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Identical letters dated 19 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I wish to convey to you the following important current information relating, first, to the destruction of the cooling tower of the Zayzun power plant in the Ghab plain, in the countryside outside Hama, by the Turkistan Islamic Party terrorist group and, second, to the scale and breakdown of the losses incurred by the electricity sector in the Syrian Arab Republic:

On 7 May 2020, fighters belonging to the extremist Turkistan Islamic Party terrorist group, which is linked operationally and ideologically to the Levant Liberation Organization, which is listed as a terrorist entity, destroyed the cooling tower of the Zayzun power plant in the Ghab plain area in the countryside west of Hama. According to Syrian Ministry of Electricity experts, the reason for destroying the main cooling tower at the power plant was to strip it of its metal panels and sell them to Turkish smugglers and traders.

Over the past two years, a succession of armed terrorist groups in control of the area have dedicated themselves to looting generators, transformers, central panels, cables and fuel tanks at the Zayzun thermal plant and selling them as “spoils of war” to Turkish traders and smugglers. The latter dismantle those “spoils”, transport them into Turkey and sell them illicitly to Turkish investors and manufacturers. They then split the profits with the leaders of those armed terrorist groups, in particular the Levant Liberation Organization, the Turkistan Islamic Party, Hurras al-Din and Ahrar al-Sham.

According to preliminary assessments by the Ministry of Electricity, the destroyed cooling tower was worth $44 million, while the cost of rebuilding the thermal power plant is estimated at around $440 million. The plant, currently valued at $660 million in real terms and with a capacity of 384 megawatts (MW), is one of the most important in the country. Each of its three gas turbine power generation units, with their associated machinery, could generate 128 MW. They also ran on liquid fuel.

Initial Government assessments suggest that the country’s electricity sector has lost some $7.22 billion since 2011, with 70 per cent of power generation plants, transfer stations, substations and gas and fuel pipelines shut down. Despite the efforts of the Ministry’s institutions and their crews, relying on domestic resources and capacity and the cooperation of a few friendly countries, to repair as much of the damage as possible, 50 per cent of the power grid in Syria is, unfortunately, out of service for the following reasons:

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1. The activities of the various armed terrorist groups are being facilitated and logistically supported by the Turkish Government. The Turkish military and security forces that control the Turkish side of the border with Syria allow the terrorist organizations to move freely on both sides and use them to transport arms, funds and terrorist fighters, and to loot power plants and smuggle the parts, in particular generators, transformers, central panels, cables and fuel tanks, into Turkey.

2. The so-called international coalition, led by the United States, is operating illegally in the Syrian Arab Republic and carrying out military operations and airstrikes with neither Security Council authorization nor the consent or approval of the Syrian Government, in violation of the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

3. A lack funds for investment in the electricity and energy sectors and the dwindling levels of personnel to service them are a result of the war being waged by terrorists and the piracy engaged in by the American occupation forces, which control the country's oil and gas fields.

4. The unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States, the European Union and others have brought intense pressure to bear on various sectors of the economy and services, in particular the electricity sector.

5. Most of the country's former foreign partners have refrained from reinvesting in the electricity sector in Syria for fear of being subjected to the sanctions that the United States and the European Union impose on any "third party" dealing with the public or private sectors in Syria. That also affects alternative energy projects. Between 2015 and 2018, the Ministry of Electricity issued the necessary licences for 19 renewable (solar and wind) energy projects, 6 of them for wind energy. Unfortunately, for a range of reasons directly or indirectly connected with the unilateral economic sanctions, none of those projects have been carried out.

6. The bulk of the funds allocated by the United Nations and the international community in aid to the Syrian people has been directed to neighbouring countries. The basic needs of Syrians in the Syrian Arab Republic itself have been largely overlooked. Above all, funding is required urgently for reconstruction and to restore infrastructure and services, especially electricity services that are key to meeting the basic humanitarian needs of all Syrians, without exception, and providing them with essential services.

7. The United Nations development system is holding back from financing the relaunch of development and recovery projects in Syria, especially in the electricity sector, as a result of direct pressure from the Governments of certain countries, above all the United States, France and the United Kingdom, which have so far stood in the way of restarting such projects.

Attached to this letter is a preliminary assessment regarding losses in the electricity sector arising from the terrorist war in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex). I should like, however, to provide an illustration here of the suffering endured by the Syrians because of those losses by giving the example of the electric power situation in the area around Damascus, where four out of five power transfer plants have been completely put out of service by armed terrorist groups. The Ministry of Electricity has a plan to rebuild those plants, but it requires an estimated budget of $500 million and could take as long as three years to carry out, owing to the above-mentioned obstacles, above all the unilateral coercive measures and the fact that

certain Governments are preventing the United Nations development system from providing funds to launch recovery projects.

The alarming deterioration in the electric power situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is seriously disrupting the daily life of all Syrians. The Secretary-General and the Member States should know that Syrian households do not have a steady supply of electricity and that power outages often last as long as 16 hours a day. Various public and private health, educational and service facilities are affected by the outages and are forced to rely on industrial generators. That brings its own problems, given that Syrians generally can ill afford to buy them and fuel and gasoline to run them are scarce, not to mention their serious environmental impact in and outside the cities. Moreover, because of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the country, the public and private sectors are not allowed to import electric power generators or spare parts for them.

My country greatly appreciates the wide-ranging campaign led by the Secretary-General, in partnership with United Nations and specialized international agencies, for global collective solidarity in addressing the health and socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as it spreads around the world. The message of the United Nations has been clear from the beginning: global solidarity is incompatible with the continued imposition of unilateral coercive economic measures by certain Governments on the peoples of some countries.

Syrians are hoping that the United Nations will take a new and more enlightened approach to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, based on the imperative of ensuring that basic life necessities, foremost of which are food, health care, water, communications and electric power for all, are provided throughout the country in a stable and sustainable manner and in proportion to individual income levels.

To be successful, the United Nations mission to facilitate the political process in the Syrian Arab Republic must go hand in hand with progress in socioeconomic development. No political process can succeed or be sustained under the pressure of an economic blockade and obstruction of the reconstruction and recovery process. As I pointed out in my last letter to you, the international community cannot expect Syrians to believe in the integrity, independence, effectiveness and credibility of the political process while they are deprived of their basic human rights.

In conclusion, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that Syrians who have lived through a bitter decade of war waged by terrorists, with all the resulting socioeconomic and humanitarian hardships, were not simply waiting for an aid and food fund. They expect the United Nations to take a creative approach and convince the Governments that have been interfering so detrimentally in Syrian internal affairs that the time has come to concede to Syrians the right to lead the political process independently and freely and to lift the unilateral coercive measures imposed on them. The time has also come for the United Nations development system to initiate reconstruction, recovery and development projects in Syria for the benefit of all Syrians, to meet the aspirations of all Syrians abroad who wish to come back to their homes and towns, and to allow all Syrians to return to a normal, stable, prosperous and safe existence.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the identical letters dated 19 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Preliminary assessment of the losses to the electricity sector arising from the war waged by terrorists in the Syrian Arab Republic

The electricity sector, aside from meeting people's need for electric power across all segments of society, lies at the heart of socioeconomic development and the expansion of services and investment in industry, agriculture, trade and the services sector of any country.

Before the war that terrorists have been waging in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011, the electricity sector kept pace with development plans, with demand for electricity growing at an average annual rate of around 7 per cent between 2000 and 2011. The response to that growth hit a peak in effectiveness in that pre-war period. Under ambitious plans, many new power plants were built and electricity transmission and distribution networks were expanded to cover all cities and regions throughout the country.

Since the outbreak of war, the armed terrorist groups have systematically and deliberately targeted the electricity sector, destroying related infrastructure and leaving about half of the electricity system out of service.

Direct damage amounts to a total of some $7.22 billion, broken down as follows:

- Damage to power plants: approximately $4.5 billion.
- Damage to the transmission network: approximately $1.72 billion.
- Damage to the distribution network: approximately $1 billion.

1. Damage to power plants (approximately $4.5 billion):

- Armed terrorist groups deliberately set out to vandalize and destroy the Aleppo thermal power plant, with a capacity of 1,065 MW. The plant's main components were blown up, causing great damage that has not been repaired. The current value in real terms of the plant, which has not returned to service, is approximately $1.54 billion.
- Since they first broke into the Zayzun combined cycle gas turbine power plant, with a capacity of 450 MW, in Idlib Governorate, armed terrorist groups have stolen and sold equipment. They recently destroyed the plant's main cooling tower. The current value of the plant in real terms is $660 million.
- The Taym open cycle gas turbine power station, which has a capacity of 102 MW and is located in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, has been looted and vandalized by armed terrorist groups. Two gas turbine units have been repaired and returned to service. The current value of the plant in real terms is $99 million.
- The Muhradah, Zarah and Tishrin power plants have all been attacked several times since the outbreak of the terrorist war. The plants and their equipment and fuel tanks have been targeted in rocket attacks, setting fire to the fuel tanks, causing varying degrees of damage to cooling towers, boilers, control cables and other equipment, and putting the plants out of commission on several

occasions. After each attack, Syrian specialists went in immediately to carry out emergency repairs and return the plants to service.

2. Damage to the transmission network (approximately $1.72 billion):

- High-voltage, direct current transfer stations (400 kilovolts (kV), 230 kV, 66 kV and 20 kV) and hundreds of kilometres of high-voltage transmission lines (400 kV, 230 kV and 66 kV) have been the object of vandalism, looting and theft. High-voltage transmission towers have been vandalized and blown up. Some 52 transfer stations have been damaged or put out of commission, including: Zarbah, Shaykh Najjar, Aleppo F, Aleppo B, Khafsah, Babiri, Siqba, Zamalka, Duma 1, Maydan 2, Qabun 3, Tall, Fursan, Fijah, Taym, Tala'i', Mayadin, Idha'ah, Umran, Shari'ah, Tadmur, Qaryatayn, Shaykh Miskin, Ghazalah, Harak, Nawa and Jasim.
- Approximately 40 per cent of high-voltage transmission lines have been put out of commission as a result of terrorist attacks on the lines and the blowing up of their towers. In short, the power grid in the Syrian Arab Republic has become fragmented. Power supply to some governorates, such as Dayr al-Zawr and Aleppo, has been cut completely, while other areas, such as the city of Hasakah, have been isolated from the main network and are being supplied locally in separate pockets.

3. Damage to the distribution network (approximately $1 billion):

- Thousands of kilometres of medium and low-voltage transmission network power lines (20 kV and 0.4 kV) have been vandalized and stolen. About 12,000 substations have been looted and vandalized.
- Electrical material and equipment, such as cables and transformers, have been stolen from warehouses, and electricity metres have been incinerated.

4. Collateral damage:

- In addition to the aforementioned terrorist attacks, which have left about half of the electrical system in Syria out of commission, the natural gas pipelines and railways that transport the fuel needed to run power plants have been attacked.
- As a result of those attacks, electric power production in State-run power plants fell from 43 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) in 2010 to a low of 17.6 billion kWh in 2016. The Ministry of Electricity has thus been forced to resort to rationing in the governorates, with power outages of up to 16 hours a day in some cases.
- The failure to supply electricity to industry and the services sector has caused the national economy financial losses. Indirect losses, including lost profit, arising from power outages caused by sabotage operations were estimated at $70 billion by the end of 2019. That calculation is based on a value of US$1 per kWh, without service costs.