



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.australia-unsc.gov.au

PLENARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

30 March 2021

Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Check against delivery

The decade of conflict that has followed the first peaceful demonstrations in Syria has seen nearly half a million people killed, over 12 million civilians displaced, and systematic gross violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Syrian regime, including the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, the targeting of humanitarian, medical and other protected facilities, and the use of chemical weapons including sarin and chlorine gas, which are prohibited under international law.

Australia is deeply disappointed by the lack of progress made at recent meetings of the Constitutional Committee. We are greatly dissatisfied by the Syrian regime's lack of engagement and refusal to participate in good faith with the peace process. We call on the regime to engage with the UN-facilitated process, which is the only viable pathway to peace.

The report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry outlined the humanitarian crisis in Syria, and the multitude of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Syrian regime and other non-state actors.

We are aggrieved by reports of violence against women including rape and sexual abuse. The Syrian regime and its proxies must be held responsible for the perpetration of violence against women or the use of such violence as a method of war or subjugation.

We continue to call on the Syrian regime to cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry, and to grant the Commission and its staff immediate and unrestricted access to Syrian territory.

Australia was also disappointed that the Security Council was unable to agree to authorisation for Turkey's Bab al-Salama border crossing in July 2020. We will continue to advocate to secure more border crossings in the lead up to July 2021 when the renewal of the Bab al-Hawa crossing point is due to be considered.

Word Count: 300