



**Arria Formula meeting**

**“Accountability in the Syrian Arab Republic”**

**Statement by H.E. Mark Zellenrath  
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations**

**NEW YORK, 29 November 2021**

Mr President,

Let me start by thanking Estonia for the organization of this event that we proudly co-sponsor, and for bringing back the attention of the Security Council to the prevailing impunity for horrific crimes in Syria.

If a universal rule exists that a downward spiral must ultimately reverse for the better, Syria is a tragic exception. Ten years after the start of peaceful protests in Syria and their subsequent violent repression, gross human rights violations still persist to this day.

For all those Syrians affected by a decade of atrocities, accountability is long overdue, but, we hope, not out of sight. They need, they deserve, an international community that is committed to shared universal rights. A community that does not accept impunity.

Mr President,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore commends the key role the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism has in ensuring accountability for the people of Syria. The IIIM has proven to be a unique international criminal justice entity, to ensure that the crimes committed in Syria will not be forgotten. The collection, consolidation, preservation, and analysis of evidence - and the preparation of casefiles – are all indispensable steps in the fight against impunity. The work of the IIIM is crucial in supporting accountability efforts at the national, regional and international level.

Through national and international accountability measures, including through prosecution based on universal jurisdiction, we are trying to fill the void of impunity and seek justice for those who suffered and continue to suffer.

The Netherlands and Canada have jointly invoked Syria's responsibility for human rights violations under international law, specifically holding Syria responsible for torture under the UN Convention against Torture. We will not accept a solution that fails to do justice to the victims.

It is these creative steps that keep the accountability effort alive.

But more is needed as unfortunately there is neither peace nor security in Syria. Here we look at the Security Council, which has a very clear task to maintain international peace and security and should consider *all* the tools at its disposal on the table. That still includes, in the opinion of my delegation, a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

We should remain adamant in reminding the Security Council of its duty and the mandate that it has taken on. We owe it to the people of Syria. *They* are the reason we are here today. We must never forget that.

Thank you.