

**Joint Statement Brazil and Switzerland Security Council meeting on Syria,
23 March 2023**

Mr. President,

I deliver this intervention on behalf of Switzerland and Brazil as co-penholders of the Syria humanitarian file.

Let me first thank Mr. Pedersen and Mr. Talahma for their updates. Their briefings make it clear that our work here is far from over, that this Council needs to continue to follow the situation in Syria very closely.

Last week, Syria entered its 13th consecutive year of conflict with one of the world's most serious and complex humanitarian crises, worsened by a natural disaster of major proportions. The February earthquakes struck areas heavily affected by the conflict, where millions live in camps and informal settlements or unsafe buildings under precarious conditions. In Northwest Syria, 4.1 million Syrians, including 2.9 million IDPs, were already dependent on humanitarian assistance. It is appalling that the conflict remains acute in those areas while emergency post-disaster humanitarian operations are taking place.

There is a multidimensional humanitarian crisis compounded by food insecurity, water, electricity and fuel shortages, lack of proper shelter and sanitation, and an elevated risk of new diseases outbreaks, while many health facilities were damaged. 15.3 million people were in need of assistance already before the earthquake. 8.8 million people in Syria have been affected and 500.000 people have been displaced by this natural disaster. An increased number of children are out of schools. Many of the learning facilities which were operational have been damaged, destroyed or are now being used to provide families affected by the earthquakes with temporary shelter. In this dire situation, we need to ensure that the humanitarian needs of all affected people, living in all parts of Syria, are met.

As we recognize the recent constructive steps taken to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria, we reiterate that all modalities of aid – including cross-border and cross-line – need to be made available to humanitarian actors operating in Syria. Assistance planned before February 6 should continue, while additional needs triggered by the earthquake have to be met.

It is encouraging that two additional crossings have been opened for the UN, that the flow of aid deliveries across the border has grown and that more than 937 trucks crossed Bab Al-Hawa, Bal al-Salam and Al-Ra'ee after the earthquakes. Unfortunately, no cross line convoy has taken place so far. We recall that all aid modalities should be used to reach the most vulnerable.

Disruption of humanitarian operations due to damaged infrastructure or security concerns can have drastic humanitarian consequences to those who have been

affected by the earthquake, but also to the wider vulnerable population in need of humanitarian assistance. It is crucial that aid flows without obstructions.

Humanitarian workers need unhindered access to people in need of assistance. Switzerland and Brazil reiterate the calls on all parties to facilitate timely, unimpeded and sustainable access for humanitarian relief and personnel and to open all routes to get to all people in every way possible. We recall that all parties must abide by their obligations under IHL.

Mr. President,

Humanitarian operations also need resources. We welcome the pledges made on Monday during the International Donors' conference in Brussels and the financial support of the Syria Earthquake Flash Appeal. We further encourage the donor community to continue to contribute to the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2023.

We are grateful for the efforts undertaken by OCHA and all UN agencies, as well as NGOs, to scale up humanitarian operations under the even more challenging conditions following the earthquakes. The Security Council must also do its part, which includes putting differences aside and working constructively towards improving the living conditions in Syria. There can be no lasting peace in Syria without a meaningful political process. After so much suffering and trauma, Syrian people, especially children who have never experienced peace, need a chance for a better future.
