

A renewed agreement this January will be critical to meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people

Thank you President.

Thank you to Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and ASG Joyce Msuya for their sobering briefings.

Let me join others in welcoming our new Irish colleague, Ambassador Fergal Mythen to the Council.

The UK continues to stand with the Syrian people in their desire for a sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict. As we have said many times, the only way to achieve this is through the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2254. This includes: a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; release of the arbitrarily detained; conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified refugee return; and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution.

Special Envoy Pederson's ongoing efforts to deliver 2254 have our full support.

We are disappointed that the regime continues to stall discussions on political and constitutional reform. We are further disappointed that Russia has used the fallout of its own aggression in Ukraine as a pretext for undermining political progress in Syria, by asserting that Geneva should no longer be the venue for what should be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned Constitutional Committee talks.

While the Syrian regime continues to fail in its responsibility to respect the basic rights of Syrians, provide for their needs, or engage in the political process, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate.

Currently, around 14.6 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance – more than 67% of the population and 12 million people are facing acute food insecurity this year.

The UK recognises that early recovery is necessary to address humanitarian needs. This is reflected in our support. Our funding has helped with the rehabilitation of water networks, provided agricultural training and inputs for livestock and vegetable production, and provided apprenticeships and small business grants to help create jobs.

But humanitarian assistance, and particularly cross-border assistance, remains a lifeline for millions. By reducing the UN cross border mandate from twelve to six months, resolution 2642 has caused uncertainty for the UN and its partners, impacting humanitarian operations and early recovery programming, a priority avowedly shared by Russia as well as other Council

members.

We therefore call on all Security Council members to work together to ensure a renewed agreement this January to meet the critical needs of the Syrian people. Further uncertainty, or a closing of this lifeline at the height of winter, would be catastrophic for millions of people.