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to the United Nations**

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Statement

By

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Counsellor**

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Political)

United Nations Security Council

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Please check against delivery

Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Mustafa for their briefings.

There is no military answer to the decade-long Syrian conflict. The only path to ending the suffering of the Syrian people is through an unyielding commitment to an inclusive political process in accordance with resolution 2254. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore continues to support the Special Envoy's determined efforts in this regard. We welcome the proposed plan to convene a new session of the Constitutional Committee towards the end of August. It is our hope that this meeting will indeed materialize and will be characterized by constructive engagement.

The security situation in Syria is intimately linked to the advancement and success of the political process. Without sustained calm the process will be severely hindered, and the already dire humanitarian situation will worsen. Although the country's security situation is currently in a fragile state, the March ceasefire agreement is an encouraging step and has laid the groundwork for what will *hopefully* develop into a full nationwide cessation of hostilities.

We take note of the 1 July Tripartite Summit in the Astana Format. We applaud the Astana Guarantors' earnest efforts and we encourage the involvement of the United Nations. We support continued dialogue and meaningful diplomatic action by states to preserve the ceasefire in the northwest and to further advance the wider political process.

Mr. President,

Syria should not be used as an arena for geopolitical confrontation, and it is imperative that its sovereignty and territorial integrity be respected and preserved. This dictates the withdrawal of all unauthorized foreign forces and the continued fight against Security Council designated terrorist groups, seeking to take advantage of the ceasefire and the COVID-19 pandemic. On the point of counter-terrorism efforts, we reiterate that all activities ought to be collaborative, targeted and in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Confidence building measures are critical to the conflict resolution process. In this respect, we emphasize the importance of addressing the issue of detainees, particularly in consideration of the pandemic. Further, the question of the fate of missing persons remains. These matters must be given the urgent attention that they require, to foster trust and to ensure transparency and accountability.

We remain deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating economic situation in Syria, which has been made worse by both the inescapable repercussions of the pandemic and the continued application of unilateral coercive measures. These measures serve to intensify and prolong the anguish of the Syrian people, who already suffer the devastating effects of currency inflation and lack of access to basic commodities. For this reason, we yet again appeal for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures to assist Syria in facing the current challenges.

Mr. President,

The situation in Syria demands our continued attention and a pragmatic approach to ensure that peace and stability is restored. Above all, we must always keep the Syrian people at the forefront of all deliberations and remember that it is them who must chart their own destiny.

I thank you.