

Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress in Syria

Thank you President, and let me thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms Ghelani for their briefing today. I'd like to make three points.

First, the United Kingdom supports the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to progress the implementation of 2254 through the Step for Step initiative. We welcome the news of his recent discussions in New York, Damascus and elsewhere. But Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress and we call for their participation in good faith. We urge them to de-politicise the Constitutional Committee. We are clear that the Committee should reconvene in Geneva, as agreed, and begin to focus fully on substance rather than process.

Second, the United Kingdom is appalled by the human rights situation in Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured since the beginning of the conflict. Including in the notorious Sednaya prison, where as civil society have told us repeatedly, detainees are tortured and killed on a daily basis.

We strongly condemn these violations. We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254, which includes release of the arbitrarily detained along with a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; conditions for safe voluntary and dignified refugee return and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution.

The UK is closely monitoring the escalation of hostilities in north west Syria. It is essential that all parties to the conflict respect the ceasefire.

Finally, President, as we've heard, the spreading cholera outbreak highlights the frankly horrifying humanitarian context, and the need for a sustained response by the humanitarian community. The United Nations is stepping up its cross-line delivery where possible.

But cross-border remains a vital lifeline for many in the north west. We look forward to this Council renewing the cross-border mandate in January, ensuring aid for millions of Syrians during winter months.

Thank you.