Statement

By

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

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Please check against delivery
Thank you, Mr. President, and I also thank Under Secretary-General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen for their usual informative briefings.

Once again we begin by saying that a sustainable peace in Syria can only be attained through a negotiated political solution that is in accordance with Resolution 2254. In this regard, the Constitutional Committee remains a vital component in the wider political process. We remain hopeful that the next session of the Committee will be convened soon and will yield positive results. We encourage all parties to remain committed to working together in a spirit of mutual respect and compromise and we thank Special Envoy Peterson for his tireless efforts in this regard.

The undertaking of confidence building measures, such as through action on the issues of missing persons and detainees, must also be prioritized to contribute to the viability of the wider political process and here too we applaud you, Geir, for your efforts.

As the political and humanitarian situations are undoubtedly inextricably linked, the improvement of the worsening humanitarian crisis is dependent on a comprehensive political resolution to the conflict. It is further dependent on pragmatic international support. As such, we echo our appeal for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures which have been imposed on Syria and have adversely impacted the country’s overall socio-economic condition.

Regarding the multidimensional humanitarian response, there is currently no alternative to the Cross-Border Mechanism, and we therefore remain in support of it. Indeed, it is imperative that both the cross-border and the cross-line modalities be scaled up and optimized to provide timely, safe, sustained and
unimpeded humanitarian access to meet the vast humanitarian needs. This ought to be done in line with the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and in coordination with the Syrian Government.

We are concerned by the reports of reduced water levels in the Euphrates River. This matter must be closely monitored as it threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of Syrians who are dependent on its supply for drinking water, the irrigation of crops and the generation of electricity.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a significant challenge for Syria. We are therefore pleased to note that COVID-19 vaccinations commenced in May and we commend those countries who have provided additional vaccines to the country. The fight against COVID-19 requires international cooperation and global solidarity.

Despite the March 2020 ceasefire agreement, Syria’s security situation remains extremely volatile, placing civilians and civilian infrastructure under constant threat. We echo the Special Envoy’s appeal for an immediate nationwide ceasefire to ensure the protection of civilians and to prevent further destruction of the country’s infrastructure.

Operations aimed at eradicating the scourge of terrorism are necessary to protect Syria’s sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. They are further necessary for the maintenance of regional peace and stability. However, we reiterate that these activities must be conducted strictly within the confines of the principles of international law. We firmly condemn all acts committed in violation of international law for which perpetrators must be held to account.
On the point of sovereignty, we reiterate that respect for this enduring principle dictates the withdrawal of all unauthorized foreign forces present on Syria’s territory.

Ten years of war have devastated Syria. Homes, schools, medical facilities and other essential infrastructure have been decimated, precipitating one of the world’s largest refugee and displacement crises and depriving millions of the fundamental human rights to education and an adequate standard of living, *inclusive of healthcare and other social services*. Vulnerabilities are high and women and children are most at risk. It is past time to change this.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains committed to helping the people of Syria and to supporting the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, which is the only path towards lasting peace and stability.

Before concluding, I would like to say it was an honor to have worked with you Jonathan, you are indeed a distinguished diplomat, and I wish you and your family the very best in your next assignment.

I thank you.