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Written statement* submitted by the Arab NGO Network for Development, a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Severe and gross human rights violations in Syria continue requiring bold action from the United Nations

Since the uprising against the authorities began some 15 months ago, more than 9,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in Syria and tens of thousands remain displaced. During these period, the Human Rights Council held three special sessions; first on 29 April 2011, the second on 22 August 2011 and the third on 2 December 2011. Nevertheless the extreme use of force and excessive violence against civilians still continues in Syria in stark contrast to the commitments of the Syrian Government under United Nations Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) to cease violence in all its forms, including the cessation of use of heavy weapons in civilian populated areas.

Moreover, although the Syrian government promised to carry out the Annan plan on March 25, 2012, there has been no genuine implementation. Indeed, the massacre of civilians in Houla on May 25th, in which 108 civilians, including over 30 children lost their lives, has unfortunately shown that there is no sincerity in the commitments made by Syrian authorities. Ending the violence was the first call of the Annan plan, yet, each and every day the sufferance of the civilians and therefore crimes against humanity continues in Syria.

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), a regional network operating in 11 Arab countries with 7 national networks and 23 NGO members, urges all Member and Observer States of the Human Rights Council to contribute to ensuring that the United Nations will take more effective measures to bring an end to the violence in Syria in this fourth special session.

This, before anything, requires immediate referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC), in order to end impunity and ensure that those bearing the greatest responsibility for abuses in Syria are prosecuted. Moreover, although Syrian authorities announced that the government had formed a “military judicial committee” to conduct an investigation regarding Houla massacre, the credibility of such investigation is suspicious. Indeed, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry must investigate the grave human rights violations taking place in Syria, including Houla massacre. Thus, ANND calls the Human Rights Council to urge Syrian authorities to grant access to the UN Commission of Inquiry for a credible investigation.

It is important to point out that the internal situation in Syria has reached a stage of severe complexity affecting the entire region with atrocities occurring in neighboring countries, lately in Lebanon resulting in increasing regional tension and unrest. Therefore the severe condemnation of the use of force by Syrian authorities must be accompanied by bold action by HRC members in support of the legitimate demands of Syrian people for freedom and democracy, social justice and more rights at all levels of political, economic and social development.