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Agenda item 123****Strengthening of the United Nations system****Security Council  
Seventy-fifth year****Letter dated 6 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of  
the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General**

Allow me first to express my deep appreciation for your letter of 21 April 2020, which reflects your concern, at the personal and professional levels, regarding the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people, and its profound negative effects on the ability of the Syrian Arab Republic to face the economic, social and health consequences of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I have conveyed your letter to the Government of my country, which will continue to communicate and work with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria, Imran Riza, to explore ways that guarantee a sufficient response in order to overcome the negative impacts of these punitive measures on the ability of the State, citizens and the economy in Syria, to address the consequences of this pandemic.

The Resident Coordinator along with a large number of representatives of many United Nations organizations and international bodies residing in Syria are able on a daily basis to monitor the situation on the ground, and to provide a balanced professional assessment about the continued suffering of the Syrian citizens, because of the terrorist war, the economic blockade and the persistence of governments that impose this blockade to prevent the launching of the reconstruction and development process. These governments are still ignoring your reports and repeated calls to lift or reduce these unilateral coercive measures, in order to ensure optimal national responses and global solidarity in the face of COVID-19.

Recently, many political statements and press releases have been issued by the United States government and the European Union, as the two parties mainly responsible for imposing unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian people and on the peoples of other countries. These United States and European Union statements included inaccurate allegations that unilateral coercive economic measures only target governments and officials and those associated with them, and that they do not target citizens and do not affect their lives nor the level of services they receive such as food, health and daily basic requirements. The United States government and the European Union have also defended these unilateral coercive economic sanctions, by claiming that there are exceptions and exemptions in their frameworks that allow the



provision of medical, food and humanitarian assistance to citizens of countries subject to the impact of these illegal measures.

In response to these inaccurate allegations, and in order to clarify the truth based on a purely humanitarian and realistic perspective, I have the honour to attach to the present letter two annexes containing information and assessments provided by the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade and the Central Bank in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annexes I and II), regarding the continuing profound and negative impacts of these punitive measures on Syrian citizens, especially in the light of this global health pandemic.

In this context, allow me to underline a set of facts and principles:

(a) The COVID-19 pandemic poses a global humanitarian challenge that transcends the boundaries of the current time stage with all its tragedies and difficulties. This challenge is intrinsically linked to the primary goal of the United Nations and its Member States, which is to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while no one is left behind.

(b) The greatest likelihood is that our world will overcome this global health pandemic. However, the failure to achieve global collective solidarity, in parallel with the economic, social and humanitarian impacts of this pandemic, will raise justified doubts about the effectiveness or existence of a global multilateral system. There is no doubt that the continued imposition of unilateral coercive measures is one of the serious gaps in building global collective solidarity.

(c) Regarding the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, I reiterate that your representatives on the ground there, with many international and local humanitarian partners are able – and indeed are obliged – to provide you with a clear assessment of the continued suffering of the Syrian citizens due to the terrorist war and the economic blockade. This suffering has recently grown because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Syrian Government having to take the precautionary measures taken by all countries of the world, but the fundamental difference is that Syria is already witnessing a strangulating economic and social situation.

(d) Your Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pederson, recently touched on this issue in his briefing to the Security Council on 29 April 2020, in response to your clear stance in calling for the lifting or easing of these unilateral economic coercive measures. It was evident that Mr. Pederson was fully aware of the impact of these punitive measures on the current and future situation in Syria in its political, economic, social and security aspects.

(e) Today, no party can deny that the insistence of the United States and the European Union on imposing a suffocating economic blockade on the Syrian people and hindering the launch of a reconstruction and development process threatens the course and credibility of the political process. No one expects Syrian citizens to believe in the viability of any political process, while they are exposed every day to suffering in securing a livelihood and obtaining the required level of basic services, food, medicine, electricity and water.

(f) I hope that the information contained in the two annexes to the present letter, and in the letter that I sent to you on 7 April 2020, and in the identical letters addressed to you on 31 March 2020 ([A/74/775-S/2020/259](#)), will provide a clear database that you can rely on in exerting your good offices to enhance the Syrian State's ability to face the repercussions of this global health pandemic, and to lift or ease unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people. It is essential to take into consideration that lifting these illegal measures and launching the process of reconstruction and recovery constitute a genuine guarantee of the integrity,

independence, efficacy and credibility of the political process in the Syrian Arab Republic.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 123, and of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Bashar **Ja'afari**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

## Annex I

### Information and assessments received from the Central Bank of Syria

**First.** The United States of America and the European Union impose a wide range of unilateral coercive measures against the Syrian Arab Republic. These unlawful economic sanctions have been imposed on the basis of many decisions and executive orders issued by the European Union and United States authorities (Council of the European Union and Office of Foreign Assets Control of the United States Department of the Treasury), since the beginning of the current crisis in Syria and in subsequent years. It must be clarified here that the United States has been pursuing a policy of imposing such punitive measures against Syria for decades, but the size and impact of these measures have expanded greatly during the current decade, with the issuance of more than eight executive orders from the current and previous American administrations, either to impose new measures or tighten unilateral coercive measures already imposed against Syria.

**Second.** These illegal measures aim at increasing financial, economic, banking and commercial burdens and restrictions on the Syrian Arab Republic, and they are creating a direct negative impact on the banking sector, whether in the field of foreign trade financing, including restricting financing of the purchases of medical, pharmaceutical and food items and materials, or in the field of conducting foreign transfers. This dire situation has reached a point today where it is impossible to carry out foreign transfers, when they are linked to payment orders and bonds in favour of the Syrian Government or any of its subsidiary and affiliated bodies.

**Third.** Public and private banking sectors in Syria are directly and indirectly affected by these illegal measures. Today, most foreign banks and financial institutions refuse to deal with the Syrian banks, even if they are not subject to these unilateral sanctions, owing to the fear that United States and European Union sanctions will affect any foreign party, or so-called “third party”, which may deal with the Syrian banking sector or with the Syrian public and private economic, commercial and industrial institutions.

**Fourth.** As a result, these unilateral coercive measures, which the United Nations considers illegal and inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and the principles of free world trade, lead to the failure to finance public and private sectors in Syria in various commercial, industrial, development, investment and service fields, and impose enormous difficulties and obstacles on importing necessary pharmaceutical, health and nutrition materials and commodities. These illegal measures lead to an increase in the cost of importing basic life commodities and raw materials needed in the manufacture of medicines and foodstuffs, as a result of resorting to complicated and indirect methods of conducting bank transfers or financing these import operations.

**Fifth.** The United States and the European Union claim that decisions and executive orders issued by them to impose unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian Arab Republic provide exceptions and exemptions that facilitate the import of goods and materials intended for medical, health and humanitarian purposes. However, these allegations remain without practical effect. Foreign banks, especially European and American ones, do not recognize or respond to any exceptions or exemptions inquiries, and they continue to this day to refuse orders for payment and transfer or any request that would free up frozen Syrian funds with the aim of financing the operations of buying and importing medical, health and food items or goods of a humanitarian or basic services nature.

In this context, the Central Bank of Syria has never been able to benefit from its frozen funds abroad for the purpose of financing the import of medical, health, food

and service materials related to the basic needs of Syrian citizens, as regional and foreign banks do not respond to payment orders issued by the Central Bank of Syria to pay for the import of such materials from the affiliated bank accounts. For example, and not exclusively, the Europe-Arab Bank – Frankfurt has transferred amounts available in the accounts of the Central Bank of Syria to other bank accounts, without providing any justifications. To the present time, the managers of the above-mentioned bank refuse to respond to the official correspondence addressed to it either through the banking correspondence system or through diplomatic channels!

**Sixth.** With regard to the current conditions associated with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to its social, economic and health impacts, including the imposition of quarantine and precautionary measures, this exceptional situation has imposed new and massive pressure on the available capabilities of the Central Bank of Syria and the Syrian banking sector, as suffering has increased in connection with securing the necessary financing for medical and pharmaceutical supplies and foodstuffs, for which the level of demand has increased significantly in recent times.

Recently, the Central Bank of Syria has become unable to meet the requests of the Syrian Ministry of Health and pharmaceutical companies in Syria, in order to secure appropriate financing or transfer channels to facilitate the import of the necessary medical and health materials. The Syrian Arab Republic is already suffering from difficulties, due to the unilateral coercive measures, with regard to securing necessary and urgent pharmaceutical and medical needs associated with combating this emerging pandemic, or with the treatment of chronic and incurable diseases. These difficulties have worsened recently after the United States government announced its intention to implement a new bill of sanctions under the name of the Caesar Act, which caused a significant decline in the transactions of Syrian banks and financial institutions with their foreign counterparts, with most of the external banks expressing great concern at dealing with any party inside Syria or linked to Syria, under the pretext of avoiding exposure to the sanctions imposed on any “third party” dealing with Syria.

**Seventh.** The following table contains an approximate, but not exhaustive, estimation of the amounts in the frozen bank accounts of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Europe.

<i>State</i>	<i>Total balances</i>
Austria	\$1,900,000
Belgium	\$150,000
Denmark	\$273,000
France	\$7,000,000
Germany	\$21,700,000
Italy	\$1,900,000
Sweden	\$53,000
Switzerland	\$27,500,000
United Kingdom	\$3,700,000

**Eighth.** The Syrian Arab Republic is looking forward today to urgent financing for the import of the following basic medical, health and nutritional materials: human medicines; primary manufacture materials; infant formula milk, rice, sugar, canned tuna and sardines; agricultural seeds; poultry feed and supplies; raw vegetable oils and fats; and animal feed.

## Annex II

### **Information and assessments received from the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade of the Syrian Arab Republic**

- The unilateral coercive measures have had negative, deep, direct and indirect impacts on various aspects of life in Syria, as they have formed a curbing factor for all economic and service activities and imposed a set of challenges during previous years, and it is expected that they will have profound impacts during the coming years with regard to related dimensions of human development. The most prominent difficulties resulting from these measures are:

(a) Restricting commercial operations: despite American and European allegations of exceptions and exemptions, to this day, these unilateral punitive measures hinder the provision of medicines, infant formula, medical supplies and equipment, as well as raw materials, intermediate goods and production lines needed for the pharmaceutical industry. These illegal punitive measures have resulted in a significant decline in the level of health services and the quality and quantity of medicines that must be provided to citizens, especially with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the exposure of many health facilities to destruction caused by the terrorist war.

(b) Restricting the ability of the Syrian financial, commercial and banking institutions to perform transactions, whether by imposing sanctions on any country or party that deals with Syrian entities, especially with the Central Bank and the Commercial Bank of Syria, or by imposing restrictions on external financial transfers in United States dollars, and freezing the assets of some businessmen and industrialists, thereby limiting their ability to engage in commercial and industrial activities, consequently leading to constraints on the provision of some food, medical and service needs.

The Syrian financial, banking, commercial and economic institutions suffer from difficulties in issuing collaterals through international banks, and in opening the documentary credits necessary for commercial operations. They also suffer from restrictions and obstacles to export operations in a way that impedes receipt of the revenues of these operations in foreign currency and using them to import basic goods and needs for Syria, in addition to the difficulty of transferring the revenue of commercial transactions in foreign currency.

(c) The difficulty of concluding shipping contracts or finding carriers that accept the shipping of goods to Syria, which causes delays in the supply of required materials and the high cost of transporting them. As a consequence, the prices for materials and goods on the Syrian market are too high for Syrian citizens to afford. This tragic situation has sometimes led to the full cancellation of supply contracts.

(d) The difficulty in finding international insurance companies that accept insurance on commercial operations with Syria, for fear of exposure to United States and European sanctions, or as a result of the risks associated with shipping to a country that is exposed to such unilateral sanctions.

(e) Many companies are reluctant to participate in tenders, requests for bids and the sale of materials to Syrian companies and institutions, for fear of being subjected to sanctions as a result of their direct or indirect dealings with Syria, and this was evident as follows:

- The withdrawal from the Syrian market of many international companies that produce specific medicinal items such as cancer drugs, medicines for chronic and communicable diseases and kidney transplant drugs.
  - Many international companies specialized in producing high-tech medical devices refused to supply devices to Syria, such as linear accelerators, radiotherapy devices and life-support devices, such as intra-aortic balloons, artificial hearts and respirators. Today, these international companies are refraining from providing Syrian companies with medical consumables and laboratory reagents intended for exclusive manufacturers' devices.
  - The difficulty in supplying and shipping ambulances and some medical equipment such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines that need technical support, such as using helium gas during transportation.
  - The reduction in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound against foreign currencies, which led to a decrease in the purchasing power of the Syrian pound and weakened the possibility of meeting the basic medicinal, nutritional and service needs of the Syrian citizens.
  - The difficulty in securing the basic needs of Syrian citizens or the high costs of obtaining them, which led to a significant increase in their prices compared with individual income, which burdened the Syrian State with additional burdens other than those resulting from the terrorist war on Syria and its catastrophic consequences.
  - With regard to allegations of exceptions and exemptions within the framework of United States and European Union decisions and executive orders to impose coercive measures on Syria, with the aim of permitting the financing of basic medical and food items, any alleged exceptions or exemptions have never had effect on the ground. To date, the Syrian financial institutions have not received a response from foreign banks when sending payment orders or any request to free up frozen funds with the aim of financing the purchase of such items. Moreover, the Central Bank of Syria has never been able to take advantage of the frozen funds abroad with the aim of financing basic materials and needs of the Syrian people, as the foreign banks do not respond to the payment orders issued by the Bank.
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