

Speech: Reiterating the call for a 30-day ceasefire, without delay, in Syria

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you also to Under-Secretary Generals Lowcock and Feltman for their clear and factual briefings and for reiterating to all of us on this Council the ongoing horror of the conflict in Syria, and in particular in Eastern Ghouta, because that is where it is clear the situation is most dire by a huge order of magnitude.

It was five days ago that we sat in this Council and all of us raised our hands in support of a 30-day ceasefire, which we hoped would provide some relief to Syria's people. This was a desperately needed step. A step that came too late for many. In Eastern Ghouta alone, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that at least 630 people were killed and 3,000 injured in the week before Resolution 2401 was agreed, with women and children representing nearly 60 percent of the wounded and 50 percent of the deceased. We continue, as well, to condemn attacks on Damascus from Eastern Ghouta.

Let us recall the demands of our resolution. It called for at least a 30-day ceasefire, without delay, to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuation.

Without delay means right now. Immediately. That there should be no delay. We all voted for these demands and we committed to use our influence to ensure this.

In response, Russia has declared a five-hour daily humanitarian window. That is not what this Council demanded, nor what Russia agreed to use its influence to ensure. A five-hour window has not delivered and cannot deliver any meaningful improvement on the ground. Under-Secretary General Lowcock has made clear that the United Nations cannot get humanitarian convoys in and out within that timeframe, as has the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Humanitarian pauses of a few meagre hours are no substitute for a sustained ceasefire, which is vital to ensure delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance and medical evacuations. If Russia is able to deliver a five-hour pause, let it deliver a 24 hour one, as they agreed on Saturday.

Mr President,

Let us now take stock of the situation in Syria, and specifically in Eastern Ghouta where the situation is at its most desperate, and review if any real change has occurred in the past five days. Has the resolution been implemented? Has there been a ceasefire? Any delivery of humanitarian aid? Or any medical evacuations? Has the passing of this resolution bought any relief to the people of Syria?

The fighting has not stopped. All of the main armed opposition groups have

committed to the full implementation of Resolution 2401. The Assad regime has not, and has in fact ignored the resolution we passed. Reports of attacks and airstrikes by pro-regime forces continue. 22 airstrikes reportedly took place even during Russia's so-called humanitarian pause.

And, as if it could not get any worse, there have been disturbing reports of use of chlorine gas. Doctors in Eastern Ghouta reported to the Syrian American Medical Society that 16 patients, including six children, were suffering from symptoms indicative to exposure to chemical compounds following an alleged regime attack on Sunday, only one day after the resolution was passed.

Since Saturday, not a single aid convoy has been able to access Eastern Ghouta to provide relief to the desperate civilians.

The World Health Organisation estimates that one thousand people are now in need of medical evacuation from Eastern Ghouta. None have been evacuated since the resolution was passed.

The consequences of the failure to implement the resolution are clear. The casualties continue to rise. The horror continues. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights report at least 14 civilians, including three children, were killed on Sunday.

In short, in the words of one doctor from Eastern Ghouta, "nothing has changed."

Mr President,

It is the responsibility of us all to ensure that Resolution 2401 is enacted in full.

In the words of my Foreign Secretary, "The Assad regime must allow the UN to deliver humanitarian aid, in compliance with Resolution 2401, and we look to Russia and Iran to make sure this happens, in accordance with their own promises."

I implore all those with influence over the Syrian regime to act now to ensure that the ceasefire, which they supported in this chamber, is implemented in full and immediately.

To do anything less is an affront to this Council, this United Nations and the international system that we live by.

We will continue to monitor implementation of Resolution 2401 and commit to returning to this Council regularly until we see it respected.

Thank you Mr President.