Mr. President,

I want to thank USG Jeff Feltman for his briefing and I echo his and the call of so many others that the carnage in Aleppo and in the wider Syria must stop and that we cannot squander the opportunity of the negotiations in Geneva. I am glad to note the news just received and heard by Mr. Feltman on a further agreement and hope that it can be implemented in full.

I am horrified by the further death and destruction in Aleppo. Over the past ten days, indiscriminate attacks and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by Government forces and its allies, by non-State armed groups, and by listed terrorist groups have intensified – affecting mostly innocent civilians. While the dead are still being counted, while medical personnel are trying to save lives and tend to the injured, we can already estimate that hundreds of civilians have been killed or injured, including dozens of women and children.

Life for people in Aleppo is horrendous and has lost all sense. Access to basic and essential services, such as water and electricity, are sporadic, at best. People are living under daily threat and terror. Those who remain in eastern Aleppo, roughly 300,000 people, live in constant fear over the next attack from the air, including from barrel bombs. School activities for thousands of children are suspended and Friday prayers are cancelled. The estimated 1.3 million people living in western Aleppo city are crowding into basements, seeking refuge from volleys of shells and mortar rounds, which continue to slam into what’s left of their homes. People and humanitarian workers are pinned down in their respective factional quarters in the city. There can be no explanation or excuse, no reason or rationale, for waging war on civilians.

Mr. President,

I am going to focus again on the inexcusable, deeply disturbing attacks on medical facilities. We have all seen the harrowing images of bombs and mortars raining down on medical facilities across Aleppo in recent days. On 22 April, an airstrike hit an ambulance en route to assist people wounded in an earlier airstrike in the Hulluk neighborhood of eastern Aleppo, killing the driver and the paramedic. On 27 April, Al-Quds hospital - the most advanced paediatric care centre in Aleppo - let me repeat, a hospital dedicated to treating children - was
destroyed after being hit by a wave of airstrikes, which by all accounts were launched by the Government of Syria. Fifty people were killed, including several doctors, and eighty more people were injured. On 29 April, airstrikes destroyed a UN-funded Primary Health Centre in the Marjeh neighborhood and the Boustan Al-Qasir Healthcare Centre in eastern Aleppo, both currently controlled by non-State armed groups, injuring several people and putting the facilities out of service.

In western Aleppo currently controlled by the Government, Ibn Rushed hospital was hit by mortars, allegedly fired by non-State armed groups last week, and just yesterday an attack on the Dabeet maternity hospital, in western Aleppo, again allegedly by non-State armed groups, resulted in three fatalities, injuring 15 more.

These terrible attacks not only claim innocent lives, but also have a multiplier effect, leaving tens of thousands of civilians unable to obtain even the most basic levels of care, even as fighting intensifies around them.

Mr. President,

More broadly, according to Physicians for Human Rights, there have been over 360 documented attacks on some 250 medical facilities during the course of the conflict. More than 730 medical personnel have been killed. Not only hospitals dedicated to treating children, but also pregnant women, are no longer places where civilians can safely go for treatment. And it’s now considered a risk, as I said in my last statement, to live near a medical facility.

Clearly enshrined in international humanitarian law and as this Council reconfirmed yesterday, the protection and provision of medical assistance and health care to the wounded and sick is at the heart of humanitarian action.

Whoever they are and on whatever side of the fight they’re on, those responsible for these repeated, unconscionable acts of inhumanity must understand that these acts cannot and will not be forgotten. These attacks against civilians are violations of international humanitarian law. Some of them may even amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those who are responsible must know that they will one day be held accountable.

Mr. President,

I want to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of humanitarian actors and first responders, most of whom are Syrian, who continue to risk their lives to stay and deliver assistance in Aleppo and across the country. So far this year, the UN and partners have delivered life-saving aid to hundreds of thousands of people per month in Aleppo city, originating both from within Syria and cross-border from Turkey.

However, we remain extremely concerned about how the security situation in Aleppo city is impeding humanitarian access and operations. Already, in the last few days, many humanitarian actors have had to suspend their operations while tens of thousands of children could not be vaccinated last week. We are dismayed that the Government of Syria did not approve our request for a cross-line inter-agency convoy to eastern Aleppo city in May. The suspension of the SARC activities in the east of the city over the last weeks is also a worrying development. SARC is a
key partner to the UN in Syria and we call on all concerned to allow it to resume its activities in eastern Aleppo City as soon as possible. In fact now, there is not a moment to lose.

Mr. President,

We are reporting today on Aleppo, but make no mistake; indiscriminate attacks and the destruction of civilian infrastructure continue to inflict tremendous suffering on Syrians across the country. We are very concerned about the escalation of violence and the impact on civilians in other parts of the country; for example, in Dar'a, where there have been reports of heavy fighting between Government forces and non-State armed groups, including shelling and aerial bombardment, over the past week.

The bottom line is that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure need to stop immediately. There also needs to be full, unhindered, unconditional, safe and sustained access to all people in need, including in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, for all types of assistance, including medical and surgical supplies.

In short, all parties must finally and unequivocally live up to their obligations under international humanitarian law and the demands of this Council’s resolutions.

My question to you today is again: how many more deaths, how much more suffering can we tolerate before there is a collective push towards an end to this senseless and shameful crisis affecting Syrians, their neighbours and many more people beyond?

Thank you.