



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

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Statement

By

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The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian)

United Nations Security Council

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Please check against delivery

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you Under Secretary General Lowcock for your usual comprehensive briefing. And we join with others in expressing condolences to the families of the victims of yesterday's attack in Afrin.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates the Special Envoy's call for a complete and immediate nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria. While the 5th March agreement has led to a significant cessation of hostilities in the northwest, the appeal for a nationwide ceasefire is now more pertinent than ever to enable the country to effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic. A decade of war has crippled the country's public services, including its health system. Many Syrians are living in camps and other informal settlements that lack the means to implement the necessary protective measures. Hostilities will only serve to further the destruction of indispensable infrastructure and prevent humanitarian actors from carrying out their life saving work.

We recognize Syria's efforts to suppress the virus, such as the implementation of travel restrictions and curfews. A balance must, however, be struck between maintaining these necessary measures and scaling up and preserving the vital humanitarian response. Timely, safe, sustained, and unimpeded access throughout the country remains essential. We urge all parties to continue to engage in dialogue in this regard.

We reiterate the appeal for the lifting of unilateral coercive economic measures. It is our obligation to ensure that every country is able to have an effective and robust response to COVID-19. Every successful fight against this virus is a victory for the entire international community. It is in our collective interest to ensure that we all have the proper tools to address it.

Mr. President,

We take note of the Summary by the Secretary-General of the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry. We await the appointment of the senior independent adviser to address the Board's recommendations. It is critical that these types of incidents do not reoccur and that the deconfliction mechanism is improved. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines maintains that all parties must respect the fundamental principles of armed conflict. The targeting of civilian and

humanitarian infrastructure is a reprehensible violation of international law. Impunity for these acts should not be tolerated.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian situation in Syria requires urgent action and the country's overall recovery needs the support of the entire international community. We have a responsibility to assist Syria, through positive action, so that it can emerge from this conflict to enjoy the peace and prosperity that it justly deserves.

I thank you.

Closed VTC (Consultations) Questions:

1. Is there any update on the status of the airlift from Iraq of WHO medical supplies?

Background: These supplies have now been stuck in Iraq for several months. As a result, some of them are no longer usable and have had to be removed from the consignment. Further progress has been impacted by COVID-19 office closures, as well as the closure of the Erbil airport in Iraq. In the meantime, the presence of COVID-19 has been confirmed in north-east Syria. Local capacity and supplies to handle an outbreak there are minimal.

2. Is there any update available on the operations of the Allouk water station?

Background: Turkey and Turkish-backed forces have controlled the Allouk water station in northeast Syria. It supplies approximately 460,000 people including 3 displacement camps. Aid workers said that the Turkish authorities have interrupted water pumping several times since the start of the year, most recently for a few days in late March.