. Drafting on the substance of the constitution should commence without further delay. This is critical for the continuation of the process. We are encouraging the opposition. If the regime is sincere about reaching a political solution, it is time to demonstrate that concretely. There is no other acceptable way forward for the Syrian people and the international community to end this conflict other than through a political solution.

We support Special Envoy Pedersen's ongoing efforts to advance the work of the Constitutional Committee. Our Foreign Minister reiterated Turkey's support during the meeting that he had with Mr. Pedersen today.

Resolution 2254 (2015) calls for free and fair elections pursuant to the new constitution. The elections announced by the Syrian regime for 26 May do not meet any of the criteria outlined in that resolution. These elections will deny participation to millions of Syrians inside and outside of the country. There is no doubt that these elections will be far from being free or fair. Therefore, it is not possible for the international community to deem these elections as being legitimate in any way. As pointed out by the United Nations, these elections are not part of resolution 2254 (2015).

In order for efforts in the political process to yield results, it is also essential to preserve the ceasefire and calm on the ground. Yet ceasefire violations and attacks targeting civilians continue in Idlib. On 21 March, civilians, including health-care workers, were killed in and around Al-Atarib hospital. On the very same day, a parking lot full of humanitarian aid trucks near the Turkish border was targeted in a horrifying attack, resulting in destruction of humanitarian aid trucks. This is unacceptable. The regime and its backers must stop all attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) continues to target Syrian civilians and Turkey from Tel Rifat, Manbij and Ayn Isa. This terrorist organization has carried out 400 attacks since October 2019, targeting civilians with car bombs. On 18 March, it launched rocket attacks from Tal Rifat targeting civilian areas in Kilis, Turkey. On 7 April, the terrorist organization killed two Turkish soldiers returning from demining operations in Afrin. The PKK/YPG shamelessly announces these terrorist attacks through its social media accounts.

The terrorist organization PKK/YPG uses Da'esh members and their families in Syrian camps for blackmail and extortion. The militants freed by the PKK/YPG for financial or political reasons pose a grave danger to Syria's neighbours. Recently, we apprehended a Da'esh member released by the PKK/YPG from Al-Hol camp while he was trying to enter Turkey illegally.

The PKK/YPG terrorist organization is also responsible for cutting electricity to the Allouk water station in Al-Hasakah and obstructing its proper functioning. As a result of the PKK/YPG's deliberate interruptions, due to the very low level of electricity available, only three of the 12 pumps linked with the water system can operate. These unlawful actions, which are putting half a million innocent lives at risk, are also impeding efforts to effectively combat the pandemic. They should be stopped. Those who support PKK/YPG and treat this terrorist organization as a legitimate actor are openly violating international law and undermining the unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified that, from 24 February to 23 March, at least 16 civilians were killed and 70 were injured as a result of shelling and airstrikes in north-west Syria. It is imperative to hold accountable all the perpetrators of this decade of systematic violations against Syrian people.

We welcome the latest report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), where it is established that chlorine was used by the regime air force in an attack against civilians in Saraqib on 4 February 2018. It has now been proven that the Al-Assad regime is responsible for at least eight chemical-weapon attacks.

We also welcome the decision adopted last week at the OPCW Conference of the States Parties. This decision was indeed a timely and necessary step towards ending impunity in Syria. This is also a prerequisite for peace and security in the region and beyond. We urge the international community to stand behind the Syrian people in their quest for justice and accountability.

As to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian regime, I repeat: I do not consider him as my legitimate counterpart. His presence here is an affront to the millions of Syrians who have suffered countless crimes at the hands of the regime, and therefore I will not honour his delusional remarks with a response.

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