



# Security Council

Seventieth year

## 7588<sup>th</sup> meeting

Friday, 18 December 2015, 4 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*


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*President:* Mr. Kerry/Ms. Power. . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Angola . . . . .	Mr. Domingos Augusto
Chad . . . . .	Mr. Cherif
Chile . . . . .	Mr. Barros Melet
China . . . . .	Mr. Wang Yi
France . . . . .	Mr. Fabius
Jordan . . . . .	Mr. Judeh
Lithuania . . . . .	Mr. Krivas
Malaysia . . . . .	Mrs. Adnin
New Zealand . . . . .	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria . . . . .	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Lavrov
Spain . . . . .	Mr. Ybáñez
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Hammond
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) . . . . .	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

**The President:** I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and the other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber today. Their presence here underscores the importance of the subject under discussion today.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Let me just say to everybody that we have a number of Ministers who have flight schedules to meet. This went on a little longer than we had thought, and I appreciate everybody's patience. We are very grateful to them.

It is now my honour now to give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General:** The Syrian conflict began with peaceful popular demands for political change, but it soon became defined by internal, regional and international divisions, including in this very Council. Almost five years later, we see a country in ruins, with millions of its people scattered across the world and a whirlwind of radicalism and sectarianism that challenges regional and global security.

I therefore welcome the critical initiative of the International Syria Support Group. In particular, I recognize the statesmanship of United States Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. I also welcome the draft resolution that the Security Council will adopt at this meeting. As the first resolution to focus on the political path to resolving the crisis, this marks a very important step on which we must build.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Ministers for their great leadership and for participating in this meeting.

At the two recent meetings in Vienna, the International Syria Support Group made two major

requests of the United Nations: first, to convene formal negotiations in January between the Syrian Government and opposition representatives, focused on a Syrian-led transition process; secondly, in parallel, to determine the requirements and modalities of a nationwide ceasefire. The United Nations stands ready to undertake those important tasks.

We welcome the meeting convened in Riyadh that brought together a broad spectrum of the Syrian opposition. As the Government and opposition delegations are getting ready, the United Nations stands ready to relaunch intra-Syrian talks mediated by my Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. As set out in the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), the parties must ensure the full and effective participation of women in those talks.

This morning, I urged the International Syria Support Group to apply the necessary pressure on the Syrian parties to immediately implement the following confidence-building measures: first, to stop the indiscriminate use of weapons against civilians, including barrel bombs, which have continued despite the Government's pledge to refrain from such assaults; secondly, to allow unconditional and unimpeded access for aid convoys — tens of thousands of people in besieged areas have been forced to live on grass and weeds, and that is outrageous; thirdly, to halt attacks on medical and educational facilities and lift all restrictions on medical and surgical supplies from humanitarian convoys; and, fourthly, release all detainees — reports indicate that prisoners face torture and atrocious conditions.

Nearly two years have passed since the Geneva II Conference. The people of Syria have suffered enough. I call on them to show vision and leadership in overcoming their differences. A fleeting opportunity for peace has emerged. Their duty is to seize it.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. I think everybody here joins in thanking the Secretary-General for his leadership and for all of the help provided by the United Nations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/996, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

**The President:** The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2254 (2015).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Secretary of State of the United States.

I want to begin by thanking the other permanent members who joined together to help fashion the resolution 2254 (2015) and spent time this morning working with our colleagues in order to bring us here this afternoon, plus the non-member, Germany, to whom we are also very grateful for their participation.

I want to thank all of the members of the Council for coming together at this late hour. I thank in particular Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Envoy de Mistura for their leadership and commitment. I also want to thank Foreign Minister Lavrov for his collaboration and efforts in the course of both Vienna conferences to produce the two Vienna communiqués, which are integrated into today's resolution.

By adopting resolution 2254 (2015) today, the Council is sending a clear message to all concerned that the time is now to stop the killing in Syria and lay the groundwork for a Government that the long-suffering people of that battered land can support. After four and a half years of war, this is the first time that we have been able to come together at the United Nations in the Security Council to embrace a road forward. During that time, one Syrian in 20 has been killed or wounded; one in five is a refugee; and one in two has been displaced. The average life expectancy in Syria has dropped by 20 years.

We need to reverse the course. That is the Council's goal here this afternoon: to put an end to the indiscriminate bombing, the acts of terror, the torture and the bloodshed. And our shared task is to find a way to make that happen.

In support of that objective, President Obama has three interrelated goals for my country. The first is to support our friends and to ensure that the instability created by the civil war in Syria does not spread further beyond its borders. That is why we are providing a

record amount of humanitarian assistance, and it is why we are doing more to help Syria's neighbours to strengthen their capacity to safeguard their territory and to defend against external threats.

Secondly, we are determined, with our coalition and its partners, to degrade and defeat the terrorist organization known as Daesh. In the past half-year, the coalition and its partners have worked with Iraqi forces in liberating Tikrit, freeing Sinjar, removing terrorist commanders from the battlefield, cutting off terrorist supply lines, hitting their oil facilities and depriving Daesh of more and more of the territory that it once controlled. Now we are intensifying the pressure, helping our Iraqi partners to retake most of Ramadi and squeezing supply routes into Mosul, and we are pushing ahead into northern Syria, assisting our partners along the Iraqi-Syrian border and in their recruiting and propaganda efforts. Further, as evidenced by the meeting of finance ministers that was held right here in this very Chamber yesterday (see S/PV.7587), we are multiplying our efforts to cut Daesh off from the revenue sources that support its depravity and criminality.

But the truth is that nothing would do more to bolster the fight against the terrorists than a broadly supported diplomatic process that gives the Syrian people a real choice — a choice not between Al-Assad and Daesh, but between war and peace, between the violent extremes and a newly empowered political centre. That is why we have joined many represented here today in support of an urgent diplomatic initiative. Again and again, countries — not just at this table today but in countless meetings in various parts of the world — have reaffirmed the notion that there has to be a political settlement. Well, this is the test. This is why we join here in an effort that is broader and more action-oriented than any ever before attempted regarding Syria to isolate the terrorists and to put Syria on the road to the political transition envisioned by the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and now embraced by the international community in a Security Council resolution.

As the Council's action today reflects, we have made important progress in recent weeks — progress that should give us all fresh grounds for encouragement. Last month in Vienna, the United States and other members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) agreed on a series of steps to stop the bleeding in Syria, to advance a political transition, to isolate the

terrorists, and to help the Syrian people to be able to begin to rebuild their country.

Last week in Riyadh, with the support of His Majesty King Salman and his Government, a broad cross-section of Syrian opposition representatives came together to form a high committee for negotiation. Under resolution 2254 (2015), adopted today, the purpose of those negotiations between the responsible opposition and the Government is to facilitate a transition within Syria to credible, inclusive, non-sectarian governance within six months. The process would lead to the drafting of a new constitution and arrangements for internationally supervised elections within 18 months. I might add that Geneva never had those dates. It is the Vienna process and the Vienna communiqué that has produced the 6-month and 18-month time horizon, and it is the Vienna process that has also embraced the ceasefire concept and a set of principles and values concerning the shape that a new Syria might be able to take, as directed by Syrians for Syrians. It is our hope that a nationwide ceasefire can go into effect, excluding only Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and any other group that we might decide at some time to designate.

I would close by saying that we are under no illusions about the obstacles that exist. There obviously remain sharp differences within the international community, especially about the future of President Al-Assad. We have emphasized from the beginning that if this is to work, the process has to be led, shaped, decided and implemented by the men and women of Syria. It cannot be imposed from the outside, and we are not seeking to do so. But we have also seen in recent weeks — in Vienna, Paris and other capitals, and again today here in New York — an unprecedented degree of unity on the need to negotiate this political transition, to defeat Daesh and then, indeed, to end the war. The resolution that we have just adopted is a milestone because it sets out specific concepts with specific time frames. Accordingly, we need to work hard together to help these political talks to go forward, to prepare for a ceasefire and to encourage all the parties in Syria to participate in good faith.

Let me just underscore the urgency of our task. Like many representatives here, I have met with refugees in and out of refugee camps. I have met with survivors, as have others in this Chamber. I have met with caregivers, as they have. I have met with many of the people who have been on the front lines of this conflict. I have talked to women who have struggled to hold

their families together, despite constant danger, bitter cold, shortages of food and great peril. I have heard the blood-chilling stories of doctors and relief workers who have been dealing with humanitarian trauma on a daily basis — month after month, year after year, and now into the fifth year. I am aware, as is everybody in this Chamber, of the atrocities that have been and are being committed, even as we sit here this afternoon, and too often against innocent civilians.

Looking ahead, we know that Daesh can never be allowed to gain control in Syria, so we have a global imperative here not only to deal with a terrorist entity, but also to end the civil war and to bring legitimacy back to the governance of Syria. President Al-Assad, in our judgement — which is not shared by everybody, but as the majority of people in the ISSG believe — has lost the ability to unite the country and to provide the moral credibility to govern it in the future. So I shall just say, not as a matter of ideology or of choice but purely as a matter of reality and fact, given the situation on the ground, that if the war is to end it is imperative that the Syrian people agree on an alternative in terms of their governance. That logic is compelling, and it provides a unifying principle for most people in our efforts going forward.

We have a lot of distance to travel — some would say miles to go — but the truth is that, in the past two months we have gone from a stand-still, from a non-existent process, to holding three separate meetings of the ISSG and now securing the Security Council's embrace of a process. We have agreed on a plan of action, and the Council's vote today is an important boost on the road to a political settlement. It is a particularly important step because it reaffirms this body's endorsement of the Geneva communiqué concerning a transitional governing body with full executive authority, and it also endorses the progress and the statements that we made in Vienna regarding a time line for the transition and elections, and standards for that election — the highest standards under the supervision of the United Nations for a free, fair, transparent and accountable election. It also brings fundamental values and principles that can guide the shaping of Syria by Syrians for Syrians.

Let us proceed with confidence from here in the determination to end this war, eliminate the terrorist threat and enable the people of Syria to return safely to their homes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Lavrov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to thank John Kerry for his initiative to convene the third meeting of the International Syria Support Group today in New York, which has brought us together here in this Chamber.

This meeting of the International Syria Support Group underscores the commitment of all its participants to the Vienna process. Resolution 2254 (2015), which we have just adopted, approves the Group's statements of 30 October and 14 November on the way forward to implement the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 30 June 2012.

It also clearly establishes, first, that those three documents constitute the sole platform for resolving the bloody crisis in Syria, and, secondly, that the Vienna format is the only one that unites all of the influential external actors and is therefore capable of providing the external conditions needed for a sustainable and just settlement through negotiations between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the entire spectrum of the opposition. Today's resolution puts the international legal authority for the collective work of preparing those negotiations under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. It emphasizes that only through an inclusive dialogue organized with the consent of the Syrians themselves can an end be brought to the terrible suffering endured by the Syrian people.

At the same time, the resolution affirms the fundamental principles of political settlements, which are that Syria must remain a united, secular, multi-confessional and multi-ethnic State, a place of welcome and safety for every sector of the population, and that the Syrian people alone have the right to determine their own future. That is a clear response to external attempts to impose on Syrians solutions to issues of various kinds, including the fate of their President. It is precisely that approach that is enshrined in the Geneva communiqué, the documents of the International Syria Support Group and today's resolution.

However, we are all united in our agreement that there is no place for terrorists, whatever their affiliation,

at the negotiating table, or for those who admit the possibility of a military solution to the conflict. The Council's unanimous vote today should open up a pathway to creating a broad anti-terrorism front on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, with the support of everyone on the planet who opposes terror, including the Syrian army, the Kurdish volunteers and the armed patriotic Syrian opposition., Elements of the Russian air forces contributed to the efforts to accomplish this task in response to the invitation from the legitimate Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. We expect that a major role in this effort will be played by yesterday's resolution 2253 (2015), proposed by Russia and the United States, aimed at toughening controls on the financing of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorists by cutting off their financing channels, mainly by preventing them from conducting illicit trading in oil. The fight against terrorism must be consistent and constant, whether in Syria or anywhere else. Attempts to divide terrorists into good and bad groups are unacceptable.

Today's resolution also emphasizes the necessity of providing the Syrian people with humanitarian aid, carried out in strict compliance with the guiding principles of the United Nations established in the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including the principle of the consent of the Government of the host country. It is important that today the Security Council once again affirmed the necessity of respecting the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The resolution adopted today strengthens the Security Council's control over the implementation of the Vienna agreements, with the assistance of the International Syria Support Group. The Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. de Mistura, will play a leading role in organizing and supporting the negotiating process, based on the results of the meetings with the Syrian opposition, including those being held in Moscow, Cairo, Riyadh, Damascus, Al-Hasakah and other places. We are relying on the Council secretariat's balanced recommendations on the essential steps to be taken regarding all the provisions agreed in Vienna. We firmly believe that our colleagues on Staffan de Mistura's team will approach that task responsibly and impartially, without yielding to possible attempts by one side or another to put pressure on them, and that they will be guided exclusively by the task of assisting in the process of arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement

between the Government and the opposition, as today's resolution requires.

As those recommendations are completed, we will be ready, as co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group with the United States and the United Nations, to convene another meeting to formulate a consensus based on the next steps to be taken to promote a settlement in Syria. As we undertake the work ahead of us, we urge all our colleagues not to be carried away by ideological rhetoric, to avoid the incitements of pernicious sectarian strife and to work pragmatically, with the aim above all of combating violent terrorism and ending the conflict through a political settlement. There is no alternative to that approach if we genuinely wish to put the interests of the Syrian people and the Syrian Government ahead of geopolitical ambitions.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Lavrov for his statement and for his leadership on this issue.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

**Mr. Judeh** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary of State of the United States, whose country is presiding over the Council this month, for convening this important ministerial meeting to follow up on the constructive international work that has been accomplished with the aim of bringing an end to the crisis in Syria and the suffering of the Syrian people.

Today's meeting is another milestone in the international response to the situation in Syria. Over the past few months, the parties concerned, both internationally and regionally, have intensified their diplomatic efforts to reach a common understanding on how to achieve a political settlement of the tragic, five-year-long Syrian crisis, whose repercussions pose such a threat to the region and to the international community, particularly through the humanitarian issues resulting from the millions of Syrians who are now internally displaced or seeking asylum, and on the security front, owing to the expansion of the Daesh terrorist group, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist individuals and entities.

Those commendable international efforts led to the establishment of the International Syria Support Group, and in that regard I would like to thank Secretary Kerry and Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs

of the Russian Federation, for their efforts in helping to realize this achievement, which, God willing, may eventually lead to the political solution for Syria that we all desire. I am also grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his work so far and his efforts in the future. We stress how important it is that the Group continue to work on ensuring the establishment of a political process for Syria based on the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex) and the declarations issued by the Support Group in the three meetings held in Vienna and today in New York, and to implement the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015), adopted by the Council today, a historic document that paves the way for implementing a political solution that we hope can end the crisis that Syria and its people have endured.

In that regard, I would also like to express our appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which hosted a conference of the Syrian opposition in Riyadh with the aim of launching the political negotiations that we hope will lead to a settlement, and to all the other countries that have worked tirelessly to achieve this. I would also like to mention that Jordan has played the part that it was asked to take on in launching the process of coordinating the members of the International Syria Support Group with the aim of reaching a common understanding on the groups and individuals who may be considered to be terrorists. We presented the results of our work to the Support Group and have outlined the consensus reached by some countries on some terrorist groups; there were other groups about which members could not agree, which means that negotiations on the future designation of those groups may have to continue.

In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, we have said that the only solution to the crisis is a comprehensive political solution. Our position under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, son of King Al Hussein, has been to emphasize that a comprehensive political solution must be realized. That remains our position and our conviction. We see no way to restore normalcy in Syria, to mend the social fabric and to safeguard its territorial integrity and political independence except through a political solution. We do not see any other way of confronting and defeating terrorism, extremism and Daesh groups or of uprooting them from Syria and other places.

That objective cannot be realized except through a comprehensive political solution that all Syrians can agree on. We will support and help them to realize it, so as to save Syria and restore international and regional peace and security. The Council's adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) today will give them the necessary momentum to realize a political solution, based on the concepts in the Geneva communiqué, within a comprehensive political context and in line with the statements of the International Syria Support Group. It should enable them to begin and sustain a path towards the realization of a political solution through the process outlined in resolution 2254 (2015) and to determine the time frames required and mechanisms necessary for its implementation and the fulfilment of all obligations, as well as to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive ceasefire, which would, however, not apply to the terrorists groups Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and others, but which will lead to defeating them.

With regard to terrorism and extremism, Jordan leads the international efforts to defeat the terrorism and extremism in our region. It is a terrorism that destroys the image of our great religion, Islam, and its message of tolerance and its moderate cause. All those who try to commit crimes in the name of our religion are not part of the religion at all. All Syrian parties must rise to the level of making a sacrifice for, and thereby realize the religious aspirations of, the Syrian people to achieve a comprehensive political solution, one that could restore security, stability and harmony to Syria and lead to the uprooting of terrorism. It could have implications worldwide and provide the basis for the reconstruction of Syria so that it can live in peace with itself, a Syria of plurality, and allow the refugees to return to their homeland.

The international community in general, and the Council in particular, must not allow any obstacles to impede a comprehensive political solution or lead to its failure, and they must take effective measures capable of defeating any attempt to delay that realization. Failure would have grave consequences for everyone. We have all seen conclusive evidence of the dangers resulting from the absence of a political vision and a political solution.

Today's momentum should spur the international community to intensify its efforts to face the crisis of the Syrian refugees, one of the most difficult and painful humanitarian crises, especially for neighbouring States hosting refugees, and notably my country, Jordan. The

number of Syrians in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan alone is estimated at 1.4 million, and they are spread across all regions of the Kingdom. Approximately 9 per cent of them live in camps. Jordan, with its limited resources, has become the second-largest host for refugees in the world and is the country that hosts the second-largest number of Syrian refugees, with all the attendant consequences and pressures on major sectors like health, education, security, the labour market and the infrastructure, which are costing the Jordanian treasury a lot of expenses beyond the reach and the ability of the Kingdom to manage.

Jordan and its kind people, including our Syrian brothers already in the country, have opened their houses to the refugees from Syria. We have shared with them our limited resources. On behalf of all humankind, we have carried out our obligation in hosting them and providing them with all that we can. We are proud of our ability to host them. Our hosting is in consonance with the principles of the Hashemite leadership. However, the world must share the burden with us, because we are performing that humanitarian duty on behalf of all humankind. We ask for help to shoulder the burden and to work with us in accordance with the response plan drawn by the Government of Jordan to alleviate the suffering of those who are living in the camps or being hosted by our citizens. We look forward to the London Conference to be held early next year, and we call on the international community to participate in the Conference so as to achieve the necessary and desired results.

Today, we are facing a real chance, one that must not be missed, to take confident steps towards the realization of a political solution that will satisfy all Syrians and restore stability and security to Syria. We should help the Syrian people to realize their ambitions to move into a new reality, a reality that they themselves will define, one that will maintain the unity and territorial integrity of their country and enable us to defeat terrorism, working in coordination and partnership with them. Today, from the Chamber, I call on all Syrians and the entire international community to avail ourselves of this opportunity before it is too late.

My statement today could be the last during Jordan's tenure as a member of the Security Council, as our non-permanent membership will end in a few days. Allow me to avail myself of this opportunity to express to the whole membership of the Council our

deep thanks and gratitude for the cooperation we have received during our two-year tenure in the Council, which began in January 2014. I also wish to express our deep thanks and gratitude to the Member States for the confidence given to Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, by electing our country as a non-permanent member of the Council.

Jordan believes in the Charter of the United Nations and is committed to its purposes and principles. We are all proud of the quality achievements that the Organization has realized and the initiatives undertaken in all sectors, notably in the youth sector. I wish to refer to the various initiatives in regard to Syria, the humanitarian situation in Syria, the Palestinian question and other important issues on which we worked with other Council members to achieve positive results and solutions during our membership. Any achievements realized in this important body have all been accomplished through cooperation with the membership in the maintenance of international peace and security.

**The President:** On behalf of the Council, I wish to thank Minister Judeh and the Hashemite Kingdom for their service and the peacekeeping they undertake, as well as for the extraordinary work done with refugees. We are all very grateful.

It is now my privilege to give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development for France.

**Mr. Fabius** (France) (*spoke in French*): There is great urgency in Syria, as well as for the Syrian people. In the past five years more than 250,000 have been killed, while 4 million have become refugees and 13.5 million have been displaced. The terrorism of Daesh has struck the heart of its cities. There is an urgent need to resolve this crisis, which, far beyond Syria, poses a threat to international peace and security.

In this context, resolution 2254 (2015), which we have just adopted unanimously, represents a glimmer of hope and is what I might call a road-map resolution. We all know, as participants in it, that a still-tenuous political process was initiated in Vienna on the basis of the Geneva communiqué, whose principles remain obligatory for us. The process has brought together, in an unprecedented manner — and this is a positive thing — all of the relevant international partners. The international community must provide a credible

framework for negotiations to be held between a delegation from the regime and a delegation from the opposition, under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, our friend Mr. Staffan de Mistura, so as to establish a transitional authority and facilitate a ceasefire. The Council is today endorsing the initial results of the process.

Allow me to quickly emphasize a few points.

First, with respect to the opposition, we have heard some ask, what opposition? Several meetings in various formats have been held on this topic, but allow me to underscore the success of the recent conference convened by Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, upon request of the Vienna Group. That success should be stressed, because the Syrian opposition responded by joining together. Indeed, all of the various movements of the political and armed opposition came together around a common platform and expressed their commitment to a political solution: a free, secular and democratic Syria that has space for all of the components of Syrian society. So we have an interlocutor guided by the Geneva communiqué. Indeed, the Special Envoy of the United Nations, with the High Negotiations Committee, now has an opposition interlocutor. At this stage, we note that, as far as we can see, the Syrian regime has not yet demonstrated a clear desire to enter into serious negotiations on the basis of the terms of reference established.

Secondly, at the political level, there are plans to hold inter-Syrian talks as soon as possible. However, they will bear fruit only if, with our support and guarantee, the credible political framework defined by the Geneva and Vienna communiqués is in fact created. That framework is based on several principles. The first is an effective political transition, meaning the handover to a transitional authority of full executive power, in particular control over the military and security apparatus, as set out in the Geneva communiqué. That step should be taken soon.

Secondly, there must be institutional reform, in particular in the area of security, in order to provide Syria with a framework that respects the diversity of the Syrian people.

Finally, there must be safeguards regarding the exit of Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, which is necessary not just for moral reasons, but also, as we have stressed earlier, ones of effectiveness. Indeed, how could a person possibly bring together a whole people when he has



played such a large part in massacring them? In that respect, whatever our views might be, we simply cannot ignore an undeniable political reality: that as long as Mr. Bashar Al-Assad's Government remains in power, a lasting and genuine reconciliation between the Syrian people and the State appears unattainable.

Finally, allow me to share a few thoughts on the ceasefire. It must be national, viable and verifiable, and we believe that for it to be lasting, at least three conditions should be met.

First, we believe that the ceasefire should accompany, not precede, the transition, and that only the advent of this transition can provide the opposition with the necessary security conditions.

Secondly, we believe that the ceasefire must be prepared for by taking immediate humanitarian measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of the people and giving credibility to the political process. Compliance with international humanitarian law is a *sine qua non*, in particular the immediate halting of indiscriminate attacks against civilians and unhampered access for humanitarian assistance. Confidence-building measures would be most welcome so as to create a foundation for the ceasefire.

Finally, after such violence, monitoring of the ceasefire will be quite difficult and will require creative solutions not only on the ground but also on the political front. A mechanism will be required through which the members of the International Syria Support Group that are most concerned, as well as the permanent members of the Security Council, can hold the parties accountable for compliance with their obligations.

By way of conclusion, let me say that I spoke earlier about a glimmer of hope and a road-map resolution. All of us around the table must contribute in good faith to creating conditions conducive to a genuine political transition in Syria. We must all bring our influence to bear to induce the Syrian parties to uphold the guidelines that we have set out, in particular as inter-Syrian talks are set to begin under the auspices of the United Nations and of Staffan de Mistura.

France, for its part, will remain active and vigilant so as to ensure that all military forces are focused on combating Daesh and eradicating terrorism. We will be vigilant in order to ensure that the parties, and first and foremost the regime, engage in talks and uphold their humanitarian obligations. And we will be vigilant so

that the international community effectively commits to a credible transition and a lasting ceasefire. Only these clear objectives and this rediscovered unity will enable the international community to, as we hope, triumph over terrorism and put an end to the Syrian tragedy.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

**Mr. Wang Yi (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) by the Security Council. The resolution embodies the broad consensus of the international community, demonstrates the important role of the Security Council, reflects the keen aspiration of the Syrian people and lends fresh impetus to the political settlement of the Syrian issue. We must follow through on it with a view to translating consensus into action and expectation into reality as soon as possible.

The protracted conflict of the past five years has brought Syria, a country with a time-honoured civilization, to ruins. Large numbers of Syrians have been displaced and are unable to return to their homes. What is worse, it has become a hotbed where radical ideas breed and spread as well as a playground for terrorists, posing a grave threat to the peace and security of the region and beyond. As such, the international community should work towards the political settlement of the issue with a stronger sense of urgency and responsibility.

For five years, relentless international efforts have been made to seek a political settlement. This on-and-off political process has had its ups and downs. We need to build on successful experience, learn the lessons and press ahead with the political process firmly and steadily, so that it can be put on an irreversible path.

First, we must remain committed to the goal of a political settlement. What has happened tells us that the greater the bloodshed, the higher the tension. There is simply no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Political negotiations are the only viable option. All warring parties in Syria must stop fighting immediately, and those organizations and individuals that reject the ceasefire will find themselves in opposition to the Syrian people and the whole world, and they will pay a high price. The Security Council has already sent a clear and strong message. The relevant countries, especially the countries of the region, should also leverage their

respective influence to engage the various parties in Syria and call for a meaningful ceasefire.

Secondly, we must remain committed to the principle that the future of Syria must be independently decided by the Syrian people. No one cares more about Syria's future or knows the country better than the Syrian people, as Syria belongs to the Syrians. The political process should be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. This is consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the universally recognized norms governing international relations.

I wish to stress again that specific steps in the political transition must be independently worked out between the Syrian Government and the opposition representatives through negotiations. The process of drafting a new constitution must be independently decided on by all parties and groups in Syria, and a future leader of Syria must be independently chosen by the Syrian people. Other countries could help in a constructive way. The international community needs to foster an enabling environment, and all parties should create favourable conditions to that end.

Thirdly, we must remain committed to having the United Nations serve as the main channel for mediation. United Nations involvement would bring more legitimacy and authority to the process, and it is the largest common denominator acceptable to all parties. Under Security Council mandate, the United Nations will formulate a comprehensive ceasefire plan and promote peace talks between the Government and the opposition. We look to the United Nations to work on both fronts steadily, as mandated, and play a greater role in integrating the opposition groups, coordinating international counter-terrorism efforts and other areas. The international community should assist, complement and provide cooperation and support to the mediation efforts by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Envoy de Mistura in a constructive way. The International Syria Support Group should build on its previous efforts and continue to support the United Nations mediation.

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, China has all along held an objective and just position and has participated in the settlement of the issue. China neither has nor does it pursue self-serving interests on the Syrian issue. No matter how we vote — for or against — our goal is always to avoid war and prevent

turmoil, give the Syrian people stability, give peace a chance and make a political settlement possible. What we are trying to do is to uphold the fundamental and long-term interests of the people in Syria and the region, safeguard the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations, and protect the legitimate interests of developing countries, especially small- and medium-sized countries.

The changing dynamics in the Syrian situation affect the various parties, the region and the whole world. Its increasingly clear, spiralling effects have triggered severe global challenges, such as terrorism and the refugee crisis. We call on all the relevant parties to rise above narrow geopolitical rivalries and a zero-sum approach, work for global strategic stability and the greater good, work together to advance political transition, jointly fight terrorism, ease the humanitarian crisis and take a holistic approach to the refugee problem.

Instability causes suffering, and conflict leaves no winner. We must join hands to help parties to the conflict to bury the hatchet and build peace so that the Syrian people will be able to lead lives free of fear and war.

**The President:** I thank Minister Wang Yi particularly for having travelled all the way to be here for one day. He is about to catch a plane to rush back. We are very appreciative of his effort, which, in itself makes an important statement.

I now give the floor to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Hammond** (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, for all that they are doing to bring the Syrian parties together. Allow me to also thank you, Mr. Secretary, for the characteristic drive and energy that you have brought for months to this process in establishing the International Syria Support Group. That has given new momentum to the resumption of Syrian-led talks and has brought us to this important occasion today.

Resolution 2254 (2015), which we have adopted unanimously today, is a further step in that work. Sadly, it is far too soon for any of us to predict an end to the Syrian conflict, but I hope that we will look

back on today as a significant step in that direction. Frankly, on Syria, the Council has too seldom found the unity it needed to live up to its responsibility for delivering peace and security, despite some useful but only partially implemented resolutions. That has to change. No country, nor any person who has been involved in Syria's destruction over the past four years, can take any satisfaction from what has been happening there. On the Syrian dossier, we have to concede that we have all failed. We have all been losers, but by far the greatest losers are the people of Syria themselves. We have to do better, and we have to do better fast, if there is not to be still more suffering.

The participants in the International Syria Support Group came together behind a single aim: to support the Syrian parties in their efforts to find an end to the conflict and to tackle the terrorists currently operating in their country. We all share the sense of urgency that comes from witnessing the ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Syria. The Syrians — over 250,000 of whom have been killed and millions more forced from their homes — have borne the brunt of that conflict. It is not a humanitarian disaster. It is a humanitarian catastrophe. The ongoing and indiscriminate use of weapons on civilians, especially artillery and aerial bombardments, including barrel bombs, continues to cause terror, destruction and civilian deaths. While Daesh poses a real threat to Syrians, as well as to the wider region, it is Al-Assad who bears the responsibility for the majority of the deaths in Syria.

I commend Saudi Arabia for convening a broad cross-section of representatives of the Syrian opposition groups in Riyadh earlier this month. The agreement reached at that meeting in Riyadh and the formation of a high-level negotiating committee showed the determination of the Syrian opposition groups to come together, whatever their differences, to play a crucial and constructive role in the talks. They reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), working towards a managed transition away from Al-Assad and a pluralistic future for Syria. I also welcome Jordan's efforts aimed at building consensus on identifying the terrorist groups operating in Syria. While it is for the Council ultimately to decide to designate any such groups, the International Syria Support Group is in a privileged position to provide information, analysis and advice to the Council to assist it. We believe that it

will take time for that review to mature, enabling us to test which groups are willing to commit to a political process and a ceasefire.

I would now like to turn to the content of the resolution just adopted and highlight the areas that will be critical to the progress of talks.

First, all of us, both in the Council and in the broader international community, want to see an national ceasefire established. To have a realistic chance of success, a ceasefire must be closely aligned to making progress on a political transition and on talks between the Syrian parties under United Nations auspices. We have seen previous attempts to end the conflict in Syria undermined by a lack of determination on the part of the parties to contribute productively to talks. It is critical that the voices of all Syrian are heard in this process, including Syrian women and members of Syrian minorities.

Secondly, there needs to be confidence among the parties that the political process will deliver real results, without which neither the talks nor the ceasefire will be successful. That will not be easy. Five years of conflict has eroded confidence. Therefore, all the parties must undertake confidence-building measures, some of which are identified in the resolution that we have adopted today. We welcome the work being undertaken by the United Nations to that end, with the aim of arriving at modalities for a ceasefire, as mandated by today's resolution. All parties have a duty to take care, in their military operations, not to cause the deaths of civilians, whether by deliberate or by reckless targeting. The indiscriminate use of weapons, especially the use of artillery and aerial bombardments, including barrel bombs, must stop. Medical facilities and schools have increasingly become targets for aerial bombardment, something that is abhorrent to all of us and must stop. All parties must adhere to their duties under international human rights and humanitarian law. They must allow humanitarian agencies rapid, safe and unhindered access throughout Syria by the most direct routes. There are 13.5 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance. Those people need to see a change in their lives, if they are to have confidence in this political process and to feel its benefits. The United Kingdom is the second-largest bilateral donor to the humanitarian effort in response to the Syrian conflict, after the United States. But let us all do more on that front.

The resolution also reiterates a commitment to political transition in Syria, following the principles of the Geneva communiqué in full, and leading to free and fair elections under a new Syrian constitution within 18 months. That will involve the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers and representative of all Syrians, all of which provides the framework for talks and an end to the conflict. That process necessarily involves the departure of Bashar Al-Assad, not only for moral reasons, given the destruction that he has unleashed upon his own people, but also for practical reasons, because it will never be possible to bring peace and unity to Syria as long as he remains in office. But we must and will protect the institutions that are necessary for the future governance of Syria. That will be possible with a representative transitional governing body and with the support of the International Syria Support Group.

While we must seek to end the conflict in Syria, especially the violence that is directed against civilians, we must also join in confronting the threat posed by Daesh and other extremist groups in the country. An end to the civil war in Syria is critical to tackling Daesh in the long term. We all agree that terrorist groups must not and will not benefit from the ceasefire that we are promoting. A key consideration for the Syrians in the establishment of the transitional governing body will be the fight against terrorism. In that fight, they will have the full support of the International Syria Support Group and the global coalition to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Following the appalling attacks in the Sinai, Beirut, Ankara and Paris, the Council unanimously decided to adopt resolution 2249 (2015), which calls on all countries to use all the necessary means to combat Daesh. The United Kingdom responded to that resolution by extending into Syria the air strikes that we were already carrying out in Iraq against Daesh. In that regard, it is vital that all countries that claim to be fighting Daesh do what they say rather than direct the bulk of their attacks against non-extremist opposition groups. There has been clear evidence over the past weeks that the weakening of such groups has created opportunities for the expansion of Daesh in certain areas, the very opposite of the stated objective.

As well as focusing on the immediate threats, we must also prepare for the future in Syria. We must reaffirm our commitment to assist in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. Next February, in close

partnership with Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the United Nations, the United Kingdom will co-host a conference in London on humanitarian support for Syria, including a focus on civilian protection, as well as planning for stabilization. Of course, that conference will seek to raise the funding that is necessary to meet the United Nations appeal to support those displaced by the humanitarian crisis. The United Kingdom is also committed to supporting post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Syria, and has already committed to providing at least \$1.5 billion to that work in the long term, in addition to the more than \$1.64 billion we have so far given in humanitarian aid. I hope that in February we will see others committing to both the immediate challenge and the long-term challenge of reconstruction.

In conclusion, the conflict in Syria is now almost five years old. During that time, more than 250,000 Syrians have been killed. We all have a duty to prevent further slaughter. Despite the important step that we have taken with today's resolution, despite the progress we have made in Vienna, despite the important steps forward at the meeting in Riyadh the week before last, there is still a very long way to go. In order to have a chance of success, the United Nations will need the clear and continued support of the International Syria Support Group, and I know that I can say that it will have the support of that group. But above all, we need Syrian leaders of all persuasions to take responsibility for the future of their country and to take the tough decisions needed to bring about a lasting political settlement and an end to the conflict. We can help, but only the Syrians themselves can bring an end to Syrian suffering.

**The President:** Allow me to thank the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, Mr. Hammond, for his personal engagement and collaboration on this matter. It has really been key, together with that of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Laurent Fabius and company. We are very appreciative of their help.

I now give the floor to the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

**Mr. Ybáñez (Spain)** (*spoke in Spanish*): The unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) opens a window of opportunity to address through dialogue the crisis in Syria, one of the most painful conflicts that we have seen in decades. The main victims of the crisis

are first and foremost the Syrians themselves. Today's resolution comes too late for the more than 250,000 people who have died in the past five years. We should not forget that in Syria the most fundamental norms of international humanitarian law have been — and continue to be — violated. At the same time, the war in Syria is a challenge owing to the implications that it has for the entire region. It triggered the escalation of the terrorism perpetrated by Daesh, which has become the main threat to the international community on a global scale.

As a co-sponsor of the resolution, Spain is well aware of the attacks in Paris, Beirut, the downing of a Russian airliner over the Sinai and the attacks in Ankara. A ceasefire in Syria will allow us to focus on the political solution to that conflict, while continuing the fight against terrorism. That is now our priority.

In the coming months, Spain will continue to actively participate in the coalition against Daesh in various areas, including the training of Iraqi security forces. Today's resolution affirms, moreover, the centrality of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, which can no longer sit idly by in the face of a conflict of this magnitude. The Vienna process has been key in bringing together countries with very different, even antagonistic, views on the conflict in Syria around the negotiating table. However, the United Nations should mediate a long-term solution, as is reflected in the responsibilities set out in resolution 2254 (2015) to the Secretary-General, the team of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and the Security Council itself.

Without the unity of the international community we would not have come this far. However, the success or failure of this process will depend mainly on the Syrians themselves. The challenge is considerable. After so many years of war, it will be very difficult to heal the wounds; the temptation to embrace a military solution will be present at each stage of the process.

Spain has always supported a dialogue without preconditions in Syria, with the knowledge that the future will inevitably go through a transition that will lead to a new political system based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). We fully support Special Envoy de Mistura, who has all the qualities necessary to successfully conduct this exercise.

The implementation of confidence-building measures in the short term would be a clear sign

of hope. In that regard, we call for the immediate cessation of indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population, in particular the use of barrel bombs by the Government of Syria.

In conclusion, yesterday marked five years since Mohammed Bouazizi's protest in Tunis, which led to the Arab Spring. Yesterday in this Chamber we also adopted resolution 2253 (2015), in which we committed to take concrete measures to sever the umbilical chord of Daesh's financing. I trust that the Security Council will swiftly take a position with the same firmness and unity in favour of guaranteeing humanitarian assistance to all Syrians through the most immediate channels and without any obstacles. Spain is working with Jordan and New Zealand to achieve the adoption of such a draft resolution. We will submit for adoption together next week, and I am sure that all Security Council members will provide their full support. The involvement of all the parties will be needed to implement that resolution.

In recent days we have had positive news on Libya from Morocco. Step by step progress is being made in Yemen. In Syria we have a long road ahead full of obstacles, but at least we are taking the most important step — an indispensable step, in fact — so that armed clashes give way to diplomacy.

As a member of the Security Council, Spain will spare no effort in translating the spirit of unity and consensus into an effective commitment to peace, security and stability in Syria and in the Middle East as a whole.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Secretary of State for External Relations of Angola.

**Mr. Domingos (Angola):** We thank the United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, for presiding over this important meeting.

We also welcome the adoption of the landmark resolution 2254 (2015), which delineates the process that will bring about the end of the Syrian crisis. Its pledge to support the ceasefire in Syria marks a vital step forward. We encourage all parties to abide by its provisions in order to successfully implement a Syrian-led political transition, thereby ensuring the continuity of governmental institutions and the maintenance of the independence and territorial integrity of Syria. We urge all parties in Syria, as well as the international community, to maintain their focus and commitment

to the principles stipulated in that resolution and in the Geneva communiqué (S/2023/522, annex).

The conflict in Syria has become one of the most appalling situations confronting the international community, with far-reaching political, humanitarian and economic repercussions. The Security Council has addressed the issue on numerous occasions with a feeling of despair due to the grim situation faced by the Syrian people. During the debates on the Syrian situation, the delegation of Angola often admitted to its disappointment with the lack of political will demonstrated by the major stakeholders. Such political will is necessary to achieve an effective, real and durable solution to end a war that has claimed the lives of so many innocent people while also displacing millions. Now, as we reach the end of this year, we look forward with a sense of renewed hope due to the apparent determination by the international community to defeat terrorism, as well as the positive momentum for the political resolution to the conflict in Syria.

The recent upsurge in brutal terrorist attacks — namely, in Paris, Beirut, Iraq, Ankara, Egypt, Bamako and elsewhere — and the staggering refugee crisis from Syria seemed to have played the role of a game-changer by making the international community understand the implications of allowing conflicts to degenerate to such an extent, as has been the case of the crisis in Syria. People suffering under such deplorable conditions for such a prolonged period of time, while international organizations and world Powers are unable or unwilling to protect them, are prey for the recruitment efforts of radical and extremist elements. Exclusion, poverty and armed conflict serve as a breeding ground for violent extremist groups to spread their ideology of hatred and intolerance, as is the case with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Daesh and other terrorist organizations operating in the region.

It is reassuring that the international community has begun to turn the tide by adopting positive steps towards a political transition in Syria that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and that will, hopefully, enable them to independently and democratically determine their own future, while repudiating extremist elements such as ISIL/Daesh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, among others.

We welcome the outcomes of the recent Syria talks in Vienna and the specific steps outlined with regard

to the political process in Syria, notably the request for the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to convene a meeting with the Syrian Government and opposition by January 2016. In that regard, we stress the importance of identifying members representing the entire spectrum of opposition forces, and for both sides to start discussing without further delay the end of hostilities and the establishment of a sustainable ceasefire. That would constitute the first step towards a meaningful political process enabling a new future for Syria.

It is also imperative that the parties to the conflict begin implementing confidence-building measures on the ground in order to attain the established deadlines for the political process agreed by the International Syria Support Group. That includes a joint national unity Government, the drafting of a new constitution and the holding of elections based on that constitution.

Putting an end to the violence is one of the most pressing issues at the moment. As the refugee crisis has demonstrated, the humanitarian catastrophe needs to be reversed by creating conditions for a ceasefire, thereby permitting the safe return of displaced people and refugees to their homes. In the meantime, however, we should not forget the collective obligation to continue providing humanitarian aid until a normal life can be restored in Syria.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support to the principles of the Geneva communiqué and the constructive measures adopted at the Vienna meetings regarding the way forward in the resolution of the Syrian conflict. We also welcome the broad-based international coalition to fight the so-called Islamic State/Daesh and other terrorist groups. Auspiciously, it became evident that inaction was no longer suitable given the dangerous proliferation of extremism throughout the world and its impact on the daily lives of people everywhere. A unified stand in the fight on terrorism is crucial. Terrorists can prevail anywhere in the world. The more the international community is divided and States selfishly pursue their national interests, the more the terrorists prey on vulnerable and alienated communities in conflict-ridden areas, thereby swelling their ranks and increasingly threatening international peace and security.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

**Mr. Krivas** (Lithuania): Our meeting today and the adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) mark an important step towards the settlement of the most brutal conflict of this century. The peace process that started in Vienna is long overdue, as a human tragedy continues to take place inside Syria and keeps spilling over its borders, with a particularly heavy burden on its neighbours. Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are bearing the brunt of it. Unprecedented numbers of refugees are reaching Europe, while human traffickers and smugglers are profiting from their plight.

To this very day, the civilian population continues to suffer atrocities committed not only by terrorist groups such as Daesh but also by President Al-Assad's regime. As part of the problem, President Al-Assad cannot be seen as part of the solution to this devastating crisis. All Syrians should feel safe and have the right to be secure in a future peaceful and democratic Syria. Those who committed crimes against humanity, gross human rights violations and mass atrocities should be brought to justice. There can be no room for impunity.

An immediate halt to the hostilities in Syria that leads to the end of this bloody conflict is a matter of urgency and a moral obligation. The very first and most urgent step is to agree on a long-term, sustainable ceasefire. It is imperative to fully open unconditional and unhindered humanitarian access to all in need, including those in besieged and hard-to reach areas.

At this juncture, the political momentum is fragile and still reversible. A real breakthrough requires long-term, genuine engagement from all parties to the conflict, along with courage and readiness to compromise. After years of this monstrous war there will be no winners, but there is much to be gained by immediately stopping the bloodshed, safeguarding the integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian State and starting to build a future for its people.

We welcome the meeting by the broad range of opposition representatives recently held in Riyadh, which aimed to achieve a common stance in the peace process. We see it as the start to consolidating the moderate opposition and as a sign of readiness to seek common solutions. In order to achieve peace and reconciliation, the Syrians will need our massive, long-term and sustained assistance in all aspects, including in the political, security and humanitarian spheres, in reconciliation and reconstruction and in the country's overall development.

We must continue to push the peace process forward by seeking a genuine and sustainable resolution to the conflict, setting aside divergent views and interests. The strong leadership and mediation of the United Nations remains essential. In that respect, we express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for their efforts. A well conceived, consistent and comprehensive strategy for political transition, including reconciliation and the voluntary, safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, must be thoroughly prepared and responsibly implemented in accordance with the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Even with a political transition soundly on track, Daesh will remain one of the biggest threats to peace and stability in the region and beyond. Along with the military effort to defeat Daesh, there will be a long and difficult battle against its poisonous ideology. That battle must be fought by Muslims themselves, who are the primary and most vulnerable target of Daesh's murderous ideology.

In order to avoid the risk of fragmentation or the creation of new frozen conflict zones in Syria, and to advance the peace process and reconciliation, it is critically important for local populations to take the lead and ownership. Women's voices in particular must be heard loud and clear at all stages of negotiations leading to peace and post-conflict reconstruction.

Syria's strength lies in its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. All pieces of that complex fabric — Muslims, Kurds, Alawites, Druze, Turkmen, Yazidis, Christians and others — must play a full and integral part in the future of Syria, while enjoying equal rights, safety, dignity and inclusion in the governance of the country. Even if the political transition is facilitated by a third party, the final decisions on their destiny must be taken by the Syrian people themselves. Only the Syrian people can decide what kind of State they want to live in. We hope that they will choose an inclusive, democratic, accountable and moderate State, in order to avoid repeating the tragedy that marks their lives today.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Deputy Permanent Representative of Malaysia.

**Mrs. Adnin** (Malaysia): I wish to first thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing.

We are of the view that, by bringing the Vienna International Syria Support Group process to New York, non-participating Security Council members are able to substantively engage on issues concerning the situation in Syria, on which we would have preferred to have more time for consultations. This is an important step in ensuring and cementing the Council's unity of purpose and vision on the way forward for Syria. That the international community has a strong desire to see an end to the conflict in Syria is beyond doubt. The cost in terms of human life and destruction of property of the Syrian conflict to date is simply staggering. Such suffering and misery must end now. It is for that primary reason that Malaysia joined the consensus on resolution 2254 (2015).

We support the aim of resolution 2254 (2015) to build on the vision and principles of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and the Vienna statements embodying the collective will of the international community to bring about a peaceful and sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict. In that context, my delegation expresses its deep appreciation to Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura for his untiring facilitation, which we fully support.

As it moves into its fifth year, the Syrian conflict continues to be a litany of horrific human rights abuses and violations — most notoriously violations of international humanitarian law through the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, and indiscriminate attacks against civilians perpetrated by the parties to the conflict. The Syrian people are further tormented by Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups and violent extremists, reinforced by the unprecedented influx of foreign terrorist fighters. The Syrian Government must accept that it has the primary responsibility and obligation to protect its own people, in accordance with established international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We reaffirm the demand on all parties to cease all indiscriminate attacks against civilians and to end targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure. We reaffirm our condemnation of the continued use of barrel bombs, aerial bombing and artillery shelling of civilians. There can be no impunity for the perpetrators of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. They must be held accountable.

At the same time, Malaysia remains deeply concerned that, despite the clear demand for cooperation stipulated in resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and

2191 (2014), the delivery of humanitarian assistance remains a huge problem. All parties to the conflict, particularly the Syrian authorities, must do more to demonstrate full and effective compliance with those resolutions.

Only through the peaceful resolution of the conflict can the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria begin to be meaningfully addressed, making it all the more urgent to do so. On that note, Malaysia acknowledges the role of Syria's neighbours, in particular Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, for their steadfast resilience and for their hospitality in sheltering and caring for the millions fleeing the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, despite facing enormous capacity and resource constraints.

A fundamental element of any proposed peace process must include the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. We are pleased that this requirement, including modalities for implementation, is explicitly outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). The preservation of Syria's unity, independence, territorial integrity and secular character are key factors for ensuring acceptance of any proposed political process or plan by the Syrian people.

No amount of encouragement, persuasion or pressure will be effective without the political buy-in of the Syrian people. In that connection, we call upon Syrian Government representatives and representatives of the opposition to spare no effort to ensure that the proposed talks take place in early January 2016.

While noting that there are a number of contentious issues that have yet to be addressed or agreed upon, we nevertheless call on all parties to continue to engage constructively in dialogue and to further narrow differences with a view to finding mutually acceptable solutions to end the conflict.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. The future of Syria must be determined through an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. The Syrian Government, the opposition parties and the Syrian people cannot afford to let this opportunity pass. We believe that the Council has an obligation to support initiatives, such as the International Syria Support Group or any other initiative, that seeks to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful means. In that regard, we look forward to the full and effective



implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) by all the parties concerned.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Nigeria.

**Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria):** We would like to thank the delegation of the United States for convening this meeting on a subject of vital importance to international peace and security. We also want to acknowledge the presence of participating Foreign Ministers and to welcome them to the Security Council. We listened attentively to the Secretary-General's briefing, and we thank him not only for sharing his perspectives on this subject, but also for being a moral voice in global politics.

The conflict in Syria is a matter of concern to Nigeria as well. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups associated with them are taking advantage of the situation to entrench themselves and consolidate their positions. They are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and, to that extent, they constitute a grave threat to international peace and security.

Containing and defeating the terrorists should be a top priority for the international community. Achieving that will require that the Syrian conflict be resolved urgently, expeditiously and comprehensively. The warring parties must agree on a ceasefire without delay. That is a crucial first step and a valid point of departure to de-escalate the conflict and create the conditions for achieving a political solution.

The establishment of the International Syria Support Group has given much-needed momentum to the search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Syria. The presence of key international and regional stakeholders in the Group is a clear indication that the international community is prepared to work in unison to resolve the Syrian conflict. We note the outcomes of the Group's meetings of 30 October and 14 November, held in Vienna, and the meeting held today in New York. We support the efforts of the Group to resolve the Syrian conflict on the basis of a Syrian-led political process and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) today is an unequivocal indication of the commitment of the Council to resolve the Syrian conflict. Indeed, as others have aptly noted this afternoon, it presents a

clear road map on the way forward. We urge the warring parties to build on the momentum of the resolution to bring the conflict to an end and restore the much-needed peace, security and stability in Syria.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*):** We thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting on the peace process in Syria. We also welcome the presence of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other high-level representatives at this meeting.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2254 (2015), despite the short period of time with which we had to familiarize ourselves with its content, because we believe that the text reaffirms the view that the solution to the armed conflict that affects that Arab country, as a result of the criminal actions of terrorist groups, should be political, peaceful and negotiated. We have always been in favour of such an approach. We are pleased to note that there is political will among the players with influence on the crisis in Syria that can pave the way for peace, which the Syrian people so yearn for. We must act decisively, and we think the space opened up by the presidency of the Council provides an encouraging sign.

We must seize the opportunity before us and decisively move the peace process in Syria forward, building on the momentum of Vienna, along the path to a political solution to the armed conflict. In the same vein, willingness should not only be expressed in words, but with concrete actions resulting from a commitment by both parties to put an end to such a conflict as this, which has had very serious humanitarian consequences and has affected international peace and security.

We express our appreciation and support for the diplomatic efforts made by Mr. Staffan de Mistura to achieve a firm and lasting peace in Syria. We are aware that identifying common elements to lay the basis for political negotiations is a difficult, but very important, task that requires the commitment of all parties to achieve concrete progress.

We believe that a positive aspect of the Vienna process is the willingness to engage with the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad in order to find a political way out of the conflict. Venezuela

believes the legitimate Government of President Al-Assad to be one of the key players in the political equation that could lead to a resolution of the conflict. Ignoring that essential reality is to condemn the peace process to failure.

The Syrian people must reaffirm their political independence, with the help of the international community, without foreign interference or solutions imposed from outside that reflect interests that are different from those of Syria. In that connection, Venezuela reiterates its support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Syria and its right to self-determination in accordance with international law, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Syria is linked to the end of hostilities. Continued conflict will further exacerbate the tragic humanitarian situation and will, in turn, create greater instability and have an impact on neighbouring countries, which have taken in millions of refugees fleeing the war. Furthermore, it is important to draw up as soon as possible the lists of terrorist and opposition groups in order to advance the agenda proposed by the International Syria Support Group in November. Opposition groups should be aware that they must sit down and negotiate with the Syrian authorities in a constructive spirit to achieve a political and peaceful solution to the conflict.

With regard to the designation of terrorist groups, there must not be any double standards or “good” and “bad” terrorists. That aspect is important because the Syrian Government is waging a merciless battle against the terrorist organizations of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and Al-Nusra Front, among others, which have expanded their activities to other countries in the Middle East, North Africa and other regions. If the international community does not act decisively to prevent the financing, training and arms transfers to those groups and stop their use and encouragement as tools to overthrow Governments, all peoples will continue to pay a high price to achieve the peace and security that they so yearn for.

In that context, international cooperation in the fight against terrorism must be strengthened. Venezuela supports any action aimed at combatting ISIS and other terrorist organizations, with the understanding that it must be coordinated with the Syrian authorities. That is why the effective implementation of the

resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council to combat terrorism — including Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015) — is of paramount importance as part of the strategy designed collectively to put an end to the financing, supply of arms and training to terrorist groups and armed and violent non-State actors that later become allies of ISIS and Al-Nusra Front in different parts of the world, making them a global threat to international peace and security.

We must prevent the collapse of Syria and its institutions, as stated in the Vienna communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). That is crucial, since the traumatic experiences in Iraq and Libya — and their terrible consequences — must not be repeated.

Finally, our country and our Government will continue working towards achieving peace and the end of this terrible conflict through our modest cooperation in the Security Council, on the basis for a negotiated political solution and with the leadership of the Syrian people and its Government and institutions, thereby ensuring the sovereignty and independence of that brotherly Arab country.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of New Zealand.

**Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand):** We thank Secretary Kerry and the United States for convening today’s meeting and for preparing the resolution that we adopted today (resolution 2254 (2015)). We also acknowledge and thank the other Foreign Ministers for coming to our meeting today.

We appreciate that this meeting and the resolution were convened and drafted, respectively, under significant time pressures and, for that reason, we were prepared to go along with the resolution even if we did not entirely welcome the short time that we were given to consider it.

The collapse of Syria into the nightmare of civil war has resulted in the spread of insecurity throughout the world. Al-Assad’s cruel response in 2011 to peaceful civilian protest and ongoing breaches of international humanitarian law have fuelled extremism and terrorism. They have precipitated the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. For Syrians, the conflict has meant death, suffering, destruction and displacement on a scale that is difficult to comprehend. The conflict has produced the biggest exodus of people since the

Second World War. Syria's neighbours, especially Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, have borne the brunt. The conflict has further destabilized Iraq and given rise to appalling atrocities, and the destabilizing impacts have now reached Europe.

The international community and the Security Council must accept a share of the blame. The devastation in Syria demonstrates beyond any doubt the need for effective conflict prevention, and for Council unity in achieving it. The fact that we could today come together at last and adopt this landmark resolution in a short time reflects the determination of the international community to end the conflict. We welcome in particular the continued close engagement between the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group.

As we move forward, it must be a time for acceptance. Everyone involved in the Syrian tragedy must accept that no side can win militarily. The Al-Assad Government and the opposition fighters must accept that, however much more death and destruction they inflict on their country, there will be no victory. They and those external actors who have serious political stakes in how the Syrian conflict is resolved must accept that political solutions mean political compromise. Anyone who insists on political red lines that block the necessary compromises will have to measure the delay that they cause in terms of more lives lost, more refugees and more suffering. Delay plays into the hands of the extremists, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Compromise requires a willingness to take difficult decisions, to give and take, to ultimately accept an outcome that may be short of initial positions. A political solution will be imperfect, but it is necessary.

In July, six countries came together with Iran and found a political solution to one of the most difficult issues of the past decade. My Foreign Minister, who was presiding over the Council at the time of the adoption of the resolution on the Iran nuclear issue, challenged Council members to apply the same courage and commitment to a political solution for Syria.

The establishment of the Support Group and its meetings have given us hope that there is at last a way out of this conflict. The Support Group benefits from its inclusive membership and from the ambition and capacities of the major Powers involved. It has also benefited from focusing on the issues that all agree

upon — working together to counter terrorism, ensure the survival of State institutions in Syria and end violent conflict. That is positive, but big questions remain.

First, there is the need for a comprehensive ceasefire. Secondly, offensive operations must be immediately and exclusively focused on ISIL, the Al-Nusra Front and any other terrorist organizations designated as such by the Security Council. Those operations must be carried out in a way that protects civilians. Thirdly, we recognize the Jordan-led process to expand the list of designated terrorist organizations, as envisaged in resolution 2249 (2015). But until there is agreement, we should proceed on the basis that peace in Syria will not be served by a hasty approach that defines far too many people as terrorists. Fourthly, Al-Assad's future is an issue for the intra-Syrian process to decide. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is unacceptable to let one person take the political-negotiation process hostage.

Answers to other difficult questions will also be needed. They include the sequencing of the ceasefire and the mechanics of the transition, including ceasefire monitoring, long-term mechanisms for guaranteeing security and coalescing the Syrian opposition. We welcome the efforts of Saudi Arabia on that last point.

On all of those issues, New Zealand encourages key players to prioritize pragmatism and an end to the conflict over their other interests. New Zealand supports a Syrian-led political transition process that is fully inclusive, representative and provides for the protection of groups within Syria. The Council also has a role to play in reminding everyone that political solutions do not mean giving up core values. It is clear that the Syrian Government's resistance to the core value of inclusiveness has been a key factor in perpetuating recruitment conditions for violent extremist groups.

We firmly believe that the day will come — and must come — when there will be accountability. In the meantime, we must do all we can to reduce suffering, open humanitarian access, build trust and protect civilians. Ending indiscriminate attacks and releasing political prisoners are also critical.

An immediate next responsibility for the Security Council is to renew the mandate for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian assistance. The arrangements in place have facilitated the United Nations and others to help millions of people. The draft resolution that has been prepared by New Zealand, Jordan and Spain

reflects developments over the last year. Its adoption is urgent, and we call on all of our Council colleagues to join us in adopting the draft resolution very soon.

Finding a solution has taken too long, but we finally have an opening. Let us make the year 2016 the year when we end the fighting, work together to counter terrorism and start to rebuild Syria.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Chile.

**Mr. Barros Melet (Chile)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of United States Secretary of State John Kerry, as well as of the Ministers and Deputy Ministers who have joined us today.

We hope that resolution 2254 (2015) contributes to the ceasefire and the start of a process of formal negotiations to achieve a lasting political settlement in Syria. My delegation would have appreciated having more time to consider the text of the resolution.

The recent meetings of the International Syria Support Group are a step forward towards dialogue, bringing together at the same table the relevant international and regional actors with influence on the parties in conflict. However, the next step is to overcome the existing substantive differences and, as noted by the Secretary-General, to be able to reduce them and build areas of shared understanding. We believe that all Syrian actors who are willing to reach a political solution for lasting peace should be brought together in an inclusive manner. The Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) is clear: there must be a political process led by the Syrians themselves. That also involves the active and proportionate participation of women.

The parties have an obligation to the Syrian people to commit firmly to reaching an agreement, and our role as the international community is to support that. Any political solution must preserve the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. State institutions must remain intact to avoid situations where the erosion or collapse of institutions leads to catastrophic consequences for the civilian population.

Terrorism, which has greatly affected Syria and many other countries, must be fought in a united manner similar to the valued unity with which the Council has addressed the terrorist threat in recent weeks. However, terrorism should not be an impediment to the political process.

We have said here in the Chamber that a political solution is the only way to deal with the humanitarian crisis. We must not forget that the civilian population, including millions of children, has been the most affected of all in almost five years of conflict. Nor can we think of lasting peace without justice, accountability and reconciliation. Nevertheless, a political solution will remain distant so long as the militarization of the conflict continues. We therefore call for an end to the supply and flow of weapons to all parties.

**The President:** I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Chad.

**Mr. Cherif (Chad)** (*spoke in French*): I thank the United States presidency for convening this ministerial meeting on Syria. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement.

The situation in Syria remains a major source of grave concern. The war in that country has gone on for far too long, and the Syrian people continue to bear a heavy burden. It is high time to take stock of the Council's action regarding the conflict, with its multifaceted and multidimensional consequences. Despite the Council's adoption of several resolutions and statements concerning the situation in Syria, it must be noted that the war drags on, with its funeral march of atrocities, suffering, the forced displacement of innocent civilians and the destruction of the country's vital infrastructure.

Despite the complexity of the Syrian crisis, the international community must not give up or spare any effort in advancing the political process with a view to achieving an end to the crisis that is lasting and acceptable to all parties concerned. To that end, we call on the parties to the conflict to be guided by the force of reason rather than the logic of force, and to resolutely commit to dialogue with a view to ending the interminable cycle of violence.

It is clear that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Solely an inclusive political process can put an end to the conflict, in which preliminary figures indicate that the number of deaths, as has been noted, is over 250,000, among which are 12,000 children. Hundreds of thousands have been wounded, with some 7 million internally displaced persons and more than 4 million refugees.

Chad welcomes the convening this morning in New York of the International Syria Support Group, and

warmly welcomes the intensive diplomatic efforts of its initiators, notably the United States of America and the Russian Federation, as well as other regional and international partners. We hope that the new dynamism created by the Vienna and New York conferences and endorsed by resolution 2254 (2015), which was adopted earlier, will allow us to overcome our differences and set up a political transition in line with the already established road map and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) and in full respect for the unity, independence and sovereignty of Syria. In that regard, we call on the regional actors to play a constructive role with a view to encouraging the parties to demonstrate flexibility and to commit in good faith and without preconditions to the political process.

The option of peace requires difficult choices and concessions from both sides. Continuing the war is not just disastrous, but also provides a breeding ground for the spread of terrorist groups, such as Daesh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, which could destabilize the entire region. Indeed, the scope of the threat is worldwide. In a region wracked by crises that are each as grave the next, the rapid settlement of the Syrian crisis is urgent. It will require further action and commitment to joint efforts and cooperation on the part of all regional and international partners, aimed at restoring peace in Syria. Along those lines, Chad voted in favour of resolution 2254 (2015) in the hope that it might help the Council progress towards peace in Syria.

**The President:** I want to take this occasion, on behalf of Secretary Kerry, to thank all Council members for moving very quickly today in pursuit of a unified message to the world and unity for resolution 2254 (2015). I know it was not easy for many delegations, so I offer the sincere gratitude of our delegation and all the members of the International Syria Support Group who worked on the resolution and sought to enshrine its key provisions.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In its meeting yesterday (S/PV.7587), the Security Council took an important step in the fight against terrorism by adopting resolution 2253 (2015). Today, we are participating in another important ministerial meeting on my country, Syria. I should like to see Council members consider the situation in Syria objectively and appropriately, rather than by

adopting positions that intensify and prolong the crisis, thereby promoting the spread of anarchy and terrorism, the exploitation of my country, and the repetition of actions that are based on failed assumptions and have already wrought havoc and destruction in more than one country.

The Government of Syria favours a fight against terrorism that is based on legal principles, not on fear or reaction to terrorist acts taking place outside Syria. The Syrian Government remains open to any initiative or sincere effort to help it overcome the present crisis. As everyone knows, Syria, on the basis of its national responsibility and the interests of its people, has extended great cooperation and commitment to the efforts of the United Nations, starting with the mission carried out by Mr. Kofi Annan, followed by those of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi and Mr. Staffan de Mistura, who is with us today but has just this moment left the Chamber.

Today, I reiterate the readiness of the Syrian Government to participate effectively in any sincere effort to ensure that Syrians alone will determine their choices through an intra-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership and without foreign intervention, and in a manner that maintains Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That has been reaffirmed by all of the relevant Security Council resolutions on Syria. However, we note that, regrettably, while some countries affirm Syria's sovereignty in the Council, they have violated it on the ground by supporting terrorist groups and sending military aircraft to bomb oil installations and economic infrastructure, and by imposing unilateral sanctions on the Syrian people.

The success of any political path in Syria requires the Government of Syria be an integral part of and party to the process. Coordination and cooperation with the Syrian Government are therefore necessary in all aspects of such a path if we truly desire success. Furthermore, a successful political track will require international commitment and sincere, genuine political will on the part of all parties, including those countries with a direct influence on the parties that are undermining the political process and those that are providing the latter with a lifeline.

While the international community emphasizes that there is only one solution—the political solution—there are those that irresponsibly and unaccountably reiterate that they will resort to a military solution. They have

given names to their failed initiatives, such as “Storm”, “Volcano”, “Cyclone” or “Tornado”. It has become quite clear that the success of the political process must be predicated on a serious, effective and collective fight against terrorism.

My country therefore welcomes the Council’s adoption of resolution 2253 (2015) and appreciates the initiative of our friend the Russian Federation and its sincere efforts to introduce the resolution, complementing and strengthening other important aspects of the issue that have not been fully covered by previous Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism. It imposes clear and unambiguous obligations on countries that support terrorism, thus backing up resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015).

Resolution 2253 (2015) responds to several concerns that my delegation has been raising for the past few years. My country therefore joins in the positive response to its adoption, and hopes that it will be a turning point in the efforts to close the gap between our words and deeds and thus to lay a foundation for a genuine international alliance aimed at combating terrorism. We have no interest in hollow, unrealistic alliances that are led by supporters of terrorism that only erode the provisions of anti-terrorism resolutions, and in particular in selective alliances that violate States’ sovereignty and serve only the interests of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida and their questionable ideologies.

We know that the restoration of peace and stability throughout Syria requires that we deal immediately with the threat posed by terrorism within the framework of international legitimacy and that we tackle the realities on the ground practically and pragmatically. The Syrian Government is therefore ready to halt the fighting in areas where Syrian armed groups are present in the interests of achieving national reconciliation aimed at restoring normalcy in those regions, including State institutions and public services, and under which the armed groups can lay down their weapons so that their conditions may be met and they can be pardoned. We have already made successful attempts in some of

those areas, and the Government is seeking to expand such reconciliation efforts in order to see stability and security restored. However, where terrorist groups and mercenaries such as Daesh, Jabhat Al-Nusra and others are concerned, the Syrian Government will never engage in dialogue and will continue to fight until they are eradicated.

We call on all honourable Syrians to participate in the political process on a national basis in order to help develop and rebuild Syria by restoring its security and stability as a priority. A settlement can be achieved only under a Syrian-led solution reached via a comprehensive political process that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. It must be done through a national dialogue that can bring everyone together under Government auspices with the aim of establishing a secular, pluralistic State in which all are equal before the law — a State in which opportunities are open to all without discrimination, led by the Syrian people alone in freedom, transparency and without foreign interference or influence.

In conclusion, I would like to state that I have noted glaring contradictions in some of the statements made today. On the one hand, they emphasize that the Syrian people alone must decide their future, without outside intervention, while at the same time they have raised issues about our sovereignty relating to my country’s presidency, a matter that is the prerogative of the Syrian people alone, as stated in paragraph 1 of resolution 2254 (2015), which “stresses that the Syrian people will decide the future of Syria”. Such efforts to interfere with the foundations of sovereignty in my country only expose the true intentions behind the policies of those speakers, who abandoned the context of the resolution before the ink on it was dry. Taking a resolution that they had only just adopted and agreed on, they began interpreting its provisions to suit their wishes. That is not promising behaviour and does not give us confidence in what we are hearing and doing.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

*The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.*