

Intervention de S.E. Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Ambassadeur,
Représentant permanent

au Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies

New York, le 14 novembre 2019 (final)

Mrs. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the three co-penholders: Kuwait, Germany and Belgium. I would first like to thank Under Secretary-General Lowcock for his valuable and well-timed briefing.

Mrs. President,

Mark Lowcock reminded us, once again, that millions of Syrians continue to be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

We heard the numbers: 11 million Syrians, including around 5 million children, need humanitarian assistance. These are essential and critical needs: we're talking about food, water, shelter, medical assistance, preventive medical care, and education for Syrian children.

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners should be allowed to continue to deliver humanitarian assistance in a timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded manner, by using all means, including cross-border, cross-line and regular programming, to reach Syrians in need throughout the country.

As of last month, 4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, depend on cross border operations, in other words almost 40% of the entire humanitarian assistance is covered through this mechanism.

Since the UN began cross border operations in July 2014, thanks to resolution 2165, this mechanism has offered a true lifeline to those people in areas that are not under the control of the Authorities. Until today, this mechanism continues to allow the UN and its implementing partners to ensure life-saving assistance that reaches millions of people. In fact, this year has been extremely busy: never have there been as many humanitarian cross-border convoys as during the month of October of this year, as a result of the situation in the North of the country.

Moreover, as Mr. Lowcock explained in detail, the monitoring mechanism that is linked to cross-border operations is a robust and reliable one. It is known to be amongst the most effective and detail-oriented systems of all OCHA humanitarian operations across the world.

The current mandate of cross-border operations ends by the beginning of next year. The renewal of this mandate is of primary importance. According to the Secretary-General *"Without this operation, we would see increased death, disease and immense suffering of a population that cannot be reached at this scale, in such a timely and direct manner, through any other means."* We share this assessment. This is why the co-penholders will work closely with all members of this Council, and countries concerned and involved, in

order to renew the cross-border operations resolution, a purely humanitarian resolution, before the end of this year. Mrs. President, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that resolution 2165 will be renewed so that the UN and its humanitarian partners can continue to alleviate the humanitarian needs of all people in Syria.

Mrs. President,

In North-East Syria, clashes continue to be reported. This has added further risk to the already dire humanitarian situation. It has led to civilian casualties, and – although the number has dropped – many people remain displaced. It is of prime importance that humanitarian access not be impeded. At this stage our particular attention goes out to the Allouk water station, and we call on all parties to fully ensure the continued functioning of this station which provides water to almost half a million people in Al Hassakeh. In Al-Hol camp, 68 000 residents remain, 94% of whom are women and children. We call for continued and full humanitarian access to the camp and for the specific protection needs there to be addressed.

In the North-West, despite a reduction of hostilities since the end of August, a recent upsurge of violence has been reported which has led to civilian casualties, especially in southern and western Idlib, further impacting civilians and civilian infrastructure. Once again, we're deeply concerned about recent reports of attacks on medical facilities. We have also condemned the attacks perpetrated by Security Council designated terrorist groups, while reiterating that counter terrorism efforts can never absolve the obligations of all parties under International Humanitarian Law, including the principles of distinction and proportionality. More than half the current population in Idlib are IDPs of which many remain displaced close to the Turkish border, in dire humanitarian circumstances, with overcrowded camps as the winter sets in.

We remain equally concerned by the situation in the south west, including around Damascus, where a total of 2.8 million people remain in severe humanitarian need of essential protection, water and sanitation, health, food, education and other relief. The security situation, which remains volatile in this region, adds to the challenge. Also in Rukban, the situation remains dire. We continue to call for a durable and lasting solution for the remaining inhabitants, and underline in this context the importance of UN access to the camp.

Finally, Mrs. President, four more points:

No lasting peace in Syria is possible without justice and accountability. We reiterate our support for the IIIM. We also welcome the Board of Inquiry which was recently established by the Secretary-General and which is now operational. With regards to the return of refugees, our position remains unchanged: all returns must be safe, voluntary, dignified and well-informed.

We reiterate our call for a nation-wide cessation of hostilities in accordance with Security Council resolutions, including 2401. There is no military solution to the conflict in Syria.

Finally, we welcome the convening of the Constitutional Committee, as a first step in the political process, and we reiterate our support to Special Envoy Pedersen in his efforts to reach a political solution in Syria on the basis of resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué of 2012.

Thank you.