

Mr President,

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

Mr President,

Since the start of the conflict nine years ago, violence has caused hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties. Syria and its people have witnessed some of the most serious crimes under international law. Millions of Syrians have left their country and remain abroad to this day. Thousands of Syrians are waiting for a sign of life from their loved ones who have been arbitrarily detained or who have disappeared.

It is in this context that the Special Envoy took office a few months ago.

A context that was further exacerbated by the escalation of violence in **Idlib** since the end of April. This creates a situation which, as we all know, is potentially disastrous for Syria and the region at the humanitarian level and in terms of regional security. In this regard, I refer to the statement made by Germany on behalf of the co-penholders on Tuesday. We reiterate that the parties to the conflict have an obligation to protect civilians and to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law.

Mr President,

As Ms. DiCarlo mentioned last week, "Our tireless efforts to find a political solution which responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people cannot make progress in a context of open conflict. "We call for the parties to reaffirm their full commitment to the ceasefire agreements from the Russian-Turkish memorandum signed on 17 September 2018, and we reiterate our call for a cessation of hostilities at the national level. We call upon all actors involved to take every opportunity for diplomacy, including in the margins of the G20, to achieve a lasting solution.

Mr President,

There is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. This was clear at the outset and remains just as clear more than eight years later: **the solution is political.**

For my country, the **Constitutional Committee** must be Syrian-owned, Syrian-led and facilitated by the United Nations. We support the important role of the Special Envoy in

establishing it. But only the creation of a **credible** constitutional committee will be able demonstrate the political will of the parties to the conflict to work constructively towards a solution to this crisis. It needs to be a **balanced, inclusive and representative** committee that represents all components of Syrian society, with clear working procedures. We have the impression that, in spite of all the diplomatic work that has been done, this process is moving too slowly. We must redouble our efforts. The time has come to achieve this.

Mr President, the horizon of peace that the Syrian people is waiting for is outlined in Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. We support the Special Envoy's efforts to implement this resolution, through the establishment of a national ceasefire, a political transition through free and democratic national elections which include the Syrian diaspora, and the establishment of a **safe, stable and calm** environment.

Finally, Mr President, we must not forget the thousands of Syrians who continue to be **arbitrarily arrested and detained**. We encourage the Special Envoy to continue his efforts on this important subject.

Thank you.
