

# Increasing humanitarian access in Syria

Thank you, Mr President.

The situation for civilians in northwest Syria is devastating. Over 1,000 civilians have been killed, including over 500 women and children, and almost 630,000 people have been forced to leave their homes, since the beginning of May. I'd like to thank ASG Mueller for her briefing and for the work which her officials and colleagues are doing. And we commend your work and we commend the work of humanitarian agencies to address the humanitarian suffering of the people in Idlib. The United Kingdom has contributed over \$150 million for humanitarian assistance in Idlib over the past 18 months. And I took careful note of what Assistant-Secretary-General Mueller had to say about the importance of the cross-border resolution in that context. We, of course, support that resolution.

Colleagues, the Security Council must act to protect civilians in Idlib. That is why we fully support the humanitarian penholders, Belgium, Kuwait and Germany, on their proposed resolution. We will be voting in favour – in favour of protecting civilians, in favour of ending indiscriminate attacks. This Council has a duty to protect those suffering on the ground. We need to send a message to the regime that the international community is resolute in condemning their actions and will not let them continue unabated. Only a vote in favour of the co-penholders' resolution will send the message that countries around this table, representing the international community, will not accept the wanton targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, regardless of the stated objective. Now is not a time to sit on the fence.

Mr President, we know the Syrian regime do not care how many of its civilians they kill, but Russia says it does. And if so, they should vote in favour of the co-penholders' text, and they and China should withdraw their text, which would permit continued attacks on civilians. We note Russian claims to the press recently that OCHA's information is not up to date, apparently, given their lack of presence on the ground. This only reinforces the need for Russia to press the Syrian authorities to approve OCHA's request for greater humanitarian access on the ground.

Mr President, on Monday, the Astana guarantors noted their commitment to sustainable peace in Syria, and that this can only be achieved through political and diplomatic methods. We have been waiting a very long time for political progress. We ask again for Russia to maintain pressure on the regime, to fully engage with the political process and, of course, to end the violence in Idlib, which threatens that political process.

Finally, Mr President, we welcome the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry, which will soon begin to investigate some of the recent appalling attacks in Idlib. We call for the findings of this inquiry to be released to the public. Some of the information underlying those founding findings may need to remain

confidential, but it is crucial that this Board is transparent in its mandate and output. The international community – but more importantly, the Syrian people – deserve to be privy to its findings on events in Idlib.

Mr President, ASG Mueller said the world was watching this Council, but the Syrian people – men, women and children – are dying while they watch.

Thank you, Mr President.