



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

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY MEETING ON THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT (INTERNATIONAL, IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT MECHANISM FOR SYRIA)

21 April 2021

**Statement by H.E. Dr Fiona Webster
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia
to the United Nations**

Thank you, Mr President.

Australia welcomes the submission of the report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

A decade of conflict has left millions of people displaced. Hundreds of thousands have been killed. An untold number have experienced horrific abuses at the hands of warring parties. Torture, rape, kidnapping, arbitrary detention – these, and many other unspeakable crimes, have become an all too common occurrence for the millions of people unable to escape the ravages of war.

As we sit here today, discussing these matters from a place of relative safety, let us be under no illusion regarding the weight of the international community's responsibility. There are those among us who seek to discredit the exceptional work of initiatives like the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria. We must not let this happen. We must staunchly defend the principles of accountability and justice. Impunity must not be allowed to win the day.

At the same time, we must ensure that the pursuit of justice does not come at the expense of the victim. Australia applauds the Mechanism's adoption of a victim and survivor-centric approach to its work. We strongly support the Mechanism's efforts to infuse gendered perspectives into its investigations, and its increased focus on crimes committed against children. All too often, the most vulnerable are also the least visible. Yet thanks to the work of this Mechanism, this need not be the case.

Australia has been an ardent supporter of the Mechanism since its inception in 2016. We believe in the virtue of its mission. We will continue to support and defend it, as it undertakes its essential work. We implore all others who wish to live in a world governed by principles of accountability and justice to do the same.