



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

685 3rd Ave., Suite 1108, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 •

svgmission@gmail.com | <http://svg-un.org>

Statement

By

**Ms. Isis Gonsalves
Political Coordinator**

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Political)

United Nations Security Council

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Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you Geir for your briefing.

The restoration of peace and stability in Syria can only be achieved through a Syrian-owned and Syrian led political process facilitated by the United Nations. The advancement of this process requires an environment which encourages cooperation and reconciliation. A cessation of hostilities is therefore an essential element in realizing the goals of resolution 2254. And now, *more than ever*, a sustained calm is needed to enable an all-out fight against COVID-19. In this regard, we are pleased that the 5th March ceasefire in the northwest continues to hold and we echo the Special Envoy's appeal for this to extend throughout the country.

It is our hope that despite the challenges and restrictions presented by COVID-19 work on the Constitutional Committee will continue, and that through compromise and commitment, consensus on the provisions of a new constitution will finally be achieved. We once again reiterate that the meaningful participation of women in the negotiation process is imperative to ensure fair and balanced outcomes for all.

Resolution 2254 underscores the need for all parties to undertake confidence building measures, which will contribute to the viability of the political process and help to sustain a cessation of hostilities. In this context, action on the issue of missing persons as well detainees should be prioritized, particularly in view of the current pandemic.

Mr. President,

Syria is facing a grave economic situation, which is further exacerbated by the measures which have justifiably had to be taken to contain and suppress COVID-19. We reiterate the call for the lifting of unilateral coercive measures to enable Syria to carry out and maintain an effective response to the pandemic and to address its current economic challenges.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to support the determined efforts of the Special Envoy. His continued positive engagement with all concerned parties will only serve to promote cooperation and thereby advance the wider process.

The Council has a great responsibility to assist Syria through positive action to emerge from the despair of 10 years of conflict. We must set aside geopolitical quarrels and unite in support of Syria and its people.

Thank you.