

Statement by China at Security Council Meeting on: The situation in the Middle East: Referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court

22 May 2014  
(Unofficial Transcript)

For over three years, the escalation of the conflict in Syria has inflicted deep suffering on the Syrian people and posed a serious challenge to the countries of the region and the international community. China has always maintained that all parties in Syria should respect human rights and international humanitarian law and prevent innocent people from being harmed during the conflict. China is firmly opposed to all violations of international humanitarian law or serious violations of human rights committed by all parties to the conflict in Syria. However, with regard to draft resolution S/2014/348, on which the Council voted earlier, China has some serious reservations.

First, China believes that any action to seek recourse to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to prosecute the perpetrators of serious violations should be conducted on the basis of respect for State judicial sovereignty and the principle of complementarity. China is not a State party to the Rome Statute. China always has reservations concerning the referral by the Security Council of particular country situations to the ICC. This is our principled position.

Secondly, efforts to seek a political settlement to the question of Syria are encountering difficulties. The international community must shore up its confidence, remain patient and be steadfastly committed to the overall direction of the political settlement. What is most urgently needed now is to urge the Government of Syria and the opposition to immediately implement a ceasefire and put an end to the violence in order to start a third round of negotiations in Geneva so as to advance the political process and embark on a political transition. In the current circumstances, to forcibly refer the situation in Syria to the ICC is not conducive either to building trust among all parties in Syria or to an early resumption of the negotiations in Geneva. It will only jeopardize the efforts made by the international community to push for a political settlement.

Thirdly, for some time now, the Security Council has maintained unity and coordination on the question of Syria, thanks to efforts by Council members, including China, to accommodate the major concerns of all parties. At a time when seriously diverging views exist among the parties concerning the draft resolution, we believe that the Council should continue holding consultations, rather than forcing a vote on the draft resolution, in order to avoid undermining Council unity or obstructing coordination and cooperation on questions such as Syria and other major serious issues. Regrettably, China's approach has not been taken on board; China therefore voted against the draft resolution.

I have already clearly elaborated my country's position and explicitly highlighted the facts and reasons. Just now, the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western countries have made totally unfounded accusations against China. That is irresponsible and hypocritical. China firmly rejects the slander expressed by those Western countries against China.

China has continued to uphold an objective and impartial position on the question of Syria. China pursues no self interest on the issue, much less shield any party, faction or persons in Syria. As a permanent member of the Council and a responsible member of the international community, China has remained committed to seeking a political settlement to the question of Syria.

China has endeavoured comprehensively and in a balanced manner to engage with the Government of Syria and opposition parties to urge them, based on the demands of all sides, to seek a middle path appropriate to the country's conditions and accommodating the interests of all sides through dialogue and negotiation.

China is highly concerned about the humanitarian situation in Syria and sympathizes with the suffering of the Syrian people. It has provided humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people and Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries through various channels on many occasions. China attaches great importance to the legitimate concerns of all sides and of the Arab countries on the question of Syria. We remain willing to maintain close contact with all parties and promote active efforts to seek a political solution to the question of Syria and to maintain peace and stability in the Middle East region.