

# International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic

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### Remarks by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

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Excellencies,

Last December's GA resolution to establish an international, impartial and independent mechanism to assist in investigating and prosecuting international crimes committed in Syria was a very significant step in efforts to further accountability. By indicating that those suspected of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are under watch, it may deter the commission of crimes and bring some measure of recognition to the millions of victims.

My Office made it a priority to assist the Secretary-General to prepare his report and develop the Mechanism's terms of reference. These were issued less than a month after the resolution was adopted.

The Mechanism has two main tasks: one, to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence; and second, to prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings in national, regional or international courts, in accordance with international law.

Its mandate and operation are clearly distinct from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria headed by my friend Paulo Pinheiro. The Commission is expected to continue to directly collect information, report on broad patterns of violations and make recommendations, notably to Member States. Its work is visible and publicly reported. In contrast, the Mechanism will primarily build on the information collected by others – notably the Commission – and it is not expected to publicly report on its substantive work. Its role will be to consolidate and analyse evidence, and establish files to assist courts. Clearly, these two entities are complementary.

Important steps are being taken to operationalize the Mechanism. We are making arrangements for the selection process of the Mechanism's Head and expect leadership positions to be filled very quickly once the ACABQ has approved the establishment of the two top posts. The Secretary-General has also asked me to allocate an initial start-up team. I am pleased to announce that the deployment plan is ready and the start-up team will swiftly begin work.

The Mechanism will now be expected to adopt its procedures and methods of work, and we are grateful in this regard for the support of the Netherlands, which is organizing and will be hosting an experts' meeting to facilitate this.

We are also grateful for the Netherlands and Liechtenstein's early financial support. We have so far received US\$ 1.2 million from the Netherlands and Liechtenstein, and a further US\$1 million in oral pledges from Qatar, Belgium, Luxembourg and Hungary.

The GA decided that, at least initially, the Mechanism will be funded exclusively by voluntary contributions. While we hope this will be reviewed as soon as possible, there is an urgent need to secure sufficient funds to enable the mechanism to commence its work. Immediate funding requirements are at US\$ 4 to 6 million. And while we are still involved in developing a precise budget, annual operating needs are expected to be in the region of US\$13 million.

The SG will soon send a letter to all Member-States asking for pledges, and ask for your urgent consideration of this issue. Because of the inherent uncertainty of voluntary funding, before we can set up the Mechanism, plan its incremental growth, and appoint its leadership and Secretariat, we need an accurate overall assessment of potential contributions and their expected timing – both for the immediate start-up period and in the longer-term.

We count on your support to implement General Assembly Resolution 71/248 and establish the IIIM, to support justice for the terrible crimes which have been committed and are still underway.