The President of the Security Council presents her compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a letter dated 5 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, and its enclosure.

This letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2018/816.

5 September 2018
H.E. Mrs. Nikki R. Haley  
Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations  
c/o Office of the President of the Security Council  
Dpa-sc3b3@un.org

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to request the distribution of the enclosed Concept Note as an official document of the Security Council.

The open Arria formula meeting entitled 'Syrian Voices on Preventing a Deathtrap in Idlib' will be held on Friday 7 September from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in CR7 in the United Nations headquarters. The meeting is co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of France, the Republic of Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of The Netherlands.

Yours sincerely,

Karel J.G. Van Oosterom  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative
Objective

Highlight the dire humanitarian situation in Idlib and the possible consequences of a further military escalation, and provide Syrian voices with a platform to inform an international response.

Background

In his statement on 29 August 2018, the UN Secretary-General expressed deep concern about the growing risks of a humanitarian catastrophe in the event of a full-scale military operation in Idlib province and urgently appealed to the Government of Syria and all parties to exercise restraint and to prioritize the protection of civilians.

In a statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Security Council on 28 August, the Security Council was called on ‘to avoid any further escalation of violence and an ensuing humanitarian catastrophe’; a ‘worst-case scenario in Idlib will overwhelm capacities and has the potential to create a humanitarian emergency at a scale not yet seen through the crisis’.

While Idlib is the last of the de-escalation zones agreed upon in Astana by Russia, Iran and Turkey, it is today at risk of facing a new military episode. It is therefore crucial to hear from Syrian political and civil society leaders on possible credible actions to be taken to protect civilians in Idlib as a matter of urgency.

Moving forward, the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly should also provide an opportunity to recommit to a political solution to the Syria conflict, in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions including UNSCR 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué, and to sustain the international response to the humanitarian and resilience needs of those affected by the crisis both inside Syria and across the region.

Format

The Arria formula meeting “Syrian Voices on Preventing a Deathtrap in Idlib” will feature representatives of the Syrian Negotiation Commission and Syrian civil society, including Hadi al-Bahra, Bassma Koudmani, Fadwa Ojyli, Hind Kabawat and Bahjat Hajjar.

Media

This event will be webcast and open to the press. Participants and the audience will join the conversation using the social media hashtags #EyesOnIdlib, #Idlib, and #WithSyria.