

Opening Remarks to Press by Head of UN Supervision Mission in Syria Major General Robert Mood

Damascus, 19 July 2012

I would first like to start by wishing all Muslims a blessed Ramadan and an advanced Eid Mubarak. I truly hope that its return next year be in times of peace for this great country.

It pains me to say, but we are not on the track for peace in Syria and the escalations we have witnessed in Damascus over the past few days is a testimony to that.

I extend my profound condolences and my heartfelt sympathies to the families of all the victims and to the wounded in Wednesday's bombings. I expressed my condemnation of the attack yesterday to the Syria Government. I call on the Parties to the end the bloodshed, and violence in all its forms, and recommit to a peaceful solution to this conflict.

As you all know too well, the current mandate of UNSMIS expires on 20 July. As a result, my duties as Head of UNSMIS also expire in a few days. That does not mean that my affections to Syria end today. My love for the people of this country and my desire for them to regain peace are endless.

I leave satisfied that I, and some 400 brave women and men, have done our best, under very challenging circumstances. We shifted our posture more than once to accommodate the changes in the security situation, yet still maintain the ability to intervene whenever possible. But the mandate of UNSMIS will become relevant when the political process takes off. That is why any extension of the Mission would come with a shift to a more political posture.

It is the Security Council that decides the fate of UNSMIS and the UN political and military presence in Syria. It is no secret that its members are divided on what actions are needed to end the killing and begin a political transition process. For the sake of the Syrian people we need effective leadership from the Security Council and genuine unity around a political plan that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and that is accepted by the Parties. Government and opposition must be willing to make the necessary concessions and sit at the negotiating table. If this happens, the presence of the Mission (OR: A UN political-military presence), UNSMIS, will be credible and the Mission can contribute to improving the situation of the ground.

Let me end by saying that there is no lasting hope in the military solution. I, as a soldier, know more than many, that the decision in favour of peace, is harder than that of war. But I have learned through many years of military practice that it is still better to make that hard choice; to choose peace, even if you can win the

war. For it is the fabric of a society that will be deeply damaged by war, and greatly enhanced by the prevalence of peace.

Thank you.