

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief: UK at Security Council

Thank you, President. And I join others in thanking Norway and Ireland for their work as penholders.

The UK approached this renewal, as we have every year since the mandate was first agreed in 2014, on the basis of humanitarian need, and humanitarian need alone.

Humanitarian need in Syria is the highest it has ever been. 4.1 million people are in need of aid across the north-west, of which 2.4 million are reliant solely on the UN cross-border mechanism for life-saving assistance every single month.

We have heard repeatedly from the UN and from NGOs that a renewal for 12 months was necessary to provide operational certainty so they could prepare to meet that humanitarian need, especially during the harsh months of winter. Last Friday, Russia stopped this from happening.

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief. The suffering and the uncertainty goes on. Without the confidence of at least 12 months, UN agencies and NGOs risk being caught in a perpetual cycle of pre-positioning and contingency planning.

It is therefore important that we are clear: while this renewal is only for an initial 6-months, the intent of the Council is to renew for a further six months, subject to another resolution.

The Secretary-General's report, requested by this resolution, will be able to set out the implications were this mandate to come to an end in January as winter is setting in.

The humanitarian case for a further renewal will be self-evident, and to oppose it will be to ignore the suffering of 4.1 million people.

The UK will continue to support the UN's efforts to deliver its Humanitarian Response Plan. But we will not consider providing any reconstruction assistance without a credible, substantive and genuine political process firmly underway.

A genuine political process is the only sustainable means of ending suffering in Syria.

Thank you, President.