Thank you Mr President,

The EU thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its 9th report as well as for the oral update delivered today. As the conflict enters its fifth year, it is civilians who continue to suffer on a daily basis, in particular women and children. The situation remains seriously alarming, and continues to result in an ever-increasing number of deaths, serious injuries, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions and inhuman and degrading treatment. The information you collate on the alleged perpetrators and on the crimes committed in Syria is instrumental to support future accountability efforts. We deeply regret that the Syrian regime continues to deny the Commission access into Syria. We reiterate our support to the Commission’s work and to its request for immediate, full and unfettered access into the country.

The situation in Syria is appalling. Systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights law and international humanitarian law continue to be committed unabated, causing nearly 11 million refugees and displaced persons as well as the obliteration of Syria’s infrastructure including the destruction and pillage of its cultural heritage. According to your findings, there is clear evidence that actions by the Syrian government forces and groups such as Daesh/ISIL and Jabhat al Nusra, amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The EU strongly condemns the repeated use by the Syrian authorities of chlorine as an illegal weapon. We also reiterate our call on the Syrian government to immediately stop the use of barrel bombs and all forms of indiscriminate shelling and
bombardment against civilian areas. The EU strongly supports the Commission’s appeal to all parties in conflict to fully respect adhere to the norms of international human rights and humanitarian law. We urge all actors on the ground to increase efforts to protect civilians

All parties must allow humanitarian access to UN agencies and their implementing partners and enable the immediate and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, to all persons in need throughout Syria. The EU is particularly appalled by the continued siege and starvation of certain civilian-populated areas, which causes immense suffering and is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

We renew our full support for the UNSG Special Envoy’s efforts to achieve a strategic de-escalation of violence, including in Aleppo, and other diplomatic initiatives aimed at finding a political solution to the Syrian conflict, on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué.

We remain alarmed by the risk of the conflict spreading even further. The spread of extremism and the absence of protection for all ethnic, religious and other vulnerable groups, is concerning. As the Commission has documented, Daesh/ISIL has set up a reign of terror, committing heinous crimes tantamount to crimes against humanity.

The EU recalls that all persons responsible for severe violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable and that there can be no impunity for any such acts. We call upon the Security Council to urgently address the prevailing culture of impunity and refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. As the Commission of Inquiry has once again concluded in its latest report, the Syrian regime and its affiliates are responsible for the majority of violations and crimes against humanity in Syria. Assad is responsible for the crisis in Syria; he continues to commit systematic atrocities against civilians and has allowed the growth of extremist groups such as ISIL/Daesh and Jabhat al Nusra.

We strongly support the Commission’s appeal to all parties in conflict to fully respect adhere to the norms of international human rights and humanitarian law. We urge all actors on the ground to increase efforts to protect civilians
In conclusion, we reiterate our full support to your mandate, in particular in fighting impunity and ensuring accountability for all violations and abuses committed by the parties to the conflict.

Thank you.