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Statement

By

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Permanent Representative**

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian)

United Nations Security Council

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Thank you, Madam President, and I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his usual insightful updates and I thank Ms Amany Qaddour for her vivid and heart-wrenching account of the plight of Syrians, Syria's Children, more so, and Syrian Relief Workers.

Madam President, we remain profoundly concerned by the security situation in Syria. Sporadic and indiscriminate violence across the country continues to threaten civilians and civilian objects. Hostilities have further exacerbated displacement and obstructed vital humanitarian access. It is past time for a nationwide ceasefire to be implemented and fully respected by all. Civilian protection remains the highest priority. Military objectives and counter-terrorism operations, although necessary, should never take precedence over civilian protection, and impunity for violations of international law should not be tolerated. Syrians should no longer continue to pay the highest price of a conflict which they did not create and over which they have no control.

The economic crisis plaguing the country and its people is undoubtedly made worse by the effects of the global pandemic. Millions remain food insecure and basic commodities are inaccessible, even as we approach the winter months. Unquestionably, Syrians must continue to be supported through humanitarian aid and the Cross-Border Mechanism is of critical importance. However, the Mechanism is not enough on its own. Other

indispensable modalities such as cross-line deliveries are necessary to complement the Mechanism and ensure sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access. We are therefore pleased to note that the first cross-line operation to the north-west took place at the end of August. **We urge all parties to continue working together to expand this modality and to ensure that that existing access arrangements are preserved and scaled up to reach every Syrian in need.** This is especially important to assist in the effective and efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Beyond humanitarian aid, further practical steps must be taken to assist Syria and Syrians in need. This requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures which have been imposed on the country. These measures have had an indirect adverse impact on the civilian population and are incompatible with international law. It further requires assistance for Syria's reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The conflict has devastated Syria's infrastructure, leaving millions vulnerable without access to shelter and essential services. Reconstruction is a costly undertaking that requires support from the international community. We ought to be reminded that it is also a necessary condition for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin. Therefore, **we encourage Syria's partners to assist in their reconstruction and to help the country achieve long-term development goals.**

The water crisis demands immediate attention. The worst drought in decades, precipitated by the existential threat of climate change, in combination with other troubling factors have put millions of lives and livelihoods in peril. A sustainable solution must be urgently pursued. On this point, **we reiterate and remind that water and water systems should never be weaponized. As the Martin reminded us earlier access to clean water is a human right.**

Syria is a grim humanitarian emergency with multi-dimensional challenges, and geopolitical dynamics have compounded the complexities of the conflict, including through the continued presence of unauthorized foreign forces on Syria's sovereign territory. **The Syrian people should be our primary concern and constructive international diplomacy ought to be encouraged and prioritized to ensure support for them.**

The wellbeing of the Syrian people is paramount, and they deserve peace and stability. The conflict and the attendant humanitarian crisis will only continue in the absence of a political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We, therefore, have a duty to engage constructively towards a political solution with the Syrian people at forefront. Thank you.