Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

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Thank you very much and let me begin, Mr President, Amr, with warm congratulations and thanks for a very successful Presidency to you and to your whole team. Once again it has been a busy month and so I am glad that you have made time for this wrap up session, so that we can capture the lessons learnt from the past few weeks, and share them transparently in this open session. I very much agree with our colleagues from Uruguay and Spain who said that it would be even more effective if the session were to be interactive and informal.

In keeping with the useful concept note that you circulated, I will focus on three points today – the Council's visit to Somalia, the situation in Syria, and our work on the next Secretary-General. I believe that all three are examples of the need for us to take an action-orientated approach so that we exert pressure and make a real difference in the world, and foster progress in a way that goes beyond our usual business of passing resolutions and adopting products.

Let me take each briefly in turn. Our visit to Somalia formed part of a good month for cooperation with regional bodies, joining the visits from both the African Union and the European Union Peace and Security Committees to New York. These are important, load-bearing relationships that we must continue to invest in and continue to strengthen for the future.

But the visit to Somalia also demonstrated something else. It reaffirmed that Security Council trips to countries on our agenda can have a positive, tangible influence. It reaffirmed that we speak with a powerful voice when we are united and when we urge progress in the name of peace and security. As our Japanese colleague just said, we saw this when the Somali President approved the electoral model to be used in this year's crucial elections shortly after our departure. In doing so, he overcame an important hurdle to the democratic, representative future that the people of Somalia so urgently deserve. So I encourage future Presidencies to mirror the example set by you Mr President and arrange more visits to countries on our agenda.

If Somalia shows how we've got it right this month, sadly Syria typifies the opposite. Following the powerful debate on health workers in armed conflict, it was right that the

Council met to discuss the deteriorating situation in Aleppo. In doing so, we helped contribute to the public pressure that brought about, eventually, a recommitment to the cessation of hostilities. But even this simple act was far too difficult to achieve. Even as Aleppo burned, this Council took too long to agree to hold a simple meeting.

Actions outside this chamber speak louder than the words within it. Actions like removing medicine from convoys… like stopping urgent medical evacuations from besieged areas … like denying basic aid to those most in need. These are the actions of the Syrian regime, and they are deafening in comparison to the words of this Council. So our response must not be limited to calling another meeting, it can't be even more words.

That's why we fully support the call in the International Syria Support Group for air drops to besieged areas, should access not be granted via land by tomorrow. That deadline is looming fast. Should the regime continue to stop aid reaching those who need it, we must all work to turn the ISSG's pledge into action.

My final point, Mr President, is on our work on the next Secretary-General. I want to pay tribute to you for beginning informal discussions on how the Council will conduct this vital selection process. The General Assembly hearings have set a high bar for us to follow. There is huge expectation both inside and outside this building. So I look forward to a Council process that builds on the excellent work of the General Assembly in the hearings last month and no doubt, next month too.

In doing so, I believe we will build on the steps taken this month towards fostering a more open and more responsive Security Council. This hasn't been about votes or negotiations or discussions, but about showing that we are in the business of getting things done. I look forward to our efforts continuing, both under the French Presidency, Francois, and in Presidencies to come.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/these-are-the-actions-of-the-syrian-regime-and-they-are-deafening-in-comparison-to-the-words-of-this-council