

Speech: Addressing political instability in Syria

Thank you very much Mr President and I'll add our voice to all those welcoming the Special Envoy and thanking him for his briefing.

Mr President, I think there's been a lot of identity of view here today and it's all centred around our support for the Special Envoy. And I just wanted to note that to date we've had resolutions, we've got principles, we've got baskets, we've got pillars and we haven't had any progress that's been meaningful, particularly on the notion of a political settlement. So I think the most useful thing I can do today is to add the United Kingdom's voice to all those pledging to support you, Special Envoy, but also to highlight one theme that I think nearly every speaker has made and that Mr President, is about the critical importance, as a Special Envoy said, of an eventual settlement that is inclusive of all legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. And this links also with what the German Ambassador just said about reconstruction. For Syria to be rehabilitated into the international community in the way that we all want to see there needs to be a political settlement firmly based on 2254 and there needs to be a representative set of politics in Syria that address all the underlying issues that led to the crisis in the first place. And we're not going to get there quickly.

I'm not going to talk about the Constitutional Committee which has bedevilled this Council for far too long. I am going to say that we trust the Special Envoy to use his very best efforts to make progress on this absolutely critical part. And for the avoidance of doubt Mr President, there's nothing ideological in the United Kingdom's position on this. We want a political settlement that is inclusive and credible and will last. And we will support the Special Envoy to the hilt in getting that settlement. So I just wanted to put that on the table because I think it's a really critical point.

I want to join all those speakers who've called on those members of the Council who have strong influence with the Syrian authorities to use that influence to support the Special Envoy in making serious progress because this has gone on too long. I really hope that by the time you come back next month there will be something more to say than these messages which we have repeated for so many months, for so many years.

The other thing I wanted to say Mr President, was about Idlib. I agree with other speakers who have made the very important point about our concern for Idlib and for the safety of civilians there. The fight against terrorism isn't a licence to harm civilians and I think that point bears repeating.

I endorse what other speakers have said about humanitarian access.

And then lastly Mr President, I wanted to make common cause with the French Representative on what he said about Northeast Syria. We too welcome the American announcement. It's very important. There is more to do against Daesh

even as the territorial manifestation of Daesh is being defeated. So I hope that we can continue to collaborate on combating terrorism but that ought to be in the context of assisting an overall political settlement in Syria. I repeat again Mr President, it isn't an excuse or a justification for going after the Syrian people by the Syrian authorities.

Thank you.