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**Statement by co-penholders on the humanitarian situation**

I will deliver this statement on the humanitarian situation in Syria on behalf of the co-penholders Germany and Belgium. We want to **thank** Under-Secretary General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen for their briefings today; and we extend our gratitude to all humanitarian and medical workers in Syria.

I will limit my statement to **four points**:

1. First, we fully support the statements of the SG and of the Special Envoy on **Covid19**. This virus constitutes an “unprecedented threat to humanity”, and its effects are *potentially disastrous* on Syria. 9 years of war have taken an extreme toll. Almost half of all healthcare facilities have been, partially or completely, destroyed. There is a shortage of both medical equipment and personnel. In particular the 6 million IDPs, especially those in the NW, as well as detainees and abductees, are living in very challenging conditions and are extremely vulnerable to respiratory infections.

Therefore, *we welcome efforts by the WHO to provide testing kits for the civilian population in Idlib*. We also echo the Special Envoy’s demands for 1) a complete, immediate nationwide ceasefire; 2) large scale releases of detainees and abductees; and 3) full humanitarian access, making full use of all modalities and respecting all humanitarian principles. These urgent demands have gone widely unanswered in the past. Under these extraordinary circumstances they are mandatory.

2. Secondly, in the **North West**, the cease-fire between Russia and Turkey is fragile, yet it seems to be holding. This is positive news.

However, USG Lowcock, in his statement, was abundantly clear on the challenges that people in Idlib continue to face, and we remain *very deeply* concerned about their situation. Due to the military offensive, nearly 1mio IDPs are living in an ever smaller area, lacking housing, food and water. Due to the high needs, more than ever before, the cross border modality has been used to import humanitarian aid into Idlib. We support the UN inter-agency mission that took place early March and call for continued close monitoring of the humanitarian situation by the UN.

3. Thirdly, in the **North East**, gaps in the influx of medical aid are becoming clear, since the Council did not agree on renewing the crossing point of Yarubiya earlier this year. To fill this gap, the SG, in his report, called for more cross-line as well as more cross-border access. We request the UN to deliver clear facts and figures concerning cross-line access, throughout Syria, and in particular to **all** areas and medical

facilities in the North East. We also request more specific information about access to non-governmental medical facilities. The Council and its Member States should also actively consider to renew cross-border access into the North East. The need is evident.

4. Finally, we renew our call for **accountability**. In this regard, we strongly support the work of the BOI, as well as the work of the IIM.

#### **Statement in national capacity on the political situation**

I will also make a short statement in my national capacity on the political situation:

- Concerning the **Constitutional Committee**, despite the hard work of the Special Envoy, there seems to be little reason for optimism. Yes: it is positive that the issue concerning the agenda is resolved. However, Damascus' tactics seems to be to stall the process, rather than to strive for the Committee to be fully functional. Discussing process is important, but the Committee's goal is to have qualitative discussions on different issues [to further the implementation of resolution 2554]. This is what Syrian people need and deserve and what is essential if Syria is to have a viable future. We call upon all parties take this point fully at heart.
- Finally, we reconfirm our position that we **will not fund reconstruction before a political solution is firmly under way**.

Thank you