Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"Only an outcome on the political track will provide a lasting solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria"

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Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2139 on Syria. Today, the Council finally shown that, whatever their political differences over Syria, it was not entirely indifferent to the devastating humanitarian crisis. We applaud the efforts of Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg in leading the negotiation process.

It has been nearly 3 years now since the Syrian people bravely stood up to demand their legitimate and universal rights. Since then, Assad has waged a brutal war against his own people. He is responsible for the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world and some of the worst human rights abuses in the world.

Four and a half months ago, the Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement which was designed to alleviate the humanitarian impact of this conflict. The Council urged all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to take a number of specific steps to improve access and to protect civilians.

But not only has the Statement been roundly ignored by the Syrian regime, but the situation has got drastically worse.

My Russian colleague suggests that there has been humanitarian progress. The reality on the ground tells an entirely different story.

There are now 9.3 million people in need, a rise of more than one-third since 2 October.

Over the same period, the number of internally displaced has risen by 50 percent to 6.5 million people.

And an estimated 140,000 people have been killed since the crisis began an increase of 40% since six months ago.

Last week, Valerie Amos came to the Council and laid bare the scale of this humanitarian crisis. She called on the Council to take urgent action to improve the reach of humanitarian organisations. Today, this Council has answered that call.

We hope that the adoption of Resolution 2139 will lead to action on the ground which brings some relief to the millions of Syrians in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

The resolution demands that the Syrian regime lift the siege in besieged areas, end the abhorrent and indiscriminate use of barrel bombs in populated areas, and allow the UN and its partners to deliver aid across borders.

The Syrian regime must immediately comply with these demands. Just to cite one example, more than 1 million people in the most extreme need would immediately benefit from UN aid delivered across borders.

The Security Council will review the humanitarian situation every 30 days. And, as the resolution makes clear, we fully intend to take further steps if the demands set out in this resolution are ignored.

Madam President

Although this resolution is an important step forward, we know that only an outcome on the political track will provide a lasting solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The United Kingdom will intensify its support, with our allies, for the Geneva II process, to bring about a political settlement of the conflict in Syria. The international community must apply the same sense of unity in support of the Geneva II negotiations that is shown today.

Madam President,

The message to the Syrian regime is clear: end the killing of your own people; stop the aerial bombardment, in particular barrel bombs; lift the sieges; and allow humanitarian aid to reach those in desperate need.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/only-an-outcome-on-the-political-track-will-provide-a-lasting-solution-to-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-syria