

Veteran UN Syria Envoy to step down, pledges to work 'until the last hour' for peace

The United Nations [Special Envoy for Syria](#), told the Security Council on Wednesday that he is stepping down at the end of next month, after four years and four months on the job

Staffan de Mistura, said that he had been “discussing with the Secretary-General my desire for purely personal reasons to move on. I have deeply appreciated his constant support and wise counsel on this matter.”

But briefing the 15-member Council on an invitation from the Government of Syria to visit Damascus next week, he said he would continue in his post up to the end of November, in an effort to get UN-backed peace talks on track, and help lay the groundwork for a new constitution.

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“I plan to engage them on the work that has been done on the Constitutional Committee”, in the Syrian capital, he told the Council, adding that “without steps on a safe, calm and neutral environment, the work of a constitutional committee will not end up being very meaningful.”

Mr. de Mistura said he hoped progress would be made not only on a fresh constitutional settlement for a post-war Syria, but also “the Working Group on the release of detainees and abductees, the handover of bodies and the identification of missing people”, which had met again last week in Tehran, he said, adding that “we keep urging for the first tangible results. Many, many people in Syria are waiting for that.”

He said objections from Damascus were holding up the committee’s launch, saying the Government objected to the 50-member delegation put together by the UN, representing Syria experts, civil society, tribal leaders and women, among others.

Turning to conditions on the ground for the millions of Syrians displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance after more than seven years of brutal fighting, he said “a catastrophe has so far been averted in Idlib, and the Russian-Turkish memorandum of understanding appears to be being implemented. Major strides have been taken in defeating terrorism and this should continue to be a priority.”

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