

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve,
Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

Briefing to the Security Council
On Syria

New York, 30/04/2019

Mr President,

I would like to thank the Special Envoy, Mr Pedersen, for his briefing and his commitment.

Mr President,

The situation on the ground in Syria remains worrying, and we are particularly concerned about **the escalation of violence in Idlib**. We call on all parties, and in particular Astana's guarantors, to strengthen their commitment to the agreement signed in September. A military offensive would cause a humanitarian crisis with disastrous effects, not only for the three million inhabitants of Idlib, but also for the region. We call for the ceasefire to be implemented throughout Syria.

To date, after eight years of conflict, millions of people are still in need of **humanitarian aid**; millions of people are still displaced. Syrian citizens must remain at the centre of our concerns. In the current context, it is difficult to describe the developments as positive. But it is our duty to remain hopeful, as it is the duty of this Council to work together towards a political solution. We encourage the Special Envoy in the implementation of his five objectives.

Mr President,

We support the Special Envoy as he pursues his concrete actions to assist **detainees and abducted and disappeared persons**. We note the recent exchange of 18 prisoners. But we still have a long way to go. A great deal of progress remains to be made in this area, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Many thousands of Syrians are waiting for a sign of life from their loved ones. We call on all Member States to use their influence on the parties to the conflicts to promote the release of arbitrarily detained persons.

Belgium calls for the convening of a **constitutional committee**, as soon as possible, as a first step towards more in-depth dialogue and genuine negotiations on the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué and Resolution 2254, under the auspices of the United Nations.

But the United Nations can only give its seal of legitimacy if the constitution meets the necessary criteria of credibility, balance and inclusiveness. In addition, the working methods and procedures are not technical details, but must be an integral part of each agreement. The parties should work diligently and constructively towards a solution; a successful agreement must **demonstrate *real commitment by all parties***. We support the Special Envoy in his regular discussions with the parties to the conflict to deepen the dialogue and build trust.

Mr President,

Syria and its citizens deserve **a peaceful and inclusive future**. The path to lasting peace involves reconciliation and justice. Only when the conditions for a safe, dignified, voluntary and well-informed return are met will refugees be able to return home. **And only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition** is firmly under way will Belgium be ready to support the country's reconstruction.

Thank you.