



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

H.E. Inga Rhonda King
Permanent Representative

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian & Political)

United Nations Security Council VTC Meeting
30 March 2020
New York

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Thank you, Mr. President and thank you Geir and Mark for your usual thorough briefings and your unwavering commitment.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the 5th March Additional Protocol on Stabilization of the Situation in the Idlib De-escalation Area, and we commend the diplomatic efforts which enabled it. It is our sincere hope that this agreement will be maintained and will lead to a nationwide cessation of hostilities.

Despite this armistice, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains of critical concern and the already dire conditions are compounded by the grave threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. The conflict has crippled much of the country's infrastructure, including its health services. Medical facilities are compromised due to inadequate staff, supplies and equipment. Syria simply cannot afford a COVID-19 catastrophe. Persons residing in densely populated and overcrowded areas such as IDP camps are especially vulnerable. Prevention strategies, such as physical distancing and frequent hand washing, are impossible to maintain in these environments. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines supports the WHO's efforts to assist the Syrian government's health response to combat this common enemy. COVID-19 and the wider humanitarian situation are far greater than any political quarrel. We therefore reiterate our appeal to countries who have imposed unilateral sanctions on Syria to engage in dialogue, to strengthen the COVID-19 response and to aid the country in meeting its urgent humanitarian needs.

We support the cross-border mechanism, which continues to be a lifeline for many Syrians. Similarly, we will support all further arrangements which seek to maintain timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access, in coordination with the Syrian government and in line with the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance.

Reconstruction in Syria is a critical component for improving the country's humanitarian situation. It is also one of the necessary requirements to ensure the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and IDPs. We encourage members of the international community to contribute to the reconstruction efforts.

Mr. President,

The presence of Security Council designated terrorist entities in the northwest continues to pose a significant threat to Syria's sovereignty, its people and the essential work of humanitarian organizations. We recognize the need for counter-terrorism operations in this regard and reiterate that such operations must respect international law.

Ultimately, full resolution of this crisis requires an inclusive political process, devoid of interference, and characterized by respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Indeed, there is no military solution. We continue to support the Special Envoy in his efforts to facilitate the wider political process and we hope that the Constitutional Committee will be reconvened soon. We are pleased to hear that the co-chairs have agreed on an agenda.

The Syrian people have been made to suffer as a result of forces which they did not choose and a geopolitical complexity over which they have no influence. This Council must work constructively to help Syria to return to stability and peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.