



Kingdom of Belgium

Intervention of Mr. Philippe KRIDELKA, Ambassador, Permanent Representative

United Nations Security Council
The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – political)

New York, 19 August 2020

Mr. President,

I thank Special Envoy, Mr. Geir PEDERSEN for his briefing and I thank him and his team for their relentless efforts.

Mr. President,

The Syrian-led and Syrian-owned Constitutional Committee is set to convene in Geneva next week Monday, as we just heard from the Special Envoy. We hope that this meeting will bring us closer to a path where Syrians can build their own future. One that meets the Syrian people's legitimate aspirations, that fully restores Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence, territorial integrity and economic prosperity. We encourage all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to meaningfully and constructively engage in this meeting. Entrenched positions and divisive rhetoric need to make room for a spirit of compromise, bearing in mind the well-being of all Syrians. The possible lack of agreement on national foundations and principles should not be an impediment to move on to other items. Furthermore, we hope the meeting will pave the way for subsequent meetings at regular intervals.

We welcome the engagement between the UN Special Envoy and the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, as well as with other civil society organisations.

Mr. President,

it is important that the dynamics on the ground change, in order to build the trust that is necessary to achieve progress on the political track. Firstly, this means that violence on the ground must end. We must acknowledge that the situation in the Northwest remains fragile. The recent protests in Southwest Syria have led to various security incidents, including assassinations. We urge all parties to refrain from violence, reduce tension and exercise maximum restraint. We reiterate our call for a nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2254. The UN should play a central role in the monitoring and implementation of such a ceasefire. Furthermore, we call for respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, including in the fight against terrorism.

True reconciliation and sustainable peace cannot be achieved without a solution for the issue of detainees, abductees and missing persons. We call on the Syrian government and all other Syrian parties to carry out unilateral releases of detainees and abductees, and move beyond 1 for 1 prisoner exchanges. Access to detainees must be ensured in line with international regulations. We furthermore call for meaningful actions on missing persons. Building confidence is essential if we want to see the political process move forward.

The COVID-19 outbreak has amplified the need for a nationwide ceasefire and for the release of arbitrarily detained persons. We are also worried about the impact of COVID-19 on the already dire humanitarian situation. Full humanitarian access must be ensured more than ever.

Mr. President,

years of war, corruption, mismanagement and oppression have led to a dire economic situation, further exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19. 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.

I thank you.