

Seizing the opportunity for political progress in Syria

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Thank you, Madam President, and may I start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Dr Mhaissen for their briefings

Madam President, we join others in welcoming Mr Pedersen's announcement that a 6th round of Constitutional Committee talks will take place in Geneva in mid-October. We commend Mr Pedersen for his persistent efforts to secure agreement to the further talks. As Mr Pedersen has made clear, the next meeting needs to be different to those that have gone before. Just as the UN strives to facilitate a political process in implementation of its side of resolution 2254, so it is now down to the Syrian parties to take responsibility for implementing their side. It is time for the regime to end its artificial delays of the process, and for substantive progress to be made on a new constitution as envisaged in resolution 2254.

Madam President, resolution 2254 explicitly recognises the link between the political process and a nationwide ceasefire. We therefore remain very concerned by the ongoing escalation of violence in north-west Syria, which has recently led to the deaths of civilians and humanitarian workers, including in heavy shelling of residential areas, and the destruction of medical facilities. We hope the upcoming meeting between Turkey and Russia in Sochi will lead to the full implementation of the 5 March 2020 ceasefire agreement.

We remain concerned, too, about the potential for renewed conflict to break out across the rest of Syria. The recent hostilities in Da'raa are a reminder of this. We welcome the recent ceasefire there, but this, and the ceasefire in Idlib, need to form part of a nationwide ceasefire agreed in parallel with the upcoming political talks in accordance with resolution 2254.

Madam President, until progress is made on the political process and until there is a nationwide ceasefire, the suffering of the Syrian people will continue, and the millions displaced will be unable to return home. In this regard we take note the Commission of Inquiry's latest report, which documents the atrocities, abuses and violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law that continue in Syria to this day, including the indiscriminate use of weapons, targeted killings, arbitrary and incommunicado detention and torture, and denial of humanitarian access- which Dr Mhaissen described so eloquently to us.

Madam President, we urge the Syrian parties, particularly the regime, to commit to compliance with their obligations, commit to a nationwide ceasefire, and to seize this opportunity for progress with both hands. The international community will support you.

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