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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 6 August 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). With reference to the Mission's note No. 12/375 dated 31 July 2012 concerning the losses sustained by the Ministry of Health as a result of the current situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, you will find below additional information relating to the inhumane unilateral sanctions imposed on Syria and their impact on the health sector and pharmaceutical companies.

The inhumane unilateral sanctions imposed by various States and regional groups have had a direct impact on the health sector in that the price of foreign exchange has increased and transfer difficulties have been compounded as a result of the sanctions imposed on the banking sector, in particular the Central Bank of Syria. The Ministry of Health has consequently faced challenges and obstacles in its efforts to conclude contracts for the supply of medicinal drugs and essential medical items, as well as for spare parts and replacements for much of the medical equipment used in hospitals and medical centres. For these same reasons, Syrian pharmaceutical laboratories, which cover some 93 per cent of local market needs, face similar difficulties in attempting to obtain the raw materials for producing medicinal drugs.

The targeting of the oil sector has affected the supply of electricity, causing repeated and prolonged power cuts in many areas and an acute shortage of fuel, in turn affecting the refrigeration of medicinal drugs and child vaccines. Patients' lives are also directly threatened by the disruption of medical services in some hospitals and health centres, where medical equipment needed for patients with chronic diseases is not functioning because of the lack of fuel.

Also in the context of the economic blockade, the European Investment Bank has withdrawn funding for health care projects that were under way or in preparation. In particular, work has ceased at eight hospitals in various governorates, at the main centre for health research and on a project for the development and modernization of Syria's health sector.

We would also point out that 25 pharmaceutical laboratories in the governorates of Homs and Aleppo and in the Damascus countryside have been forced to halt the production of domestic pharmaceuticals altogether because they and their personnel have been directly targeted by armed groups.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic requests that the present note be circulated in the official languages of the United Nations as a document of the twenty-first session of the Human Rights Council.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic avails itself of this opportunity to express to OHCHR the assurances of its highest consideration.
