

Speech by H.E. Ms Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador, Deputy
Permanent Representative

at the UN Security Council briefing on the political situation in Syria

New York, 27 March 2019

Mr President,

I would like to thank Ms DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General, as well as Mr Rajasingham, Division Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their presentations. Regarding the humanitarian situation, I am referring to the statement made by Germany on behalf of the three writers. I will limit myself to a few short remarks concerning the political situation and the situation on the ground.

1/ Firstly: the political situation

While the Syrian conflict is beginning its ninth year, we are supporting the Special Envoy in his efforts to implement his **five goals**, which were mentioned in his first briefing in the Council.

We congratulate his work on the multiple dimensions of Resolution **2254** of the Security Council. As mentioned in my speech last month, for Belgium, a sustainable solution can only be founded on the Geneva Communiqué and with the full integration of Resolution 2254. We will underline the agreed role of the Special Envoy in Sochi and we support his efforts to unite, as quickly as possible, a **constitutional committee** which is trustworthy, balanced, inclusive and representative, with *clear* procedures and work methods.

We note that the common denominator of the goals for the Special Envoy is to create trust and broaden discussion in order to move the process forwards. Yet, trust between parties in conflict is impossible without regarding justice. As a concrete measure, we are asking that all parties exercise their influence to liberate those arbitrarily detained.

Finally, Mr President, the Special Envoy indicated that the entire Syrian population must commit to and participate in efforts to build trust and search for peace. The Brussels III conference underlined the vital role of civil society. A dynamic civil society which is considered on a political basis and which exemplifies the right to come together and freely express itself should constitute the backbone of every community. Brussels III also placed specific emphasis on **Syrian women**. While congratulating ourselves on the recent meeting of the Special Envoy with the Women's *Advisory Council*, we will highlight the necessity for significant participation of at least 30% for Syrian women in decision-making *bodies*.

2/ Next, the situation on the ground

We are calling for a national ceasefire to guarantee protection of civilians. As other speakers have mentioned, Belgium is severely concerned about the renewed upsurge of violence in **Idlib**. It is imperative that all parties, including Astana guarantors, remain fully committed to honouring the agreement signed in September, as a major military operation could provoke an excessive humanitarian crisis.

In **Deir ez-Zor**, the last fights against ISIL have just finished. But: the end of ISIL as a terrorist organisation with a territorial base does not mean the end of the threat that this group represents. It is vital that the international community remain vigilant to avoid its revival.

3/ **Lastly**, Mr President, a word regarding **reconstruction**. Belgium fully endorses the position of the EU. We will not be ready to aid reconstruction until there is a full commitment to a genuine and inclusive overall political transition, negotiated by the Syrian parties in conflict and based on Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

Thank you.