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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 thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his usual thorough briefing – and Special Envoy it is good to have you here in person. We also thank Ms. Abeer Hussein for her remarks today.

Syria's only viable path towards peace and stability is through a credible, balanced, and inclusive political process that is owned and led by the Syrian people and meets their legitimate aspirations. Yet ten years after the conflict began the Syrian people continue to suffer as a result of dynamics over which they have neither influence nor control.

Constructive and pragmatic international diplomacy is needed now more than ever to assist in creating an environment which is conducive to the fulfillment of the political process. In this regard, we must acknowledge and commend the unwavering efforts of the Special Envoy and we continue to strongly urge all parties to recommit to working together in a spirit of mutual respect and compromise in the pursuit of peace and stability.

The Constitutional Committee remains an essential component of the wider political process and we emphasize the importance of convening a sixth session as soon as practicable. The Committee's consultations should involve the meaningful participation of all groups, including women and youth. We remain hopeful that the Committee will be a driver of progress in the political process for the sake of the Syrian people.

Measures aimed at building confidence are also vital to the success of the wider process. In this context, we reiterate the urgent need to address the issues of detainees, abductees, and missing persons. Further, conditions must be cultivated for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. These expressions of goodwill will undoubtedly promote reconciliation within Syria. They will also aid the parties in the development of trust and, thereby promote active participation in the political process.

We acknowledge the close linkage between a ceasefire and the parallel political process. The implementation of a complete and immediate nationwide cessation of hostilities is essential to

stabilize the country's volatile security situation. We appeal to the parties to exercise maximum restraint and we remind them of their obligations under international law, including in the conduct of counter-terrorism activities.

There exists a well-established link between justice and peace, and it has long been recognized that neither one is able to thrive in isolation of the other. We therefore reiterate that accountability for acts committed in violation of international law ought to remain a high priority.

We maintain that the political and humanitarian situations are inextricably connected. Stagnation of the political process has the disastrous effect of prolonging the conflict and in turn worsens the dire humanitarian situation. A wholistic approach remains imperative.

The international community must prioritize the people of Syria and leave behind geopolitical disputes, which continue to compound the complexities of the conflict. This dictates the removal of all unauthorized foreign forces in respect for Syria's sovereignty and its territorial integrity. It further requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures, which have had a detrimental impact on Syria's overall socio-economic condition.

Mr. President,

Syria and its people deserve security and to live in a state of calm. This Council and the wider international community bear a great responsibility to assist them through positive action to emerge from the despair created by ten long years of war.

I thank you.