



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Security Council Briefing on the situation in the Middle East (Syria) 12 February 2025

Greece's Statement delivered
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Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and ASG Msuya for their briefings and invaluable work.

Mr. President,

Syria's stability is pivotal for the whole region. Greece has long-standing economic, political and cultural relations with Syria and we want to open a new chapter in our ties and contribute to the stability and prosperity of this country. This is why our Foreign Minister visited Damascus last Sunday to convey this message. At the same time, we have certain expectations from the de facto authorities in Syria.

In this respect, I wish to underscore four points:

First, only an inclusive political transition will be viable in Syria.

We expect a fully inclusive political transition, including all Syrian voices, for instance Christians, Druzes and the Kurds, towards a fully representative and non-sectarian government which will prepare a constitutional reform and lead towards elections in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

The only sustainable path forward is one of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, fully inclusive political process, free of foreign interference, following an inclusive national dialogue. Any alternative would sow the seeds of future instability; one which the brave Syrian people can simply not afford.

We took careful note of Ahmad al-Sharaa's appointment as President for a transitional phase, as well as him being bestowed the ability to appoint a transitional legislative body. We carefully monitor how this will affect the political process. We are eager to welcome additional clarity in this regard.

We should spare no effort for the integration of *all* affected, male and female, civilians—including the vibrant Christian community and all religious and ethnic groups in the political life of this country. Safeguarding Syria's rich cultural heritage and religious monuments is also key.

Second, the humanitarian and security situation must be urgently addressed.

Greece is particularly worried with the humanitarian conditions on the ground. Syrian infrastructure is largely devastated; food and electricity are scarce in large swathes of the country; while fighting ensues, particularly in cities in the North and Northeast.

Meanwhile, the real risk of the resurgence of ISIL and other terrorist groups remains. ISIL operates in pockets of Syrian land. It is crucial that we prevent its potential re-emergence—a substantive menace to neighbouring countries and regional stability.

The threat of non-conventional weapons also needs to be addressed. Syria must abide by all relevant Security Council Resolutions, demonstrating a clear willingness to cooperate with the international community, particularly on chemical weapons stockpiles. We are encouraged by positive signs of cooperation between the de facto Authorities and the OPCW. We call for its sustained continuation.

Third, the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees must remain on our collective horizon. Syrians deserve to go home and contribute to the re-building of their country.

We fully support the efforts of the UNHCR and OCHA in this regard, as well as collective efforts towards restoring shelters and critical infrastructure in Syria, contributing to the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees. We have noted the willingness of many Syrians to explore the conditions for their return and the international community must rise to this occasion.

Of course, we take careful note of appeals for the suspension of sanctions. The EU Foreign Ministers recently agreed on opening the discussion for a step-by-step easing of some sectoral sanctions on Syria to assist its recovery. The EU collectively sent a signal of its willingness to re-engage with Syria while also advising for caution and laying out its expectations for a fully inclusive political process, Syria's commitment to *fully* respecting international law (including, let me stress, the International Law of the Sea); as well as the respect for the sovereignty and sovereign rights of neighbouring countries. In this respect, the EU steps are conditional and reversible.

Fourth, we call on all parties to respect the unity, independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria.

Deeply concerned by systemic violations of Syria's sovereignty, we expect all actors to contribute, responsibly and sincerely, to the stabilization and reconciliation efforts of the international community. All regional stakeholders must refrain from acts that could jeopardize the political transition in the country for the sake of their own foreign or domestic policy objectives.

In the Northeast, we are particularly concerned by threats against the Kurds, who have been critical partners in the fight against ISIL. Escalation and provocative rhetoric do not help. We cannot afford another conflagration in the region. We should not—and cannot—ignore that the Kurdish element has been critical in containing the resurgence of terrorism.

Furthermore, Greece expresses its full support to UNDOF and the implementation of its mandate, calling for the respect of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

In closing, Mr. President,

A new era emerged for Syrians on December 8th of 2024. There is a path towards a prosperous, stable and inclusive Syria. To get there, we believe this Council's message must be clear: international legitimacy and recognition lie at the end of a *fully inclusive* political path, with strong and inclusive State Institutions and with respect of International Law. These are critical elements for ensuring regional stability and promoting Syria's long-term security and prosperity.

I thank you.