



**STATEMENT**

by

**H. E. Mr. Richard Galbavý**

**Deputy Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic  
to the United Nations**

**Formal debate of the General Assembly  
under agenda item 34**

Prevention of armed conflict

**on the**

**Report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the  
Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under  
International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011**

**23 April 2019  
New York**

**-Check against delivery-**

Madam President,

First, I express my sincere thanks to you for your introductory words. I would also like to thank the Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel, for introducing the second and third report on the implementation of the mandate of the Mechanism.

Slovakia highly appreciates the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> report on the functioning of the IIIM, covering the period from 1 February 2018 to 31 January 2019. With resolution No. 71/248, the General Assembly decided to take action being faced with endless accounts of horrific crimes committed on Syrian territory without any tangible response having been taken, especially in the field of accountability. The Assembly emphasized the importance of ensuring „*credible and comprehensive accountability*“ for serious international crimes as part of any political process to end the crisis in Syria.

Today, with the conflict in Syria in its 9th year, a functioning Mechanism is more relevant than ever. Ensuring accountability, including a victim-centered approach must be an integral part to any lasting solution to the conflict in Syria. The structural investigations conducted by the Mechanism are well placed to shed light on the developments on Syrian territory and help establish a comprehensive picture about the atrocities committed.

Madam President,

The Mechanism is a pioneer structure in international effort to ensure accountability. By collecting, analyzing and preserving evidence, it assists and facilitates pending or future criminal proceedings carried out by national authorities, as well as regional or international courts. By requiring the recipient jurisdiction to respect international human rights law and standards, including the right to a fair trial, the IIIM contributes to strengthening Rule of law and due process. The 14 requests for assistance from national war crimes units received in the period covered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> reports evidence the value of the Mechanism. As far as the use of the evidence gathered by the Mechanism is concerned, all potential jurisdictional grounds have to be taken account by the national authorities.

In order to benefit from the full potential of the Mechanism, States have to assist it in carrying out its mandate. Besides that, the cooperation of the IIIM with the UN and other international bodies is of utmost importance. In this respect, Slovakia welcomes the collaboration of the IIIM with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and with the OPCW, as well as with other international and non-governmental organizations.

Madam President,

Setting up an accountability mechanism is a demanding task. We are therefore grateful to Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel and her team for all the work accomplished so far, so that the Mechanism

has become operational. We believe that the novel state-of-the-art information and evidence management system may become the standard for other international or hybrid tribunals and investigative mechanisms.

While a lot has been done, one important aspect still presents a huge challenge to the long-term, stable and sustainable functioning of the Mechanism. While we are heartened by the broad range of States that have made voluntary contributions, including two contributions by my own country, without financing from the UN regular budget the work of the IIIM may be impaired. Therefore, we strongly support the inclusion of funding for the Mechanism in the regular budget of the UN starting 2020.

To conclude, Madam President,

Slovakia continues to be a firm supporter of the Mechanism. We are convinced that bringing perpetrators of international crimes to justice is a basic requirement for the solution of any conflict and for subsequent reconciliation efforts. It should also serve as a standing warning to any potential perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity anywhere in the world that their acts will not go unpunished.

Thank you, Madam President.