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الدائمة لدى الأمم المتحدة - نيويورك**



Statement by

H.E. Fayssal Mekdad

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

of The Syrian Arab Republic

Head of the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic

to The General Debate

of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. Abdulla Shahid,

President of the 76th Session of the General Assembly,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as president of the current session of the General Assembly and I wish you all the best in the performance of your duties. I also thank the Secretary-General for the efforts he is making within the framework of the mandate entrusted to him to achieve the aspirations of Member States in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past two years, the world has experienced unprecedented circumstances: hospitals reached full capacity, millions of lives were lost, economies contracted, poverty and hunger soared, cities went into lockdown, curfews were imposed, universities and schools closed their doors, and we grew afraid of approaching one another. All of this because of an invisible virus, that continues to evolve and mutate, threatening to claim more lives from all over the world.

In the midst of these difficult times, there was a glimmer of hope. We have witnessed extraordinary efforts and medical breakthroughs as well as gestures of human solidarity from a number of nations. But there was also a dark side, as some used the pandemic as a way to settle political scores and accuse other countries of creating the virus, while others selfishly ignored the needs of others, choosing to believe they were alone on this earth. Even worse, there are those that took advantage of the pandemic to scale up their unilateral coercive economic measures against those countries and people who differ with them, despite the catastrophic humanitarian impact of such measures.

They did that while ignoring the repeated appeals of the United Nations and humanitarian agencies who have called for these measures to be waived or reduced. If COVID-19 would claim one life in the absence of so-called sanctions, it would claim so many more when they are in place. As the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights said, “Sanctions are bringing suffering and death in countries like Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen”. And as noted by a group of independent UN human rights experts, “Sanctions that were imposed in the name of delivering human rights are in fact killing people and depriving them of fundamental rights, including the rights to health, to food and to life itself”. End of quote.

We welcome the theme of the 76th session of the General Assembly, namely ‘Building resilience through hope’. But I wonder, will everyone heed that call? Will they rebuild sustainably and respect the rights of people? Will they learn the lessons of the past? Will certain governments abandon their flawed policies that have jeopardized international security and stability? These questions require clear and decisive answers if the theme of this general debate is not to remain a mere slogan for media and political consumption, without any impact in the real world.

Mr. President,

You are well aware that Syria was one of the countries most affected by terrorism and terrorist crimes. These terrorists have received military, financial, media, and logistical support from countries known for sponsoring terrorism. Terrorists have killed and displaced innocent people, destroyed infrastructure, looted Syria’s resources, and created a humanitarian crisis in a country that had so much to be proud of, having achieved a development level

of more than 9.5% annually before the start of the terrorist war against Syria. I could speak endlessly about the suffering terrorists have inflicted on my people. Thanks to the sacrifices of our people and armed forces, and with the valuable support of our allies and friends, we have made significant advances in combating and eradicating terrorism. Syrians will forever be known as the people that defended not only themselves and their country, but the whole world, against terrorism.

Syria confirms that it will continue this noble fight until we root out all terrorists from our land, restore state authority, and restore security and stability. This is our national and constitutional obligation and a non-negotiable right. We will not waiver, regardless of external pressure and no matter the lies and accusations made against us. Those that continue to support and invest in terrorists are making a dangerous bet that is doomed to fail. Sooner or later, their support of terrorism will come back to haunt them, and innocent people will end up paying the price. We have seen this happen in many countries, and we must never let it happen again. In this regard, it seems that one of those who spoke on this rostrum a few days ago is still detached from reality, and have the illusion that they could turn back the clock, that their money can cover their failures and crimes, or that their continued investment in terrorism in Syria can achieve the goals of their masters.

Mr. President,

Syria has seriously and positively engaged in the Astana process, hoping it would contribute to the fight against terrorism and to the country's security and stability. The Turkish regime, however, has shown time and again that it is not committed to the outcomes of the Astana process nor the Sochi understandings on Idlib in the north-west of Syria. Instead, it continues

to support and protect terrorist groups operating in that region, especially Al-Nusra Front, designated by the Security Council as a terrorist entity. As a result, the region has become an incubator for foreign terrorists, as confirmed by the reports of relevant Security Council committees. In addition, the Turkish regime has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in the territories of Syria it occupies. It has carried out ‘Turkification’ and policies of forced demographic change and has displaced and oppressed the people of the region that dare to resist it. It has inflicted collective punishment on people, deliberately and repeatedly cutting off the water supply of more than a million Syrians in Hasakah and surrounding towns. On top of that, it has reduced the water level of the Euphrates to less than half the levels agreed upon between the two countries in 1987, resulting in dangerous humanitarian, ecological, health, and agricultural consequences. All of these violations and crimes require urgent and serious action by the Security Council and the Secretariat, to bring them to an immediate end.

Mr. President,

We reiterate that any foreign presence on Syrian soil without the consent of the Syrian government is illegal and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter, as well as all relevant Security Council resolutions, which reaffirm the importance of upholding Syria’s sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity. Such a presence hinders counter-terrorism efforts and threatens regional stability and security. Turkish and US forces are occupying Syrian territories under false pretexts and are looting the natural resources belonging to the Syrian people. This must stop immediately without any preconditions. Just as we managed to wipe out terrorists from most of Syria, we will work to end the occupation with the

same resolve and determination, using all possible means under international law. History shows that Syria always drives out occupiers sooner or later.

As for the few seeking secession in northeast Syria, we warn them against harboring such illusions that contradict the will of the Syrian people. By pursuing such ends, they are allying themselves with those plotting against Syria's unity, and they will be dealt with accordingly. They must abandon their delusions and learn from recent lessons; favoring external and occupying forces over their own people is doomed to fail and will only bring them humiliation and will harm their country and people.

Mr. President,

In tandem with fighting terrorism, the Syrian government has always been open to any and all genuine and impartial political initiatives aimed at helping us overcome this crisis that targeted the Syrian people and state, despite the obstacles placed by those countries that have no interest in Syria's stability. While unwavering in our commitment to our national principles, the Syrian government has participated in the Geneva Talks, the Moscow Consultations, and the Astana Meetings. We have also facilitated the convening of the Constitutional Committee by helping reach an agreement on its composition and rules of procedure. We reiterate that this process must be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, with no external interference. The constitution and all related issues fall within the exclusive right of Syrians and must be decided by them. The Special Envoy for Syria must focus on his role as a facilitator and report on the proceedings in an honest, unbiased, and objective manner.

Mr. President,

We have made it clear that Syria's doors are widely open for the safe and voluntary return of all refugees to their country. All relevant institutions in Syria are tirelessly working towards that goal, by rebuilding and rehabilitating infrastructure and services in areas reclaimed from terrorists and by putting the necessary procedures in place to facilitate the return of people and meet their basic needs. To that end, a number of decrees have been issued, which would contribute to the safe and voluntary return of people. Unfortunately, while the Syrian government and its allies are making honest efforts on this humanitarian issue, some continue to take advantage of the suffering of Syrians to serve an agenda that has nothing to do with humanitarian objectives or the interests of Syrians. Humanitarian action in Syria must fully respect Syria's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and be conducted in coordination with the Syrian government and with its consent, in line with General Assembly resolution 46/182. The scope of humanitarian interventions must be expanded to incorporate development assistance and early recovery and resilience projects, which would provide water, sanitation, health, medical, and housing services. We stand ready to do our utmost to ensure humanitarian access to beneficiaries in Syria. The so-called cross-border aid mechanism must be shut down, following incidents of corruption and failures, especially the diversion of aid to terrorist groups, instead of the people who actually need it.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses once again that the use of chemical weapons is reprehensible and completely unacceptable under any circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and anytime. That is why Syria has

voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and fulfilled all relevant obligations in record time while maintaining cooperation with the OPCW to settle the matter as soon as possible. Unfortunately, some have sought to explicitly politicize this issue. They have made baseless accusations against Syria, relying on information from terrorists and their supporters. They have questioned Syria's cooperation with the OPCW and have issued reports that lack credibility and professionalism. They have also misconstrued the provisions of the CWC to create illegal mechanisms and pushed through a decision imposed by western countries against Syria at the 25th session of the Conference of State Parties to the CWC. That decision constitutes a dangerous precedent for the organization and a threat to all state parties.

Mr. President,

Israel, since 1967, has continued to occupy a dear part of Syrian territory, the Golan. Therefore, The Syrian Arab Republic remains firmly committed to exercising its right to fully recover the occupied Syrian Golan, up to the line of 4th of June 1967. All decisions and measures taken by Israel, the occupying power, to alter the region's natural and demographic features and impose Israeli laws and administration, are null and void and have no legal effect under international law and relevant UN resolutions, notably Security Council resolution 497 (1981). We can no longer accept the UN and the international community's failure to compel Israel to implement these resolutions and to cease its systematic and grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. All the while, Israel continues to expand its settlements and support terrorists. It persecutes, discriminates against, and arbitrarily detains Syrians under its occupation, plunders the Golan's natural resources, and repeatedly violates Syria's sovereignty. Israel must be held

accountable for this rogue behavior and ensure its impunity. This is important for regional security and stability and for the sake of justice and international law.

Mr. President,

Despite what we have been through over the past few years, the Palestinian cause still remains a central priority for Syria. Syria will spare no effort in supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle to recover their occupied territories and regain all their legitimate rights, especially the right to establish their independent state on their territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, the right to full membership to the United Nations, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions. We call for putting an end to Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially killings, settlement activities, siege tactics, arbitrary detention, forced displacement, and racial discrimination. Syria holds countries supporting Israel responsible for the implications of these crimes.

Mr. President,

Syria expresses its full support of, and solidarity with, the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of the illegal and irresponsible US measures against it, especially following the US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement. In this regard, Syria condemns the economic embargo imposed on Cuba for decades now, and the American militarization of the situation in the Korean Peninsula. My country also demands to put an end to the economic terrorism imposed by the United States and its western Allies against Iran, Venezuela, Belarus, Nicaragua, and the DPRK and my country, Syria in accordance with international law and UN resolutions. I must also support

Russia and China's efforts to uphold international law, maintain security and stability, and promote development worldwide, in the face of the hegemonic policies and interference attempts of some countries.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we must promote dialogue and understanding between one another based on mutual respect, common interest, sovereign equality, and respect for international law. This is necessary if we are to build a new, more balanced, democratic, and just world order, that contributes to achieving the common aspirations of our people and the development, prosperity, and stability that we want. This must be done in defiance of some governments that rely on military and political interference, support terrorism, and employ unilateral coercive measures, in contravention of all of the values espoused by humanity and the principles of the Charter. Some need to understand that we live in the same interconnected world, and no country can serve its interests and ensure its security at the expense of the interests and security of other countries.