



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, and by human rights lawyer and activist Noura Ghazi, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on the situation in the Middle East (Syria) convened on Tuesday, 16 June 2020. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Nicolas de Rivière**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen**

Last month, I told the Council how struck I was by the depth of concern among ordinary Syrians at the current state and future of their beloved country (see S/2020/420). A month on, I have heard those messages even louder, including in continued consultations with Syrians participating in the Civil Society Support Room and with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board. I have heard many of the appeals the Council members are familiar with — a thirst for progress on the political process pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015), for an end to all violence and terrorism, for a nationwide ceasefire, for action on detainees, abductees and missing persons and for progress in creating conditions for Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner.

I heard a new level of alarm at the dramatic collapse in economic conditions throughout the country. It is easy to understand why. In the course of just one week during the reporting period, the Syrian lira's market rate depreciated more than in the entire nine years prior, before rallying somewhat. But currency and price volatility remain acute, and the inflation rate has hit peak levels in the past six months. The economic crisis is hitting every part of Syria, regardless of territorial control: from Damascus and the south-west to Aleppo, the north-west and the north-east. Medicine is scarce and more expensive. Food prices have skyrocketed and supply chains have been disrupted. The purchasing power of ordinary Syrians has seriously diminished as wages — in both the private and public sectors — are vastly inadequate to meet the demands of the day.

Before this recent deterioration, over 80 per cent of Syrians were estimated to be living below the poverty line. The situation is undoubtedly more severe today, and the intensity of that poverty is likely more acute. The World Food Programme (WFP) now estimates that some 9.3 million people are food insecure, with over 2 million more at risk, a rise of some 42 per cent in the past year. As WFP Executive Director David Beasley recently warned: if this situation deteriorates, "famine could well be knocking on [the] door". Syrian women — the primary breadwinners in many families — are disproportionately affected, forced to shoulder caretaking responsibilities while financially supporting the household. Many women, including those in refugee communities, are facing higher risks of exploitation and abuse as they struggle to provide for the day-to-day needs of their families.

In recent weeks, we have seen many Syrians begin to express new fears, even panic in some quarters. We have heard of shops and pharmacies forced to close, unable to cope with the recent volatility, of jobs being lost, of remittances drying up. In some areas of north-western Syria, reports have emerged of locals increasingly using foreign currencies.

The decade-long conflict in Syria has wrought destruction on Syria's people, its environment, its infrastructure and the very fabric of its society — the bonds of trust that underpin any economy. Syria's economic governance has also been characterized by recurrent fiscal and monetary mismanagement and corruption. In recent months, new factors have joined those underlying structural problems, pushing the economy to the brink. The banking crisis in next-door Lebanon has had a significant impact. The repercussions all societies and economies have experienced from measures to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have also played their part.

Another factor in this context is significant sanctions by the United States and the European Union. They target individuals and entities affiliated with the

Government and restrict activity in the financial, banking, oil and gas, and military sectors, as well as exports and multilateral lending to and investments in Syria. Further secondary sanctions by the United States, which have been foreshadowed since the passage of legislation six months ago, will begin entering into force as early as tomorrow and are aimed at deterring foreign business activity with the Syrian Government.

Against that backdrop, we have seen some Syrians take peacefully to the streets in a few areas in recent weeks, such as Al-Suwayda, Dara and Idlib, protesting a range of grievances. Moreover, in Syria's south-west, what was set to be a major violent confrontation, centred around the town of Tafas, has been averted for now with the assistance of Russian mediation. However, we are concerned that there have since been further security incidents and tensions that might result in a renewed escalation of violence. It is an area where there are broader geopolitical tensions that appear to be growing more acute. I further note that this month again saw reports of Israeli air strikes inside Syria. Southern Syria is also an area where Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) cells appear to remain active.

Meanwhile, in the north-west, the calm brought about by Russia and Turkey is, by and large, holding. However, we have seen worrying signs: increased mutual shelling, reports of reinforcements on both sides, the first reported pro-Government air strikes in three months and reports of new civilian displacement. Last week, the extremist Wa-Harid Al-Mu'minin Operations Room launched another cross-line attack that resulted in the death of several Syrian soldiers. Two of its leaders were subsequently killed in a drone strike by the United States on 14 June. It and other small extremist factions have now formed a new operations room — a likely harbinger for future attacks. I have been assured by both Russia and Turkey that they are working to contain the situation and sustain the calm and I note there has been further progress in Russian-Turkish cooperation on the work of joint patrols on the ground.

I continue to appeal for calm to be sustained in Idlib and elsewhere and for a nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). I underscore the importance of addressing the challenge posed by listed terrorist groups through a cooperative, targeted and effective approach that safeguards stability, protects civilians and fully respects international humanitarian law. The same is true regarding efforts to prevent ISIL's resurgence, whose attacks have continued in and around the central desert.

I am ready to convene and facilitate a third session of the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned Constitutional Committee. Conscious that global travel restrictions remain in place, I am hopeful that a session in Geneva may be possible towards the end of August.

However, the realities facing the Syrian people obviously cannot be addressed solely by discussing the Constitution, and the Syrian parties will face great difficulties in resolving Syria's problems without real diplomacy among the key international players with influence. After all, there are still five international armies operating across the country and active measures by many countries with respect to Syria.

There are real and substantive differences among those international players, as there are among the Syrian parties. Indeed, we have seen the depth of these differences in debates regarding sanctions in recent weeks, and we continue to see it in competing assessments regarding the political will of different actors to work to resolve the conflict. These issues are not going to be resolved by positioning. They need to be the subject of real discussion and diplomacy. Unlocking progress will need mutual and reciprocal steps, on the basis of clear understandings, by the Syrian parties and by international partners. I am convinced that there are common interests

on which to build such a diplomacy, and there is a common stated commitment to advancing resolution 2254 (2015) and supporting the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated Geneva political process.

At this critical time, let me also reiterate the Secretary-General's emphasis on the importance of full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access, using all modalities, including scaled-up cross-line and cross-border access. Humanitarian access remains imperative given not only the increasing suffering of the Syrian people, but also the fact that there is still a risk from the COVID-19 pandemic. Syria has now reported 183 cases in total.

Meanwhile, I reiterate my appeal for the Syrian Government and all other Syrian parties to carry out large-scale and unilateral releases of detainees and abductees, especially women, children, the elderly and the sick, and for more meaningful actions on missing persons. The COVID-19 pandemic is still a risk, and it should serve as an extra impetus for such action, as it has in other countries.

Syria is going through a time of great flux. Nobody involved in the conflict should presume that time is on their side. Nobody should be sure that there will be better openings down the road. What is required is the readiness of all to deal seriously with the realities of the conflict. Guided by resolution 2254 (2015), I will continue to work with the Syrian parties and all international stakeholders to facilitate a way forward that addresses all aspects and outcomes of the conflict, restores the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, ends the acute suffering of the Syrian people and enables them to shape their own future.

Annex II

Statement by human rights lawyer and activist Noura Ghazi Safadi

I was very confused when the French presidency of the Security Council kindly invited me to attend this meeting because how, in 10 minutes, can I describe the suffering of a people and a country that has continued for almost 10 years now?

I am definitely very proud to address the Security Council. My life is now passing in front of me like a short film, showing all the deprivation and loss I have suffered as a result of my resistance to tyranny and injustice. But, at the same time, I feel that I am facing a difficult test before the eyes of the world. Will my presence really constitute a contribution to finding a solution to the issue of detainees and the forcibly disappeared in Syria? Or will I be used as a tool to highlight the human face of the international community, which, unfortunately, has always failed to advocate just humanitarian issues?

During my childhood and adolescence I was brought up on the stories of the struggle of peoples around the globe — in Africa, Latin America and the Arab world — on behalf of issues of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention that resulted from authoritarian and racist practices.

I am not here to talk about myself or my suffering as a daughter and as a wife. I do not have any personal attitude towards anyone or any party despite all my suffering and the heavy price I have paid in my personal and professional life, because hatred has no place in human rights work. This is what our opponents do not understand. Today I am trying to summarize in my briefing the story of a homeland and to address in my words an ethical and humanitarian issue that is certainly historical.

Right here and now, I am talking about the suffering of tens of thousands of families of missing, forcibly disappeared and detained persons, in particular women, in this geographical area closest to my heart, namely, Syria. I specify women for many reasons, the most important of which probably is that they are the direct victims of these flagrant violations of human rights with the enforced disappearance of their male loved ones in the most horrific ways.

Of course, this does not make me exclude women themselves as detainees, forcibly disappeared or missing. But, as members know, most of those who have disappeared or been arrested are men. This has left women on their own, struggling with all the hardships of life and feelings of loss alone, taking care of their families alone and fighting for this country and to know the truth about the absence of their loved ones alone.

We Syrian women struggle to know the fate of our loved ones and to demand justice for them, for us and for our country. We have established many family associations, and I am proud to be a founding member of one of them — the Families for Freedom movement.

I am also proud that, together with my team in the NoPhotoZone organization, which I direct, I have succeeded in not discriminating against the families of detainees and the forcibly disappeared on any political basis or on the basis of the party that arrested or hid their loved ones. Rather, we gathered hundreds of such families despite everyone who wanted to separate us. Pain, suffering and purpose unite us. We want our loved ones. We want justice, and beginning to know the truth will lead us to it.

Perhaps the most prominent reason that causes our suffering to continue is the absence of the international political will to stop it.

According to many international organizations, there have been tens of thousands of detainees, forcibly disappeared and missing persons in Syria since the outbreak of the protests started in March 2011. One of our priority demands in those protests was to release the detainees, but the result was that we were met with killings and arrests. Violence has led to more violence throughout Syria until we have now become unable to count the number of our victims and the names of our opponents who violate our rights every day.

Detention, enforced disappearance and torture are being committed by many parties, but the world views the conflict in Syria as a war between a dictatorial regime and extremist factions, turning a blind eye to our existence as non-violent activists who reject everyone who commits violence and injustice by means of our non-violent resistance.

There are thousands of innocent women and children in detention centres, hundreds of mothers arrested with their children and children born inside detention centres. All those arrested were accused of being terrorists even though they are faultless except for the fact that they rejected injustice. Possibly they did not participate in any act against the authorities but were arrested simply because they belonged to regions that enraged these authorities or as hostages owing to the activism of relatives opposed to the regime. Does anyone here believe that there is a political system that hates and get angry at a certain region? I kindly ask Council members to review the development indicators in Syria before 2011.

Allow me to express my rejection, and that of those I represent, of all prisoner-exchange deals that take place between the fighting parties, none of which we belong to. Our detainees are not prisoners of war; they are arbitrarily detained persons, and the central Government uses them as leverage and to make gains. For us, prisoner-exchange deals are nothing but blackmail. We want a radical, comprehensive and fair solution for all the detainees and disappeared in Syria, not only for some of them.

Today I am talking about violations of laws by the Syrian regime, not only international laws but also Syrian ones, foremost among them the current Syrian Constitution. I defend the Syrian law itself against all those who violate it, or break it, and despise it. Are not the exceptional courts, particularly the military field court and the terrorism court, a violation of the principles of a fair trial stipulated in Syrian and international law? Are not summary executions a flagrant violation of human and prisoners' rights? Is not torture really a crime in all laws and under all circumstances?

There are daily examples of the violation of the Syrian Constitution by those who promote that they are its guardians. We are the protectors of the Constitution. We do not have a military force; our weapon is the law, and our opponent violates the law.

Is it not obvious to the world who violate laws in Syria? Imagine the death of a loved one; imagine how to prepare for a grand funeral for his farewell, wearing the most beautiful clothes, conducting a condolence ceremony and putting the most beautiful flowers on his grave. We are deprived of this in Syria. We want graves for our loved ones; we want to live the mourning process, as every human being on this Earth is entitled to, and we want to close our open wounds.

I hope to convey here everything that I have done for the issues of the detainees and the disappeared. I bring messages to the Council from hundreds of women whom I represent. Those women demand that the fate of their loved ones be revealed where a death certificate, as a document containing a date and a fictitious cause of death, is not sufficient for them.

I say to all that the whole world is united in its fear of the coronavirus disease. At the very least, why do we not unite around the will to take the decision to protect detainees in Syrian prisons from this virus, which places them at double risk? Our demands are simple and clear to the world. We Syrians want the application of laws and accountability for those who violate them and call us traitors because of our demands. Should we have to submit to injustice and tyranny in order not to be called traitors?

I am not a traitor and I am not submissive. I belong to Syria — the land, the people and the State, like other Syrians. Yes, I belong to a State — the State that the Syrian regime violates through unfair practices towards all of its legislative, judicial and executive authorities and that is defined by the Constitution as the people, the land and the authority. How can I be against my State? I believe that because of my love for the State, I contend with the regime that robbed the authorities of their independence and subjected the people and the land to it.

We are a people who belong to our State, who protect it and who defend it against a security and political system that robs the country every day.

Forgive me, but I cannot end without saying what my heart is urging me to mention, which is the peaceful protests in Suwayda, southern Syria, and the arrest by the Syrian authorities during yesterday's protest of 10 activists who belong to a minority that the regime claims to protect; it cannot accuse them of being terrorists, and it knows the reason.

Finally, I hope that I have succeeded in communicating my message to the world — a message for which I will always be ready to pay the highest price. I thank members for taking the time to hear me out, and my thanks again to the French presidency of the Security Council for inviting me. May we all have a free and fair world.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve**

We would like to start by thanking the Special Envoy for his briefing, as well as Ms. Ghazi for her intervention and powerful testimony. We continue to support the Special Envoy's call for a nationwide ceasefire, for large-scale releases of detainees and for the need for full humanitarian access.

We welcome the relative calm in the north-west of the country since the Russian-Turkish ceasefire arrangement at the beginning of March. However, recent Russian air strikes and Syrian artillery illustrate the fragility of the situation. The risks for hundreds of thousands of vulnerable civilians in this region are enormous. We urge all parties to refrain from violence, reduce tension and exercise maximum restraint. The United Nations should play a central role in the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, as well as in its monitoring.

The war in Syria has now raged for over nine years. We have said it before so many times, and I repeat it today again — there is no military solution to this war. Meanwhile, the devastating effects of the economic collapse brought about by years of mismanagement and corruption are reverberating ever wider throughout Syria. The recent protests unfolding in Suwayda and elsewhere are a mere symptom of a far greater crisis striking at the heart of Damascus.

Nine years of violence and brutal suppression have not led to the results the Syrian authorities had hoped for; instead, they have left the country in a shambles. Only a political solution can break the cycle of violence and put Syria back on track.

The Constitutional Committee and the wider political process should urgently be reinvigorated, and we fully support the Special Envoy's efforts as an important contribution to the United Nations-facilitated political process mandated by resolution 2254 (2015), and we urge those Member States with influence over Damascus to use it urgently. Furthermore, any elections, including parliamentary elections, should be fair, transparent and open to the members of the Syrian diaspora, in order to constitute one step on the path to such a political solution.

On the issue of political prisoners and missing persons, so far hardly any progress has been made. It is high time for Damascus to move beyond one-for-one prisoner exchanges and to release prisoners and information as an important confidence-building measure.

More than ever before, full humanitarian access must be ensured. Belgium, as humanitarian co-penholder together with Germany, will continue its work towards the renewal of resolution 2165 (2014), concerning cross-border assistance. We urge all Council members to be fully aware of the common responsibility we bear on this topic. We must shoulder this work together, guided solely by the humanitarian interests of Syrian men, women and children.

At the end of this month, the fourth Brussels conference will take place. The European Union (EU) and its member States are the most important humanitarian donor for Syria, having contributed over €17 billion since the beginning of this Syrian war. Yet, until this war is over and a political solution is well under way, we reconfirm our position that the EU will not fund reconstruction.

To conclude, let me say a few words about sanctions. The EU sanctions are targeted at those responsible for ordering or carrying out attacks and torture against their own people, making or using chemical weapons, or building their personal fortune on the war economy. They are carefully crafted to avoid any adverse humanitarian effects or unintended consequences for persons who are not targeted.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

Let me join colleagues in thanking Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. We appreciate his continued efforts under challenging circumstances. I also take note of the remarks by Ms. Ghazi.

Concerning the Syrian issue, it is China's consistent position to support the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. The urgency of finding a political solution to the issue is further highlighted in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We understand that COVID-19 has caused additional difficulties for the process. Meanwhile, it is our firm belief that the political process should not stop under any circumstances. We encourage the Special Envoy to make every effort to promote substantive political dialogue and enhance mutual trust among the parties concerned. We are glad to hear that Constitutional Committee will hold its third round of meetings before the end of August and we are looking forward to more progress at that round of consultations.

We also hope the ceasefire appeals by the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy will meet with positive responses. Facing a window of opportunity to promote inclusive dialogue and a political solution, we cannot overstate the importance of the need for the Syrian parties to strengthen consultation within the Constitutional Committee and engage constructively with the Special Envoy. Other relevant parties should also play a positive role in jointly addressing the challenges facing the Syrian people.

With regard to the pandemic issue, we note that there are new confirmed cases in Syria. The Syrian Government is taking effective measures to fight against COVID-19. Meanwhile, the international community should intensify cooperation with the people and Government of Syria in combating the virus. China donated medical supplies to the Syrian Ministry of Health earlier this month, and we are ready to continue offering our support and help. At this difficult time, it is imperative that the international community, United Nations agencies and countries of the region cooperate with the Syrian Government in the fight against COVID-19 and ease the suffering of Syrian people.

We are deeply concerned by recent reports on the economic situation in Syria. Years of economic blockade have caused tremendous hardships for the Syrian people — in particular, for women and children. The suffering caused by the devaluation of Syrian currency and soaring commodity prices, including for food, falls heavily on civilians across the country. We have heard briefings by the Special Envoy on the poverty and possible famine in the country, and are extremely concerned. We urge the United States to respond actively to the urgent appeals of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy and lift unilateral sanctions immediately.

What is even more worrying is that new rounds of sanctions will be imposed against Syria. These sanctions will inevitably further hinder the economic and social development of Syria, as well as the livelihoods of ordinary Syrians. As vulnerable countries like Syria are struggling with the pandemic, imposing more sanctions is simply inhumane, and may cause additional catastrophes. The United Nations, and especially the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, should pay greater attention to the negative impact of sanctions on the humanitarian conditions of the Syrian people. Some countries are talking about human rights. If they do indeed care about the human rights of the Syrian people, they should take real actions to respond to the appeals of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys on the issue of sanctions.

We should recognize and acknowledge that relevant parties are making great efforts to maintain a ceasefire and promote stability in Syria. Meanwhile, the international community should remain alert to the fact that terrorists are seeking to take advantage of the current situation, and not allow them to do so. The Security Council should attach importance to this issue and support the Special Envoy's call for effective, cooperative and targeted counter-terrorism efforts. We also call on relevant parties to launch negotiations and take actions on counter-terrorism.

The future of Syria must be decided by the Syrians, without foreign interference. It is fundamental to respect and uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. China will continue to support the good offices of the Special Envoy in fulfilling his mandate, endorsed in resolution 2254 (2015).

Annex V**Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger**

I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing.

I would also like to thank Ms. Noura Ghazi for lending her voice to the families of the thousands of Syrians that have gone missing over years of conflict. Whether their loved ones are detained or dead, families have the right to know their whereabouts.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic can be both a challenge of potentially unprecedented scale for the Syrian people and an opportunity to enhance our solidarity with the most vulnerable.

A year ago, the Security Council was united in adopting resolution 2474 (2019), on missing persons in armed conflict. With it, the Council underscored that the steps set out therein could “contribute to the process of confidence building between parties to armed conflict”. In the Syrian context, with more than 90,000 people reportedly having gone missing since the start of the conflict, achieving more progress on the humanitarian release of detainees could be the first step in a national trust-building effort that could eventually constitute the cornerstone of a broader process whereby Syrians achieve reconciliation.

We must advocate tirelessly for the promotion of truth, justice and accountability and the fight against impunity, so that those responsible pay the price of their acts. The Security Council therefore has the responsibility to continue to demand greater meaningful action on the release of detainees and the provision of information about the missing to their families.

The deteriorating living conditions of Syrians are a source of great concern for the Dominican Republic. The convergence of a humanitarian crisis, an economic crisis and a potential public-health crisis is undermining the capacity of the people to cope and seriously impacting their resilience.

Adding to the list of concerns is the worrying signs of resurgence and regrouping in the region of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. They are again attacking civilians and security forces and terrorizing farmers by destroying their livelihoods and infrastructure.

All these conditions reiterate the pressing need to continue to push for a definitive and sustainable political solution to the conflict. I say it again: a political solution — one that helps Syrians rebuild and relaunch their country based on the rule of law and on peace and security for all its citizens, in fairness and equality.

To conclude, the Dominican Republic reiterates the following several points. A lasting national ceasefire is necessary — all parties, and those who support them, must commit to this, and allow the suffering population, particularly in the north-west, some sense of security.

It is important to facilitate safe and unimpeded access to serve all those in need, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the persistence of pressing needs all across the country.

There is no military solution to this conflict, only one based on a negotiated settlement led and owned by the Syrians and facilitated by the United Nations, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015).

The Constitutional Committee can indeed be a door opener for a broader political process. Therefore, parties need to continue their consultations as soon as the conditions are in place to do so.

Finally, the Government of Syria needs to show credible and renewed commitment to the broad political process with words and with actions, and, building on that commitment, create the conditions for free and fair elections next year. The opportunity is now in the Government's hands to move forward and meet the aspirations of the people of Syria, including those living as refugees.

A sustainable solution to this conflict will only emerge from the determined commitment of all parties to the peace and prosperity of the Syrian people as their main objective.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Noura Ghazi for their briefings.

Looking at north-western Syria, we express growing concern about the recent ceasefire violations and military build-up of the Syrian army around Idlib. In order to avoid civilian casualties and another wave of mass displacement, preventing military escalation must remain the Council's priority. Continued fighting in the Idlib area may also accelerate the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), as it limits the work of humanitarian aid organizations.

It is unfortunate that we are hearing of few new developments in the political process. We call on the parties to set a date for the meeting of the Constitutional Committee as soon as possible.

We reiterate the need to implement resolution 2254 (2015). The plan of the Syrian regime to hold parliamentary elections in July is in clear violation of the road map set out in that resolution. A credible and inclusive political process must be in place before any such actions.

As Ms. Ghazi described, an important step towards national reconciliation is solving the situation of detainees in Syria. We call on the Syrian Government to abide by the international human rights law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2139 (2014), and to release immediately all arbitrarily detained persons, particularly women and children. Forced disappearances must stop. Unfortunately, past announcements of general amnesties have not led to any significant releases of arbitrarily detained Syrians.

We remind the Syrian Government and its allies that the European Union (EU) will not provide aid to Syria's reconstruction before a genuine political process is in place. I would also like to stress that the current economic crisis in Syria is not the outcome of international sanctions, but rather a result of widespread corruption and lack of good governance. The difficult economic situation in neighbouring Lebanon also greatly affects Syria.

Finally, these points will be repeated in two weeks during the fourth Brussels Conference to support the future of Syria, convened by the EU. We welcome the inspiring video-teleconference on accountability for crimes committed in Syria, held by the EU within the framework of that Conference on 8 June in Geneva. Participants included EU member States; human rights activists; the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, and others trying to shed light on Syrian rights violations and bring perpetrators to justice. The Security Council should also consider this kind of holistic approach to accountability.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Ghazi for their presentations.

More than 100,000 people in Syria today are imprisoned in the regime's jails. The latest amnesty announced by the regime cannot be taken seriously.

The lack of progress on the issue of the disappeared persons also remains one of the main sources of suffering for the Syrian people.

The Council must unite in response to the Special Envoy's call to release prisoners and facilitate access to detention centres. It is urgent to move beyond the current prisoner-exchange logic. The time has come to work on a broader political process that meets the expectations of Syrian civil society.

The paralysis in the work of the Constitutional Committee eight months after its creation is appalling. After months of obstruction, for which the regime bears sole responsibility, it is urgent that discussions with the Special Envoy resume to prepare for a meeting in Geneva as soon as possible. The regime's repression of protests in the south of the country in recent weeks also clearly shows that it continues to propose repressive solutions to political problems.

In the face of instability and the coronavirus disease, the priority must be to establish a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire under United Nations supervision, in response to the appeal made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy.

In the north-west, the Russian-Turkish truce agreement remains fragile. The fight against terrorist groups cannot justify the resumption of an offensive by the regime and its allies or violations of international law. In both the north-west and north-east, humanitarian aid must reach people in need. In that context, the cross-border mechanism remains irreplaceable.

France will continue, along with its partners, to combat the resurgence of Da'esh in the centre of the country.

Finally, the instability and serious economic crisis in Syria underscores the urgency of finding a political solution. The economic crisis in Syria is the result of chronic corruption and of the regime's refusal to compromise. The European sanctions are focused on individuals and entities that participate in the repression and profit from the war economy. Sanctions also have mechanisms to safeguard humanitarian access. The European Union is among the main contributors of humanitarian assistance, including in the regime-controlled areas.

Because it is the only way to bring back stability, I call on the Special Envoy to work on a political process that encompasses all elements of resolution 2254 (2015): the implementation of confidence-building measures to create a secure and neutral environment, and preparations for free and fair elections under United Nations supervision in which the Syrian diaspora participates. Elections that do not meet the criteria set out in resolution 2254 (2015) can in no way be recognized as legitimate by the Council.

Finally, as long as a credible political process is not firmly under way, France and the European Union will not finance reconstruction in Syria.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

We are concerned by reports of renewed violence in north-western Syria, in particular attacks by terrorist groups on the one side and airstrikes and shelling by the Syrian regime and Russia on the other side. We strongly warn the Syrian regime and Russia against a new military offensive in and around Idlib and the humanitarian implications thereof.

A new military offensive would only result in civilian casualties, mass displacements and a humanitarian catastrophe. A repetition of what we have seen earlier this year under the pretext of fighting terrorist groups would be absolutely unacceptable. We therefore urge all parties, in particular the Syrian regime and Russia, to uphold and fully adhere to the 5 March ceasefire agreement.

We continue to fully support the call of Special Envoy Pedersen for a complete, immediate nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria and stress the central role of the United Nations in reaching such a genuine and sustainable nationwide ceasefire in line with resolution 2254 (2015). This call is all the more important given the fragile security situation, including in the south.

The economic and financial situation in Syria has further deteriorated in the past weeks. The responsibility for the economic and financial crisis and the suffering of the Syrian people lies squarely with the Syrian regime. It is the regime of Bashar Al-Assad that has been waging a war against its own people since 2011 and continues to do so.

At the same time, the Syrian regime is trying to blame others by claiming that the current situation in Syria is the result of sanctions or lack of reconstruction assistance. That is not only a plain lie; it is also cynical. As the Syrian regime appears to find it increasingly difficult to pay off its supporters, it is looking for scapegoats to deflect from its own drastic failure.

Since 2011, the European Union (EU) and its member States have mobilized more than €20 billion in humanitarian aid and stabilization assistance. Germany alone has provided €8.1 billion in assistance since 2012, and in 2020 will again be providing around €600 million in humanitarian aid for Syria and its neighbouring countries.

On 30 June, the European Union and the United Nations will co-chair the fourth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. The Conference will again provide the international community with an opportunity to join forces to mobilize the necessary financial support for those affected by the Syrian conflict both in Syria and in neighbouring countries.

The EU and its member States are currently doing a great deal to help Syria. We are helping the Syrian people, but not the Syrian regime.

There is a way out of the Syrian crisis: a political process under the auspices of the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Once a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition is firmly under way, Germany and the EU will assist in the reconstruction of Syria. And when the Syrian regime changes its brutal behaviour and ends its grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, there will also be a lifting of EU sanctions. So if the Syrian regime really cares about the fate of the country and the Syrian people and not only about its own survival, it must finally end its obstruction and start engaging seriously and constructively in the

Constitutional Committee, the broader political process and the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

As Russia maintains its claim to be interested in a political solution, we call upon it to finally use its influence over Damascus in that regard.

Resolution 2254 (2015) calls for the release of arbitrarily detained persons, particularly women and children. The issue of detainees and missing persons remains a very sad and at the same time important issue, and we thank Noura Ghazi for her briefing today.

Since the Council meeting held in August 2019 (see S/PV.8593), there has been no meaningful progress on the situation of detainees, abductees and missing persons despite the commendable efforts and the active engagement of Special Envoy Pedersen with all parties on that issue. We are convinced that the Council needs to do more in order to support Special Envoy Pedersen and his call for the unconditional, large-scale releases of detainees and abductees and more meaningful action on missing persons.

The Council should call upon the parties, in particular the Syrian regime, which holds the overwhelming majority of detainees, to finally release arbitrarily detained persons on a meaningful scale, starting with elderly people, women and children and those with health conditions.

Furthermore, the Syrian regime must allow immediate, unconditional and unhindered access for the relevant humanitarian organizations to all prisons and detention facilities under its control and ensure adequate medical care and protective measures for all persons in detention.

Finally, the Syrian regime must inform the families of the fate and whereabouts of the tens of thousands of missing persons.

We remain convinced that national reconciliation and sustainable peace in Syria will not be possible without truth, justice and accountability for arbitrarily detained persons and missing persons and for all other crimes and atrocities committed during the Syrian conflict.

Impunity for those responsible for international crimes in Syria cannot be an option. Justice for the victims and for Syria matters if there is to be reconciliation. Accountability will also be one of the key aspects during the fourth Brussels Conference to be held on 30 June.

Annex IX

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Muhsin Syihab

We thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Ms. Noura Ghazi for their briefings.

As mentioned by the Special Envoy, the current situation in Syria is indeed very challenging, with the social and economic impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the prolonged humanitarian situation due to the Syrian crisis.

Clearly, there is no magic bullet that could solve all these challenges overnight. A strong commitment from the Syrian parties to remain engaged in a constructive dialogue is imperative as part of the step-by-step efforts necessary to address the various issues in Syria. Respecting a nationwide ceasefire is key to being able to sustain calm throughout Syria.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the implementation of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, facilitated by the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), and it believes that a broader process should respect and ultimately restore Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

I wish to focus on the following points in particular.

First, the Syrian people need to make tangible progress on the ground, from ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistances to all people in need to enhancing the capacities of laboratories and COVID-19 testing kits, and from maintaining the ceasefire agreement to securing a significant release of detainees, abductees and missing persons. We urge all relevant parties to step up their efforts in this regard.

Secondly, the agreed agenda of the Constitutional Committee must be respected by all Syrian parties. We are pleased that the agenda has been agreed upon and that it will serve as the basis for the next round of Committee meetings, to be held in Geneva once international travel allows. As mentioned by Special Envoy Pedersen, we are also hopeful that the third session will be able to take place at the end of August.

We all are aware that this is only the beginning of the process; however, this is a crucial step in order to advance to the next stage of the political track. Only through constructive and substantive discussions based on trust and confidence among its members will the Committee be able to reach its objectives.

Despite the fact that the problems being faced by the Syrians cannot be addressed solely by this discussion, as highlighted by Special Envoy, we should spare no effort in capitalizing on all of the available positive momentum in order to open up every possible opportunity to end the suffering of the Syrian people.

Thirdly, the international community should work together in helping the Syrian people to survive the dire economic situation. Syria's currency has plunged, and the prices of essential goods are rising. The Syrian people are now facing food insecurity, and major humanitarian needs are increasing across all sectors. COVID-19 mitigation measures are also facing challenges in these particular conditions.

My delegation shares the Secretary-General's call for the waiver of sanctions that could undermine the capacity of countries to ensure access to food, health care and medical supplies in responding to the pandemic. After all, we must not lose faith in humankind.

The risk of escalation in some areas in Syria is high, as reported by the Special Envoy. Indonesia urges all key parties to cease violence and to refrain

from unnecessary actions that would put the Syrian people in an even more dangerous situation.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate my delegation's strong support for Special Envoy Pedersen's good offices in facilitating discussions among the relevant stakeholders aimed at implementing resolution 2254 (2015) and giving peace in Syria a chance.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Noura Ghazi for their insightful presentations. We heard Ms. Ghazi's heartfelt cry of distress.

I would also like to welcome Bashar Ja'afari, Permanent Representative of Syria, who is joining us this morning.

The Niger would like to reaffirm that a solution to the Syrian conflict cannot be pursued by military action alone. While we welcome the decrease in violence since the Turkey/Russia-sponsored ceasefire, we believe that the cessation of hostilities must go in tandem with a revival of the political process. We cannot afford to see the crisis become more and more entrenched and the suffering of innocent and vulnerable population be prolonged. There is an urgent need to make progress on the path to a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

To this respect, allow me to touch upon the following points, which we believe are the cornerstones of an inclusive and lasting solution to this protracted crisis.

First, securing a comprehensive national ceasefire, as called by the Special Envoy and the Secretary-General, is crucial at this time of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which requires all parties to focus on containing and mitigating its impacts on the population, which is already experiencing dire living conditions.

After observing many months of decreased hostilities, we note with concern reports that indicate an escalation in the Jabal Al-Zawiya area of Idlib and in north-western Hama, and we call on all parties to de-escalate.

Secondly, my delegation calls on all stakeholders to return to the negotiation table in good faith. The Niger supports the efforts deployed by the Special Envoy in engaging with the various parties to the Constitutional Committee in a bid to revitalize its work. The United Nations must lend all necessary support to this process while preserving the leadership and ownership of the concerned Syrian parties over the process, in keeping with the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). We call on the Syrian Government in particular to further enhance its engagement with the other parties to the talks.

Thirdly, confidence-building measures on both sides could greatly help overcome mistrust between the negotiating parties in the political process. We therefore echo the call of Special Envoy Pedersen on 18 May that "[l]arge-scale and unilateral releases as well as more meaningful actions on missing persons have never been more necessary" (*S/2020/420, p. 3*). Both sides should show compassion in these unprecedented times by ensuring medical care for all detainees and when providing deserved clarification to the families of missing persons.

Fourthly, the call for a ceasefire and the need for a common and collective effort in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic should not distract us from the fight against terrorism, especially as evidence shows that criminal groups are trying to take advantage of the current health crisis to regroup and resume their activities. The Syrian Government has the right to continue to fight terrorism on its territory. Yet it must be done in compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, especially with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Lastly, we should be aware that given the recent protests fuelled by economic hardship in some southern provinces that had thus far remained stable, a constitution

and the eventual holding of elections will not be a panacea to end the crisis. Economic measures and carefully considered peacebuilding efforts must be crafted and implemented.

On the subject of economic hardship for the Syrian people, we must also keep in mind that often when a conflict is protracted — as we have seen elsewhere — a country's natural resources, which would normally benefit the population, are illegally exploited and looted by various actors during the conflict. We must therefore ensure that a country's people retains sovereignty over their natural resources.

In conclusion, my delegation would like once again to express its appreciations to Mr. Pedersen for his unrelenting efforts in engaging with Syrians stakeholders from all sides, including the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and civil society organizations across Syria and the region. We expect to see the political process resume in earnest as current virus-related restrictions are lifted around the globe.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

We thank Geir Pedersen for his briefing. We listened to Ms. Noura Ghazi. I think that the next time we engage in a political discussion about Syria, it would be fair to invite a representative of Syrian civil society to hear stories of suffering under the yoke of terrorists, foreign occupation and bombings. War is a very cruel thing. Nine years of war brought terrible suffering to all Syrian people, whether abroad or within Syria.

As the Special Envoy informed us, he maintains contact with the Syrian parties with the aim of holding a third meeting of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva as soon as the restrictions caused by the global pandemic allow. Some tentative dates have been proposed, and the Syrian parties demonstrate the will and readiness to engage in dialogue on the basis of the agreed agenda.

We support the Special Envoy's efforts. For our part, we will continue to promote intra-Syrian dialogue both in our national capacity and together with Turkey and Iran within the framework of the Astana format, which has proved its effectiveness. At the same time, we note that this should remain a Syrian-owned and -led process. There must not be any external interference or imposition of foreign agendas.

In general, the ceasefire holds in the Idlib de-escalation zone, where joint Russian-Turkish patrols continue. Nevertheless, terrorists continue their provocative actions and attacks, some of which have killed Turkish troops. My American colleague appealed to Russia and Syria to respect the ceasefire, but I would appeal to her to understand who is violating the ceasefire, as detailed by Geir Pedersen himself.

There was an attempt to seize several settlements, but Syrian Government forces managed to repel those attacks. That once again proves that Idlib is controlled by terrorists. We hope that our Turkish partners will fulfil their obligations to neutralize those elements. At the same time, we will not allow the rebranding of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham into the moderate opposition, as some are promoting.

In recent months, terrorists have intensified their activities in other parts of the country, primarily to the east of Euphrates. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams attacked Kurdish units and militants escaped from prisons. Nothing is being done to improve the situation in the Al-Hol refugee camp, or that of the Al-Tanf area or the Rukban camp. Stability and security in those areas is possible only if the control of legitimate Government is restored. For those who demand that Damascus implement resolution 2254 (2015), we recall its first lines, which reaffirm the "strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic". We propose starting from the beginning and implementing that paragraph first and foremost.

In that regard, we stress the need to find solutions to Syrian problems through inclusive dialogue and to put an end to foreign occupation. That would also help Syrian refugees return to their homes. Their return process has now resumed after having been temporarily suspended due to coronavirus restrictions. The Syrian authorities are taking all the necessary measures to accommodate returnees and prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Attempts to consort with terrorists or to use them for one's own purposes is just one example of how the situation in Syria is politicized. We are convinced that all Security Council meetings on Syria in fact have a political motive because the so-called chemical and humanitarian dossiers have simply become a tool to

pressure Damascus. Invoking the need for humanitarian assistance to Syria, as done by some colleagues when discussing humanitarian access to Government territories and to areas beyond Damascus's control, is one of the clearest examples of political blackmail. We will discuss that issue in the coming days. We were appalled by the attack on the World Food Programme humanitarian convoy in Lebanon, which was intended for Syria. In the Lebanese city of Tripoli, several trucks were attacked and burned by locals due to suspicions that it was smuggling Lebanese goods.

Tomorrow the so-called Caesar Act will enter into force in the United States. We heard today that United States officials proudly boast that it is because of their sanctions that the economic situation of the Syrian people has become so complicated. In doing so, they recognize that the sanctions imposed, allegedly against the Syrian leadership, in fact hit ordinary people. That said, they confirm that the purpose of these measures is to overthrow the legitimate authorities of Syria.

In late May, the European Union also extended unilateral sanctions against Damascus. We have repeatedly said that this not only cripples the country's economy, but also hinders humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria. Advertised exemptions do not work, which is confirmed by the humanitarian workers themselves.

Regrettably, the United Nations is also used for political purposes, as is the case with the Board of Inquiry established by the Secretary-General to investigate attacks in north-west Syria. Despite the fact that we do not consider the creation of this Board to be legitimate, the Russian Ministry of Defence examined the summary of its report on an exceptional basis and conducted its own investigation.

We have repeatedly denied accusations that the Russian Air Force attacked civilian targets. We held a special press conference at the United Nations on 16 September — exactly 10 months ago — and presented photo evidence. That information was ignored because of the ongoing political directive to put pressure on Russia. Unfortunately, it has become business as usual to rely on unverified, false data and banal fakes. The problem lies, first and foremost, in the sources of information. We know full well why those sources are carefully hidden. They are always opponents of the Syrian authorities and masters of staged chemical attacks. At the same time, the methodology for collecting so-called evidence is always the same — social networks, remote interviews with witnesses who actually live in European and Western capitals, Photoshop and, my favourite and the most ridiculous source, interceptions of pilot exchanges.

For its part, the Russian military physically visited the sites of alleged strikes and was able to inspect the buildings and take photographs. One site is under terrorist control for the time being, so we have only satellite and reconnaissance imagery. Evidence gathered by our Ministry of Defence proves that the sites were not subject to air or artillery strikes. At the same time, the Al-Nayrab Palestinian refugee camp was indeed shelled by militants, resulting in civilian casualties. Our Mission has photos and eyewitness testimonies. We do not hide their names, because they are real people who give true testimonies.

Analysis of the report's summary leads to one more conclusion: the deconflicting mechanism has more than just gaps — to put it mildly — and yet it is used for misinformation. A special United Nations Board was created on the basis of false data. It is as if we were coming back to test tubes with alleged Iraqi chemical weapons. Some deconflicted objects did not actually correspond to the declared status, and some buildings were used by militants as headquarters.

We handed over all the evidence to the Secretary-General. We are ready to present those documents to all parties concerned, but I wonder whether the Council would be interested to study them.

Annex XII**Statement by the Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jamesha Prince**

I would like to thank Ms. Ghazi and Special Envoy Pedersen for their briefings. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to support the Special Envoy's determined efforts to facilitate the wider political process in Syria.

The creation of a safe and neutral environment that fosters trust and cooperation is vital to the progress and success of the political process. In that regard, the March ceasefire agreement, although fragile, has created an opportunity for further meaningful engagement. It is our hope that this agreement will also encourage the full implementation of a lasting nationwide cessation of hostilities.

We take note that the Small Body of the Constitutional Committee is keen to proceed with its next session whenever the global situation allows. The Committee must maintain its momentum despite the current circumstances. We therefore encourage the recommencement of this important work in as far as it is practicable to do so remotely.

To foster goodwill, we reiterate the need for constructive action on the issue of detainees, particularly in consideration of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The fate of missing persons must also be clarified.

Syria's socioeconomic situation continues to deteriorate to the detriment of the Syrian people. We echo the appeal for the lifting of unilateral sanctions so as to alleviate the burden and to assist in strengthening the country's capacity to confront the pandemic.

We continue to encourage the international community to contribute to Syria's reconstruction. The restoration of critical infrastructure is integral to the improvement of the humanitarian situation and is necessary for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The presence of Council-designated terrorist entities continues to pose a substantial threat. We underscore the need for a collaborative approach in counter-terrorism efforts, which must comply with international law. In the same vein, we emphasize that full respect for Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity dictates the withdrawal of all unauthorized foreign forces.

Syria's only viable path towards peace is through a credible, balanced and inclusive political process that is free from interference and reflects the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The international community must therefore continue to lend its support to ensure that the goals of resolution 2254 (2015) are realized.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

Allow me to begin by thanking Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Ms. Noura Ghazi for their briefings today.

The Syrian civil war has been raging for over nine years, in which thousands have been killed, injured or displaced. The conflict has been exacerbated and no doubt prolonged by the interference of outside role players, including foreign Powers and armed groups. A peaceful, stable country became a battlefield for geopolitical rivalry and the ambitions of terrorist groups.

As we reach the final stages of this conflict, the Syrian parties and all international role players must commit to a peaceful settlement based on the commitments made, including the road map agreed upon in resolution 2254 (2015).

In that regard, South Africa calls on the parties to work towards a permanent ceasefire that will pave the way for an environment conducive to inclusive Syrian-led dialogue aimed at achieving a lasting political solution that reflects the will of the Syrian people.

As we advance that process, there is an urgent need to address instability and tension in the north of Syria. Moreover, the presence of armed groups in the east pose an imminent threat to local and regional stability. We reiterate that peace cannot be achieved as long as there is external interference and support to armed groups in Syria. That must end. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected.

The continued efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and his team to find a lasting solution to the conflict in Syria, despite the restrictions and challenges brought on by the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, must be supported. The Council meets monthly to receive updates from the Special Envoy on progress made in moving the parties towards peace. While we all commit in words to support the peace efforts, that must be followed up by action.

We are encouraged about reports that the groups representing the Government and the opposition in the Constitutional Committee have agreed to reconvene in August 2020 at the earliest, should the COVID-19 travel restrictions be lifted. The convening of the Constitutional Committee is the resumption of a vital political process and, as Mr. Pedersen has stated, necessary for building trust and confidence among the parties engaged in this process.

South Africa reiterates that the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria are interlinked. We therefore call on all stakeholders to promote progress in both tracks in order to ensure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us, developed and developing countries alike. However, its impact is exacerbated in countries affected by conflict. While the Security Council's inability to adopt an outcome calling for a global ceasefire in the time of the pandemic is unacceptable, we must at the very least support Special Envoy Pedersen's calls for an immediate and nationwide cessation of hostilities in Syria and the Secretary-General's call for the lifting of economic sanctions measures, so as to ensure that Syria is fully able to respond to the virus.

Syria remains at high risk for the spread of the virus, and all parties — the Syrian Government, the international community, non-governmental organizations and humanitarian agencies — must all do their part to contain the spread of the virus. This includes the continued safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid

and medical supplies to combat the virus and to ensure that all those who require assistance, wherever they are throughout Syria, receive it.

All sides must be encouraged to undertake trust- and confidence-building measures, which includes making progress in the release of civilians detained, particularly those belonging to such vulnerable groups as women, children, the elderly and the disabled. As part of these confidence-building measures to promote progress, the easing of economic sanctions imposed on Syria should be considered if there is forward movement on the political front. At the very least, humanitarian exemptions must be expedited and impediments to allowing these exemptions eased in order to ensure the delivery of required supplies.

In conclusion, resolution 2254 (2015) remains the road map for the political process in Syria, and we call for its full implementation and for the Council's continued support of the work of the Constitutional Committee, the Special Envoy and his Office, and the various stakeholders participating in the mediation process. As we have seen by our own experience in South Africa, the only path to a sustainable peace is through dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation. Today South Africa commemorates Youth Day, the day in 1976 in which the youth of South Africa rose up against oppression and injustice. We remember the youth of Syria and elsewhere who have suffered for far too long and who deserve the right to live in peace.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Kais Kabtani**

I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, for his briefing. Tunisia's support for Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts aimed at promoting the return of peace in Syria against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic remains constant.

In the last quarter since the Special Envoy's call for a durable nationwide cessation of hostilities, there have been some encouraging developments. Remarkably, the last month registered the lowest civilian-death toll since the start of the conflict. However, the overall political and security trends observed in Syria and across the wider region remain particularly worrisome. While the 6 March ceasefire in Idlib seemed to have held and violence dropped in May, the pace of recruiting Syrians to fight in Libya increased significantly in the same month. This month witnessed a surge of violence in north-west Syria, which engendered renewed displacements in southern Idlib and northern Hama and reversed the recent returns of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin.

We are concerned about the potential breakdown of the ceasefire, in the light of the resumption of air strikes and the reported arrival of military reinforcements on the ground in Idlib. Such developments undermine the political process on track, as the Constitutional Committee discussions are slated for resumption in Geneva at the earliest opportunity.

We call on parties to exercise the utmost self-restraint and work together to sustain the truce. The north-west, as much as the rest of Syria, cannot endure a new humanitarian catastrophe. We reiterate our support for a stepped-up role of the United Nations and its Special Envoy in mustering ceasefire initiatives in line with resolution 2254 (2015), with a view to ensuring a nationwide and durable ceasefire in the country.

The activities of terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida affiliates Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and Horras Al-Din, are yet another worrisome trend. Attacks carried out by ISIL have been on a steady rise for months now in Syria and Iraq and require due attention from the Security Council. Tunisia reiterates that marshalling collective counter-terrorism efforts is necessary if any solution to the conflict is to take hold in the long run. We reaffirm that the ceasefire remains a temporary form of relief until a joint and genuine solution has been identified to address the threat of Council-designated terrorist groups and eradicates the safe haven that these groups have established in the region.

The latest approval by Israel of a plan to build a new settlement in the Golan is a blatant move in Israel's endless series of actions undertaken in systematic contempt of international law, international legality and the international community. Tunisia reiterates that the Golan is a Syrian Arab territory occupied by Israel. We condemn Israel's repeated and flagrant violations of the unity, independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria in its territories, including the Golan territory. Such violations are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 350 (1974), on the disengagement between the Israeli and Syrian sides, and resolution 497 (1981).

Finally, let me reiterate that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. The only way forward is through a political solution in line with resolution 2254

(2015) that ends the suffering of the Syrian people and safeguards Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity. Indeed, it bears repeating: the political solution must be one that safeguards Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity.

Annex XV**Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, James Roscoe**

I would like to begin by once again thanking the Special Envoy for his briefing, and Ms. Noura Ghazi Safadi both for joining us today and for her heartfelt yet clear-eyed appeals for justice. We felt the pain she expressed on behalf of so many Syrians.

We remain deeply concerned at the security situation in north-west Syria, and we welcome the 5 March ceasefire agreed between Russia and Turkey that brought a vital period of relative calm to the north-west and allowed some of the 1 million people displaced during the regime's and Russia's offensive at the beginning of this year to start returning to their homes. But in recent weeks we have seen fierce fighting between extremists and regime forces, and in recent days we have heard worrisome reports of renewed Russian air strikes, including those that took place on 8 June, causing civilian casualties and prompting others to flee.

The United Kingdom fully supports the request of the United Nations Special Envoy and the Secretary-General for a lasting cessation of hostilities in the north-west and throughout Syria. The Security Council and the United Nations have repeatedly warned that a continued escalation in fighting would have catastrophic consequences for the 3 million Syrian civilians in the north-west. We urge all parties to show restraint and redouble their efforts to work together and with the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to find a political solution, particularly at a time when the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) poses a severe threat in a country already weakened by conflict.

As we agreed unanimously in resolution 2254 (2015) and have reiterated many times since, the only sustainable solution to the crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. Yet, despite this unanimous agreement, the Syrian regime, aided and abetted by a permanent member of the Security Council, has ignored resolution 2254 (2015) and continued to subordinate the interests of the Syrian people to its pursuit of a military solution.

The devastating effects of that policy on the Syrian people and the Syrian economy are increasingly clear and have been compounded, as Mr. Pederson informed us, by global factors. The collapsing economy in Syria is exacerbating the plight of civilians in all parts of the country. While COVID-19 and the problems of the Lebanese economy are clearly important contributing factors, the main cause for the state of the Syrian economy is the years of conflict, corruption and mismanagement by the Al-Assad regime. Unless the regime resolves to engage genuinely in political dialogue, focus on reform and address the legitimate concerns and aspirations of the Syrian people, there will be no sustainable solution.

While the crisis intensifies, the United Kingdom continues to support the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Health Organization in providing life-saving assistance to those who need it most. While the cross-border aid mechanism is a temporary measure to achieve this end, the Secretary-General has made clear in his report (S/2020/401) that there is not yet any alternative either in the north-west or the north-east. It is with that in mind that resolution 2504 (2020) must be renewed for a further 12 months and cross-border assistance into the north-east reauthorized.

We note that, last week, Al-Assad sacked his Prime Minister and that, at the end of May, he appointed a new set of governors, undoubtedly to give the impression

that he is doing something to address the problems facing Syria and his failure to deal with them. However, that is not what Syrians have been calling for. What they need and what they deserve is a better Syria and for the concerns and grievances that brought them into the streets in 2011 to be addressed.

It is in this regard that we greatly commend the work of Noura Ghazi Safadi in promoting the rights of the families of the detained. Time and again in meetings of the Security Council, we have discussed the need for the regime to properly engage on the issue of detainees. Limited prisoner swaps are not enough. We urge the regime to make a widespread release of political prisoners and vulnerable people and to ensure medical care is available for those still in detention. This is even more important given the threat posed by COVID-19. We are proud that the United Kingdom is able to support Noura's work through the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Finally, we again today heard criticism of sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime. The way to achieve the removal of these sanctions is clear. Rather than interfering with aid, bombing schools and hospitals, and detaining and torturing its people, the regime must heed the call of its population and engage seriously with Special Envoy Pedersen and the United Nations-led political process to achieve a peaceful end to the conflict. We would reiterate once more that goods and medical supplies used for humanitarian purposes are not subject to European Union sanctions, which the United Kingdom continues to apply, and additional exemptions from sanctions are available for humanitarian activity in Syria. I would again note that the United Kingdom and our European partners are among the leading donors to humanitarian aid to Syria, including in regime-held areas.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

I thank the President of the Security Council for convening today's meeting and for his briefing. I also thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen for his briefing and Ms. Noura Ghazi Safadi for reminding us that we must not turn a blind eye to the existence of non-violent activists in Syria. I would express my sincere gratitude for her informative comments on a topic that is very dear to me.

The United States reiterates its call for the Al-Assad regime to immediately release the thousands of civilians being arbitrarily held in detention centres where, as we have noted before, crowded and inhumane conditions significantly increase the risk of a rapid spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Equally important is progress on the Constitutional Committee, whose stakeholders have agreed on the agenda but have not met in recent months because of the unwillingness of the Chair representing the regime to convene virtually. We welcome Special Envoy Pedersen's announcement of the agreement of the opposition and the regime to convene the Constitutional Committee in August.

Last week, Syrian and Russian air strikes in Idlib and north-western Hama caused the largest disruption of the Idlib ceasefire agreement since it was established by Turkey and Russia on 5 March. The United States condemns these acts of violence by Syria and Russia, as well as provocations by terrorist groups on the ground, in violation of the ceasefire. We call for an immediate end to air strikes by the regime and Russia, and we urge Damascus and Moscow to recommit to an enduring verifiable nationwide ceasefire. Maintaining the ceasefire in north-west Syria is absolutely vital for the achievement of a political solution to this conflict, and it is essential for the work of the Special Envoy and the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

Once again, we reiterate our call for the United Nations to be at the centre of efforts aimed at formalizing the Idlib ceasefire under United Nations auspices, in accordance with Special Envoy Pedersen's call for a nationwide ceasefire. This call is in line with the demands for a nationwide ceasefire as set forth in resolution 2254 (2015) and for the Special Envoy to monitor the lines of contact to ensure that the ceasefire be upheld.

The United States is resolute in its commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian conflict. We will continue to reject any attempt by the Al-Assad regime and its allies to use military force, obstruction or disinformation to bypass United Nations efforts to restore peace in Syria.

The recent violations of the Idlib ceasefire remind us of just how fragile the political process is and, consequently, how important it is to deny the Al-Assad regime and its allies a military victory in its nearly decade-long war against the Syrian people. To that end, tomorrow the Trump Administration will take decisive steps to prevent the Al-Assad regime from securing a military victory and to steer the regime and its allies back toward Special Envoy Pedersen and the United Nations-led political process. Our aim is to deprive the Al-Assad regime of the revenue and support it has used to commit the large-scale atrocities and human rights violations that prevent a political resolution and severely diminish the prospects for peace.

The mandatory sanctions provided for in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 are aimed at deterring bad actors who continue to aid and finance the Al-Assad regime's atrocities against the Syrian people while simply enriching themselves and their families. The Caesar legislation contains strong provisions to

ensure that humanitarian assistance is not in any way impacted by the legislation. It also outlines requirements for the suspension of the Caesar Act sanctions on Syria, including ending all brazen attacks towards its people and holding all perpetrators accountable.

The Al-Assad regime has a clear choice to make — pursue the political path established in resolution 2254 (2015) or leave the United States with no other choice but to continue withholding reconstruction funding and imposing sanctions against the regime and its financial backers.

I want to focus with a few words on 10 July — 23 days away — when the Council will deliberate on the mandate renewal of the humanitarian cross-border mechanism, as set out in resolution 2504 (2020), and its impact on the United Nations-led political process. The simple truth is that there will be no end to the humanitarian crisis in Syria until there is a political solution.

We cannot use the mandate renewal negotiations to shape the political realities on the ground. Our job, above all others, is to uphold the highest humanitarian ideals and do the most good for the vulnerable people around the world. As the political process remains in its early stages, we must ensure humanitarian aid flows to the Syrian people based on their needs. That means humanitarian aid must not be used as a bargaining chip; millions of people depend on United Nations assistance across all parts of Syria. Therefore, every member of the Council must ensure that every Syrian in need of aid is reached by cross-border and cross-line assistance through the most direct routes. For the millions of women, men and children in north-east and north-west Syria, the United Nations-authorized cross-border points of Bab Al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah are the most direct routes.

The Al-Assad regime has a choice to make, but so does the Council. And I want to say today that we cannot choose, through inaction or gridlock, to starve civilians, deny them shelter and allow COVID-19 to spread as tactics for reaching a political solution. We cannot turn a blind eye, as Ms. Ghazi said. Supporting the continuation of United Nations cross-border access to as many people as possible, regardless of who controls the territory, is just as important as supporting Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to achieve a political end to the conflict.

Annex XVII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy

I would like to thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Ms. Noura Ghazi for their briefings.

We are pleased to see that the ceasefire agreement of 5 March in the north-west continues to be generally observed, although certain challenges remain in that area as well as in different parts of Syria. In addition, the resurgence of terrorist activities is troublesome.

We would like to reiterate our support for the appeals of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria. We continue to urge all parties to heed the call to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the most comprehensive manner possible and to ensure stability in Syria. Only when a sustainably calm situation on the ground is secured can trust and confidence among the parties concerned be regained and an enabling environment be created to accelerate the political process.

Viet Nam would like to take this opportunity to commend the continuous efforts of the Special Envoy to bring the parties together, and we look forward to the resumption of negotiations within the framework of the Constitutional Committee. We consistently support a political solution for the situation in Syria, in keeping with resolution 2254 (2015), with full respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs and full adherence to international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The volatile socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Syria, with a new layer created by COVID-19, is becoming extremely worrisome and putting greater pressure on the hardship of Syrian people, including millions of internally displaced persons. Even though the number of confirmed cases remains relatively low, the risk of the further spread of COVID-19 demands appropriate attention in order to contain the negative impacts of the pandemic and the humanitarian situation on the people, now and in the long run.

While fighting the pandemic, we urge all the parties concerned to create the most favourable conditions for the continuation of essential humanitarian assistance. We also call upon the international community to provide unwavering support for the Syrian people. Let us first focus on saving and protecting the lives of innocent people.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: Arabic and English]

When the United States openly steals 200,000 oil barrels from the Syrian oil fields on a daily basis and also steals 400,000 tons of cotton and sets fire to thousands of hectares of wheat fields, when it steals 5 million heads of livestock, bragging about dividing Syria and deliberately weakening the value of the Syrian pound, when it imposes economic coercive measures aimed at suffocating the Syrian people, when it occupies parts of the Syrian territories and protects its Turkish partner, who occupies other territories, and when my colleague the Permanent Representative of the United States then talks about the Administration's concern about the deteriorating living conditions of Syrian citizens, attributing that deterioration to what she calls "the regime", then the legitimate question becomes: Does that not indicate an acute illness? Are these not the symptoms of political schizophrenia?

On 31 May, my country, Syria, submitted a formal complaint to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council against the Governments of some of Member States, at the forefront of which are the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Turkey. Over the past nine years, the Governments of those countries have supported, financed and armed multinational terrorist organizations, groups with multiple loyalties and labels and separatist proxy militias. Furthermore, they have deliberately intervened militarily in my country through unilateral and tripartite acts of aggression, the occupation of parts of Syrian territory, murder, destruction, displacement and demographic change, the looting of natural and historical resources and riches, including oil, gas, antiquities and agricultural crops, burning and destroying what they cannot steal, and the imposition of further unilateral coercive economic measures on the Syrian people.

These practices and gross violations of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations highlight a contradiction in those Governments' vision of multilateral international action and a return to the perspective of the League of Nations, which legitimized aggression and occupation, thus dooming itself to failure. These practices are blatant attempts at destructive intervention in the political process facilitated by the United Nations through the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, with the aim of diverting the process from a path based on the inter-Syrian national dialogue, Syrian-owned and -led, to a form of imposition of those countries' will and dictates on the United Nations at the expense of Syria's sovereignty and resources and the well-being and security of its people.

In the light of the statements we just heard, I find myself obligated to clarify a few points.

First, the policies of blockade and the imposition of unilateral coercive economic measures have been, and continue to be, an integral part of the West's blind and prejudiced policies and the other side of terrorism that has reaped the lives of Syrians and destroyed their achievements. Harming the Syrian people by targeting their national currency, medicine and livelihoods and obstructing the ability of State institutions to meet the people's basic needs and continue to provide public services negates any Western claims of humanitarian concern. The latest example of the attempts to harm the Syrian people is manifested in the burning of humanitarian food shipments by some Lebanese parties. Those shipments have been regularly provided by the World Food Programme to Syrians in need through Lebanese territory.

Secondly, the United States Administration and the European Union have flouted all international demands to put an end to the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on the Syrian people, including the calls of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to Syria. Moreover, they have renewed and intensified the effects of those measures, in parallel with the entry into force of the United States so-called Caesar Act. All of the above shows the disregard of the American Administration and the European Union for all the achievements of humankind in the field of international law and is an attempt to impose American and European law on the world.

Thirdly, James Jeffrey's recent statement represents an explicit recognition by the United States Administration of its direct responsibility for the suffering of Syrians. Such an irresponsible statement reaffirms that the Administration views the region through Israeli eyes as the demands that Jeffrey is talking about are renewed, old Israeli demands aimed at shaping the region in a way that achieves its hegemonic agenda.

Fourthly, the responsibility to maintain international peace and security, with which the three Western permanent members of the Council in particular are supposed to be entrusted, is not in line with the way these same countries and other Western Governments, as well as their tools, turn a blind eye to the practices of their North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally Turkey, whose crimes in Syria, Libya and other countries they fully endorse and defend. That responsibility is also inconsistent with ignoring the American-Turkish occupation of parts of my country, shamelessly sponsoring terrorism and separatist militias there and holding meetings between representatives of those two countries' Governments and terrorist organizations on our territory, as recently demonstrated by the infiltration of the Turkish Ministers of Defence and the Interior into the Syrian territory of Idlib governorate. They have taken advantage of the calm that has prevailed since the Moscow agreement to reinforce the presence of the Turkish occupation forces and their affiliated terrorist groups operating in that area. Moreover, the Turkish regime is currently seeking to replace the Syrian national currency with the Turkish currency in the areas it occupies. It also persists in its attempt at the Turkification of those areas. In that regard, Erdogan's forces are identical to Israel's in their occupation of my country's territories. The Turkish and Israeli occupations are complementary and harmonious in serving their American operator.

Furthermore, the responsibility to maintain international peace and security is not in line with the resolve of the three Western permanent members of the Security Council to not eliminate the terrorist organization of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), as they mobilize its remnants in Iraq and Syria whenever their interests so require. In my statement delivered on 19 May (see S/2020/427), I referred to the confessions of ISIS terrorists captured by the Syrian Arab Army, in which they stressed the fact that they were trained by the American occupation forces in the Syrian occupied region of Al-Tanf. Recently, an ISIS terrorist named Mohammad Hussein Saud confessed that British intelligence forced him, along with other terrorists, to work for them and tasked them with gathering information on Syrian and Russian military locations and institutions in Syria.

In its official complaint, my country requested the Secretary-General and the Security Council to put an end to the hostile foreign interventions in its domestic affairs and to call on all Member States to refrain from engaging in any practices aimed at undermining the independence and course of the political process and which affect the interests and choices of the Syrian people, the safety and stability of Syria and my country's regional and international relations. Syria also requested the Secretary-General to mandate the specialized legal bodies of the Secretariat to

immediately prepare a report on how the American and European laws imposing an economic embargo on the Syrian people are in line with the provisions of the United Nations Charter and relevant Security Council resolutions. Such as report should also highlight the catastrophic impacts of those measures on the lives of the Syrian people.

My country looks forward to the Secretary-General's response to those requests and to being informed as soon as possible of the procedures being implemented, in keeping with his mandate and capacity, to facilitate the political process in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We have always been a victim of Western score-settling; therefore, we are good readers of history. The problem with our enemies and rivals is that we read history differently. In that regard, it would be suitable to recall what a wise social politician once said — only fools defy history.

In conclusion, I would like to say to my colleagues the representatives of the Western countries in the Council: take your pressure off Syria, let the Syrian people breathe.
