

Urging the Syrian regime to put the Syrian people ahead of its own survival

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We thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Emergency Relief Coordinator Griffiths for their briefing today and Ms Albarouki for her statement.

Mr President, the past month has seen a worrying increase in incidents of deadly violence in Syria. In particular, we note with concern the 20 October rocket attack on residential areas of Ariha city, southern Idlib by regime forces which reportedly killed 13 people, including several schoolchildren, and wounded 30 others. The UK notes with concern the bomb attack on a military bus in Damascus on the same day, which reportedly led to the death of 14 people. The UK condemns both these attacks.

We reiterate our condemnation of any and all acts of terrorism committed wherever, whenever and by whomsoever, and reaffirm our demand that all parties in Syria immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects, and any indiscriminate use of weapons. We express our condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims of these and other attacks and wish the injured a speedy and full recovery.

Against the background of this apparent steady increase in the level and nature of violence in Syria, we last month expressed hope for substantive progress on the resolution 2254 political process, particularly in the 6th round of Constitutional Committee talks this month. We thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his tireless work in facilitating the talks in Geneva. After 2 years of meetings, there were some signs of limited progress. But we share the disappointment that despite Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts, the parties failed to reach consensus on next steps, including drafting a new constitution or agreeing a date for the next round of talks, and in this sense fell short. We hope to see genuine preparation on the constitutional reform process soon.

A political solution pursuant to resolution 2254 remains the only clear path out of the conflict in Syria. In the absence of substantive progress towards a sustainable end to the conflict, the UK reaffirms its position that we will not provide funding for reconstruction.

In the meantime, the UK remains committed to doing what it can to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. This includes restricting the resources available to those seeking to perpetuate or profit from the conflict, and to provide what assistance we can to Syrians facing one of the direst humanitarian situations in the world.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the UK has committed over \$5 billion in humanitarian aid to Syrians. In 2020-2021 alone, the UK has provided over \$2 million dollars' worth of food, clean water, medical consultations, education, and over 200,000 vaccines. Helping the most vulnerable in Syria using every possible route remains a priority. Recent cross-line missions have demonstrated the challenges of securing consistent and safe cross-line aid access into north west Syria, and so cross-border aid delivery remains the most effective and safest means of delivery. We welcome the development of a six month plan for a cross-line assistance to explore in more detail the potential for increased cross-line access. We extend our thanks to partners including Turkey. Without their collaboration, cross-line pilot missions could not have taken place.

Mr President, in addition to providing direct lifesaving assistance, the UK recognises the importance of humanitarian assistance providing sustainable solutions to meet people's needs, through strengthening resilience, restoring capacity, and catalysing recovery from a crisis. This is otherwise known as "early recovery". To date in Syria, the UK's early recovery work has included cash assistance to vulnerable households, inputs for agricultural and livestock production, and basic housing repair support among others. In north east Syria the UK has supported over 5,500 people with cash-for-work interventions, and over 53,000 people through business development interventions.

Mr President, we regret that until the Syrian regime puts the Syrian people ahead of its own survival and genuinely commits to making progress on the political process endorsed by this Council in resolution 2254, this support will never be enough. We once again urge them to work in good faith with the UN and the Special Envoy to create a truly sustainable peaceful future for Syria and Syrians.

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