
Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by Germany on behalf of the humanitarian co-penholders regarding the consequences of the offensive in Idlib.

I will limit myself to a few political remarks:

1. We are seriously alarmed by the ongoing military escalation.

We support the **fight against terrorism**. But counter-terrorism efforts must *never* exempt parties from their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality.

2. Unfortunately, this situation demonstrates that contracting out work pertaining to the **ceasefire** under the Astana format has not been successful. Of the many ceasefires that have failed to hold, the most recent lasted only two days. This crisis, and specifically the risk of potential miscalculation as a result of clashes between the various parties, poses an enormous risk to international peace and security. Moreover, we have seen this scenario time and time again, and unfortunately we know all too well how it ends: it is civilians who pay the price. We call on all parties to exercise **maximum restraint**. We expect that the UN, and the Special Envoy in particular, to expend every effort to that end.

We call for a nationwide cessation of hostilities, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). And we call for a **negotiated solution** to address the complex challenges in the north-west, as well as in Syria as a whole, in a sustainable manner. The only path to stability is a **credible and inclusive political solution** facilitated by the United Nations, in accordance with Resolution 2254.

3. Over and above their devastating impact on civilians, **bombings in urban areas** destroy homes, schools, hospitals, electricity and water networks, etc. How can Syria bomb these facilities in urban areas, while at the same time expecting the international community to pay for reconstruction? We reaffirm that Belgium, in line with European policy, will not participate in the reconstruction process without there being a robust political solution in place.