Statement

By

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Permanent Representative

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian)

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Thank you, Mr. President. I also wish to thank Under Secretary-General Mark Lowock, Ms. Henrietta Fore and Dr. Amani Ballour for their informative briefings.

For a decade, the Syrian people have endured the perils of war and the resulting effect of living through one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has witnessed. The country’s dire situation is further exacerbated by an amalgamation of factors, including severe socio-economic decline, precipitating commodity shortages and food insecurity, climate-related severe weather events and the global pandemic.

The provision of timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian assistance, in coordination with the Syrian government and in line with the humanitarian principles, therefore, remains imperative for the sake of human dignity. The Cross-Border Mechanism continues to perform a critical role in this regard and must be preserved and scaled up to adequately meet the steeply rising humanitarian needs across the country. Further, assistance and access through the cross-line modality ought to be strengthened to complement the Mechanism and fill the existing gaps.

Syria’s COVID-19 cases have continued to rise in recent weeks. Those who reside in densely populated and overcrowded areas such as IDP camps and other informal settlements, that lack the means to implement the necessary protective measures, are especially susceptible to contracting the virus. As such, the equitable and efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is an important component of the overall humanitarian response. We recognize the COVAX Facility’s vital role in this regard by providing the first shipment of vaccines. It is our hope that the rollout will begin soon to mitigate the public health and economic impact of the pandemic.

The protection of civilians and objects indispensable to the survival to the civilian population must remain a priority. Insecurity persists, despite the ceasefire in the north-west and the many appeals for an immediate nationwide cessation of hostilities. We continue to be alarmed by the indiscriminate attacks on both civilians and humanitarian actors. We firmly condemn these acts, which constitute serious violations of international human rights law and international
humanitarian law and we reiterate that perpetrators must be held accountable to prevent impunity and bolster confidence in justice.

Ten years of war have decimated Syria’s critical infrastructure, obstructing the provision of health care, depriving hundreds of thousands of children of their right to education and displacing millions – transforming them from ordinary citizens into refugees and internally displaced persons. We renew our appeal to the international community to contribute to the country’s reconstruction efforts to support its long-term recovery for the benefit of the Syrian people.

We strongly urge all parties to prioritize and address the deteriorating security situation and urgent health needs in displacement camps. Further, we emphasize the importance of pursuing a sustainable solution to the frequent disruptions of the water supply in the north-east. Access to a safe and reliable supply of water and sanitation services is essential to preserve the health of the people, especially in consideration of the pandemic.

Syria’s humanitarian situation will only continue to worsen and stability will be hindered in the absence of a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, in accordance with Resolution 2254. The international community has an obligation to help Syria and its people through positive and pragmatic action. The politicization of the grave humanitarian situation must come to an end. This requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures, which have deepened the socio-economic crisis and are incompatible with international law. They also impede the movement of humanitarian aid despite the humanitarian exemptions. It further requires a targeted and collaborative approach to counter-terrorism and the removal of all unauthorized foreign forces present in Syria in violation of the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I close by reiterating Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’ commitment to supporting Syria and its people to emerge from the untold despair and suffering created by this protracted conflict.

I thank you.