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Statement

By

**H.E. Inga Rhonda King
Permanent Representative**

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian)

United Nations Security Council

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Thank you, Mr. President, and I also thank Secretary-General, H.E. António Guterres, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham and Ms. Sherine Ibrahim for their briefings.

After ten years of war, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is still absent and the Syrian people continue to pay the highest price with their untold suffering. Their despair is further deepened by severe socio-economic decline, which has precipitated commodity shortages and acute food insecurity. Furthermore, the continued application of unilateral coercive measures has had an indirect adverse impact on life-saving humanitarian operations and has hindered the country's overall socio-economic recovery. This remains a primary concern and we reiterate our appeal for the lifting of these sanctions for the benefit of the Syrian people.

Syria's arduous road to recovery is also greatly reliant on the international community's goodwill in providing reconstruction aid - without which, millions will be deprived of vital social services and safe and dignified living conditions. Support for the rehabilitation of the country's basic infrastructure is therefore urgently needed.

Unquestionably, Syria is one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time. Needs are steadily rising across the country and women and children are disproportionately affected. Addressing the multidimensional and complex challenges requires continued constructive engagement with the Syrian government and international humanitarian agencies. It further demands the preservation and scaling up of both the Cross-Border Mechanism and the cross-line modality. There remains no alternative to ensure timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access, *in line with the humanitarian principles*, to those desperately in need in Syria. Failure to reauthorize the Mechanism will not only put an end to the critical lifeline of aid to millions but will also create disruptions in the distribution of much needed COVID-19 vaccines. It is imperative that humanitarian assistance is not politicized, and that the Syrian people are prioritized.

We are deeply concerned by the worsening situation in the Euphrates River. Drought and other troubling factors have led to alarmingly low water levels. Millions are dependent on its supply for drinking water, the irrigation of crops and the generation of electricity. A sustainable solution to

safeguard lives and livelihoods must be pursued. On this point, we remind that water and water systems should never be weaponized.

Civilians are forced to endure the consequences of continued hostilities across Syria. Death, displacement, and the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure are regrettably an everyday occurrence. A nationwide ceasefire is therefore immediately needed for the protection of civilians and to guarantee the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid. Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, *in violation of the fundamental principles of international law*, must be met with condemnation and perpetrators of these indefensible acts must be held accountable.

Further on civilian protection, the deteriorating security situation in displacement camps, particularly in Al Hol, is disturbing. Civilians residing and working in these camps must be afforded safety and access to basic services. This necessitates immediate action.

Mr. President,

As has been said many times in this Chamber, there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. A Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process in line with Security Council Resolution 2254 is the only viable path to peace, stability and the protection and prosperity of the Syrian people.

I thank you.