Since my first briefing to the Council on Syria some three years ago, we have sat in this chamber many times and borne witness to the spiraling violence and growing despair in the country. Each time, I speak of atrocity after atrocity; violation after violation; misery after misery. And, despite the Council's unity on the appalling humanitarian consequences of the conflict and three resolutions demanding protection for civilians and full humanitarian access, the government, armed and terrorist groups continue to kill, maim, rape, torture and take Syria to new lows that seemed unimaginable a few years ago.

People have become numb to figures that should, every day, shock our collective conscience and spur urgent action. More than 220,000 people have been killed; over one million injured. More than 7.6 million people are displaced within Syria and nearly four million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. People risk their lives if they stay, and some when they leave as we have seen with those who have drowned in the Mediterranean.

We need the numbness to the senseless violence and the apparent apathy to end.

Violence has continued to escalate in a number of areas of the country. In the past weeks alone well over 100,000 people have been displaced by fighting in Idlib; many of them for the second time. More than 1,500 people have been injured. But none of the three hospitals that were operating less than a month ago are functioning. There is nowhere for those seeking medical help to go.

And despite the Council’s concerted action on the removal and destruction of chemical weapons, there are fresh allegations that chemical weapons have been used again in Idlib, killing and injuring civilians.

Civilians in Aleppo also continue to be subjected to indiscriminate fire from the air and from underground, with barrel bombs dropped on opposition-controlled parts of Aleppo city and tunnel bombs exploding under government-controlled districts. And it is civilians who are paying the heaviest price.
The Council has been briefed extensively on the situation in Yarmouk, once a symbol of Syrian hospitality with refugees and host communities living side by side. Today people have reached new levels of despair.

Hundreds of thousands of people elsewhere in the country also remain besieged. Theirs is a daily struggle for survival as they remain trapped and out of our reach, subjected to collective punishment. Full and unimpeded humanitarian access remains a priority.

Humanitarian workers, often at great risk to themselves, are responding as best they can throughout the country including through cross-border operations.

On March 26th, a team of United Nations humanitarian workers and Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers delivering humanitarian supplies in Ar Rastan was briefly detained by a non-state armed group. ISIL has continued to inhibit the delivery of aid and this month has even prevented polio vaccines from reaching hundreds of thousands of children under five years old. The Government has finally approved a number of interagency convoys and critical food and education assessments but there continue to be restrictions in aid delivery that limit our capacity to deliver.

Last month I called on the Council to remind government security forces that all aid – particularly medical and surgical supplies – must be allowed on convoys. Despite these calls, and the approval of civilian authorities, Government security forces again removed all surgical supplies from the trucks destined for Ar Rastan in Homs governorate, depriving people of urgently needed treatments.

In resolution 2139, the Council expressed its intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance with the resolution.

Fourteen months later, there continues to be a shocking lack of respect for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and a total absence of accountability. The failure to stop the violence has undermined the credibility of this Council and eroded confidence in the international community to take its responsibilities seriously. Billions of dollars have been pledged for humanitarian assistance, which we welcome, but the people of Syria, rightly, want more. They want an end to the war which has ravaged their country and destroyed lives and livelihoods.

I am appealing to the Council to look seriously at all the options at its disposal which could help to bring an end to the violence in Syria, stop the violations of international law, protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access. Some are practically difficult, others contentious, but given the conditions ordinary Syrians have to face I ask the Council to consider the following:

First, demand that attacks on education and health facilities cease and schools and hospitals become zones of peace. This is in line with resolution 2139 in which the Council 'demands that all parties demilitarize medical facilities, schools and other civilian facilities and avoid establishing military positions in populated areas and desist from attacks directed against civilian objects'.
Second, a specific Security Council Mandate to the Commission of Inquiry looking specifically at the situation in besieged communities and the militarisation and responsibility for attacks on medical and educational facilities. This should be done through the conduct of a fact-finding mission.

Third, mandate the negotiation of humanitarian pauses and days of tranquillity.

Fourth, send perpetrators a clear message that their crimes will not go unpunished and demonstrate to the Syrian people that there will be justice for the crimes committed against them. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Fifth, enforce an arms embargo and targeted sanctions for violations of international humanitarian law and non-respect of humanitarian imperatives.

Mr. President,

This Council has paid great attention to the humanitarian situation in Syria. But try as we may, there is no humanitarian solution.

The only solution is through political dialogue that reduces and ultimately ends the violence.

Time is, however, running out for Syria, and for the neighbouring countries which have taken on such a heavy burden on behalf of the international community. This is a crisis with potential global repercussions. I ask this Council to match its scale with an equally bold and courageous response.

Thank you.