



# Security Council

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## **Letter dated 17 March 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. Bernard Duhaime, Current Member and former Chair-Rapporteur of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, 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 Monday, 15 March 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 dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (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)* Linda **Thomas-Greenfield**  
President of the Security Council



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

The Syrian conflict has now raged for 10 years — roughly the length of the First World War and the Second World War combined. Ten years ago, peaceful popular demonstrations were violently suppressed. Syria was sent into a spiral of armed conflict. In time many countries, and fighters from across the whole world, came to Syria to fight in one form or another. It must sometimes feel to ordinary Syrians that they are trapped in an endless and global conflict.

The Syrian tragedy will go down as one of the darkest chapters in recent history, with the Syrian people as among the greatest victims of this century.

On this grim anniversary, I want to commemorate Syrian victims and remember Syrian suffering and resilience in the face of the unimaginable violence and indignities that all Syrians — men and women, from all areas and all backgrounds — have faced over 10 long years. They have been injured, maimed and killed in every way imaginable — their corpses even desecrated. They have been snatched from the streets, thrown into prisons or abducted, disappeared, mistreated, tortured, paraded in cages and ransomed or exchanged in prisoner-swap deals.

They have witnessed their homes, markets, hospitals, schools and utilities being destroyed by air strikes, barrel bombs, rocket and mortar fire and improvised explosive devices. They have endured the unspeakable horrors of chemical weapons.

They have been denied humanitarian assistance, sometimes under sieges in which perpetrators deliberately starved the population. They have faced human rights violations on an enormous and systematic scale and endured countless violations of international humanitarian law.

They have seen the largest Security Council-listed terrorist organization in recent memory take over a third of their country — a group so violent and extreme that it enslaved women and girls and sold them in markets.

They have seen foreign fighters flooding into their country. They have seen front lines and fault lines emerge across their country, as five foreign armies jostle in the theatre.

They have been displaced into city-sized camps or to sleep in the open in olive groves and abandoned houses, only to be displaced again and again, in baking heat and freezing snow.

They have fled Syria often only to face further poverty and discrimination, or, worse, perishing at sea in search of refuge. They have been dispossessed of their lands and homes. They have watched their middle-income country dragged back into de-development and destitution on such a scale that it will take generations to rebuild.

They have experienced corruption, mismanagement, sanctions and economic meltdown. Nine in 10 Syrians now live in poverty. Their currency has collapsed, with savings and livelihoods evaporating overnight, and their money worth a minuscule fraction of what it was before the war.

They have waited for hours queueing for bread and fuel, searched the pharmacies for medicines that were not on the shelves, or found their hospitals lacking essential medical equipment.

They have faced the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic with a depleted and devastated health system. Syrian women have faced conflict-related sexual violence — from all parties — and the rise in early and forced marriages.

Most Syrian children have never lived a day without war. Many have gone without food, medicine or education, or been detained, recruited for battle, injured or killed. And every Syrian parent must feel anguish that the legacy of this conflict will last for the lifetime of every treasured newborn child.

Syrians, meanwhile, observe that those responsible for actions that may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes enjoy near-total impunity.

Ordinary Syrians have also seen no compromise between incompatible political visions and no real progress in talks between the Government and the opposition to reconcile those visions.

All Syrians have seen that the international community has been divided, trapped in geopolitical competition, caught in their own competing narratives and often focused on supporting one side in the conflict. The world has not succeeded in helping deliver the Syrians as one people from what the Secretary-General has called “a living nightmare”.

I express the profound regret of the United Nations that we have yet not been able to mediate an end to this conflict.

Amid that tragedy, one silver lining is that a relative calm now exists, at least in terms of front lines not shifting for a year now. But the calmest year of the Syrian conflict has still been tremendously violent by any other measure. There is still frequent mutual shelling and rocket fire along contact lines, and violent unrest. Air strikes from Syrian and foreign parties have continued, and listed terrorist groups remain active and present in Syria.

Thus the lightning flashes of war still crack daily in Syria, and dark clouds gather. The greatest danger of all is that the fragile calm will unravel, leading to a new storm of all-out conflict and all that it would mean for Syrians, the region and beyond.

That is why I will always stress, first and foremost, the importance of consolidating this fragile calm into a true nationwide ceasefire according to resolution 2254 (2015), together with a common approach to addressing the continuing challenge of listed terrorist groups in Syria.

The other danger facing Syria is that, even if calm does not collapse, prolonged stasis sets in, and the Syrian people endure a new decade of desperation, despondency and despair. That is a grave danger, especially if Syria does not receive high-level and creative international diplomatic attention.

Yes, the Syrian parties must negotiate a settlement in a Syrian-led process convened by the United Nations to implement resolution 2254 (2015), and they need to show the political will to do so. But I am absolutely convinced that they will not progress far if a Syrian-led process is not supported by a constructive international diplomacy on Syria. After all, this is among the most deeply internationalized conflicts of a generation, with many of the issues that matter most to Syrians not even in Syrian hands.

I know that progress will not be easy. There is very little trust and confidence among the Syrians and between regional and international actors. The divisions are deep, and they are everywhere we look. But we need to find a way around the “you first” syndrome that characterizes much diplomacy on Syria. Right now, there are demands on all sides but little movement on any side.

What should be plain to each side is that progress on particular objectives is unlikely without matching progress on objectives of concern to the other side. Thus what is needed is to identify with realism and precision — and to implement

in parallel — mutual and reciprocal steps-for-steps, step-by-step, from Syrian and international players.

For that to succeed, the Syrian Government and opposition, as well as key international players, would need to be ready to identify not only what they realistically hope to achieve but also what they can put on the table in the context of advancing resolution 2254 (2015). We would need to break issues into their component parts and move in lockstep to make steady progress.

There are many ways in which that could be done. But what is needed are good steps for good steps. We all have to work in that direction, for the sake of the Syrian people.

I discussed my thinking on all aspects of the political process recently in a first meeting in Damascus with Fayssal Mekdad, in his capacity as the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, and with the President of the Syrian Negotiations Commission, Anas Al-Abdah, in Istanbul, and in a range of international travels and virtual contacts. I will continue to explore possibilities.

I believe that we need to continue quiet diplomacy in that regard, and I am working on this. In time we may need to try to put in place a new means of international discussion, a new international format for the necessary diplomacy and cooperation.

Allow me to stress the importance of unblocking progress on the issue of detainees, abductees and missing persons. Neither my efforts nor those of the Working Group on this issue have produced the kind of progress needed. Yet I am absolutely convinced that if we could make inroads here, it would be an important humanitarian gesture, a vital confidence-builder, a signal to all Syrians and a circuit-breaker in the context of international diplomacy.

I take this opportunity to strongly underline the need for full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of Syria. Intensified cross-line and cross-border deliveries are essential to reaching everyone in need, everywhere. I reiterate the appeal of the Secretary-General to the Security Council to achieve consensus on this crucial matter.

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

Let me finally turn to the work of the Syrian-led and -owned Constitutional Committee. As I have often said, it cannot on its own solve the conflict. But it could be a building block for intra-Syrian cooperation in implementing the call made by resolution 2254 (2015) for the drafting of a new constitution. It could also be a door opener to a broader process that could create safe, calm and neutral conditions for constitutional reform to take hold in Syria and for the conduct of free and fair elections, administered under United Nations supervision with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate, and, of course, the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian refugees — all in the context of progress in a steps-for-steps manner, as I have indicated.

A sixth session of the small drafting body of the Constitutional Committee needs to be carefully prepared, and assurances should be in place to ensure that it implements the terms of reference and core rules of procedure, restores and builds some trust and confidence, and makes progress on the Committee's mandate. 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 work plan.

I will continue to engage the Syrian parties, the Syrian co-chairs and the middle third as we seek to advance the Constitutional Committee. The co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Government, Ahmad al-Kuzbari, shared a proposal with me in Damascus on 23 February. I conveyed that to the co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Negotiations Commission, Hadi al-Bahra, who reverted with an amended proposal on 11 March. I have conveyed that to the co-Chair nominated by the Syrian Government. I have spoken to both co-Chairs in recent days.

I appreciate that both co-Chairs have committed procedural proposals to writing, and they are both engaging. I continue to facilitate their exchanges in the hope of concluding agreement. The United Nations will be ready to convene a sixth session as soon as an agreement is in place.

I was able to brief you last week on International Women's Day on the ways in which we are seeking, as facilitators, to ensure that the determination of Syrian women to play their full part in the political process is made real. I will continue to engage the Women's Advisory Board for their insights and advice on all aspects of the process.

Let me also stress that I will continue to engage the participants in the Civil Society Support Room — women and men. I pay tribute today to all those Syrians who continue to work day and night for peace. They have never given up hope, and neither will the United Nations.

I hope that the members of the Council will not give up either. At a time when there are so many pressing challenges, do not lose sight of the fundamental importance of a peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict. A political solution is the only way out, and I am convinced that it is possible. In some ways, it is more possible now than before. But to turn those possibilities into realities, creative and high-level engagement from key international players with a stake in this conflict will be needed. Now is surely the time to advance a genuine political process that restores the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria and enables the Syrian people to independently chart their own future. With that goal in mind, let us ensure that Syria receives top level and sustained attention, and that we work together to implement resolution 2254 (2015).

## Annex II

### **Briefing by the Current Member and former Chair-Rapporteur of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Bernard Duhaime**

It is a great honour and privilege to address you all on behalf of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, as a member and former Chair-Rapporteur.

Today we reflect on the tenth anniversary of the conflict in Syria, which has inflicted huge suffering on Syrian women and men and girls and boys across the country.

As clearly stated in the 1992 Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, any act of enforced disappearance is an offence to human dignity. It is condemned as a denial of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and as a grave and flagrant violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Working Group, as the oldest special procedure mechanism of the Human Rights Council, with a distinct humanitarian and human rights mandate, was created in 1980 to act as a channel of communication between relatives of disappeared persons and the relevant authorities with a view to clarifying their fate and whereabouts.

To that end, the Working Group receives and examines reports of enforced disappearances submitted by the relatives — or human rights organizations acting on their behalf — and transmits them to the Governments concerned. The Working Group then requests those Governments to conduct independent and effective investigations into enforced disappearances, carry out searches for the disappeared or their remains and protect the rights to truth, justice, reparations and memory of the victims and their relatives.

Since the start of the conflict, the Working Group has transmitted 509 individual cases to the Government of Syria concerning the alleged enforced disappearance of 478 men and 31 women, including children. These are reported to have occurred throughout the country. At present, 490 cases remain outstanding, which means that the Working Group has received very little or insufficient information from the Government or the respective sources to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the individuals concerned.

As is true for most countries, but particularly Syria, the number of cases registered with the Working Group represents only the tip of the iceberg of the phenomenon, which, according to a number of consistent and reliable reports, including the most recent report on arbitrary imprisonment and detention issued by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/46/55), remains widespread and systematic.

Since 2011, we have been requesting that the Syrian Government extend us an invitation to visit the country, in the context of our mandate. Unfortunately, we have received no response, in spite of several reminders. In that respect, we recall Human Rights Council resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, which call on the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including by allowing country visits, and with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including through the establishment of a field presence.

In 2014, the Working Group became increasingly concerned about the extent and scale of enforced disappearance in Syria and therefore decided to call on United Nations entities at the highest level to take action in order to tackle the issue. In

particular, the Working Group requested that the President of the Security Council bring the matter to the Council's attention in order to contemplate appropriate action, including considering a referral to the International Criminal Court. Since then, we have reiterated our call every year in our annual reports to the Human Rights Council.

The vast majority of cases reported to the Working Group relate to enforced disappearances perpetrated by Syrian Government forces or armed groups that operate with its support or acquiescence. In addition, the Working Group has also started examining cases of acts tantamount to enforced disappearances, perpetrated by non-State armed groups that exercise effective control and/or Government-like functions over parts of the Syrian territory. In doing so, the Working Group acts pursuant to its humanitarian mandate to address a growing protection gap affecting disappeared individuals and their relatives who have been denied information on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. Common to all of these cases is the immense suffering of said relatives and the lack of an effective remedy to address their plight.

The Working Group observes that enforced disappearances are perpetrated unabatedly and with impunity throughout Syria, in clear violation of international law. The cases documented by the Working Group illustrate an alarming pattern of arbitrary arrests of men, in particular. Often several individuals are arrested at the same time in single raids. The impression left on their relatives is that the intention behind the carrying out of mass public arrests is to suppress dissent and instil fear in the local community. The deprivation of liberty is normally followed by a refusal on the part of the Syrian authorities or non-State actors to disclose information about the fate or whereabouts of the concerned person, or even to acknowledge their existence. Reports suggest that many individuals have been subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, which has also led to deaths in custody.

Their relatives describe desperate attempts to obtain further information about their loved ones, often over a prolonged period. In the absence of official mechanisms for obtaining further information, they must conduct the necessary inquiries on their own initiative, often in the face of intimidation and targeted reprisals. The Working Group stresses the need to fully recognize that, in the case of enforced disappearances, the victims are not only those who disappear, but also those who suffer harm as a result of it. Indeed, in addition to the anguish and sorrow caused by the absence of their loved ones, those left behind also suffer grave consequences affecting their economic, social and cultural rights.

Even when death is confirmed by the authorities, the remains of the victims and their belongings are rarely returned to their relatives for burial, thus further exacerbating their anguish and suffering. In the apparent absence of effective inquiries, a marked increase in the issuance of formal death notifications to relatives of the disappeared has further epitomized the rampant culture of impunity.

We are also alarmed, as indicated in our latest annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/45/13), by numerous reports of several members of the same family being subjected to enforced disappearances, including children as young as seven.

Forty years ago, the Working Group was established thanks to the relentless activism of the relatives of the disappeared. Within the remit of its mandate, the Working Group has worked with these relatives to help them ascertain the fate and whereabouts of their family members, raise awareness about enforced disappearance as an ongoing crime and bring about its end around the world.

The Working Group recognizes a comprehensive and rights-based vision advanced by the Truth and Justice Charter, which was presented by five Syrian family associations on 10 February. The Charter calls for collective action to hold

perpetrators accountable and protect the rights of victims and their relatives to truth, justice, reparation and memory.

In that context, the Working Group underscores that all duty bearers must ensure full transparency and accountability in relation to persons in their custody, account for their fate and whereabouts to relatives and ensure that due process and fair trial rights are respected and protected. All places of detention — official and unofficial — should be disclosed, with complete lists of names and a formal registration of all those held in such facilities, and we must ensure that persons are only held in recognized facilities.

All victims, including families of disappeared persons, should be granted the right to an effective remedy, including the cessation of violations, as well as compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

The Working Group joins the recent call for the creation of an independent mechanism with an international mandate in order to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing and disappeared persons, locate mass graves, exhume and identify the human remains of these individuals and return them to their relatives, with due respect for their cultural customs.

The tragic situation in Syria has lasted for too long. It is now time for the United Nations, including the Security Council, as well as other mechanisms of the international community, to demonstrate that they are able to respond to the challenges and meet the rights and needs of victims in Syria. Bringing closure to so many families after a decade of trauma and loss depends on our collective and coordinated action. The Working Group stands ready to contribute to that process.

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

[Original: English and Chinese]

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Mr. Duhaime for their briefings.

The Syrian crisis has lasted a full decade. Over the past 10 years, Syria has suffered from illegal invasion, external occupation, terrorism and unilateral sanctions. National development has nearly stagnated and people's lives are miserable. The Security Council should actively promote an early end to the Syrian crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

Today, I would like to make three points.

First, we must continue to pursue a political settlement. China supports Special Envoy Pedersen's ongoing efforts to ensure the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and advance the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. We call on all parties in Syria to maintain communication with the Special Envoy, engage in extensive political dialogue on the basis of existing consensus and make progress at an early date. The Constitutional Committee must remain independent in discharging its functions, adhere to the principle of a Syrian-led and-owned process and be free from outside interference. All parties to the Syrian crisis should actively respond to the Secretary-General's global ceasefire appeal, stabilize the security situation in Syria and create the necessary conditions for political settlement. In addition, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Syria should not be linked to the political process, as doing so would violate the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and would undermine mutual trust among the parties.

China welcomes the establishment of a tripartite coordination mechanism for Syria by Russia, Qatar and Turkey, and commends the Arab countries concerned for their positive consideration of Syria's return to the League of Arab States. We hope that this positive momentum will yield concrete results and create synergies with the mediation efforts of the United Nations. The international community should encourage the countries of the region to strengthen dialogue and cooperation, instead of engaging in threats or obstructive behaviour.

Secondly, we must ensure compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Over the years, illegal aggression, occupation and attacks on Syrian territory have caused turmoil in Syria and the entire region. China notes that some countries have recently carried out air strikes and missile launches against Syria. The Permanent Representative of Syria sent a letter to the President of the Security Council to express his concerns in that regard. China calls on all parties concerned to respect Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and to avoid exacerbating the situation in Syria. The international community should be committed to promoting unity and tolerance for Syrian society and should reject all intentions and actions to isolate the country.

Thirdly, we must strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation in Syria. Terrorists are entrenched in north-west Syria and frequently launch attacks that result in civilian casualties. There are worrisome new trends in the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorist group. Many Council members are concerned about terrorist activities in Syria and their spillover risks. The international community should support the Syrian Government's efforts to protect its national security and combat terrorist forces in Syria.

Advancing the Syrian political process and restoring peace and tranquillity to Syria requires all Syrian parties and the international community to strengthen

dialogue, build consensus and work together. Sanctions and pressure will only lead to strong backlash and confrontation, intensify and prolong the conflict, exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people and will not help solve the fundamental problems. I would like to emphasize again that the future of Syria is in the hands of the Syrian people. The Security Council and the international community should adhere to the principle of a Syrian-led and -owned process and play a constructive role in reaching an expeditious political settlement of the Syrian issue.

## Annex IV

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

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing on the political situation in Syria, and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for his briefing on the status of detained and missing people in Syria. Today marks 10 years since the start of peaceful protests in Syria. Instead of answering those demands for dignity and justice, the Syrian regime responded with brutal violence.

After more than half-a-million deaths, the repression persists. Millions have been displaced, thousands are being arbitrarily detained or are missing; the country has been completely destroyed; and chemical weapons and barrel bombs have been used against Syria's own people. I recall the Secretary-General's words from last week, that "the situation remains a living nightmare".

It is the task of the Security Council to uphold and promote international law by acting decisively in response to the widespread violations of international human rights law in Syria, many of which constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. The Secretary-General noted that the parties to the Syrian conflict have repeatedly violated international humanitarian law, with almost absolute impunity.

Estonia joins Mr. Duhaime and the European Union in calling for 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.

Investigative mechanisms, such as 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, of the General Assembly; the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, of the Human Rights Council; and the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, all play a central role in collecting evidence and uncovering crimes against the Syrian people and moving towards accountability. We fully support those efforts. We hope the Security Council will work more closely with these mechanisms and incorporate this matter into its agenda.

The conflict will not end until the Syrian regime stops using torture to suppress free speech and silence its citizens. We demand the release of arbitrarily detained people, especially women, children and the elderly.

With regard to the political process, the Syrian Constitutional Committee has not yielded the expected results. The deadlock continues as the regime refuses to meaningfully engage in the process.

Planning for Syria's future, including rebuilding the country, must take into account the legitimate claims of the Syrian opposition. Estonia and other member States of the European Union support free and fair elections in Syria under the supervision of the United Nations, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), with the participation of all Syrians, including members of the diaspora. Anything less would amount to yet another farce. We remind the Syrian authorities and its allies that the European Union will not fund Syria's reconstruction and lift sanctions until a genuine political process is firmly in place.

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 also contemplated in the road map for peace, as set forth in resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 2012 (S/2012/522, annex).

**Annex V****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings.

Today we commemorate a very sad anniversary — a decade of war in Syria. I would like to pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of civilian victims.

Ten years ago, the Al-Assad regime chose to respond to the demand for freedom and dignity expressed peacefully by its people with indiscriminate repression. It tortured, besieged and bombarded its own population, including with chemical weapons, in order to ensure that its clan would remain in power rather than make the slightest concession.

Today, Syria has been devastated. We are all aware of the figures that shock our consciences: half of the population is displaced or has taken refuge in neighbouring countries, more than 13 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, and tens of thousands of people have disappeared. Youth are paying a heavy price for the ongoing conflict and, as many have said, some have known nothing but war.

The war in Syria continues even today: hostilities are increasing in the north of the country, instability is chronic in areas that have been forcibly recaptured by the regime, and Da'esh is reconstituting its forces. This lucid observation demonstrates the failure of the scorched-earth policy pursued by the regime and its allies. Only a political solution will allow Syria as a whole to recover and avoid another lost decade.

France echoes the Secretary-General's call to all parties, in particular Damascus, to seize the opportunity for dialogue on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the conflict. It is a delusion to think that an actor can impose its will by force and then expect international rehabilitation. It is high time for the regime to engage in good faith in the Geneva negotiations, for which the Syrian Negotiations Commission has proposed a reasonable timeline. The regime bears full responsibility for blocking the Constitutional Committee, which has made practically no progress in the nearly year and a half since its establishment.

The success of the Committee cannot be a precondition for any progress. In this context, it is more urgent than ever to establish a broader political process on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015). This means working towards the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire and preparing now for the holding of free and transparent elections under United Nations supervision, in which the diaspora will be able to participate, without which there will be no settlement to the conflict.

France will also fully support any initiative that will allow progress to be made on the issue of regime-held detainees and missing persons. In this regard, we note the calls for the establishment of an international mechanism on this issue and encourage the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria to make progress on this front, as the Permanent Representative of the United States suggested. We encourage the Special Envoy to work on all these aspects and report back to the Council.

Without a credible political settlement, France and its partners will remain steadfast in their position on reconstruction, normalization and sanctions. These positions were taken in response to the regime's brutal repression against its population and the grave violations of human rights committed by its officials. These violations persist today.

It is unrealistic to think that the sham presidential elections scheduled for this summer will be enough to change these positions. We will not recognize the outcome of elections that do not meet the criteria set out in resolution 2254 (2015).

We will continue to lend our full support to international mechanisms to fight impunity. In this regard, progress in national legal procedures are important steps to ensure that those responsible for all the foregoing crimes do not remain unpunished. The conflict in Syria has lasted far too long, but France remains more determined than ever to do everything possible to bring peace back to Syria.

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

Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Geir of the Secretary-General for Syria Pedersen for his briefing on the recent developments in Syria. He has travelled to Damascus, Moscow and Sochi and held meetings with important stakeholders. I thank him for his candid views reflecting the current state of play and his assessment of the situation. It is indeed disheartening that, as we approach the tenth year of conflict in Syria, peace and stability remain unfortunately elusive for the country and its people.

The political transition in Syria, facilitated by the United Nations, is not an exclusive process. The five rounds of meetings of the drafting body of the Syrian Constitutional Committee have resulted in very little progress. External influence is also adversely affecting the process.

The situation on the ground does not present an optimistic picture either. It will be unrealistic to expect any dramatic outcomes in the near future unless the international community takes decisive collective steps in the right direction and bridges differences. If we are serious about achieving progress, we need to have a greater convergence of views and act to strengthen the hands of the Special Envoy.

Constructive international diplomacy is the need of the hour to bridge existing divides by focusing on mutual and reciprocal steps. We believe that linking humanitarian and developmental work with progress on the political track will help to create an environment conducive to trust and confidence. We welcome the fifteenth round of international meetings in the Astana process, which was held in Sochi last month. We call on all parties to the conflict to show political will and statesmanship to break the current impasse in the working of the Constitutional Committee.

The Syrian conflict and involvement of external actors has contributed to the growth of terrorism in the country and its neighbours. This has been reiterated in the latest report of the Secretary General on the threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (S/2021/98). We express our serious concern with the increased presence and terrorist activity of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and other affiliated terrorist groups that pose a threat to civilians inside and outside the Idlib de-escalation area. 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 this region can only be achieved 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).

The 10-year-long Syrian conflict has brought untold suffering to the Syrian people. The coronavirus disease pandemic has further compounded the situation, posing serious challenges to the fragile health infrastructure. There is an urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country without discrimination, politicization or any preconditions. The humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic, calls for the sanctions imposed on Syria to be relaxed. The international community must act with a sense of urgency to help the Syrian people.

We remain convinced that all efforts aimed at improving the humanitarian situation in Syria will positively affect the political track as well. We call upon the wider United Nations system, in particular the World Health Organization and the Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to prioritize the vaccination programme in Syria, including through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access initiative.

As we have mentioned in our earlier statements on Syria, India has regularly extended development assistance and human resource development support to the country. These include lines of credit for development projects, supplying medicine and food, and running an artificial-limb fitment camp and capacity-building training programmes for Syrian nationals. We reiterate our commitment to continuing these initiatives in support of the people of Syria.

Finally, on this tenth anniversary of the conflict, let us reaffirm our resolve to help the people of Syria. India stands ready to continue to render all possible help and support to the Syrian people.

## Annex VII

### **Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino**

I thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Geir Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the protracted conflict in Syria, it is heartbreaking that the people of that country continue to suffer in an internationalized state of senseless violent wars that have resulted in up to 593,000 deaths, generated a colossal refugee and internal displacement emergency, ignited a humanitarian crisis of unimaginable proportions and literally impoverished the entire population of a country that once knew peace and dignity. In his remarks on 10 March 2021, the Secretary-General said that the people of Syria “have endured some of the greatest crimes the world has witnessed this century”, which has caused him to repeatedly plead with the Security Council to achieve a consensus on this crucial matter.

The devastating reality of the situation in Syria is an indictment of multilateralism, and particularly of the Security Council, which is at the vanguard of international peace and security. Kenya’s delegation therefore calls on all members of the Council, especially those that have divergent positions, to close ranks to facilitate a long-desired consensus towards a political solution for the sake of the Syrian people.

For us to begin to witness the much-needed change in Syria, it is important to revamp the political track underpinned by the following three imperatives. First is the resumption of the Constitutional Committee, with a genuine engagement by all parties to consider tangible proposals and solutions with a view to preparing and drafting the new Constitution. It is our hope that the recent visit of Special Envoy Pedersen to Damascus will generate momentum in this direction. It is critical that the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution adheres to the principles set out in resolution 2254 (2015), including ensuring free and fair elections.

Second is the need for constructive international diplomacy to bridge existing divides to revive the political track, as called for by the Special Envoy. This requires addressing the situation of detainees, including by facilitating the release of such detained vulnerable groups as the elderly, women and children, and by clarifying the status of missing persons. These would be significant confidence-building measures.

Finally, there is the imperative that all the parties honour the nationwide ceasefire. In this regard, Kenya commends the Astana guarantors for their continued assurances to uphold the ceasefire. We condemn the attacks in towns near the Syrian-Turkish border and the mutual shelling and targeted air strikes between armed groups. We are also gravely concerned by the sporadic attacks using improvised explosive devices that have resulted in civilian deaths and injuries. These must come to a halt.

Let me conclude by once again echoing the Secretary-General. We reaffirm that the parties have the opportunity to demonstrate a willingness to find common ground and recognize the need for all Syrians to move beyond this protracted state of conflict. Kenya firmly believes that the Security Council and the multilateral order must prioritize the interests and needs of the Syrian people by supporting a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned inclusive dialogue with a view to finding a robust political solution.

**Annex VIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Mr. Duhaime for their respective reports.

As has been mentioned, a decade has passed since the Syrian conflict began — 10 years in which we have witnessed a crisis of grave consequence for humankind, a decade in which the international community, and the Security Council in particular, have failed to live up to the commitment to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, which is the premise on which the Charter of the United Nations is built.

The human and economic cost is unacceptable, and the task of the Council and the international community remains the same — to put an end to the violence in Syria once and for all. After 10 years of civilians having to pay the heaviest price, it is clear that the political path is the only one that can put an end to the suffering of millions of people.

Despite the efforts of the United Nations, the work of the Constitutional Committee remains stalled, as do discussions on other issues, such as the release of detainees. We reiterate our call on the participants in the political process, facilitated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to engage in good faith, in a constructive and committed manner, to reach an agreement that will bring peace and prosperity to the Syrian people.

We are aware of the serious impact the war has had on women and children. In this month that also marks International Women’s Day, I would like to recall the story of the young Syrian girl, Yusra Mardini, who was part of the first refugee Olympic team in 2016. At the age of 17, Yusra was forced to leave her country, and she embarked on a journey via Lebanon and Turkey to reach Europe. In the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, the raft on which Yusra and her sister were travelling with 20 other refugees fell apart. Yusra, along with her sister and two others, jumped into the sea and swam from the boat to safety. Yusra is an example of the strength and determination of the Syrian people — those who have sought refuge outside their country as well as those who remain.

Tragically, thousands of Syrian women and girls are suffering the consequences of the conflict, unable to escape as Yusra did. They continue to fall victim to various forms of gender-based violence and human rights violations. Many others do not know the whereabouts of their children, husbands, fathers or brothers. In the past decade, more than 12,000 children have been killed or injured, while the majority of Syrian children require humanitarian assistance. The international community and the United Nations are indebted to all those Syrian girls, young women and children who continue to suffer from violence in their country, and with every passing minute, this Security Council is complicit with the inaction or inability to end this shameful chapter.

Those responsible for the atrocities experienced by the Syrian people must be held accountable. The recent conviction in a German court of a former Syrian officer for crimes against humanity shows the extent of the weight of the law. We hope that further sentences will be handed down there, where there were crimes that should not go unpunished.

We call on all States to cooperate with 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. Let us recall that the Mechanism was established by the General Assembly, in the face of the paralysis of the Security Council, precisely to combat impunity. Atrocities and international crimes should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

The recent findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic on detentions and enforced disappearances in Syria since 2011 are alarming. We demand the release of all arbitrarily detained persons, as well as a prompt clarification of all reported enforced disappearances.

In the absence of a military solution to the conflict in Syria, Mexico reiterates its concern about certain States abusively invoking Article 51 of the Charter to justify the use of force without the authorization of the Council. Moreover, that practice runs the risk of de facto increasing exceptions to the general prohibition on the use of force, as contained in Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter.

Mexico echoes the Secretary-General's call for support for the Special Envoy's efforts to achieve a national ceasefire and to establish confidence-building mechanisms so as to create a more secure and stable environment on the ground. The purpose is none other than to ensure that the main concerns of the Syrian population, as identified in resolution 2254 (2015), are finally addressed.

I conclude by reiterating the premise that gave birth to the Franco-Mexican initiative — the veto cannot be used when it comes to preventing or stopping atrocities. After 10 years of war and human suffering, the time has come to say enough to violence and to focus all efforts on diplomacy. We too will be held accountable for our actions and omissions.

**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Geir Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings.

On 9 February, during the briefing on this very issue, one could sense a certain frustration and even a certain annoyance in Mr. Pedersen's words owing to the lack of progress in the political dialogue.

I would like to reassure him that we share his frustration because after 10 years of conflict and thousands of deaths, Syria must stop being a laboratory of horrors where everything has been tried and nothing, or very little, has been achieved.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the continuing violence, which has seen an increase in ceasefire violations and renewed hostilities in northern Syria. The use of improvised explosive devices, landmines and unexploded ordnance, as well as increasingly frequent air strikes and bombings, are contributing to a rise in the number of civilian deaths and injuries, including women and children.

We are convinced that real and tangible progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee and in the cessation of hostilities must be complemented by progress in other areas, such as an end to external interference, including support for armed groups and the plundering of Syrian resources, among others. Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be respected by all.

We encourage the Special Envoy to continue his good offices to create a political context that includes all Syrian parties, regional actors and those who can help him advance this process.

Indeed, how can one succeed in drafting a consensual constitution in a context where certain groups — described as terrorists by some and friends by others — are carrying out actions that thwart the desired goal, to say the least? How can progress be made in an atmosphere of suspicion among the parties and where sanctions, instead of challenging the legitimacy of the Syrian authorities, impose unbearable sacrifices on the Syrian people, including women and children?

Like all peoples, the Syrian people have the right to peace, security and the free election of their leaders.

As elsewhere, negotiations among the Syrian parties necessarily reflect their power dynamics, which can only be modified through an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue. It is obvious today that none of the parties to the conflict in Syria can achieve what they want through military action alone. It is therefore high time that the Government and the opposition, with the support of the international community, finally resolve to pursue a frank and sincere dialogue in order to achieve a lasting resolution of the crisis that is in the interest of their country.

Another very important aspect of advancing the political process is the need for confidence-building measures, including the release of civilians, especially women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities. Such measures can go a long way towards building confidence and encouraging the necessary compromises in any negotiation process.

In this month, dedicated to women, rather than merely reaffirming principles, action must be taken to consider the living conditions of women and strengthen their

capacity to participate in all stages of the negotiation process in order to ensure their inclusion and that of young people in the peace process.

In conclusion, our duty is to encourage the Syrian parties to engage in dialogue, not to do it for them. In that respect, I invite the members of the Council to take advantage of the window of opportunity that seems to be opening today and to change their view of the multifaceted crisis Syria is facing. That is how we can support the Special Envoy in his difficult mission.

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

I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime, from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, for their very timely briefings.

As other Council Members have noted, this month marks the tenth anniversary of the Syrian conflict. The fact that the conflict is still ongoing indeed reflects poorly on the international community and on all of us. We are failing the Syrian people.

We should use this tragic anniversary to not only reflect on our mistakes, but to look for ways of changing the dynamics of the conflict and actually moving forward. But as the Special Envoy has highlighted, Syrians themselves must own the political process. We urge the Government of Syria and the opposition to put the needs of the people first and to advance the constitutional process and, more broadly, the peace process.

We commend the inclusion of civil society and urge the Special Envoy to continue to draw on the expertise of the civil society members of the Constitutional Committee. This conflict cannot be solved by Syrians alone. Several actors remain deeply involved in the conflict and they all need to be a part of the solution.

We, the broader international community, also need to ask ourselves how we can contribute to unlocking this stalled peace process in order to help the parties move to a phase of progress and difficult compromises. Progress on the political track is the key to stability, development and the return of refugees to Syria. Norway lends its full support to the Special Envoy in his efforts to engage with the parties and relevant actors in the political process.

Turning to the latest developments, we note that there will most likely not be a sixth round of negotiations in the Constitutional Committee before Ramadan. Although the lack of progress is disappointing, we know that the parties have worked on proposals, and we welcome the Special Envoy's recent talks with the parties and other relevant actors.

In order to not lose momentum, we need timely and unambiguous input and feedback from all sides. The coming weeks should be used to prepare for the next round of talks so as to ensure that the Syrian parties can move towards a reformed constitution that addresses the needs of the people and contributes to a political settlement. Norway continues to call for the implementation of all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), adopted by consensus, and there remains broad agreement that it is the appropriate framework for a political settlement. We have a responsibility to ensure that it is implemented.

Today, the constitutional track is the most active part, but we also need to ensure progress on other issues in tandem. I stress the importance of releasing arbitrarily imprisoned and detained persons. That is a key issue for the Syrian people and for building confidence among the parties. We urge the parties to contribute in good faith to this process and to work with the Special Envoy and his team to find solutions.

Finally, the lack of accountability for violations and abuses against civilians is untenable. Those responsible for atrocities must be held accountable, and the rights and needs of the victims must be ensured. Accountability remains central to achieving durable peace and a national reconciliation process. No amount of time — not even a decade — can erase that need.

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

[Original: Russian]

We thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Pedersen for his briefing and listened attentively to Mr. Bernard Duhaime.

In this anniversary of the Syrian crisis, we are faced with two questions: What allowed this conflict to last this long? And what can we do to put an end to it as soon as possible?

External forces used the unrest that flared up in March 2011 to stir up the situation in Syria. They sought to overthrow the legitimate authorities and reform the country as they saw fit. Syria was rapidly delving into chaos and illegal armed groups gained a foothold in vast swathes of its territory. Among them were terrorist groups who terrorized the local population, instilled extremism and intolerance and, generally, committed unspeakable crimes against civilians.

However, the Syrian State was able to withstand this unprecedented terrorist pressure. Thanks to Russia's decisive support, the Syrian authorities were able to break the backbone of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and put down other hotbeds of terrorism on its land. Now they are restoring the devastated socioeconomic infrastructure in the liberated areas.

In the framework of the effective and thoughtful action of the Astana format, Russia, Turkey and Iran jointly achieved a sustainable ceasefire throughout most of Syria's territory. Hotspots of tension still remain in the Idlib de-escalation zone, where Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, listed by Security Council as a terrorist organization, maintains its position. As of today, the ceasefire in Syria is generally holding. Had it not been for the ongoing resupply of militants and separatists and attempts to conceal them, the entire territory of Syria would have been liberated from extremists.

There can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. It can be resolved only by promoting the political process on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015), with the assistance of the United Nations.

Following the decisions of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress, in Sochi, Syria established the Constitutional Committee, which remains active today. In that context, progress has not been easy, but it is vital that we support and encourage it in every possible way. At the same time, we proceed from the understanding that intra-Syrian negotiations constitute an internal affair of the Syrian people, and that such negotiations do not allow for any artificial deadlines or external pressure. We stand ready to further support Special Envoy Pedersen in establishing constructive contacts among the parties to the Syrian conflict.

The Syrian authorities need the support of the international community today as never before. In his recent statement, the Secretary-General said that 60 per cent of Syria's population is at risk of hunger. The people are in need of collective international assistance, and this problem cannot be solved by merely distributing food. We must help ordinary Syrians restore peaceful life by carrying out early recovery infrastructure projects. We are convinced that such an approach would facilitate the return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. Today, surveys show that most of them still harbour hope of returning to their homeland.

Despite all the hardships that Syrians are living through, the political opponents of Damascus decided to take the country through the means of starvation.

Once their forceful attempts failed to overthrow the unwanted Government, they switched to financial and economic pressure. Syria has faced sanctions that put immense constraints on the country's normal life. In fact, ordinary Syrians are suffering a collective punishment. At the same time, West-proclaimed humanitarian exemptions from sanctions regimes simply do not work — a fact that has led to further deterioration of the socioeconomic situation in Syria. By the way, United Nations humanitarians on the ground in Syria are also rather critical about that situation.

Syria's return to the Arab family, in particular to the League of Arab States, would greatly contribute to the country's normalization. We welcome the readiness of Damascus and the Arab States to move in that direction, and we call on others to not impede this emerging normalization between Damascus and the Arab world. We believe that the main prerequisite for a peaceful settlement is putting an end to the foreign occupation and armed action that is not coordinated with the legitimate Government, in addition to respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Syria, as envisaged by resolution 2254 (2015).

**Annex XII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Pedersen and Mr. Duhaime for their briefings.

The Syrian conflict has created violent instability, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands, displacing millions and decimating the country's economy and infrastructure. And today, 10 years after the harrowing conflict began, the Syrian people continue to pay the highest price with their untold suffering.

Special Envoy Pedersen underscored earlier today that the Syrian conflict is undoubtedly the darkest chapter in recent human history. How much longer will we remain on this path —saying and doing the same thing and expecting a different result. It is past time to set aside self-interest, it is past time to set aside the need to be right, it is past time to climb down and think anew. It is time for self-reflection, it is time to challenge one's own perceptions, perspectives and approaches and ask the really hard questions. How can we continue to say with any real credibility that we care about the people of Syria? Recently, I had the privilege to speak with persons on the ground; at the end of it I cried, they cried. They concluded by simply saying: "We just want to live, to live in dignity and in peace". The situation is catastrophic. What are we doing?

There remains no alternative to a political resolution to this protracted crisis. For this reason, the work of the Constitutional Committee must be re-energized, and the parties must endeavour to make tangible progress in the pursuit of peace and stability. In this regard, we recognize the work of the Special Envoy thus far and we continue to urge the parties to recommit to working together in a spirit of mutual respect and compromise. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of the meaningful participation of women and youth in all discussions to ensure a sustainable and equitable peace for all Syrians.

The viability and eventual success of the wider political process require parties to the conflict to undertake confidence-building measures. These acts of goodwill will undoubtedly cultivate trust and encourage much-needed national reconciliation. Accordingly, the issues of missing and arbitrarily detained persons necessitate urgent attention.

Resolution 2254 (2015) acknowledges the close linkage between a ceasefire and the parallel political process. The perpetuation of hostilities denies an environment conducive to the fulfilment of the process and the restoration of stability. The date of 5 March marked one year since the Idlib agreement, which has largely held, yet we remain concerned by the continued reports of sporadic violence. The security situation is fragile, and we therefore strongly urge parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint in order to preserve the ceasefire. We further appeal to the parties to respect their obligations under international law in the conduct of all military and counter-terrorism activities. The link between justice and peace has long been recognized and we reiterate that accountability for atrocities committed since the commencement of the war ought to remain a high priority.

The cessation of hostilities is also indispensable to the creation of conditions for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. So too is the reconstruction of the country's critical infrastructure. Syria cannot go it alone. As such, we echo our appeal to the international community to contribute to the country's rebuilding.

The suffering of the Syrian people will continue in the absence of a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led credible, balanced and inclusive political process that meets

their legitimate aspirations. In support of this, the international community bears a great responsibility to engage in a pragmatic way by prioritizing the people of Syria and setting aside geopolitical disputes, which have compounded the complexities of the conflict. This dictates the removal of all unauthorized foreign forces out of respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It further requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures, which are incompatible with international law and have a detrimental impact on Syria's socioeconomic condition.

We reiterate that the political and humanitarian situations are inextricably linked. The stagnation of the political process has the disastrous effect of prolonging the conflict and in turn worsens the dire humanitarian situation. A wholistic approach remains imperative.

Syria and its people deserve peace and prosperity. A decade of conflict has already taken too much from them and the country will emerge from its despair only through positive action. The protection of millions of civilians and the overall stability of the region are dependent on it. We must not continue to fail them.

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

[Original: Arabic]

I should like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran to this meeting.

We meet today with the Syrian crisis having passed its 10-year mark and the country in dire straits. The Syrian people have borne the brunt of the suffering and the sacrifice; as the conflict drags on, prospects for a political solution have reached a dead end, as the factors and manifestations of the crisis grow in magnitude and complexity, thereby heightening tensions and instability in the region.

On this occasion, Tunisia reaffirms its position that there is no military solution to the crisis and that the crisis must be resolved by expediting a sustainable political settlement in line with resolution 2254 (2015). That is the only way to end the suffering of the Syrian people, fulfil its aspirations, restore security and stability to Syria, and preserve the country's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

The upheaval and developments in the situation in Syria over the past 10 years have made it clear that it will remain impossible to end the crisis as long as divisions and polarization persist. It can only be resolved by adopting a logic of dialogue and negotiation, allowing a spirit of consensus to prevail and strengthening confidence-building measures. Such an approach will contribute to achieving political and social stability in Syria and restoring the country's role and standing in the Arab region. To that end, the Syrian parties must redouble their efforts to advance the negotiation process, with a view to reaching a political settlement.

In that context, we look forward to the resumption of Constitutional Committee talks in Geneva in the very near future and hope that they will continue to be held regularly in order to make rapid progress towards constitutional reform. We urge the Syrian parties to give pride of place to the interests of the Syrian people by engaging constructively and striving to achieve consensual solutions with a focus on common ground. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to facilitate the constitutional process and the political process, especially with regard to making the Committee's work more structured and organized.

It is self-evident that advancing the political and constitutional processes will also require more support from a unified Security Council, which should work to facilitate a shared understanding of the various factors and drivers of the crisis and ways to overcome it.

We stress that it is important to create objective conditions conducive to reaching a peaceful settlement by establishing a comprehensive ceasefire throughout Syria and that all parties must ensure that civilians are protected in compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We support the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Syrian refugees and the active participation of women and civil society organizations at all stages of the political process.

We underscore that Syria will only be stable once it is rid of terrorism. A collective approach consistent with international law should be adopted to combat terrorist organizations on the Security Council lists, both in Syria and elsewhere, in order to consolidate peace and security in Syria and the region.

There is a pressing need for a comprehensive and practical perspective that encompasses and addresses all the factors that fuel the crisis. That would be consistent with the spirit and letter of resolution 2254 (2015) and would help to reverse negative security, humanitarian, economic and social trends in Syria.

In closing, we are hopeful that Syrian society, with all its various forces and factions, will be able to overcome this long-running crisis and move on to building a secure future in an environment of peace, stability and political and social harmony.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

I would like to start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings.

Ten years ago, Syrians took to the streets to peacefully call for an end to regime oppression, torture and corruption. Al-Assad and his regime answered those calls with brutal violence, chemical weapons and starvation.

The latest report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/46/54) highlights the horrific scale of atrocities and the tragic suffering of the Syrian people in the past decade. Over half a million Syrians have lost their lives. Tens of thousands more have been forcibly detained, tortured or disappeared. Over 12 million refugees cannot return home without fear of further violence or arbitrary arrest and torture. As we have heard from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the Secretary-General, this is a living nightmare.

This grim 10-year milestone is a reminder that we, the United Kingdom and the wider international community, should do all in our power to strengthen accountability for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes in Syria.

We continue to support the Syrian people and international efforts to assist victims of human rights abuses and violations and are pleased to be finalizing an agreement with the Commission of Inquiry to support this.

The United Kingdom's autonomous Syria sanctions regime has designated over 350 individuals and entities responsible for repressing civilians in Syria or enabling the Al-Assad regime to keep doing so. Today, the United Kingdom has announced further sanctions against six individuals that fall into this category. These sanctions send a clear message to the Al-Assad regime and its backers — we will not stand by while you continue to commit heinous crimes against the Syrian people.

Meaningful progress on detainees and missing persons is a central element of resolution 2254 (2015), which could build confidence towards a political process. As a starting point, the Syrian authorities should provide comprehensive lists of the names of all detainees, clarifying the whereabouts of people who have never emerged from arbitrary detention. The United Kingdom continues to support the work of the International Commission on Missing Persons with Syrian families of the missing to secure their rights to justice, truth and reparations, as well as the Commission's critical work to build an impartial database of all those who have gone missing, regardless of their origin or role in the conflict or the circumstances of their disappearance.

The United Kingdom reiterates its unwavering support to Mr Pedersen and calls once again on the regime and its backers to engage seriously with the political process outlined in resolution 2254 (2015).

Though the situation is desperate, the people of Syria have shown incredible resilience and hope, for the future lies with them. The United Kingdom stands with the Syrian people to deliver all the steps enshrined in resolution 2254 (2015): a nationwide ceasefire, unhindered aid access, the release of those arbitrarily detained, conditions for safe refugee return, and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution — all of which represent the only way out of this conflict. Like you, Madam President, we hope that the eleventh anniversary of this conflict will not pass the same way as the tenth.

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

Let me start by thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, for his thorough evaluation and recommendations. We encourage and support his continued efforts towards creative solutions that will bring the current crisis in Syria to an end. And I thank Mr. Duhaime for his insights and for all the work that he does to help the families of those who have been detained or disappeared.

Today, exactly 10 years ago, the Syrian people peacefully took to the streets. They chanted slogans for freedom and held up pictures of detained friends and relatives. They called for an end to Government corruption. They asked the Government to respect their human rights. The people were filled with hope, solidarity and song.

And what response did they get? The Al-Assad regime responded with violence. As the Secretary-General recently noted, “the violent suppression of peaceful popular demonstrations in Syria set the country on the path to a horrific war”. And now, for a full decade, the Syrian people have endured the unimaginable — a full decade of violent suppression; a full decade of terrorism; and a full decade of a brutal civil war.

Imagine being a 10-year-old child in Syria who has never experienced life free of conflict. One of your parents may have been killed by a chemical-weapons attack or Russian airstrikes, or be one of the 500,000 killed by Al-Assad’s brutal regime. Some of your relatives have been tortured and disappeared. You are one of 13 million Syrians who have been forced to flee their home. You are gaunt, likely malnourished. You see only sadness in your parents’ eyes. You see tanks on the streets, look out for snipers on rooftops. You are barely able to survive. You are 10 years old and you have known nothing but war.

For that child and so many others, we must allow and empower humanitarians to do their jobs and save people’s lives.

The United States considers not only the Security Council’s July authorization of cross-border assistance, but its strengthening and expansion, essential to ensuring delivery of food, medicine, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines, and other lifesaving assistance into Syria. As the Secretary-General said last week, “More humanitarian access is needed. Intensified cross-line and cross-border deliveries are essential to reach everyone in need everywhere”. We know very clearly that cross-line aid alone cannot reach all those in need.

It would be inhumane and unconscionable for the Security Council to halt the United Nations ability to deliver aid to all Syrians, and we call on Security Council members to support this important mechanism — a life-line that is even more important given COVID-19.

To put a permanent end to this suffering, the United States remains committed to achieving a political solution to the Syrian conflict, per the parameters outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). We strongly support Special Envoy Pedersen’s efforts aimed at enhancing and advancing a political settlement.

There is only one reason we have not been able to enact this solution and resolve this crisis— the Al-Assad regime’s refusal to engage in good faith. The regime has not taken a single step that would lay the groundwork for peace. So, we call on Russia to press the Al-Assad regime to quit stalling. It is time for the regime to address the conflict’s root cause — the basic demand of all Syrians to live in dignity, free from torture, abuse and arbitrary detention.

And I would ask the international community to not be fooled by upcoming Syrian presidential elections. These elections will be neither free nor fair. They will not legitimize the Al-Assad regime. They do not meet the criteria laid out in resolution 2254 (2015), including that they be supervised by the United Nations or conducted pursuant to a new constitution.

Instead of delaying and distracting, the Al-Assad regime should release those who have been arbitrarily detained, particularly women, children, and the elderly.

On 2 March, I attended a high-level panel in the General Assembly, where I heard the stories of those who have been detained. One of the briefers, Wafa Moustafa, relayed the horror of being locked up in a regime-run detention centre when she was just 21 years old. She is still searching for her father — one of the over 100,000 people who have been arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared by the Al-Assad regime.

So today I ask the Special Envoy to provide an update on his efforts to locate and release detainees. The United States asks the Special Envoy to continue to strengthen Geneva-based efforts to work towards the release of detainees, including assistance with locating and returning missing Americans, such as Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz. We hope to see an increase in United Nations personnel engaging directly and more regularly with families of the detained, former detainees themselves and civil society representatives. Special Envoy Pedersen, I ask you to provide an update on your efforts to locate and release detainees and your views on how the Security Council can assist.

It is time to advance a real political solution. The Syrian people deserve progress and dignity. They deserve a safe, stable and hopeful future. And as I have said before, the eleventh anniversary cannot look like the tenth.

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

I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Mr. Bernard Duhaime for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran to this meeting.

Over the past 10 years, the international community, including the Security Council and international and regional actors, has exerted every effort to put an end to the crisis in Syria. There have been certain steps forward that allow us to believe in tangible outcomes. For instance, the Geneva and Astana processes and other diplomatic efforts have been able to bring parties to the negotiation table. The relatively calm situation on the ground has been preserved in the past year following the ceasefire agreement in Idlib. Humanitarian assistance continues to reach people in need despite certain operational challenges.

However, lasting peace and stability do not appear in sight. One may grow accustomed to hearing about the plight of millions of Syrian people, which continuously worsens with further impacts of the growing economic meltdown and the coronavirus disease pandemic. Hundreds of thousands have died, millions have had to seek refuge or been displaced, 65 per cent of the population is dependent on humanitarian assistance, while 60 per cent face food insecurity. Terrorism is still threatening people's lives.

One of the main reasons for this is the lack of confidence and trust among parties. Resolution 2254 (2015), unanimously adopted by the Security Council in 2015, stresses that the only solution to the crisis in Syria is through an inclusive Syrian-led political process. Viet Nam reaffirms its strong support for a comprehensive political solution, which is led and owned by the Syrians and facilitated by the United Nations, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of Syria.

To further promote a political settlement, my delegation would like to stress the following points.

First, with regard to confidence-building and dialogue, divergences after years of conflict cannot be bridged overnight. Confidence-building measures therefore can help ensure progressive achievements. Viet Nam supports the crucial roles played by the United Nations, the Special Envoy and all international actors in encouraging a political solution in Syria. We call on the Syrian parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order to achieve breakthroughs within the Constitutional Committee framework, as well as in the broader political process.

While seeking a workable solution to the current crisis, it is indispensable that trust and confidence also be built among international interlocutors. There should be renewed international efforts in order to make meaningful contributions to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Syria.

Secondly, with regard to preserving stability, the relatively calm situation remains fragile, as sporadic insecurity incidents are still happening in the north-west, as well as in the north-east and the south. It is concerning that hostilities continue to claim lives and impact the livelihoods of civilians. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from actions that could lead to further escalation. Stability is vital to enable dialogue efforts.

Thirdly, concerning continued assistance of the international community, efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development for the Syrian people must

always be coupled with our unwavering support. We call for continued assistance for the Syrian people in all areas and by all means in order to facilitate a peaceful solution to the crisis and to help settle their extremely dire living conditions. It is also necessary to find a long-term solution to their hardship and strengthen the resilience of the population.

The past 10 years have brought about desolation and misery. A healthy environment is needed to facilitate a viable political solution. We believe that it can be achieved only if the international community is unified in supporting Syria.

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## Annex XVII

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

In the past 10 years, the Syrian people have suffered greatly from the Syrian conflict, which also has had adverse consequences for the peace, security and stability of the entire region. This cannot and must not continue indefinitely.

At the tenth anniversary of the start of the Syrian conflict, all efforts must be made to end the fighting. In this context, a number of key principles are of paramount importance and must be observed fully, effectively and in good faith by all.

This crisis has no military solution and must therefore be settled peacefully and in full conformity with international law, particularly the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The conflict cannot and will not end without ensuring the full sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. This can in no way be compromised. Neither will the Syrian people accept the continued occupation of their territory and violations of their sovereignty, nor must the international community accept this, as it runs counter to the cardinal principles of international law.

We once again call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces present in Syria without the permission of its Government, particularly United States forces that continue to occupy parts of the Syrian territory.

In this context, we condemn the unlawful military strike on the Syrian-Iraqi border on 25 February. Such unlawful acts escalate the already tense situation in the region, and hence must stop.

Equally, we condemn the continued Israeli military attacks in Syria. They are unlawful, provocative and destabilizing. That regime must be compelled to put an end to such military adventurism.

Similarly, restoring Syria's territorial integrity requires unabated fighting with all terrorist groups, as any pause in such operations will allow them to consolidate their presence and atrocious activities in Syria, prolong the conflict and delay a political solution to the crisis. Of course, the protection of civilians must at all times be a guiding principle in combating terrorists.

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

A truly Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated political process is critical. Along with the Astana guarantors, Iran supports the work of the Constitutional Committee and stresses that its work should continue without foreign interference and externally imposed timelines.

Likewise, while the Committee's work must be governed by a sense of compromise and constructive engagement, the reconstruction of the country and the return of refugees and displaced persons must go hand in hand with the political process. They are interlinked, mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing.

Mounting political and economic pressure against the Syrian Government and people and making multiple preconditions for the peaceful settlement of the crisis has proven to be counterproductive. Measures such as politicizing humanitarian aid, the return of refugees and displaced persons, and in particular imposing unilateral sanctions, only prolong both the crisis and suffering of the Syrian people, who are already suffering seriously from other hardships, particularly the coronavirus

disease pandemic. By any measure, these sanctions are unlawful and inhumane and violate the basic human rights of the Syrian people and must therefore be removed immediately.

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

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

[Original: English and Arabic]

It is clear to those following this meeting today that there is another attempt by some countries to seize the 10-year anniversary of the outbreak of the crisis in Syria as an opportunity to continue incitement against the Syrian State, levelling various accusations against it and promoting the failed policies of those countries. Since those countries wanted to conduct an inventory of what has happened in Syria during the past 10 years, I would of course also like to present the correct Syrian reading of what has happened so that public opinion is informed of the real facts.

On this day 10 years ago, the Governments of some countries, mainly the United States, the United Kingdom and France, launched an unprecedented, multifaceted, aggressive war against Syria to undermine its national choices, target its legitimate Government and distort the image of its leadership through terrorist tools, in grave violation of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. This clearly revealed that those countries give precedence to the law of force over the force of law.

It has been 10 years during which the Governments of these countries have made every effort to pit Syrians against each other and incite them to spread chaos, which they considered productive, and spent huge sums of money to inflame and prolong the tragic crisis in a way that served the goals of those Governments and to destabilize security and stability in Syria, destroy its achievements in terms of civilization and development and break up its territorial integrity.

The past 10 years proved that the Governments of these countries do not learn from their previous experiences. They have reopened their old guidebooks and once again followed their outdated recipes in using extremist terrorist groups as a tool to serve their aggressive agendas. They recruited terrorists from all over the world and transferred them to Syria through Turkey, facilitated by the Turkish regime, to wreak death and havoc in my country, Syria.

The great irony is that these Governments used those terrorists as an excuse to form an illegal international coalition to combat terrorism based on a distorted interpretation of Article 51 of the Charter. This illegal coalition killed thousands of innocent civilians. This illegal coalition is unable to combat terrorist organizations of its own making. The truth is that this illegal coalition was aimed at weakening the capabilities of the Syrian Arab Army, which is fighting against terrorist elements of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist organizations. This illegal coalition is aimed at weakening the capabilities of the Syrian Government by destroying civilian facilities, such as schools and hospitals, and infrastructure, such as power stations, bridges and dams, which has resulted in enormous human suffering. The so-called international coalition is in fact an American coalition that American Administrations have used to launch their attacks against the peoples of the region.

It has been 10 years during which we witnessed those countries not only allowing terrorist organizations to commit murder, instigate displacement and demographic change, recruit children, plunder oil and cultural property, burn agricultural crops and deprive the population of drinking water, but also allowing the “Turkification” practices imposed by the Turkish regime on the areas it occupies.

It has been 10 years during which delegations of those countries repeated their political hypocrisy by expressing their grave concern over the humanitarian

situation in Syria. Simultaneously, these countries impose unilateral coercive measures, tighten a suffocating siege on the Syrian people and adopt legislation to prohibit reconstruction. All of that resulted in catastrophic consequences that targeted the livelihood of every Syrian citizen, especially women and children. The true label of these measures has become economic terrorism.

It has been 10 years during which the Governments of these countries expressed their eagerness to respect the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. They have also maintained that the solution is political, not military, while carrying out the most heinous violations of the sovereignty and independence of Syria through the presence of American military forces in the north-east and south-east of Syria, and the Turkish forces in northern and north-western Syria, not to mention the continued Israeli occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan and the systematic acts of aggression that it commits every day.

After all this, is it possible for us to believe the alleged support of these countries for a political solution? How can we believe their adherence to resolution 2254 (2015) when they deliberately and systematically violate its first provision, namely, respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic?

The resilience of the Syrian people and their uniting behind their leadership led to the failure of the destructive policies that were implemented during the past 10 years. Should not these Governments review their policies after this failure, or do they want another 10 years of more failed policies and more destruction of Syria? Those Governments should look realistically at the current situation to see what their hostile policies have led to with regard to Syria in particular and in the region in general. Then they should take measures to correct those wrong policies and adopt new constructive approaches based on respect for the principles of international law and adopt diplomacy and objective dialogue, in order to allow the restoration of peace and stability in Syria and the region.

We listened attentively to the briefing of the Special Envoy, Mr. Geir Pederson, in which we had hoped that the various aspects that I referred to above, which represent the real and biggest obstacle to achieving a political solution, would be addressed adequately and in a crystal-clear manner. We call on the United Nations and its Special Envoy to take a clear position on these challenges and to exercise their role in implementing and protecting the purposes and principles of its Charter, which Syria, among other countries, participated in drafting.

In mid-February, the fifteenth round of Astana meetings was held in the Russian city of Sochi and issued a significant statement that reaffirmed the strong commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and to the continuation of cooperation until the terrorist organizations in Syria were completely eliminated. The statement also rejected the separatist agendas that aim to undermine the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, as well as the attempts to create de facto entities under the pretext of combating terrorism. The Astana statement also rejected the plundering of Syrian oil that is the exclusive property of the Syrian State and the unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria. It condemned the continued Israeli attacks on Syria and demanded an end to such aggressions. Finally, the statement expressed support to the political Syrian-owned, Syrian-led process, including the Constitutional Committee. In this context, my delegation would like to thank the delegations of the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran for their contribution to the success of the work of this round. And we call on the Turkish regime to fulfil its obligations under the Astana agreements and the Sochi understandings and to stop its practices that do not contribute to providing an environment conducive to a political solution.

Damascus welcomed the visit of Special Envoy Mr. Geir Pedersen on 22 February, during which he held constructive talks with the Foreign Minister, who reaffirmed Syria's commitment to a Syrian-owned, Syrian-led political process, facilitated by the United Nations in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, which all affirm at their outset the strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, my delegation stresses that the success of the work of the Constitutional Committee requires respecting the rules of its procedures that have been agreed upon, rejecting any external interference in its work or any attempts to dictate the conclusions of its work or impose artificial timetables to accomplish its mission. We look forward to holding the sixth round of the Constitutional Committee as soon as possible.

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

I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Mr. Duhaime for their briefings.

Today marks 10 years since the beginning of the Syrian war. We should all take a moment to recount the tremendous human toll and immense suffering this decade-long conflict has wrought upon the Syrian people. There is not a single Syrian family untouched by this human-made disaster. Millions of innocent civilians paid a heavy price in their quest for democracy, freedom and dignity.

Over the years, the regime's atrocities and crimes have come in many forms: aerial bombings with chemical weapons, cluster and incendiary bombs, deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, torture, arbitrary detention, abduction, forced disappearances, sexual abuse, sieges, the denial of humanitarian and medical aid and more.

Half a million have died at the hands of the Al-Assad regime and its backers. Half of the population has been either internally displaced or forced to flee their beloved country.

Turkey alone hosts nearly 4 million Syrians. This is almost one-fifth of the entire population of Syria before the start of the conflict. There are 13.4 million Syrians in the country who are in need of humanitarian aid and 5.9 million people are homeless. By far, the Syrian conflict is the gravest humanitarian tragedy of the century.

Yet, despite growing humanitarian needs, the scope of the cross-border mechanism has been downsized over the course of the years from four border-crossings to merely one. As the Secretary-General has emphasized, "more humanitarian access is needed. Intensified cross-line and cross-border deliveries are essential to reach everyone in need everywhere".

The conflict has had a staggering impact on children. While their peers elsewhere learned how to read and write, Syrian children have had to learn how to take cover and survive. The war has left the lives and the future of a generation of Syrian children hanging by a thread. Almost 12,000 children have been killed or injured throughout the conflict. Only last week, two children were killed when a munition left over from previous shelling exploded while they were playing in the suburbs of Raqqa.

Nearly 90 per cent of children are in need of humanitarian assistance. This represents a 20-per cent increase in the past year alone. More than half a million children under the age of five in Syria suffer from stunting owing to chronic malnutrition. Almost 2.5 million children in Syria are out of school. The number of children displaying symptoms of psychosocial distress doubled in 2020, as continued exposure to violence and trauma has had a significant impact on children's mental health.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime has been part of its brutal war against its own people, with devastating humanitarian consequences. Emboldened by a growing sense of impunity, the regime has repeatedly resorted to chemical weapons on at least seven occasions, as established by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Syrian conflict also has had a profound impact on the fragile regional security and stability. Neighbouring countries have had to cope with both the humanitarian fallout and the terrorist threat emanating from Syria.

Over the course of the conflict, terror groups have established their own so-called states on Syrian territory because the tyrant in Damascus has denied Syrian people their basic rights. By releasing terrorists from prisons, ceding territory to and purchasing oil from them, the Al-Assad regime has bred, raised and nurtured the extremist and separatist terrorists that flourished at our doorstep.

Today the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) poses a real and present threat to Syrian civilians and the country's unity. PKK/YPG, following in the footsteps of the regime, is releasing Da'esh fighters and their families, effectively paving the way for a resurgence of Da'esh. When will some Member States learn that there is no such thing as a good terrorist? If we are genuine about the stability of Syria and the wider region, it is time to put an end to this. There can be no lasting peace in Syria as long as the country remains a safe haven for terrorists.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out, it is impossible to fully fathom the extent of the devastation in Syria, but its people have endured some of the greatest crimes the world has witnessed during this century. Without an end to the atrocities, there cannot be an end to the war. The international community may be tired of the Syrian conflict, but the Syrian people are determined. Their demands and expectations are still valid. They will persevere in their struggle for dignity and freedom.

That is why there should be no illusions. The regime can never achieve military victory. A military solution cannot bring any legitimacy or create a lasting settlement. Legitimacy can be achieved only through a negotiated political settlement that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people.

The Constitutional Committee's work is critical to achieving this ultimate goal, in line with the resolution 2254 (2015). At previous Council meetings, I have emphasized the necessity to fend off the regime's stonewalling tactics. We regret that progress could not be achieved in the fifth round of talks owing to the regime's obstruction.

We broadly agree with Special Envoy Pedersen's assessment. In Geneva, we followed the meetings closely, encouraging the opposition to be constructive and flexible. It is obvious that the opposition has performed remarkably during the last round and over the 15 months since the establishment of the Committee. The international community should recognize the strong commitment of the opposition. The Committee meetings must be conducted seriously and deliver concrete outcomes swiftly.

We understand that Special Envoy Pedersen had useful meetings in Damascus, Moscow and Istanbul and that the Syrian parties exchanged ideas for the conduct of the next round. If the sixth round could be convened, it is imperative to start going into the substance of the constitution. This is essential for the continuation of this process. Now is the chance for the regime to prove that it truly wants a political solution.

Let me remind you that the Constitutional Committee is the sole functioning mechanism for the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). Therefore, the Security Council has a special responsibility to support its work and not allow the regime to backtrack again.

The mere presence of the regime representative at this meeting is an affront to millions of Syrians who have suffered countless crimes at the hands of the regime for a decade. His hallucinatory statement and delusional accusations do not merit a response. Lest he claim again to be my legitimate counterpart, I will tell him this: His regime has the blood of innocent people on its hands and lost its legitimacy a

decade ago. The answer to the criminal regime he represents will be given by the Syrian people when they save and rebuild Syria.

We remember the first day the Syrians took to the streets and asked for their freedom. We can easily recount the history of the conflict. And we know how this conflict can come to a peaceful end. But we can never have the unique perspective of a Syrian who has suffered at the hands of the regime.

It is the innocent Syrian people who have to live with constant fear, who have to bury their loved ones and who have to live without any hope in sight. It is the innocent Syrian people who must run for their lives, survive bombings and starvation.

After 10 years, we must feel a sense of urgency about it — in Dr. King’s words, the fierce urgency of now — because people are being killed as we speak. Hopes for a better life are dying as we speak. After 10 years, what is happening in Syria is a crime against humanity. What is happening in Syria is a crime against everything the Charter of the United Nations stands for. It is a crime against the very purpose of the Security Council.

And we can still do something to stop it. The constant excuses for inaction no longer suffice. It is time to stop talking about how sorry we are. It is time to remember the last killed Syrian. And it is time to do something to prevent the next killing.

This human-made catastrophe will not end before the people of Syria have a legitimate government, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), that truly represents their will and that enjoys their full consent. It is not going to end until the Syrians live in a democratic, secure, prosperous and secular Syria. Until then, Turkey will continue to stand by the innocent people of Syria and their legitimate aspirations.

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