



Security Council

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Letter dated 31 August 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany (on behalf of Belgium and Germany), Indonesia, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on the situation in the Middle East (Syria), convened on Thursday, 27 August 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 2 April 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/273), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dian Triansyah **Djani**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ramesh Rajasingham**

I will focus today on five areas: first, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and its impact on health services; secondly, the economic downturn; thirdly, the protection of civilians; fourthly, humanitarian access, which is essential for our operations; and, fifthly, what support humanitarian agencies have been delivering to people across Syria.

In his briefing to the Security Council last month, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock (S/2020/758, annex I) warned that the very limited COVID-19 testing in Syria masks the real extent of the outbreak. Reports of health-care facilities filling up and of rising numbers of death notices and burials all seem to indicate that actual cases far exceed official figures. What the official figures do show is that community transmission is widespread. Of the 2,440 cases confirmed by the Syrian Ministry of Health, the majority cannot be traced to a known source.

Rising patient numbers are adding pressure to the fragile health system. Many are reluctant to seek care at medical facilities, leading to more severe complications when they do arrive. Health workers still lack sufficient personal protective equipment and associated supplies. Several health facilities have suspended operations due to capacity issues and to staff contracting the virus. Some are in areas already among the most underserved when it comes to health care.

In Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria, 12 health facilities had to suspend operations this month due to staff becoming infected and having to self-isolate, or due to a lack of personal protective equipment. Both field hospitals at the camp have since resumed operations. Sustained health services are critical at Al-Hol, where the population is already considered highly vulnerable. Between 6 and 10 August, eight children under the age of five died in the camp, from a range of conditions.

I join the Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Imran Riza, in expressing alarm over these deaths and in his assertion that no child should be forced to live under the challenging and potentially dangerous conditions at Al-Hol camp. Of the 65,000 people residing at Al-Hol, the majority, 35,000 children, are under five years of age.

The World Health Organization is leading an interagency technical mission to Al-Hol this week to look at how health coverage at the camp can be improved despite the immense challenges posed by COVID-19 and by the severe staffing and supply shortages, which predate the pandemic. Al-Hol has also been affected by renewed disruptions in water supply from the Allouk water station over the past month. Water supply from Allouk has been interrupted at least 13 times this year, affecting some 460,000 civilians in Al-Hasakah governorate.

On 22 August, power supply from the Tishrin dam resumed to the Mabrouka and Darbasiyah electricity stations, after which nine out of 34 boreholes at Allouk started producing water. Technical teams were able to carry out essential repairs at the station on 25 August. Due to the low pumping capacity and a further disruption on 25 August, water has yet to reach Al-Hasakah. In response to the water shortages, humanitarian partners have been delivering an estimated 2,500 cubic metres of water to the area per day. But this is neither a sufficient nor a sustainable solution. I emphasize that parties to the conflict are obliged under international humanitarian law not to render useless objects, such as water installations, that are indispensable for the survival of the civilian population.

My second point is the humanitarian impact of the economic downturn. The Syrian pound has stabilized since falling to its lowest-ever recorded informal rate in June. This has also reduced food inflation. Food prices are still rising, but they are doing so at a much slower rate. The average price of the World Food Programme national reference food basket increased by 3 per cent from June to July, after surging 48 per cent from May to June. These are still unprecedented levels; current food prices are more than twice the level of the previous price surge at the height of the crisis in 2016.

One of the impacts of COVID-19 in Syria has been a disruption in some commercial supply chains. Commercial supply chains may also be affected, to varying degrees, by the explosion at the port of Beirut. Let me join the Secretary-General in expressing his condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of this horrific event and in wishing a full recovery to the many thousands of injured, many of whom were Syrian refugees who had been so generously hosted by the Lebanese people.

My third point is the protection of civilians. The ceasefire in the north-west is largely holding, but it will hardly seem that way for civilians in front-line areas. Hostilities in the north-west have been increasing in July and August, with increased levels of shelling reported by local sources in the front-line areas of the southern Idlib, northern Latakia, northern Hama and western Aleppo governorates.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded at least 10 civilian deaths, including three children, as a result of ground strikes and air strikes in the “de-escalation area” in June and July. Another 30 civilians, including 10 children, were injured during this period. I would recall that, under international humanitarian law, all parties to armed conflict must take constant care to spare civilians.

The contamination of large parts of Syria by explosive hazards adds to the appalling human cost of the active fighting. Each month we see a steady stream of civilian casualties; often these are children killed or injured while playing or picking through rubble.

On 12 August, a group of around 70 people, including families with children, walked into an area contaminated with explosive remnants in the area of Nobbol and Zahraa in northern rural Aleppo. They triggered explosions that, in turn, drew fire from armed actors in the area. While some bodies of the victims have been recovered, it is unclear how many were killed. The group was travelling with local smugglers — a market that has been boosted by the economic downturn and deteriorating security situation in the south, alongside other factors that are pushing increasingly desperate families to take extreme risks.

My next point is on access. A United Nations humanitarian delivery to northern rural Aleppo was dispatched via the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing on 28 July. This was the first such delivery since the adoption of resolution 2533 (2020). The convoy took 11 hours to reach its destination, Al-Bab, after multiple delays caused by a lack of approvals from various parties, as well as poor road conditions. Travel time to Al-Bab from the Bab Al-Salam crossing would have been approximately two hours. A subsequent delivery on 21 August was also delayed.

As the Secretary-General notes in his latest report on Syria (S/2020/813), which members received last week, these challenges were foreseen. They have resulted in a more costly, higher risk, less timely and, ultimately, less effective humanitarian response. United Nations agencies are working to mitigate the impact of the reduction to one authorized border crossing. The capacity of the remaining

authorized crossing at Bab Al-Hawa needs to be expanded, as does the capacity of crossing points inside Syria.

Significant roadworks will need to be completed before the onset of winter weather. Engagement is also under way with parties on the ground to ensure that humanitarian deliveries can cross between Idlib and northern Aleppo unimpeded.

From within Syria, a United Nations inter-agency mission reached Khan Shaykhun and Big Khwein in southern rural Idlib on 28 July. These areas were retaken by Government forces a year ago. The mission found civilian infrastructure severely damaged and basic services lacking. Fewer than 300 families have returned. Work is under way to develop a response plan based on the needs identified by the mission.

Turning to Rukban, the humanitarian operation has remained without access to the 12,000 people at the camp since September 2019. Only a few local truck drivers have been able to sporadically deliver basic goods through informal routes, and there remains no access to medical services at the camp. The humanitarian situation has significantly worsened as a result. Another 576 people have left Rukban since March. Support is needed from all parties to help those who still want to leave. Sustainable solutions need to be found for all who remain. Crucially, humanitarian actors must be granted access to the camp to deliver life-saving assistance for civilians in need.

Let me conclude with an update on the assistance that we are providing to the civilian population throughout Syria. In the first half of the year, humanitarian operations reached an average of 7.2 million people across the country each month. More than 12 million medical procedures were conducted, and 5.4 million treatment courses provided. Some 3 million people were reached with protection support, such as child protection services, support services related to gender-based violence and mine action support.

Food assistance reached 5.4 million people on average each month and, as of July, it is being expanded to reach vulnerable people in COVID-19 quarantine centres. That assistance is all the more critical as food insecurity continues to rise in Syria. It must be sustained.

In his briefing to the Council last month, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock highlighted the generous pledges made at the fourth Brussels conference in June. Without those contributions, we would be unable to help people throughout Syria. I join him in urging other donors to contribute and more fairly share the financial burden.

Annex II

Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun

I thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham for his briefing, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria to the meeting.

After listening carefully to the briefing and reading through the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/813), I must say that we have many reasons to be worried. The economic situation in Syria is extremely fragile, and the international community should support the Syrian Government in revitalizing the economy. We acknowledge that the Syrian Government has made commendable efforts in order to improve the livelihoods of the Syrian people, including implementing agricultural reform, helping small businesses, facilitating inter-governorate transportation and combating the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The international community should support Syria's efforts with concrete actions and assistance. In addition, it should support Syria in defending its sovereignty and managing its own natural resources. Syria's oil fields belong to the Syrian people and cannot be subject to illegal foreign plundering.

Years of unilateral sanctions have caused tremendous hardship to the Syrian people, and such sanctions must be lifted immediately. The unilateral coercive measures are damaging the Syrian economy, destroying the livelihoods of civilians and undermining Syria's capacity to respond to COVID-19. The Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock have repeatedly appealed for the waiver of sanctions.

China strongly urges the United States to respond actively to these urgent appeals and lift unilateral sanctions without delay. The Secretariat and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should pay close attention to this issue, strengthen research and analysis in that regard and report to the Security Council.

We call on all stakeholders, especially United Nations agencies, to increase their input into and coordination of humanitarian operations in Syria.

We welcome the recent progress in cross-line humanitarian operations. There have been missions from Damascus to both the north-east and the north-west. We call on the United Nations to continue to strengthen cooperation with the Syrian Government and to scale up cross-line operations in combination with cross-border deliveries. Donor countries are encouraged to fulfil their assistance commitments to Syria as soon as possible. Such assistance should not come with preconditions, nor should it be used as a tool to further a political agenda or pressure the Syrian Government.

It is disturbing that the water supply of Allouk water station was cut off, affecting 460,000 people. The neutrality of civil infrastructure must be guaranteed.

The development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria cannot be overlooked. Forceful measures, as well as more assistance, must be put in place. The Syrian Government has taken decisive actions in many areas to reduce the risk of public transmission and save lives. The international community needs to support those efforts.

We are glad to know that the United Nations has formed 112 rapid response teams and that the World Health Organization has provided dedicated training for 432 persons. China has already delivered two batches of medical supplies to Syria. Last week, we provided specialized medical equipment to children's hospitals in Syria. We will continue to provide necessary assistance to the Syrian people.

The security situation in Syria deserves special attention. The international community should continue to support Syria in fighting terrorism, in line with international law and Security Council resolutions.

There has been a significant increase in attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria since early 2020. Recently, improvised explosive devices and mine explosions have caused a large number of casualties. Many incidents can be attributed to designated terrorist groups. We are concerned that a gas pipeline in the Damascus suburbs was attacked, causing a blackout throughout Syria on Monday. Counter-terrorism is an ongoing battle and a long-term task. A ceasefire should not mean the unleashing of terrorist activities. The international community must remain alert and adopt unified standards to combat terrorism, including in Syria.

With regard to the political process, let me reiterate China's firm support for the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process. The sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be upheld.

We are glad to learn that the third session of the Constitutional Committee is resuming today. We hope that the meeting is productive.

China rejects the groundless accusations of the United States. Such political propaganda and blatant lies have become a cliché in the United States statements. If the United States truly cared about the humanitarian situation in Syria, it could do many things instead of blaming others, including lifting unilateral sanctions. I strongly urge the United States to stop politicizing the Syrian humanitarian issue and to match its words with deeds.

Annex III

Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger

I thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham for his briefing. Through him, we once again thank all humanitarian workers, volunteers and local organizations. In the most unthinkable circumstances, they still go out every day to serve the needs of the Syrian people.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has a different dimension in conflict-affected countries. We are all shaken and disrupted by the effects of such an unprecedented situation. But we must recognize that in contexts such as the Syrian Arab Republic there are deep, protracted layers that contribute to a much complicated environment. The country's limited testing capacity, its collapsed health-care system and an increase in burials and death certificates could be telling a very different story from the one the numbers tell. We commend the efforts, led by the World Health Organization in support of the national health authorities, to increase Syria's overall capacity to address and respond to the pandemic.

We continue to be extremely concerned over the levels of food insecurity in the country. We are thankful that the explosion in the port of Beirut will not have an impact on the delivery of food assistance led by the World Food Programme.

However, we are concerned that the situation in the north-west, for example, where 2 million people could become food insecure, could deteriorate even further given the difficult economic situation and the ever-present possibility of increased hostilities. We therefore reiterate that humanitarian access must be sustained and facilitated in order to provide emergency food assistance and prevent more damage.

In that same vein, we wanted to highlight something that Mr. Rajasingham has already touched upon, namely, that, due to the closure of the Bab Al-Salam crossing point, humanitarian assistance in the north-west has become more costly, more risky and less timely. That is truly both concerning and shameful.

But in the north-east, while cross-line access has been possible to a limited extent, we continue to pay attention to the existing gap created by the closure of Al-Yarubiyah. The numbers speak for themselves, and we are seeing more COVID-19 cases in the north-east than in the north-west. In that regard, we emphasize the humanitarian imperative to utilize the most efficient and effective means for impartial needs-based assistance to the people in the north-east.

To conclude, it is only with a renewed sense of humanity and solidarity that we, the Security Council and the entire international community, will be able to support the Syrian people in these circumstances. Political will is necessary now more than ever to end the suffering that Syrians are enduring. The political solution to this conflict therefore needs to be the top priority of all stakeholders. Humanitarian assistance is not, and should not, replace our shared responsibility to that end.

We are living in unprecedented times of fear, suffering, indifference and uncertainty. Let us do our best to get all stakeholders to adhere to a national ceasefire, facilitate humanitarian access, release the detainees, abductees and information on missing persons to their families and work with determination to achieve the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. Children and teachers need to go back to school safely. Hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure need to be respected, Civilians need to be protected from harm, food insecurity, diseases and violence, and humanitarian access needs to be guaranteed. Above all, in the midst of a deadly pandemic, we need to be able to see the reality and prevent a catastrophic outcome.

Annex IV

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Gert Auväärt

We thank Acting Assistant Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Rajasingham for his briefing. We also extend gratitude to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its humanitarian workers, who currently provide aid to 7.2 million people inside Syria.

Unfortunately, widespread instability continues to undermine that tremendous humanitarian response. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/813), violations of the Idlib ceasefire agreement have increased and extremist armed groups continue to target Turkish-Russian joint patrols.

Furthermore, regime-held areas in the southern parts of Syria still suffer from continuing kidnappings and repression. Estonia demands the release of all arbitrarily detained people, especially women and children.

The fragile security situation is coupled with the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Across Syria, at least 2,500 people have been infected with the virus. As testing remains low, the actual number of infections is probably much higher.

It is worth noting that COVID-19 has already directly affected the Syrian political process, as the Constitutional Committee talks were postponed after three cases among the Committee's members were diagnosed in Geneva earlier this week.

At the same time, inside Syria, the people in overcrowded internally displaced persons camps are the most vulnerable to the virus. Estonia requests all parties to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to those areas.

Answering to our Russian and Chinese colleagues on the issue of sanctions, I repeat once again that there is absolutely no evidence that European Union (EU) sanctions are hindering the humanitarian response in Syria. Food, essential goods and medical supplies are not subject to EU restrictive measures. The sanctions target only specific individuals who support the Syrian regime.

As such, after nine years of war, the Syrian regime bears the primary responsibility for the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The findings of the Secretary-General's board of inquiry implied that earlier this year, similarly to other independent investigations throughout this long, well-documented war.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, Wadid Benaabou**

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing. As he pointed out, the coronavirus disease pandemic continues to spread, including in the north-west and north-east. We know that the reality of the pandemic is probably even more alarming than the figures he quoted, as the testing capacity is very low.

In that context, an immediate cessation of hostilities and a humanitarian pause, in accordance with the terms of resolution 2532 (2020) and the appeals of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, are more essential than ever. They are all the more necessary as the truce in the north-west remains fragile.

We cannot say it often enough: respect for international humanitarian law is an obligation incumbent on all parties. I am thinking in particular of the protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as civilian infrastructure. France will continue to strongly support all efforts to prevent and punish violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Our collective priority today is to respond to the emergency and meet the ever-growing humanitarian needs not only in Syria, but also in Lebanon, where the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities are exacerbated by recent developments. The instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance must stop. All parties, in particular the Syrian regime, must ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need of assistance.

France regrets the closure of the Bab Al-Salam border crossing and the lack of consensus within the Council to reopen the Al-Yarubiyah border crossing, at a time when the spread of the pandemic and worsening food insecurity make the delivery of aid to the north-east and north-west even more essential. However, we cannot ignore the consequences of the adoption of resolution 2533 (2020): humanitarian operations in the north-west are now more costly, higher risk and less timely.

In conclusion, only a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015) will put an end to the humanitarian tragedy and bring lasting stability to the country. As long as a credible political process is not firmly under way, France and the European Union will not finance reconstruction. Finally, the Council is aware of our positions on the lifting of sanctions and normalization. They remain unchanged.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

I make this statement on behalf of Belgium and Germany, the humanitarian co-penholders. We would like to thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for his briefing.

In July, civil society briefer Amany Qaddour asked us, the Security Council, to share the risk humanitarian aid workers are exposed to — the risk of displacement, violence, insecurity and, I may add, infectious diseases — and not to simply pass it down to those who already absorbed so much and in many cases sacrificed their lives in the process (S/2020/758, annex II). One week ago we remembered these victims on World Humanitarian Day. Syria, sadly, is at the top of the list of the deadliest places for humanitarian workers.

We bow our head to those who gave their lives fulfilling humanitarian duties — but do we follow Ms. Qaddour's recommendation? Do we live up to humanitarian expectations, for instance, delivering aid via the most direct routes?

In his most recent bimonthly report, the Secretary-General gave a first assessment of the consequences of the closure of Bab Al-Salam:

“The first cross-border aid delivery dispatched to northern Aleppo via Bab Al-Hawa under the new resolution was subject to the anticipated challenges, resulting in a more costly, higher risk, less timely and, ultimately, less effective humanitarian response.” (S/2020/813, para. 51)

And in this first convoy, only seven trucks experienced neither the impact of combat activities nor harsh winter conditions on poor roads. Warehouses are still full because enough inventory had been stocked beforehand, but this will change. The numbers of trucks will have to increase significantly and the challenges and risks will grow further. The number of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance and protection is growing.

Years of war, mismanagement and oppression, now exacerbated by the economic crisis in neighbouring Lebanon, have aggravated the economic crisis in Syria. This has led to an additional 1.4 million people becoming food insecure over the past six months, while the most recent projections estimate that another 2 million are at risk of becoming food insecure: the total number could exceed 11 million soon.

Furthermore, the spread of the coronavirus disease across the country is increasing exponentially. Testing capacities remain very low, so most cases may go unnoticed. The numbers we hear about may only represent the tip of the iceberg. The destruction of health facilities and the shortage of health workers dramatically imperil any response.

All this indicates that more, not less, humanitarian access is needed, today and tomorrow. The countries that lobbied against cross-border access have to engage actively to improve crossline access. Consistent, safe and unimpeded access is urgently needed — and not only a spectacular one-time delivery via costly and time-consuming routes, such as Erbil- Damascus- Qamishli. What is needed is distribution to all people and health-care facilities, and not the regime deciding who is worthy of receiving aid and who is not.

As of the end of August 2020, we have to acknowledge that cross-line assistance to the north-west is still not working and that many health stations in the north-east are still lacking most basic goods.

As humanitarian co-penholders we stress again that the closing of Al-Yarubiyah in January and the closing of Bab Al-Salam last month contradict humanitarian logic. We have pushed as much as we could to find a solution guided by the humanitarian imperative and to keep those crossings open. The burden of responsibility lies with those countries that have systematically limited humanitarian access through the cross-border modality. We hope that they carefully listen to the consequences just described by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We hope that they will also try to contribute to diminishing the humanitarian impact of having closed those crossings.

The Allouk water station is another example of how humanitarian arguments are defied. Ramesh Rajasingham just explained the latest problems. There is simply no excuse for denying access to water to millions of men, women and children. Doing this during the hot summer months and in the middle of a pandemic is even more inhumane. We ask all parties who bear responsibility to find a sustainable solution and to guarantee a constant supply of water for the region.

Protection issues sadly persist not only for those in arbitrary detention or who are still missing, but also for those who have become victims of air or ground offensives. The numbers have significantly increased over the past months. We call on all parties to maximize restraint and consider the humanitarian repercussions of military actions. We condemn the recent attacks of terrorist groups. Let me again underline that any response should comply with obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

Finally, only a political settlement in line with resolution 2254 (2015) can put Syria back on track towards peace. So the news this morning that the talks in Geneva could resume was very good.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani

We thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for his updates on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

With over 11 million people already in need of humanitarian assistance, my delegation is deeply concerned about the increased suffering of the Syrian people due to the economic fragility and the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly with various hostilities in some areas of the country, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/813).

My delegation also remains alarmed by the growing number of people in Syria who are food insecure.

A targeted and sustained humanitarian response is key to addressing these challenges. We are pleased that, despite difficult circumstances, the United Nations continues to provide humanitarian assistance throughout Syria. It is important that the aid meet the priority needs of the people.

Allow me to highlight the following points.

First, with regard to the importance of prompt, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, we urge all the relevant parties to take all appropriate steps to promptly facilitate safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance for all civilians in need.

My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the first cross-border aid delivery under resolution 2533 (2020), of which the operations have become more costly, less timely and higher risk. Indonesia appreciates the ongoing efforts to ensure that these operations continue with minimal impact on the Syrian people and looks forward to receiving more details and information on this issue. We wish to also encourage key parties, particularly the Syrian authorities and the United Nations agencies, to continue and strengthen their coordination in order to increase the cross-line deliveries.

Secondly, with regard to the Allouk water station, my delegation wishes to specifically address this issue since the water station, which provides a water supply to almost half a million civilians, has been disrupted many times. People in Hasakah governorate, including people in the Al-Hol camp, are continuously facing a crucial water crisis. The severe water shortages faced by those vulnerable communities, against the background of the threat of a COVID-19 outbreak, is indeed disturbing. We commend the United Nations and its partners for their efforts to address this issue and scale up water trucking. However, it is crucial to ensure a sustainable and a long-term solution to this problem. Indonesia encourages the United Nations to continue advocating for a sustainable agreement among all the relevant parties on the facilitation of access to water as a basic service, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, my delegation urges all parties to the conflict to immediately cease all forms of violence. We have stressed this over and over again. All parties to the conflict must respect the ceasefire agreement and do everything in their power to protect civilians. The fragile humanitarian conditions in Syria should not be met with additional hostilities. The international community must secure all efforts to assist the Syrian people and prevent another humanitarian tragedy. Millions of Syrian people cannot bear more devastation or distress.

Before concluding, on the Constitutional Committee, my delegation is pleased to note that the third session of the Committee in Geneva is resuming. We wish to extend our support to all the Committee members and Special Envoy Pedersen, and we wish them all the very best in moving the discussion forward.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi

I thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham for his briefing. I also warmly welcome the representative of Syria.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire, and actions need to be stepped up to alleviate the hardship that millions of Syrians have been enduring for almost 10 years now. A decade of war, the collapse of the economy and the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have further complicated the already precarious living conditions of many Syrians. In this respect, allow me to touch upon the following points.

First, we commend the efforts of the Syrian Government in continuing its collaboration with the United Nations and other organizations in the fight against the spread of the pandemic and in ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance. My delegation echoes the call of the Secretary-General on the parties to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for all civilians in need, wherever they are located.

Secondly, my delegation remains concerned about the recent increase in hostilities in spite of the Turkish and Russian ceasefire agreement. We reiterate the call of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for an immediate nationwide ceasefire in Syria and an all-out effort to combat the pandemic.

However, my delegation would like to stress that the call for a ceasefire and the need for a common and collective effort in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic should not distract us from the fight against terrorism, especially as evidence shows that terrorist groups are trying to take advantage of the current situation. Whether in Syria or in the Sahel, Governments, in partnership with the international community, should have the right to continue the fight against terrorism on their territories, in compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, especially with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Thirdly, in an effort to build confidence, the Niger calls for a large-scale and unilateral release of detainees, as well as more meaningful action in the cases of missing persons, by all belligerents. Additionally, ensuring that all detainees get necessary medical care and that deserved clarification be given to the families of missing persons will be another step to that end.

Fourthly, we condemn the repeated disruption of the Allouk water station, which serves Syrians in Hasakah governorate, including internally displaced persons who are already living in hardship conditions, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, according to Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about 30 per cent of Syrian food transits through the port of Beirut. With the blast of 4 August, and as the humanitarian crisis deepens in Syria and the region, there is an urgent need to take the necessary steps to guarantee access to food, essential medical supplies and medical assistance around the country, in keeping with resolution 2533 (2020). Hence, we also reiterate our call for humanitarian relief from all unilateral economic measures that may hinder the Government's ability to effectively fight this pandemic and which will complicate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham for his briefing.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains alarmed by the dire humanitarian situation in Syria. The amalgamation of conflict, economic downturn and the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has considerably intensified the humanitarian emergency and the scale of human suffering.

The cross-border mechanism therefore remains a critical component of the humanitarian response, and we continue to support its operation. We take note of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/813), which highlights, among other matters, that cross-border aid deliveries face considerable challenges, including having to travel longer distances. It is evident that the mechanism must be strengthened and optimized to ensure its effectiveness in providing timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access, in coordination with the Syrian Government and in line with the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance. The scaling up of the cross-line modality must also be prioritized to assist in filling the existing gaps.

Syria's declining socioeconomic situation is a cause for concern. Millions are now food insecure, with millions more on the brink. Basic commodities are out of reach owing to hyperinflation, and as a result, many Syrians have resorted to negative coping mechanisms. Amid the challenges, COVID-19 cases are on the rise with nearly one third of all active cases requiring hospitalization. Syria's health care system was already in a fragile state prior to the emergence of the pandemic, and a major outbreak of the virus will undoubtedly be devastating to the country.

On this point, we yet again appeal for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria. These measures undermine the country's capacity to fight the pandemic and further burden the moribund economy.

We echo the Special Envoy's call for a nationwide ceasefire to end the violence, preserve critical civilian infrastructure and enable humanitarian actors to effectively carry out their important work. We urge the parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire in the north-west and exercise maximum restraint. We also remind the parties that all military and counter-terrorism activities must comply with the fundamental principles of armed conflict.

The Allouk water station continues to face numerous interruptions, leaving almost half a million civilians without its vital supply, including those residing in the densely populated Al-Hol camp. A sustainable solution to this increasingly troubling issue must be found, especially in consideration of the pandemic.

Reconstruction is inextricably linked to the improvement of the country's humanitarian situation. It is also a necessary requirement for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. We therefore continue to encourage members of the international community to contribute to the country's reconstruction efforts.

The humanitarian situation is distressing, and it will not improve in the absence of a political resolution to the conflict. The well-being of the Syrian people is paramount. They deserve peace and stability. The international community must continue to engage constructively towards a political solution with the Syrian people at the forefront.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations**

I would like to thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ramesh Rajasingham for his frank and insightful briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria. I also extend South Africa's sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations humanitarian agencies, partners and personnel for their tireless efforts in ensuring that the people of Syria be provided with the essential assistance they so desperately require.

In that regard, we call on the international community to assist in this effort by contributing to the humanitarian programmes aimed at helping the Syrian people. I would also like to pay tribute to those humanitarian workers who have given their lives in the course of assisting the Syrian people.

Since the beginning of this year, 20 aid workers have been killed, making Syria the most insecure country for aid workers for the third year in a row, with national aid workers being the most affected. More must be done to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers.

As we heard this morning, the humanitarian situation in Syria continues to be of concern, with Syrian civilians, particularly children, many of whom have known nothing but conflict, continuing to endure the worst aspects of this dire situation.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further significantly impacted the economic and humanitarian situations. The effect of over nine years of conflict on critical infrastructure, including the health, education, water and sanitation sectors, has eroded Syria's capacity to fully respond to this pandemic. The risk to refugees and internally displaced populations are of particular concern, given their cramped quarters and limited access to necessary water and sanitation services.

In this regard, the continued disruption of service at the Allouk water station is deeply troubling, as the station is the primary source of clean water for over 460,000 people in the Al-Hasakah governorate, including Al-Hol camp. South Africa therefore calls on the parties to ensure that water services are fully restored and a long-term sustainable solution found to ensure that shortages and disruptions no longer occur.

Additionally, South Africa calls on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, such as schools, health facilities and water-reticulation facilities.

It has now been over a month since the cross-border humanitarian assistance programme was reduced to just one border crossing, at Bab Al-Hawa. We appreciated the lengths gone to by the United Nations and its partners in making every effort to ensure that people in need feel minimal impact as a result of this reduction.

However, we must also remain cognizant of the increased challenges this has brought about, making humanitarian operations in the north-west more costly, riskier and less timely. South Africa calls on all actors, in particular the Syrian Government, to increase cooperation with humanitarian agencies and work towards the improvement and enhancement of all modalities, including cross-line assistance programmes.

We note with appreciation the efforts for increased cross-line deliveries in the north-east and north-west of Syria, and call on all parties to continue these efforts.

South Africa reiterates its call for the safe, unimpeded and impartial delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance to all who require it, in line with the provisions of international humanitarian law.

In the light of the continuing humanitarian situation and the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in all parts of Syria, the imposition of unilateral sanctions only further worsens the economic and humanitarian situation in the country. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to include in his bi-monthly reports to the Security Council an overview of the effects and impact of unilateral sanctions on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

In conclusion, the situation in Syria can be resolved only through negotiations and mediation. South Africa calls on all parties to exert every effort towards the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). In this regard, we are pleased to hear that the discussions of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, suspended due to positive COVID-19 cases among a few of the participants, will resume today.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Kais Kabtani**

I thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for his briefing.

My delegation also takes note of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Syria pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions (S/2020/813).

Recent reports suggest Syria is currently faced with a harrowing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation. As it stands, the pandemic is rising exponentially in a way that is threatening the most vulnerable and halting the smooth conduct of the much-needed, much-awaited work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva.

Moreover, millions of Syrians are slipping into deep poverty and food insecurity as a result of the economic freefall, thereby making a dire humanitarian situation actually worse.

We are deeply disturbed by the humanitarian and socioeconomic disaster in the making in Syria as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic fallout and economic collapse. It is therefore urgently necessary to address vulnerability, fragility and the drivers of instability in order to mitigate the worsening humanitarian crisis.

Tunisia believes that focus should be placed on five key priorities: the ceasefire, humanitarian access, health care, food security and rehabilitation of critical public services. And I would like to further elaborate on these priorities.

First, ending hostilities and restoring calm throughout Syria are both urgent prerequisites and long-term goals to effectively cope with the humanitarian emergency brought about by COVID-19 and put Syria on the path of sustainable and lasting peace.

We remain deeply disturbed by the fragile security situation across Syria and the impact it has had on the physical integrity of civilians, including women and children, as well as on civilian infrastructure.

In recent weeks, tensions and unrest have grown more tangible in several parts of northern and southern Syria. Furthermore, international humanitarian law and ceasefire violations have regrettably not abated, notwithstanding the appeal of Special Envoy Pedersen for a nationwide ceasefire and the understandings on the de-escalation zone in Idlib.

We reiterate our call on all parties to exercise the utmost restraint, de-escalate tensions and protect civilians and civilian objects in all circumstances. The Syrian people cannot withstand a new wave of widespread hostilities.

Ultimately, a political process that is firmly on track and enables a just, Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015) would resolve the humanitarian crisis and bring peace and prosperity to the Syrian people.

Secondly, I recall the importance of a needs-based, vulnerability-based, whole-of-Syria approach to humanitarian assistance using all access modalities. We welcome the resumption of cross-border operations from Bab Al-Hawa into north-west Syria in implementation of resolution 2533 (2020), as well as the scaling-up in overall humanitarian relief from Damascus in the first half of 2020, including into the north-east. We also take note of the progress in planning the cross-line mission to Atarib in north-western Syria.

The challenges arising from the use of a single border crossing, pursuant to resolution 2533 (2020), highlight the need for commitment, cooperation and dialogue among the relevant parties in order to maintain safe, timely, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access into the north-west.

Thirdly, a systematic focus on the underequipped and underresourced Syrian health-care system becomes ever-more necessary to avert a catastrophic spread of the disease. It is critical to step up efforts related to adequate funding, scaling up of testing capacity and provision of medical supplies, as well as support for humanitarian partners and protection of medical and humanitarian workers.

Fourthly, the alarming rise in food insecurity, aggravated by inflation, massive poverty and unemployment, underscores the need for sustainable assistance for livelihoods, as well as for strengthening safety nets and building long-term resilience. We appreciate, in this respect, the scaled up assistance by the World Food Programme to millions in need throughout Syria, taking into account, in particular, the economic impact of COVID-19.

Fifthly, there is a need to rehabilitate critical public services, such as hospitals, schools and water, electricity and sanitation supplies. Tunisia is deeply troubled by the recurring, yet unresolved, issue of disruption to clean water and electricity supplies as a result of hostilities, which is limiting access to such basic services for innocent Syrians and hindering core sanitation and hygiene measures against COVID-19.

We stress that it is critical to rehabilitate electrical lines and water pipes as part of any sustainable solution to this issue, while reiterating our call on parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. At the same time, the rehabilitation of shattered hospitals and schools, following nearly a decade of conflict, is a moral imperative in order to make the lives of children and other vulnerable Syrian populations modestly better and focus on the true battle of saving lives and future generations.

Annex XII**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I very much thank the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for his briefing today. There can be no doubt, based on his assessment, that the Syrian people need more United Nations humanitarian aid now more than ever, and still the Al-Assad regime is failing to step up to meet its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

At this time of significant humanitarian need, the welfare of millions of Syrians remains at the mercy of the political calculations of the Al-Assad regime and the Russian Federation. Due to the callous and inhumane Russian and Chinese vetoes earlier this summer, United Nations humanitarian access via the cross-border modality is forced to trickle into Syria from the single remaining crossing point at Bab Al-Hawa. And despite their assertions to the contrary, we have seen no sustained improvements in the regime's provision of cross-line access. Russia and China's refusals to reauthorize the Al-Yarubiyah crossing continue to have a profound impact on the lives of Syrians in need.

We are deeply saddened by reports from UNICEF earlier this month that eight children under the age of five died in Al-Hol in less than a week. We understand that four of those deaths were caused by malnutrition-related complications.

I know that we all talk about things like this in the Security Council all the time, and I worry that sometimes our words lose their meaning because we talk about such horrifying events just in our normal statements. But these were real people; these were real children; they were real lives that were cut short. They were never given the chance to become what they should have become. They were never allowed to recognize their potential, that they had no choice over the situation that they had been put into. These deaths were completely preventable — had the thousands of camp inhabitants still received the life-saving combination of cross-line deliveries from Damascus and cross-border aid deliveries from Al-Yarubiyah.

Each of us needs to ask herself whether the deaths of these eight innocent children could have been spared had the Council been able to keep Al-Yarubiyah open. For the United States, the answer to that question is very clear: yes. The Security Council has to do better.

The United States is also concerned by the reports we are receiving about a massive coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in the Damascus region and elsewhere in regime-controlled areas. There are no reliable statistics from Syrian authorities in Damascus and no transparency, in general, from the Al-Assad regime on the scale of the outbreak. There is no clear picture of how the Syrian Government is using the COVID-19 assistance it has been receiving from the international community. Nor has the regime conducted any significant public health campaign or outreach to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Therefore, we call on the Syrian authorities to immediately grant full and transparent access to the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations to collect statistics and determine the scale of the pandemic in Syria. Until that happens, the Syrian people will continue to suffer while they and the rest of the world have no real idea about what is going on inside the Syrian Government's territory.

The coronavirus is absolutely exacerbating the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Of the more than 1,600 confirmed cases of coronavirus reported, dozens of health workers across Syria have tested positive. This complicates humanitarian efforts.

The United States stands with the Syrian doctors and other health-care and humanitarian professionals, including the volunteer White Helmets, who are serving on the front line of the pandemic to protect their communities. The brave men and women of the White Helmets remain in our thoughts as they put their lives in danger to help others. Rest assured that the United States will continue to do everything in its power to provide humanitarian assistance and support to all the Syrian people in need.

In north-east Syria, the United States is closely monitoring the operating status of the Allouk water station. The United States has been very clear with all sides, including with the Turkish authorities, that restricting access to water and other basic services is unacceptable. We encourage the United Nations to provide technical assistance to address the water station's operations, because it is imperative that water be permitted to flow at levels that adequately meet humanitarian needs, particularly in the midst of a pandemic. The United States will continue engaging with the relevant parties to achieve a sustainable solution.

In north-west Syria, the recent airstrikes by Russia and ground movements by Syrian forces in Idlib province are of serious concern. The continuation of the 5 March Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement is fundamental to a lasting political solution to the conflict. Notably, the continuation of the Idlib ceasefire is more essential now than ever since resolution 2533 (2020) forced the United Nations to shift its operations from Bab Al-Salam and reach the entire displaced population through Bab Al-Hawa alone.

Renewed military hostilities could have a profound and crippling impact on United Nations aid deliveries from Bab Al-Hawa, and there is no backup option for United Nations cross-border assistance to flow into the country if Bab Al-Hawa is closed.

Therefore, every single member of the Council must commit to ensuring that Bab Al-Hawa remains open. To that end, the United States urges Turkey and Russia to contain all escalatory incidents, continue cooperation on the implementation of the 5 March memorandum of understanding and restore calm in Idlib.

The Al-Assad regime must also heed the calls of Special Envoy Pedersen to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus by releasing detainees who are being unjustly held in horrific conditions.

Seven years ago, on 21 August 2013, the Al-Assad regime launched a horrific chemical attack with the nerve agent sarin on the Ghouta district in Damascus that killed more than 1,400 Syrians, many of them children. On this solemn anniversary, the United States reiterates our resolve to prevent further use of those deadly weapons and to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable for its heinous crimes against the Syrian people.

The United States is committed to the future of the Syrian people — all of the Syrian people. Every Syrian child should have an opportunity to live up to his or her highest potential. Instead, they and their parents worry whether they will live until their next birthday. That is wrong. The United States will continue to work towards a peaceful future for all Syrians, and we know the rest of the Council will as well.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Pham Hai Anh**

I would like to thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for his briefing. My delegation takes note with concern of the information provided in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/813) and the further updates by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs today.

It is sad that we can grow accustomed to listening to these disturbing reports and numbers every month and still do nothing to help stop the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria. Viet Nam is deeply concerned over the insurmountable difficulties faced by the Syrian people as well as the increasing challenges to meeting their basic needs.

There is no easy way to report the number of civilians killed and injured. Indeed, 369 is the number for this reporting period, half of them women and children, many of whom were killed or maimed by explosive devices.

Zero damage to educational facilities in the reporting period is a good sign but needs to be sustained. It is our great concern that the fragile health-care system and overburdened indispensable health workers continue to be attacked, killed or injured by the hostilities and by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Catastrophic consequences cannot be avoided if the health-care system is not protected and strengthened.

We are troubled by the worsening development of COVID-19 in Syria and its impacts on the already dire humanitarian situation in the country. This enemy threatens millions of Syrians in all areas by limiting humanitarian access, obstructing the humanitarian response and worsening the socioeconomic crisis and the economy's ability to recover. In addition, the pandemic has also been hindering dialogue and negotiation efforts to find a long-term solution to the suffering of the Syrian people. Just a few days ago, the long-awaited talks within the framework of the Constitutional Committee were, unfortunately, put on hold.

Water and food are critical to the survival of human beings. We continue to be greatly concerned about the increasing food insecurity and repeated incidents that cause water shortages affecting millions and hundreds of thousands of people, respectively.

Viet Nam would like to stress the following points.

First, at this time it is important to ensure timely, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access in order to facilitate effective humanitarian operations to all parts of Syria. A sustainable, calm environment is greatly needed. Insecurity and the increasing violence and unrest in the north-west and the north-east, as well as other regions, need to be addressed to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the people in need in a timely manner and in adequate quantity.

We reiterate our support for the call by the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for a nationwide ceasefire and call on the parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, particularly the obligations to protect civilians and civilian objects, and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Regarding the implementation of resolution 2533 (2020), we welcome the steps taken by the United Nations and its implementing partners in addressing logistical challenges in order to maintain the provision of assistance into north-west Syria. We take note of the increase in cross-line deliveries to the north-east and encourage

the Government of Syria and the relevant parties to continue their cooperation in that regard.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian response, Viet Nam appreciates the efforts of United Nations agencies and international partners and donors in providing support to the Syrian people. We would also like to pay tribute to all humanitarian workers on the ground for their continued dedication in the face of great difficulties.

We once again reiterate the importance of strengthening Syria's COVID-19 preparedness and response capability by providing the necessary technical assistance, medical supplies and personnel, as may be required. Early response can go a long way, including by improving testing capacity and implementing basic measures to avert a major outbreak.

We also would like to call on all concerned parties to address the reported issues regarding the situation in camps for internally displaced persons. The water shortage caused by the disruption of the Allouk water station, affecting nearly half a million people in Hasakah, requires a timely and sustained solution.

Last but not least, we call for continued international support for Syria in all areas and by all means in accordance with its needs.

The humanitarian situation in Syria demands a long-term solution that brings about sustainable peace and development for all Syrian people. It is our firm belief that the only way to achieve this is to pursue a comprehensive political solution, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and in full accordance with international law.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: English and Arabic]

Over the past years, the Governments of some States members of the Security Council have dealt with the humanitarian situation in my country with blatant selectivity. That selectivity has manifested itself, and continues to be manifested, in their politicized focus on certain areas to protect the remnants of the terrorist organizations that control them. That selectivity is also aimed at preventing the Syrian Arab Army and its allies from liberating them from terrorism. At the same time, those Governments deliberately overlooked the catastrophic humanitarian conditions experienced by Syrians in other areas occupied by the American and Turkish forces and the crimes committed by their tools of proxy separatist militias and terrorist organizations.

I will be focusing in my statement today on the areas that were termed in the deliberations of the Council as areas located in north-eastern Syria and which have been dubbed by the United States Administration as areas east of the Euphrates. The suffering of those areas has not been limited to the afflictions resulting from the criminal practices of the terrorist organization the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, or to the results of the crimes of the illegal international coalition that wreaked havoc and devastation in the region and paved the way for the occupation and looting of Syria's resources, including oil, gas, antiquities and agricultural crops. Rather, the suffering of the Syrian people in those areas was exacerbated in quantity and quality as a result of the crimes of the American and Turkish occupation.

Today, as has been the case for more than 20 days now, more than 1 million Syrian civilian in Hasakah city and its surrounding areas — in north-eastern Syria — are facing water deprivation and thirst as the Turkish regime continues to commit its crimes, using water as a weapon of war to punish the people of the city, including women, children and the elderly, because they refuse occupation and hold on to their country.

With the blessing of the American Administration and its tools, the Turkish occupation forces and their proxies have cut off the pumping of drinking water from the Allouk station and the wells feeding it more than 16 times and for varying periods, the last of which extended for more than 20 days, which resulted in the suffering of our people in Hasakah. That city has so far continued to suffer from thirst due to the extreme climate conditions and the health threats associated with the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

On behalf of the Government of my country, I have addressed many relevant official letters to the Council and to His Excellency the Secretary-General. Unfortunately, we have not seen from the Council any concrete steps to stop these prescribed atrocities and gross violations.

While we express our thanks and gratitude to the Secretary-General for his prompt response and his good offices to end the suffering of our people in Hasakah and to ensure that drinking water is re-pumped to them urgently, we condemn the failure of the Turkish regime and its tools to respond as promptly as required, and we deplore the positions of Mr. Lowcock, who is supposed to represent the human face of the United Nations. Mr. Lowcock, instead of condemning the crimes of the Turkish occupation in his briefings, has previously, before this very Council, thanked the Turkish regime for its facilitation in sending a technical team to repair the Allouk station, ignoring the fact that the Turkish regime bombed the station and

attacked its workers, expelling them, as it launched what was called a “peace spring operation”. He also ignored the fact that this station is a civilian facility that provides necessary drinking water to more than 1 million Syrian civilians and that bombing it or cutting off its water supply is a barbaric act, a war crime and a crime against humanity under international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. That crime requires urgent action from the United Nations to put an end to this occupation and end the suffering of the people of Hasakah from water deprivation and thirst. I would have expected Mr. Lowcock to head a humanitarian demonstration in front of the Turkish Permanent Mission protesting the deprivation of the people of Hasakah city of drinking water.

We have the right to ask: if Mr. Lowcock is biased and incapable of taking professional, objective and credible positions, why did the so-called humanitarian co-penholders in the Council not take action to hold meetings and adopt at least one presidential statement condemning Erdoğan’s targeting of the Allouk civilian water station and his use of water as a weapon to punish civilians?

These self-proclaimed co-penholders and those behind them are clearly loyal to NATO and its aggressive policies, which show zero respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and human rights. That disrespect has been demonstrated on an ongoing basis, as no voices were raised when attacks by the American occupation forces caused severe damage to the Euphrates and Baath dams, energy and water plants and to the famous suspension bridge in Deir ez-Zor, in addition to other civilian facilities. Nor were their voices raised when, on 27 March 2017, the illegitimate coalition air force targeted a vehicle carrying a team of technicians supervising the Euphrates dam and volunteers from the Syrian Red Crescent as they were trying to reach the dam to repair the damage caused by the United States bombing and prevent its collapse. That sinful attack led to the death of Firas Al-Hussein, a Syrian citizen who was a humanitarian volunteer in the Syrian Red Crescent, while the rest of the team were injured. None of my Western colleagues in the Council at the time, nor at any other time — I do not have the time to enumerate them now — uttered a single word about the American air force targeting humanitarian workers.

Two days ago, the so-called international coalition acknowledged its responsibility for killing 1,377 civilians during its hostilities, considering them as collateral damage. Of course, the numbers exceed this number exponentially, but the matter will pass unnoticed so long as Germany and Belgium are the two entrusted humanitarian co-penholders in the Council. Therefore, international law has become like the gentle lamb whose care is entrusted to a herd of wolves.

Today Erdoğan is committing these crimes in joint complicity to implement the Western project based on targeting and destroying civil and service structures and the institutions of the Syrian State. If the Council thinks that our words do not show the reality on the ground, we challenge it to prove the opposite and take steps to hold the countries that are occupying parts of my country accountable for their crimes against Syria and the region in general.

The Syrian State and Syrian humanitarian organizations have honourably assumed their responsibilities in the face of the Turkish regime’s crime of cutting off drinking water to the residents of Hasakah. Drinking water has been provided to our people there to the extent possible, but the needs exceed all expectations and capabilities owing to the Turkish and American occupation of the northern and eastern areas of Syria.

Syria warns of the continuation or recurrence of this disaster and demands that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the European Union countries and leaders wake up from their irresponsible slumber and show respect for the moral and legal foundations on which this international Organization is based.

In continuation of the policies of some Governments hostile to my country, on 24 August terrorist organizations blew up the gas pipeline feeding the Syrian electric power stations, causing a general blackout all over Syria.

That terrorist attack, perpetrated by the terrorist groups supported by the American troops in the Al-Tanf occupied area, is merely a link in the chain of economic terrorism that has become the dominant title of the current phase. This economic terrorism is practiced by some Governments of the States Members of the Organization vis-à-vis my country by imposing unilateral coercive measures, including the so-called Caesar Act, and through the crimes that those Governments commit directly or through their tools of separatist militias and terrorist organizations to plunder oil, gas, antiquities, wheat and agricultural crops and destroy civilian facilities and infrastructure.

All of those crimes aim to suffocate Syrian citizens and deprive them of their basic requirements of food, medicine, gas and electricity, obstructing the reconstruction process, preventing the return of the displaced and exerting greater pressure on the Syrian Government to make political concessions, especially since that terrorist bombing coincided with the commencement of the third round of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to a study published a few days ago by the Center for a New American Security, funded by the United States Government. This study is authored by Nicholas Heras, a researcher at the Center who has also worked with the Pentagon. It calls on Washington to weaponize wheat to starve civilians in Syria in order to reduce food supplies and pressure the Syrian Government and Russia to make political concessions that serve United States interests in the region. This twisted logic of using wheat as a weapon to punish civilians is akin to Erdoğan's use of water as a weapon to punish civilians.

Some of the Governments of Council Member States have slaughtered international humanitarian law in their policies towards my country just as they slaughtered its biological father — international law — before it. Nothing remains before the Council, except the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, which a number of Member States still uphold and defend. The question here is, does the Council want the provisions of our Charter to fail this test too?

Finally, in response to what the United States representative has stated about the situation in Al-Hol camp, we stress the responsibility of the American Administration, its terrorist militias and some European Governments for the current situation in the camp. That is in view of the American occupation of that area and the refusal of some European Governments to repatriate their thousands of semi-human trash who were sent illegally to my country as terrorists without borders and their families. We have demanded this over and over. Separatist militias of the Syrian Democratic Forces, which are proxies of the American occupation, are trying to take advantage of the issue of inhabitants of Al-Hol camp to feign some sort of recognition, then concluding suspicious cheap deals and using them as political media blackmail.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Hadi Sinirliöglu**

First, I would like to thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham for his briefing.

As we recently marked World Humanitarian Day, we pay tribute to all humanitarian workers for their sacrifice. These unsung heroes do a remarkable job each and every day, especially for the Syrian people.

Resolution 2533 (2020) is a devastating blow for Syria, which is on the brink of a widespread coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, with a severely weakened health infrastructure.

The loss of the Bab Al-Salam crossing point interrupted direct access to parts of northern Aleppo. Unfortunately, the Security Council failed to reauthorize the most direct, effective and highly monitored route to reach 1.3 million people. Since the closure of the Bab Al-Salam crossing point, my Government, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is striving to respond to the immense humanitarian needs in the north-west.

We have been working to increase the capacity for Bab Al-Hawa crossing point. However, access from Bab Al-Hawa will be limited and the United Nations will need to address the additional costs and challenges related to longer distances. Let me repeat once again that the so-called cross-line access is not an option for the north-west and can never replace cross-border humanitarian deliveries.

On the pandemic front, the means and measures to combat a possible outbreak is insufficient. The Al-Assad regime and its backers have conducted at least 530 attacks on hundreds of health facilities and destroyed the basic infrastructure of the country.

It is estimated that Syria has the capacity to treat only 6,500 cases of COVID-19, due to its limited health-care capacity. As of today, at least 60 doctors in Syria have lost their lives to COVID-19. A high number of fatalities among health-care workers is an important indicator of widespread communal infection and lack of protective equipment and training. Yet, due to a lack of reliable information, we do not know the severity of the situation in regime-controlled areas.

Our humanitarian partners emphasize that, due to medical aid channelled in from Turkey, north-west Syria is the best-prepared region to mitigate the effects of an outbreak. However, the rapidly rising number of cases since the first COVID-19 case was recorded in the region is concerning. In addition, the lack of access to water and sanitation exacerbates the effects of the pandemic.

The Security Council has listened to the lies of the regime representative on the Allouk water station. Now let me set the record straight — water pumps serving the station operate on electric power from the Tishrin Dam, which is under the control of the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG). Since last November, electricity to the Allouk station has been regularly and deliberately cut by the PKK/YPG.

Thanks to our repeated démarches towards those who have influence on the PKK/YPG, electricity flow to Allouk has been resumed, and the pumping of water from the station has been recently restored. However, its sustainability and the provision of water to Al-Hasakah at full capacity depends on the uninterrupted supply of electric power. We are ready to work with the United Nations in order to find a durable solution.

The Secretary-General reports that insufficient potable and farming water supply in Al-Bab also affects water access for the local population and the ability to maintain health and hygiene standards. We should not let terrorist organizations and the Al-Assad regime use water resources as a weapon to further weaken the Syrian people for their separatist and malicious agendas. We should be vigilant against attempts by the regime and the PKK/YPG to gain legitimacy by exploiting the pandemic as a pretext.

The PKK/YPG seeks to consolidate its power throughout the north-east by oppression and economic incentives, such as so-called oil contracts and legislation to confiscate property. Let me be clear — Turkey will never condone such attempts.

We continue our efforts to preserve the ceasefire in Idlib, despite violations by the regime. Idlib is the last refuge for Syrians fleeing Al-Assad, and it should be protected at all costs. As always, Turkey reserves the right to use force to respond to any attack by the regime or radical groups. Maintaining the ceasefire is essential for improving the humanitarian situation, facilitating the return of internally displaced persons to their homes and reviving the political process.

The only way to end the Syrian conflict is through the United Nations-mediated political solution process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). With that understanding, we have been focusing on the stabilization of the situation in Idlib and the establishment of a credible, balanced and legitimate Constitutional Committee.

We welcome the convening of the third session of the Constitutional Committee on 24 August in Geneva. Turkey will spare no effort to ensure the success of the Committee, which is a milestone in the political process. We expect the international community to support the Committee's viable functioning and to not allow the regime to backtrack.

Last week marked the seventh anniversary of the 2013 Ghouta chemical attack, where the Al-Assad regime massacred hundreds of civilians in a single day. The horrifying images still haunt us to this day. That was neither the first nor the last time the murderous regime used chemical weapons against its own people.

In each and every incident in Syria, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has arrived at the same stark conclusion: the regime is responsible for chemical attacks against civilians. The report (S/1867/2020) of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team on the three chemical attacks that took place in March 2017 in Ltamenah is just the latest documentation of the ever-growing record of the Syrian regime's crimes against humanity.

I will not respond to the regime representative's lies and fabrications. I wonder how they can continue to believe that they can deceive the international community with their lies. We believe that they will be held accountable for their heinous crimes, and their atrocities against the people of Syria will be recorded in the darkest pages of history.
