

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SYRIA GEIR O. PEDERSEN
BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON SYRIA
25 February 2022**

Thank you, Mr. President.

1. Every month I draw your attention to the fact that Syrians across the country – and those who are displaced - are facing poverty and hunger at levels higher than at any point in the conflict. Joyce will brief you on the latest humanitarian situation. But let me emphasize that the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2585 is important not only on humanitarian grounds, but also in the context of building trust and confidence. For my part, I remain steadfastly committed to implementing my mandate in Security Council resolution 2254 to convene the Syrian parties in the formal political process and to exercising good offices to promote full implementation of the resolution in a manner that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and restores the full sovereignty, unity independence and territorial integrity of Syria.
2. Militarily, front lines remain unshifted, but we still see all signs of an ongoing hot conflict. Any of a number of flashpoints could ignite a broader conflagration. We continue to see mutual shelling, skirmishes, IEDs and security incidents across frontlines in the northwest, the northeast, and the southwest. Yet again, we have seen more violence across international borders – drone strikes in the north-east; Israeli strikes in the south and Damascus; and further security incidents on the Syrian-Jordanian border, which Amman states are related to drug smuggling. And we have seen Security Council- listed terrorist groups active across Syria; we note here the US ground operation that killed the leader of ISIL.

Mr. President,

3. It is plain that there is a stalemate, that there is acute suffering, and that a political solution is the only way out. This requires a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process, which must be supported by constructive international diplomacy – however hard that is, and especially right now.

Mr. President,

4. I am glad to report that we have now set a date for convening the 7th session of the Small Body of the Syrian-owned, Syrian-led, UN-facilitated

Constitutional Committee in Geneva, on 21 March. The background here is that, on the last day of the 6th Session, the Co-Chairs agreed with each other that the Committee needed a mechanism to improve the workings on the 5th day of the session, and, with my facilitation, they've reached an agreement on how this could be done.

5. It is important that the Small Body's work continues - and in such a manner that it builds trust and confidence. *The parties' positions are substantively far apart and narrowing their differences will inevitably be an incremental process. But, in line with the Terms of Reference and Core Rules of Procedure*, what we do need is a sense of compromise and constructive engagement from all delegations, so that the Committee works expeditiously and continuously to produce results and continued progress, without foreign interference or externally imposed timelines. The Co-Chairs have agreed to future sessions during May and June 2022 and to discuss a workplan, which is plainly needed.

Mr. President,

6. In the meantime, I have continued and will continue to work on the broader process to implement other elements in Security Council resolution 2254 that lie outside the constitutional basket. I am conducting a rolling process of consultations to identify how this might be done. In parallel, I have also continued to engage with the Syrian parties, meeting with the Syrian Government in Damascus and the Syrian Negotiations Commission in Istanbul and in Geneva. And I held in-depth discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Turkey and Russia in their capitals this month.
7. Security Council resolution 2254 speaks of the need for a political negotiation and for confidence-building measures to support progress, and enumerates a range of specifics in this regard. In that spirit, as I continue to facilitate the Constitutional Committee, I have been seeking to identify areas where consensus might be found on a series of reciprocal confidence-building measures in resolution 2254 that could be implemented in parallel, step-for step – and in the process, to explore how a broader political process could be constructed to tackle all the issues in the resolution.
8. As I told this Council last month, I am asking interlocutors not only what they would demand, but also what they would be able to put on the table. The aim would be to make progress, step-for step, on issues via commitments which are made with precision, which are verifiable, and which are implemented in parallel. I am listening carefully to all interlocutors on how they believe it is possible to make progress. I thank all

who have engaged so far, and I appreciate the constructive ideas that have been shared to date. I look forward to continuing the consultations with those that I have not yet been able to consult, and to further rounds of engagement.

9. Following my last briefing to this Council, I consulted with the Women's Advisory Board in Norway and look forward to welcoming them in Switzerland on 14-21 March. Meanwhile, on Sunday, I am meeting with a diverse group of Syrian civil society representatives invited for thematic consultations through the Civil Society Support Room in Geneva. I very much look forward to resuming this direct engagement and to hearing their feedback, suggestions and ideas. I am always encouraged and inspired to see them engage constructively on how to rebuild a Syrian society based on common civic values of independence, participation, plurality, transparency, dialogue and equality, despite their own life stories and diverse narratives.

Mr. President,

10. I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of the Syrian people desperately want this conflict to end, to see some basic improvements to their shattered lives and to live in safety and dignity. And they want to see progress on the file of detainees, abductees and missing persons, which keeps affecting the lives of so many families in every corner of Syria. Scaled-up action with regard to releases – particularly women, children, the sick and the elderly – and sharing of information on the fate and whereabouts of missing persons is more vital than ever.

Mr. President,

11. Through my last round of consultations, I had hoped that we might be starting to find a way into a functioning political process to implement resolution 2254. I am obviously very concerned that the constructive international diplomacy required to push this may prove more difficult than it already was, against the backdrop of the military operations in Ukraine.
12. For my part, I will continue to focus on engaging and convening the Syrian parties and consulting widely. We will convene a series of Constitutional Committee meetings in March, May and June; and we will continue rolling out a set of consultations on step-for step within the wider issues in 2254 and on how we can make progress.

Thank you, Mr. President.