

Speech: Building an irreversible and durable political process in Syria

Thank you very much indeed Mr President. Thank you to Staffan and to his team for all the work that they do on the ground.

Mr President, it's good that we're discussing this issue. It is good because it gives us an opportunity to recall, as the French Ambassador has just done, exactly how many agreements there have been from the Security Council including, but not limited to, 2254 on what exactly the political process needs to do. And I just want to say I won't rehearse what Ambassador Delattre said but just to lend our full support from the United Kingdom to everything he said.

Mr President it's also good that we're discussing this because the people of Syria continue to need our help. They can't rely on their own government to protect them and they can't rely, after all the shenanigans over the Constitutional Committee and Sochi, they can't rely on the partners of their own government to protect them, namely the Russian Federation and also Iran. I think that's a key point that proponents of the Syrian authorities sovereignty mantra would do well to bear in mind.

Mr President, we fully support Special Envoy de Mistura. We want him to convene an inclusive, balanced and Constitutional Committee by the end of the year. And I join other colleagues in urging him to use to the full the authority that has been granted to him in UNSCR 2254 to do that. The key to moving forward is obviously rapid and palpable progress on the political track.

Other speakers, Mr President, have referred to the 27 October Istanbul Communique Commitment to launch the Constitutional Committee by the end of the year. Given that Foreign Minister Lavrov and President Putin contributed to the Istanbul Communique it is mystifying, Mr President, why it has not yet been put into practice. The Special Envoy has been crystal clear that it is vital to have political progress. Resolution 2254, which was voted on unanimously, is also clear that the Special Envoy has the authority to bring it about. We would welcome Mr President, we would welcome more detail as to why this final piece of the political machinery has not yet been put in place.

Mr President it's right that the Special Envoy should consult and we completely agree that to be effective the Constitutional Committee must be credible to and acceptable for all sides. That obviously requires the Committee to be representative and inclusive but not that any one side has a veto over its makeup. The Syrian authorities' argument that its "sovereignty" defines what the international community can or cannot do in the Syrian crisis is a red herring and it's a distraction. Under Article 24 of the Charter members of the United Nations agree to confer on the Security Council the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security

and they further agree, Mr President, that the Security Council acts on their behalf. This is true whether the resolution is under Chapter VIII, it's under Chapter VII or it's under Chapter VI or it doesn't specify; they agree that the Security Council acts on their behalf. This is what the Special Envoy is doing and he deserves the explicit and concrete support, Mr President, of everybody around this table. And I repeat I would really welcome an explanation today of why further progress has not been possible. It is absolutely vital that we get this political process launched before the end of the year.

Mr President I just want to end by making a general statement about the political process, but as a general statement that holds deeply true. Without an irreversible and durable political process there won't be reconstruction, there won't be refugee return at scale and there won't be rehabilitation for Syria. Mr. President, we have all been shown a way forward. I would welcome everybody round the Security Council table today rallying to the Special Envoy, getting the Constitutional Committee set up well before the end of the year so that this crisis can eventually begin a long but slow path to resolution.

Thank you.