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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jürgenson	(Estonia)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mr. De Rivi�re
	India	Mr. Gupta
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ram�rez
	Niger	Mr. Maman Sani
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Prince
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; and Ms. Abeer Hussain, Syrian women's rights promoter and a member of the Syrian Women's Political Movement.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: I am very grateful to speak to the Security Council in person on Syria — it has been 18 months since I have been able to do so.

An imminent priority is of course the humanitarian situation, and let me fully reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal when he briefed the Security Council on Wednesday (see S/PV.8803). Civilians across the country desperately need life-saving assistance and help building resilience. It is absolutely vital to maintain and expand access, including cross-border and cross-line operations. A large-scale cross-border response for an additional 12 months is essential to save lives. Council members' unity on this will be critical.

The same unity is needed for the political process. I think we are all disappointed that we are not making real advances on the political track to implement resolution 2254 (2015), including a new constitution and elections administered under United Nations supervision. Regrettably, the gulf of mistrust among the parties and the complexity of the situation on the ground makes early progress towards a comprehensive settlement unlikely. But we must find ways to unite around advancing elements of the resolution, so that in time the situation will be ripe for a more comprehensive

resolution of the conflict. I sense there is widespread support among Council members for this.

Trust and confidence will be built through actions not words. Key players need to be ready to come to the table with the necessary goodwill and something to deliver. I believe we need a new constructive international dialogue on Syria to discuss concrete steps — steps that should be reciprocal and mutual, defined with realism and precision, implemented in parallel and verifiable. My idea is to deepen exploratory substantive consultations that help identify the very first steps that Syrian and international players could deliver to explore not only what they ask of others, but what kind of specific steps each can entertain.

I know that will not be easy. But I sense that all key players are interested in deepening this conversation. I have been in regular contact with senior officials from the Russian Federation and the United States, before and since the recent Geneva summit. I have also been in regular contact with many other Council members and key States in the region. From New York, I will fly to Rome for consultations with Foreign Ministers participating in a ministerial meeting on Syria convened by Italy and the United States. I hope to be in Moscow soon and to consult Turkey and Iran and as well — there will be an Astana format meeting in Nur-Sultan in early July.

I believe there are several areas where the initial steps might be found. They are areas of vital concern for average Syrians where there is potential common ground among key players and where progress would promote internal and regional stability and build trust and confidence.

Take, for example, the call for action on detainees, abductees and missing persons in resolution 2254 (2015). Yes, we continue engaging the Syrian parties and participating in a working group on that issue. But those efforts so far have not delivered in a way that is commensurate with the nature and scale of the issue. That is tragic, because families from every corner of Syria have seen loved ones detained, abducted or gone missing. Women are particularly impacted when detained or when their family members are, as we regularly hear from the Women's Advisory Board. All sides — Syrian and international — say that they agree that action is needed. All sides stand to benefit from progress. We recently again engaged the Syrian Government on this subject, following up on a number

of suggestions that we made, while also seeking information on the latest presidential decree of 2 May and recent reported releases. I believe a steps-for-steps discussion could help unlock more serious progress.

The call for a nationwide ceasefire in resolution 2254 (2015) is another area for potential cooperation. I need not remind Council members that there are five foreign armies jostling inside Syria. Syrian territory is split into a number of de facto zones, with the country's sovereignty seriously compromised. A patchwork of regional de-escalation and ceasefire agreements — in which Russia, Turkey and the United States are key players — have brought about 15 months of relative calm between those zones. But there is a danger that existing arrangements could unravel. They could be slowly eroded by the near-constant tempo of limited violence across front lines. Even worse, they could swiftly collapse as a result of a much more dramatic escalation. A nationwide ceasefire should therefore be a common cause — to avert those dangers, to keep civilians safe and to serve as the first step toward the ultimate reunification of Syria and the restoration of its sovereignty.

There were alarming signs of escalation this month in the attack on Al-Shifa hospital, in Afrin city. Civilians, including medical personnel, were killed and injured, and parts of the hospital were destroyed. Let me reiterate here my strong condemnation of that appalling attack and stress that all parties must fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian objects. We also saw another escalation in southern Idlib, with mutual shelling, air strikes inside Idlib, reports of civilian fatalities and significant displacement. Elsewhere, this month has seen more air strikes attributed to Israel, more turbulence in the south-west and more attacks by Security Council-listed terrorist groups, including operations claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Indeed, countering listed terrorist groups is another priority area for common effort. There are worrying signs that ISIL may be strengthening, given the increased frequency and reach of its latest attacks. Other listed terrorist groups remain at large and in control of territory. Key international players can and should cooperate on countering listed terrorist groups, in an effective way that protects civilians and promotes stability, in line with international law.

Recovering from the economic impact that most Syrians face after a decade of war and devastation is another area of potential common focus. By some measures — particularly the currency — the situation has stabilized somewhat in recent weeks. But many Syrians are struggling to put food on the table, to find medicine and health care for loved ones, to find fuel for transport, to sustain their businesses, and to access electricity and water. Indeed, water cuts and restrictions, and the worst water deficit ever in the Euphrates basin, continue to impact millions of Syrians in the north-east. The convergence of an economic crisis and a humanitarian crisis will continue to have dramatic consequences if not addressed. The result will be not only more human suffering and hopelessness but also instability. That cannot be in anyone's interest. For things to change, we need real reform and international engagement.

Let me note here that it is important that any humanitarian effects of sanctions exacerbating the plight of ordinary Syrians be avoided and mitigated, in particular in terms of overcompliance. I note the measures taken in this direction recently by the relevant players, but continual action on this is indeed needed.

Let us also focus on the displacement crisis in Syria. It is almost incomprehensible in scale, with 13 million people forced to flee their homes, within Syria and abroad — half the country's pre-war population. That is a profound humanitarian and national tragedy and also a ticking time bomb for regional stability. We need to see actions that create the necessary conditions and confidence for safe, dignified and voluntary return. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has laid out protection thresholds and parameters in that regard. I believe that there are steps that could be taken by the Government and that there are steps that could be taken by others, too, to promote concrete progress.

These are the kinds of issues — and there may be others, too — that I believe could be seriously discussed and where mutual and reciprocal actions could begin to make a positive difference for Syrians and give impetus to a political process.

In the meantime, let me stress that I continue to seek to facilitate the Constitutional Committee as an important contribution to a broader process. It is no doubt difficult to work on a new constitution in a situation of unresolved conflict. But that is what the two

parties — the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Negotiation Commission — agreed to when they concluded the terms of reference and core rules of procedure for a credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee, facilitated by the United Nations in Geneva. The Council welcomed that agreement in a presidential statement on 8 October 2019 (S/PRST/2019/12). I think most Syrians and most of us here in this Chamber are disappointed that the Committee, which has met five times, is not yet working expeditiously to produce results and continued progress on its agreed mandate to prepare and draft for popular approval a constitutional reform.

Further to my update in my most recent briefing (see S/2021/418), I continue to seek to facilitate the agreement of the Syrian co-Chairs on how to ensure that the existing challenges are addressed, based on my April bridging proposal. Deputy Special Envoy Khawla Matar is currently in Damascus in the context of that effort. When the co-Chair agreement is in place, we will brief the middle third of the Constitutional Committee and immediately set in motion the planning for a sixth session in Geneva and the work of the Committee going forward.

As we seek to advance a political process, we should engage the many Syrians who are working to ameliorate the consequences of this conflict and to build bridges in their society. That is why it is a high priority for me and my team, as it was for my predecessors, to involve the widest spectrum of Syrian civil society in the political process, including via our Civil Society Support Room.

I am pleased to report that this month we have deepened that effort in two ways. First, we launched the first in a series of thematic working groups, to give participants in our Civil Society Support Room a more structured way to contribute their expertise and inform my mediation efforts, aided by a virtual platform.

Secondly, earlier this week, Deputy Matar and our team began a series of virtual regional consultations of the Civil Society Support Room. Approximately 120 Syrian civil-society actors are taking part, more than a third of them women, participating from across all Syrian governorates and from abroad. I look forward to engaging with them myself next week.

My own thinking continues to be shaped by these encounters with Syrians and the common messages that they bring forth. There is a thirst for a political resolution of the conflict as the only means to put the

country back together again. There is a sense that this is not just desirable but possible and that the United Nations must preserve and facilitate the political process for that purpose. There is also a sense that at this juncture, the most important priority should be to address the issues that are causing more and more daily suffering to the Syrians themselves. And there is a very strong sense that many of the issues have fallen out of Syrian hands and require international attention.

Syrian civil society — and, indeed, I think, the vast majority of Syrians — are desperately looking for signals that the members of the international community, despite their differences, can work together. I urge all present to assist me on that in the weeks and months ahead. In doing so, I hope that we can ease the suffering of many millions of Syrians, promote stability and move forward, step by step. Our goal remains a lasting political settlement that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and restores Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

The President: I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hussain.

Ms. Hussain (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to start by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to address the Security Council today at a time that requires commitment and courage for political action.

I am honoured to deliver my briefing on behalf of the Syrian Women's Political Movement. As I present my comments today, I carry with me the strength of a movement across Syria and the world. It is our hope that this Security Council briefing indicates that the international community is still concerned about the fate of the Syrian people. Today, as a consequence of war and economic deterioration, the Syrian people are in need of humanitarian aid, which is critical to improving the quality of life of millions of people in Syria. We are grateful for the Council's attention to the Syrian people. However, for a sustainable future in Syria, our hope lies in galvanizing a genuine political solution and supporting the stability, security and reconstruction of Syria. We will then not need international aid to survive.

All members of the Syrian Women's Political Movement inside Syria, including myself, will say what one of our colleagues so eloquently stated:

“We women residing inside Syria are strong, and no one needs to pity us due to our geographic

location. We chose to stay because we believe that we have a greater opportunity to create change, at least in our communities. Virtual platforms have contributed to breaking down barriers between women inside and outside Syria. Expressions of sympathy for us make us feel that we are weak and deserve pity. With all due respect for people's noble sentiments, we are strong. We are heading in the right direction, and we persist in our struggle to achieve what we want."

International reports provide comprehensive data on the deterioration of the living conditions of the Syrian people on several levels, the worst of which is the deprivation of the most basic components of a normal life due to high prices and the scarcity of job opportunities. Our children are deprived of education due to military operations, including the bombing of schools, frequent displacement and children being forced to work to support their families because of the destitution facing most Syrians.

I have witnessed the suffering of women: lack of economic security and stability, chaos, gender-based violence, displacement, kidnappings and the spread of disease. This reality worsened yet further with the coronavirus pandemic. Hospitals are no longer able to take in patients and provide the necessary treatment.

The causes of fear are similar in the regime-controlled areas due to the deteriorating living and health conditions, coupled with the fear of arbitrary arrest by the security services, which is still an ongoing practice.

The war economy has contributed to the spread of organized crime, drug trafficking, kidnapping and murder. However, communication and solidarity remain strong among those who reside within and outside regime-controlled areas, at least through virtual means. The various de facto forces, with their various agendas, and geographic divisions have reinforced societal and identity-based divisions and weakened the possibilities for dialogue. This still hinders our communication and our capacity to reach a common vision that contributes to building an inclusive national identity.

Faced with this reality, the Syrian regime still does not recognize the Syrians residing outside the areas under its control. This was evident in the presidential elections, whereby it granted itself another term in office, ignoring Security Council resolutions, notably resolution 2254 (2015). The elections did not include

all Syrians at home and abroad and challenged the international community and ignored the road map for a political solution that provided for the completion of a new constitution and elections under the supervision of the United Nations, in accordance with that new constitution.

From my own observations on the ground, and our national consultation on elections, which included input from women in 15 regions within and outwith the regime's control in Syria, all confirmed that those elections were a fraud. There were security pressures from the Syrian regime to vote for it. Due to fear and that a voting card is required for official transactions, such as renewing a travel document or the so-called smart card with Syrians use to get bread, cooking gas and motor fuel, the whole process did not respect the most basic internationally recognized standards.

In the light of this reality, with increasing risk, local chaotic escalation and international complications for Syria and the countries of the region, it is astonishing that the international community has not been able to adopt a comprehensive political solution to implement the resolutions adopted by the Security Council itself — to achieve a cessation of military operations throughout Syrian territory, to support the work of the Constitutional Committee with a clear time frame for the completion of a constitution in line with the interests and rights of Syrian women and men, and to resume the political process to form a transitional governing body by working on the four baskets simultaneously in order to reach a comprehensive solution.

We are fully aware that the comprehensive solution to which we aspire might require some time, but some steps can be taken in order to limit the deterioration of the security situation and to support those who seek to build confidence among the Syrian people, notably women. We need the Council's support to begin implementing the conditions for establishing a safe and neutral environment in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and to work on building mutual trust. That can be accomplished by the following means.

First and foremost would be the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees. Establishing the fate of the abducted and forcibly disappeared is essential for building a safe and neutral environment. The issue of detainees is non-negotiable for us. It is our top priority.

Secondly, armed groups, supported regionally or internationally, that have never worked in service of the Syrian people but deepened the rift between us, must be controlled.

Thirdly, the practices contributing to demographic ‘change must be brought to an end. These have occurred in several regions in Syria, including Al-Qusayr, eastern Ghouta, Dara’a and Homs. These practices include forced displacement, which is still an ongoing practice in various regions.

Fourthly, the necessary conditions must be put in place to ensure the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrians to their original places of residence.

Finally, the political settlement must be linked to accountability for those responsible for crimes committed against Syrian women and men, as a first step on the path to justice.

Syria was the first Arab country to grant women the right to vote, in 1949. However, we observe a decline in women’s political participation. We are working for equal and full citizenship, justice and democracy, which will remain incomplete without the participation of all active political forces in Syria agreeing on a political solution. Democracy will remain incomplete if we do not strengthen the political participation of Syrian women in the negotiation process on an equal and integrated basis with men to build our future with a common position. This can be done by drafting a constitution that guarantees women’s rights by defining the status of international conventions in the legislative system to take precedence over the legal system in order to abolish all kinds of discrimination against women. This will impact the sustainability of the political solution and its application on the ground by ensuring women’s participation in the development and implementation of security sector governance strategies so that we can achieve a safe and neutral environment as we move towards reconstruction.

We are confident in our ability to play a decisive and effective role in the peace process as a pressing force in the process of democratization for sustainable peace and sustainable development. The reality on the ground does not encourage women to be involved in political decision-making, despite the election of a few women to local councils.

We, the Syrian Women’s Political Movement, work with Syrian feminists in civil society by organizing

a feminist agenda and its priorities. We work on coherence between the political and civil track and on establishing a mechanism to guarantee women’s meaningful presence in decision-making positions and in all bodies and institutions, with a percentage of no less than 30 per cent of the total seats for women only. Even if women delegates are not appointed, those seats should not be filled by men; they should be kept vacant until women fill them. This percentage would be a temporary positive measure to reach parity, in line with resolution 1325 (2000) on the role of women in peace- and security-building processes. The theme for our conference this year was “No Women, No Legitimacy”.

I thank you for your attention, Mr. President, and once again thank the Security Council for ensuring that the voice of Syrian women is heard.

The President: I thank Ms. Hussain for her briefing.

I should like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council’s commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing today.

The United States reiterates its full support for tireless efforts of Mr. Pedersen and his team to broker a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria. A special thank-you goes to Ms. Abeer Hussain for her efforts and everything that she does to empower women and girls in Syria.

Women and girls in Syria and around the world are disproportionately impacted by conflict, and yet they continue to be underrepresented in peace processes. That underrepresentation is unjust. It also holds back peace. We need to support the Women’s Advisory Board and similar efforts because we know for a fact that involving women in the negotiations and the resolution process leads to peace. We need peace because, after a decade of war, the suffering of the Syrian people has gone on for far too long. There is only one way forward for peace and stability in Syria — a resolution to the conflict and an end to the war. The United States therefore remains committed to resolution 2254 (2015),

as it provides the only path to a just, sustainable political solution to the Syrian conflict.

That decidedly is not what happened during the so-called election in May. Those elections were not free. They were not fair. They were a sham, plain and simple. They did not include the millions of Syrians who have fled their homes and are displaced inside Syria or across the region. As the Security Council has unanimously declared, elections in Syria should occur, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015), following the enactment of a new Constitution and under United Nations supervision. None of that happened. The Syrian people deserve elections, and those elections should feature a diverse range of candidates, a safe voting environment and a meaningful way for displaced people to participate.

In the meantime, the ongoing conflict in Syria poses a threat to regional and international security. We are particularly concerned about the repeated violations of the Idlib ceasefire. In addition, recent strikes, such as the one that hit residential areas and Al-Shifa hospital in Afrin cannot continue. Military actions, particularly against protected health facilities, will not lead to peace. They only lead to suffering. We call on all parties, that is, all parties, to adhere to the nationwide ceasefire. It is time to engage in the political process and end the war. We support efforts by the Office of the Special Envoy to secure the release of the tens of thousands of arbitrarily, or wrongfully, detained Syrian. The families of thousands of missing Syrians have waited for far too long and deserve information about the fate of their loved ones.

We also take note of Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to seek progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee. All parties should engage constructively with those good efforts. However, without progress in achieving political reforms, the United States will not normalize or support any reconstruction aid that benefits the Al-Assad regime.

Finally, we need to achieve a political solution urgently in no small part because of the dire humanitarian situation. As we all know, that situation will go from bad to worse if some Council members refuse to renew the cross-border mandate. The United States supports all methods of aid delivery, including cross-line. But, as everyone made clear to me when I visited the border — refugees, non-governmental organization representatives, United Nations humanitarian workers and local experts — there is no alternative to cross-

border assistance — none. For millions of Syrians Bab Al-Hawa is a literal lifeline, and we must reauthorize it and reinstate Bab Al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah. This dire humanitarian crisis directly informs the political situation. If we cut off cross-border aid, we will further destabilize the region and encourage even more internally displaced people. It will encourage more internally displaced people to flee. We call on the Security Council to reauthorize and expand United Nations cross-border humanitarian assistance in order to give the Syrian people a future — a future for themselves, a future for their children and a future that leads us to a sustainable, just peace.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Hussain for their briefings. I also welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey.

As we have just heard from Mr. Pedersen, negotiations on Syria's political future remain at an impasse, despite his many attempts to overcome the deadlock. We regret that the parties have failed to reach an agreement to hold the sixth meeting of the small group of the Constitutional Committee. Some 20 months have elapsed since the first meeting of this Committee without significant progress being made. We therefore urge the delegations, and in particular the delegation appointed by the Syrian Government, to engage constructively in the negotiations. Without dialogue, points of common interest cannot be reflected in a future Syrian Constitution. There is no doubt that a comprehensive and inclusive political process is required to make progress in resolving the conflict, which must be accompanied by a durable and sustained nationwide ceasefire.

We have also just heard in Ms. Hussain's briefing about the crucial role played by civil society. We therefore commend the Special Envoy's efforts aimed at maintaining regular interaction with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the civil society delegation. Ten years of conflict have left deep scars in the Syrian social fabric. Civil society is the cornerstone of the country's development and cohesion. We must work with it.

Mexico echoes the Secretary-General's call to clarify the facts about the numerous cases of missing persons, and we urge that detainees be released. Without priority attention being given to the demands for justice and for accountability with respect to arbitrary

detentions, enforced disappearances and human rights violations, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to find the path to reconciliation and sustainable peace in Syria. Given that international crimes have been committed, it seems to me that they should be referred to the International Criminal Court for consideration. We reiterate our call on all States to cooperate with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. We also reiterate our concern that the conditions for the safe, secure and dignified return of Syrian refugees are not in place. While we acknowledge the many host countries, support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must continue in the region.

On the economic side, the news is not good either. The deteriorating economic situation has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. This, in turn, has led to growing citizen unrest resulting in mass protests in various parts of the country. We call on the authorities to respect the right of association of protesters and urge the Syrian Government to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and allow it to operate on the ground to protect and promote respect for the human rights of the population.

A decade of conflict has had a very high human cost and a broad geographic impact, which is reflected in the severe humanitarian crisis. There is an urgent need to move the political process forward. Without a definitive end to hostilities, humanitarian needs will continue to grow, and mistrust of resuming political dialogue will continue to increase. The provision of humanitarian assistance cannot be held hostage to political considerations.

In conclusion, I would reiterate my country's concern about the abuse by some States of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which they invoke to justify the use of force in Syria, going beyond the terms of that provision so as to circumvent obtaining the express authorization of the Security Council.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Hussain for their briefings. We welcome the presence of Special Envoy Pedersen and express appreciation for his efforts to promote the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and advance the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

The Syrian issue should ultimately be resolved through political means. It is precisely because of the lack of progress on the political track that the international relief efforts are so overstretched on the humanitarian track. China supports a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and the mediation efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen.

As Syria suffers from foreign occupation, unilateral sanctions and terrorism, it is difficult for the Constitutional Committee to make the expected progress. Nevertheless, negotiation is always better than war. China hopes that the Constitutional Committee will launch its sixth round of work as soon as possible, while staying independent and free from external interference.

At the same time, we must recognize that Constitution-making and elections are not enough, by themselves, to resolve the Syrian issue. Progress on the political track depends on the building of mutual trust between the Syrian parties and those who have influence on the Syrian situation. Only with such mutual trust can consensus be formed on issues of common concern to the Syrian people and be implemented in a step-by-step and reciprocal manner. In this process, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected, and so must the political independence of the Syrian people. Unilateral sanctions against Syria must stop. Any schemes to effect regime change in Syria must be utterly renounced.

The authorization of Syrian cross-border humanitarian access is about to expire. The Security Council should have a thorough exchange of views on the draft resolution on this subject, conduct in-depth and comprehensive consultations, strive for consensus and avoid a showdown. Doing so will help all parties to increase mutual trust and create favourable conditions for advancing the political process.

Advancement in the Syrian political process requires a good security environment. In north-west Syria, terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council launch repeated attacks and kidnap civilians. Frequent eruption of hostilities in the north-east have resulted in civilian displacement. Foreign troops continue to operate in Syria without any time frame for withdrawal.

All those aspects have added to the complexity of the Syrian security situation. China urges all the

parties concerned to implement the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire and end the foreign occupation of Syria as soon as possible. China calls on the international community to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation, in accordance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and jointly combat terrorist forces in Syria.

The Syrian economy is in deep distress. Without timely international assistance, the humanitarian consequences will be disastrous. Claiming to seek solutions while allowing the problem to worsen will simply not work. China calls on the relevant countries to resume economic and development assistance to Syria and avoid linking aid with the political process.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Pedersen for his briefing. As others said, it is very good to see him back in the Chamber with us. I am also very grateful to Ms. Hussain for her briefing. I think that she offered us a stark description of the desperate situation in Syria, especially with regard to violence and discrimination against women and their counterproductive exclusion from the political process. It was interesting to hear the extent to which her diagnosis of and remedy for the situation aligns with ours. As she insisted, we offer her no sympathy, but only admiration for her strength and determination to challenge an illegitimate regime and fight for change and accountability.

We remain firm in our belief that the way to secure rights for all Syrians is by bringing about a negotiated end to the appalling conflict and that the political process established by resolution 2254 (2015) remains the only viable route to lasting and inclusive peace. As the Council made clear in resolution 2254 (2015), the meaningful participation of women in the United Nations-facilitated political process is critical. And it was good to hear Ms. Hussain reiterate that herself. Indeed, we cannot envisage a solution to the situation without the participation of women. We therefore very much welcome the vital work of the Syrian Women's Political Movement and ongoing engagement by the Special Envoy with women representatives. I was very encouraged by the information that he gave us on the way that he is engaging civil society in the process in innovative ways.

Now that the distraction of the so-called presidential elections in Syria is out of the way — I noted Ms. Hussain's description of them

as a sham — we call on the Syrian regime finally to engage constructively with the political process and the Constitutional Committee towards a new constitution and free and fair elections pursuant to the constitution. We recognize the Special Envoy's efforts to that end and his efforts to accelerate progress on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including by encouraging greater international consensus on the path forward. We would be interested to hear more about his ideas for a new international dialogue.

We must not forget that the conflict continues in Syria, and we are deeply concerned about increasing levels of violence, including strikes on southern Idlib, a regime attack on a school facility in a camp for internally displaced person on 9 June and an attack on yet another hospital in Afrin on 12 June. We call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, abide by existing ceasefire agreements and implement resolution 2254 (2015)'s instruction for a nationwide ceasefire. That remains as urgent as ever.

We also note the call of resolution 2254 (2015) to allow humanitarian access to those in need, and we thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his comments today. We obviously discussed the imperative of humanitarian access in some detail on Wednesday, 23 June (see S/PV.8803). We therefore will not reiterate those points today.

Like others, we call once again on the regime to release those whom it holds in arbitrary detention, which Ms. Hussain described as her group's greatest priority, allow medical access to those detained and provide information on the missing to their families, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and Human Rights Council resolutions on Syria.

Lastly, progress on the political process is the only way to build conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes and secure a lasting end to the conflict in Syria.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Geir Pedersen for his briefing today and express our appreciation for his hard work on the ground at this very challenging time. I also thank Ms. Abeer Hussain for sharing her insights. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran at our meeting today.

Let me begin by stressing our staunch support for the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned United Nations-facilitated political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), in its full adherence to international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

A political solution that allows the Syrians themselves to decide their future is the only viable way to achieve long-term peace and stability to end their untold sufferings. The realization of the Syrian people's aspiration for peace, stability and development should be given immediate priority.

On that account, my delegation would like to stress the following points.

First, with regard to building trust and promoting dialogue, arriving at a political solution will require renewed efforts in order to bridge the substantial differences among all parties concerned. If that is not the case, we are afraid that those differences will be exacerbated and become impossible to settle. We call on the Syrian parties to engage in constructive dialogue with a view towards achieving breakthroughs within the framework of the Constitutional Committee, as well as the broader political process. We hope that the parties will soon reach an agreement on a working methodology in order to create the necessary conditions to continue dialogue. We would also like to stress the need to ensure the equal participation of women in the political process.

At the same time, a political solution cannot take place without the meaningful engagement of all international interlocutors. That requires close and constructive dialogue in order to end the long-standing divergence of views and lack of confidence among the international community. My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate its full support for the work of the United Nations, the Special Envoy and his team. His critical bridge-building role is of great importance in bringing the parties together.

Secondly, with regard to an environment conducive to dialogue and negotiation, a fragile calm, as described by the Special Envoy, has been maintained for more than a year. However, sporadic security incidents continue to occur in many areas, and terrorists' activities do not seem to be on the decline. The most recent attack in Afrin, which killed 19 civilians and injured 40 others at Al-Shifa hospital, is extremely concerning. It clearly

shows the fragility of the security situation in Syria. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from actions that could lead to further escalation. A period of sustainable calm is of vital importance to allow progress in the political domain.

It is also critical to continue efforts to combat terrorist groups designated as such by the Security Council. At the same time, such efforts should be coordinated to best ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian law, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, concerning continued support for the Syrian people, more than a decade of conflict has brought about extreme hardships and suffering for the Syrian people. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, especially in the past year with the cruel impact of the economic crisis and the coronavirus disease pandemic. There are now 13.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance — the highest number since the start of the conflict.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the need for the unity of the international community in assisting Syria. The Syrian people need our unwavering support during this critical time.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. We are very happy to finally have him here in person. I also want to thank Abeer Hussein for her remarks and for the important work conducted by her organization to promote the rights of women and girls.

Regrettably, since last month's meeting (see S/2021/418), there has been little to no progress on the political track. We are well aware that the Special Envoy has worked intensively with the parties in the Constitutional Committee to reach agreement on a framework for further negotiations. Yet a compromise proposal has not yet been fully agreed. We give our full support to Mr. Pedersen's efforts to make sure there are concrete results in the next round of negotiations. We urge the parties to work with the Special Envoy in good faith to lay the groundwork for a reformed Constitution, as part of a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned peace process.

Let me also emphasize the important contribution of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the Syrian Civil Society Support Room towards an inclusive process.

As we have said previously, the Constitutional Committee is just one piece of the larger political process. Other parts of resolution 2254 (2015) must also be implemented, including a nationwide ceasefire, the release of arbitrarily detained persons and the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees. We have the framework for a solution in Syria, which was adopted by consensus by the Council. Now we need it to be fully implemented.

As the Special Envoy has elaborated, there is a fragile calm in Syria, with less violence than earlier in the conflict. However, as the attack on 12 June on a hospital in Afrin shows, civilians are still being killed and injured as a consequence of the conflict. A nationwide ceasefire is needed. We continue to urge all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian objects.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant still has a significant presence in Syria and continues to take advantage of the ongoing conflict and a lack of stability and a political solution. We must stay vigilant and continue our support to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham on every level.

Let me conclude by repeating our call for broader and better coordinated international engagement. Together with the Syrians themselves, all actors involved must be engaged in the process, especially those present on the ground. A new international mechanism for moving the process forward may be combined with a step-by-step approach, as proposed by the Special Envoy. We must start by building trust on all sides and then move ahead together to solve the larger questions of political reform and a political solution — one based on human rights and the rule of law.

Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen — it is good to see him in person — and Ms. Hussein of the Syrian Women's Political Movement for their briefings today.

As we have stated before, the reality of the situation in Syria is an indictment on multilateralism, particularly on the Security Council, whose primary mandate is the maintenance of international peace and security.

The renewed incidents of daily shelling, air strikes and violence among non-State armed groups and the prevalence of explosive hazards continue to generate unnecessary casualties and displacements, with the

most vulnerable suffering the worst consequences, particularly women and children.

Also alarming is the increasing terrorist activity, including wanton attacks against civilians and control of swaths of territory by terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other armed groups. In that regard, Kenya reiterates the following three points.

First, all parties must honour the ceasefire and do their best to ensure that it holds.

Secondly, there is a need for renewed unified action against terrorist groups, including holding to account those responsible for heinous crimes, in accordance with international law and applicable United Nations resolutions.

Thirdly, all parties, including foreign armies, should exercise maximum restraint and refrain from actions that would jeopardize the safety and security of the people and the country.

It is regrettable that there have been no meaningful developments in the work of the Constitutional Committee. We continue to encourage the resumption of the sessions and call on the Syrian parties to be objective and pragmatic in their engagements.

Kenya commends the Special Envoy's continued robust engagements with civil society, including the Women's Advisory Board. Those groups can make significant positive contributions to the political process if they are meaningfully included.

With regard to the plight of detainees, abductees and missing persons, Kenya encourages programmes for psychosocial support and coping mechanisms, particularly for women whose spouses have been detained, abducted or are missing. Such women, who work hard against many odds to support their families, are often rejected, stigmatized and denied their human right to dignity by the society.

As we mark the second anniversary of resolution 2474 (2019), on missing persons in armed conflict, we call for renewed attention to resolving the issue of detainees and missing persons as a confidence- and trust-building measure among the Syrian parties.

With more than 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid in north-western Syria alone, the cross-border aid mechanism remains a critical avenue for humanitarian assistance, including coronavirus

disease vaccines, to reach the millions in need. I reaffirm Kenya's position that the cross-border and cross-line mechanisms must coexist and complement one another for effective humanitarian access.

In conclusion, Kenya commends the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy in supporting the Syrian political process. We reiterate that the long-term solution to the Syrian crisis lies in a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political dialogue that speaks to the needs of the people of Syria.

Mr. Maman Sani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing and his tireless efforts to find a negotiated solution to the crisis in Syria. I also thank Ms. Abeer Hussein for her contribution to today's debate. I would like to welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey to today's meeting.

The end of the Syrian crisis will not be achieved solely by the power of force of weapons, but rather, and it cannot be stated enough, through a negotiated political solution borne out of a Syrian-led process that involves the various components of Syrian society. That has become obvious with each monthly briefing on the issue. However, it must be noted that, in spite of the Special Envoy's efforts to help the parties to the conflict find common ground for a lasting and just solution to the crisis, progress is by no means as we had expected. That is why the political process must urgently be put back on track, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). In that connection, I would like to make the following comments.

On the security front, the Niger is concerned about the resurgence of violence, particularly in the north-west of the country. We call on the parties to put an end to the hostilities, which is a sine qua non for making tangible progress in resolving the crisis in Syria. The use of improvised explosive devices, landmines and unexploded ordnance and the increasing pace of air strikes and bombings, resulting in a growing number of civilian deaths and injuries, including many women and children, are not conducive to such progress.

My delegation calls on the parties to the conflict to observe a comprehensive ceasefire in Syria, as called for by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy. We remain convinced that a ceasefire will help to create the conditions for a successful political process and make the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic possible and effective.

We believe that the need for a collective effort in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic should not distract us from the fight against terrorist groups, which continue to ignore the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire and try to take advantage of the pandemic and measures taken to reassert themselves. Syria, in the exercise of its sovereignty, must relentlessly pursue the fight against terrorism. Any attempt to undermine its sovereignty or territorial integrity is simply unacceptable.

The Niger remains concerned about the fate of the many detainees on both sides. We call on the parties to take steps to build mutual trust, including through the unilateral mass release of detainees and clarifications to families about missing persons. That will help to ease tensions and build confidence between the parties, thereby making it possible to achieve the progress we all expect on the political front.

In that regard, we lament the lack of progress in the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. The Niger reiterates that, after several attempts, it is time to improve the Committee's working methods. To that end, the Niger calls on all stakeholders to show flexibility in moving the political process forward. Only an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue that reflects the will of the Syrian people will lead to a peaceful long-term solution in Syria. The success of the political process will also determine the success of all efforts on the humanitarian side of the crisis.

I would like to conclude my remarks by urging members of the Council to show a true sense of unity in order to finally give reason for hope to the Syrian people who, after more than a decade of war, yearn only for peace.

Mr. Gupta (India): Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Geir Pedersen for his very comprehensive briefing today. I also wish to thank Ms. Abeer Hussain of the Syrian Women's Political Movement for bringing the civil society perspective to today's meeting.

As things stand presently, the political track has not moved any further since our most recent discussion in the Security Council, on 26 May (see S/2021/418). The United Nations-facilitated Constitutional Committee process therefore has the onerous task of preparing and drafting, for popular approval, a Constitution that will contribute to the political settlement in Syria and the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). However, there has not been much progress since its establishment, in September 2019.

We call upon all sides to remain engaged in discussions on the bridging proposal put forth by the Special Envoy in April. We have noted the update on Deputy Special Envoy Khawla Matar's recent engagements in Damascus. We hope that the Special Envoy will succeed in bringing about an understanding among all three groups on the work plan and methodology, paving the way for convening the sixth session at the earliest opportunity.

Let me reiterate once again that, for the United Nations-led political track to move forward, we need cooperation from all major stakeholders in the conflict. The political transition in Syria facilitated by the United Nations is not an exclusive process. The stakeholders need to bridge existing divides by focusing on measured, incremental positive steps. They need to review their long-entrenched positions, act collaboratively and strengthen the hand of the Special Envoy, thereby giving a collective push to the United Nations-led political track. We believe that can be realized if all parties agree to work together in good faith and provided their sponsors do not interfere.

The recent attack on the hospital in the city of Afrin in northern Syria underscores the need for a nationwide comprehensive ceasefire. We condemn the attack on the hospital and the killing of innocent civilians. Across the country, including in north-western Syria, fighting along the front lines has continued in one form or another, putting the lives of innocent civilians in jeopardy. It is also a matter of concern that the fundamental principles of international law, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States and respect for territorial integrity and independence, have been repeatedly violated in Syria. The presence of foreign forces and the provision of support to armed groups have led to an extremely dangerous situation in Syria.

India remains deeply concerned by the involvement of external actors in Syria, which has given a fillip to the growth of terrorism in Syria and beyond in the region. We urge the international community to reflect on that aspect of the Syrian conflict with all earnestness. We need to be consistent in strongly condemning terrorism. The latest 60-day report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation (S/2021/583) mentions the attacks carried out by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a designated terrorist group, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The latest report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (see S/2021/419) also refers to the repeated use of chemical weapons by ISIL against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. Reports of the presence of mercenaries from Syria in Africa is equally worrisome. It is imperative that all parties adhere to their international obligations to fight terrorism and terrorist organizations in Syria, as designated by the Security Council.

We welcome the Special Envoy's participation in the upcoming meeting on the situation in Syria in Rome on 28 June and look forward to hearing his comments on the broader issues to be discussed there.

Finally, India firmly believes that the long-term security and stability of the region can be achieved only by preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We also remain convinced that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirm our commitment to advancing a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Ms. Prince (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his usual thorough briefing. It is good to have him here in person. We also thank Ms. Abeer Hussein for her remarks today.

Syria's only viable path to peace and stability is through a credible, balanced and inclusive political process that is owned and led by the Syrian people and meets their legitimate aspirations. Yet, 10 years after the conflict began, the Syrian people continue to suffer as a result of dynamics over which they have neither influence nor control.

Constructive and pragmatic international diplomacy is needed now more than ever to assist in creating an environment that is conducive to the fulfilment of the political process.

In that regard, we must acknowledge and commend the unwavering efforts of the Special Envoy, and we continue to strongly urge all parties to recommit to working together in a spirit of mutual respect and compromise in the pursuit of peace and stability.

The Constitutional Committee remains an essential component of the wider political process and we emphasize the importance of convening a sixth session as soon as practicable. The Committee's consultations should involve the meaningful participation of all

groups, including women and youth. We remain hopeful that the Committee will be a driver of progress in the political process for the sake of the Syrian people.

Measures aimed at building confidence are also vital to the success of the wider process. In that context, we reiterate the urgent need to address the issues of detainees, abductees and missing persons. Further, conditions must be cultivated for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Those expressions of goodwill will undoubtedly promote reconciliation within Syria. They will also aid the parties in the development of trust and thereby promote active participation in the political process.

We acknowledge the close linkage between a ceasefire and the parallel political process. The implementation of a complete and immediate nationwide cessation of hostilities is essential to stabilizing the country's volatile security situation. We appeal to the parties to exercise maximum restraint and we remind them of their obligations under international law, including in the conduct of counter-terrorism activities.

There exists a well-established link between justice and peace, and it has long been recognized that neither one is able to thrive in isolation of the other. We therefore reiterate that accountability for acts committed in violation of international law ought to remain a high priority.

We maintain that the political and humanitarian situations are inextricably connected. The stagnation of the political process has the disastrous effect of prolonging the conflict and, in turn, worsens the dire humanitarian situation. A holistic approach remains imperative.

The international community must prioritize the people of Syria and leave behind geopolitical disputes, which continue to compound the complexities of the conflict. This dictates the removal of all unauthorized foreign forces in respect for Syria's sovereignty and its territorial integrity. It further requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures, which have had a detrimental impact on Syria's overall socioeconomic condition.

Syria and its people deserve security and to live in a state of calm. The Security Council and the wider international community bear a great responsibility to

assist them through positive action to emerge from the despair created by 10 long years of war.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy and Ms. Abeer Hussain for their briefings.

This is a serious time for the Security Council. We must decide in the coming days to restore a glimmer of hope to the millions of people who depend on the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism to receive the aid they need. The Security Council cannot abandon them to the goodwill of the Syrian regime.

It is high time to relaunch a real political process that will finally bring tangible results. After nearly two years, the Constitutional Committee has, regrettably, yielded no results. The regime continues to oppose good-faith and serious discussions. That has been demonstrated again in its refusal of the Special Envoy's compromise proposal. France fully supports the Special Envoy's efforts to overcome the morass and re-establish a credible political process.

We must return to the heart of resolution 2254 (2015), which paves the way for a political settlement and was adopted unanimously by the members of the Security Council. All its elements must be implemented without further delay. That means that there must be urgent progress on the issue of detainees in the hands of the regime and disappeared persons, which is a key demand of all sectors of Syrian society. It also requires progress on a sustainable and verifiable nationwide cessation of hostilities and preparations for elections. That is what all Syrians expect.

The presidential election organized by the Syrian regime does not contribute in any way to the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). How could it lead to the lifting of sanctions, reconstruction or normalization? We oppose it. We will nonetheless continue to assume our responsibilities in terms of humanitarian response, which we are financing with our partners up to 92 per cent, despite the obstacles that the regime continues to impose on the delivery of aid and the work of the United Nations.

Only a robust political settlement will make it possible to permanently extinguish the hotbed of terrorism that the country has become and to put an end to the human tragedy and instability in Syria. We

stand ready to work with the Special Envoy and all Council members.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): It is good to see Special Envoy Geir Pedersen in the Chamber with us. I thank him for his briefing and, of course, for his ongoing efforts on the Constitutional Committee. We sincerely welcome those efforts to focus the Security Council's attention on the crisis in Syria and to press all parties to work together on concrete steps towards the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

We also very much welcome the Special Envoy's initiative to launch virtual thematic working groups, which will allow civil society actors to engage with each other and the United Nations, regardless of their geographic location or ability to travel. We know from experience and best practice that peace efforts produce more sustainable outcomes when civil society is adequately and, more importantly, meaningfully included in political and mediation processes. I thank him for that initiative.

Despite the Special Envoy's commendable efforts, I know that the Syrian authorities have yet to engage meaningfully in the work of the Constitutional Committee. Ireland reiterates its call on the Syrian authorities to end their unacceptable stalling tactics, which leave the prospects for substantive progress in the Constitutional Committee as far away as ever. Regrettably, we are no closer to meeting the expectations of the Syrian people for substantive progress on the political solution and national reconciliation that were foreseen in resolution 2254 (2015). Such progress is unattainable, in our view, without a new constitution that sets out a peaceful and inclusive vision for all Syrians. Sadly, last month's elections brought us no nearer to that goal.

In particular, I want to welcome this morning the participation in this meeting of Ms. Abeer Hussain. We listened with great interest to her and about her work focused on empowering women. I see that work as absolutely critical, and I happen to believe in her final words to us: "No women, no legitimacy". We join in her desire to see what she aptly describes as the strong women of Syria take their rightful place in the peace process in working for equal and full citizenship and in working for justice to reach a democracy. We heard her appeal to see women play a decisive and effective role as a pressing force in the political process on a full,

equal and meaningful basis. That, I understand, is their right and not their request.

While a ceasefire continues to largely hold in the north-west, the attack on Al-Shifa hospital in Afrin was an appalling attack. It resulted in the killing and injury of civilians, including medical personnel and children, and the destruction of parts of the hospital. Ireland strongly condemns that disgraceful attack and calls for an end to all such attacks.

This latest appalling incident and the continuing violence underline the importance once again of a nationwide ceasefire in Syria.

Ireland strongly condemns those parties in Syria that continue to disregard international human rights and humanitarian law. All must fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including those relating to the protection of civilians and civilian objects. The Syrian authorities, through their repressive security apparatus, continue to arbitrarily arrest and detain their own citizens, with flagrant disregard for due process.

We must never forget that tens of thousands of Syrian citizens have been subjected to arbitrary detention, in addition to those who are missing. We think of their families left cruelly in limbo, without knowing the fate of their loved ones. It is unconscionable to us that the Syrian authorities have such callous disregard for their own citizens.

We welcome Mr. Pedersen's continued efforts to make progress on detainees, abductees and missing persons, and he has our full support in that work.

The violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the Syrian regime are extremely well documented. Ireland has consistently called for full accountability for the crimes and violations committed. Ireland commends the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for their work. The Commission of Inquiry's reports testify to horrific crimes, including the bombing of hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure. Ireland strongly condemns those acts as well as attacks against civil-society actors and human rights defenders.

To conclude, we call on the Syrian authorities to engage urgently and meaningfully with the Constitutional Committee, and with the wider political

process, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). We urge the Syrian authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and to put an end to their brutal policies. Only when that comes to pass will the Syrian people be able to begin rebuilding their lives and look forward to a hopeful and peaceful future. As we have often said, that is the very least that the long-suffering people of Syria deserve.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, for his briefing, and I welcome his presence here today. I also thank Ms. Abeer Hussain, Syrian women's rights promoter and a member of the Syrian Women's Political Movement, for her briefing. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran in this meeting.

There is an urgent need to bring stability to Syria and to put an end to the military approach to the crisis. That approach has been futile and exacerbated the suffering of Syrians throughout the decade-long crisis and led to an impasse in the political process. If the deadlock remains, those tensions will cause the situation to deteriorate further and increase the number of terrorist acts in Syria, as well as the waves of displacement, deepening the humanitarian tragedy for the Syrian people, with all of the attendant negative repercussions for security in the region and for international peace and security.

The deterioration of the daily lives of the Syrian people is unprecedented. The international community and the Security Council therefore have today more than ever a historic responsibility to find a comprehensive and lasting settlement based on constructive approaches, purposeful interaction and joint coordination.

Tunisia reiterates its support for the work of the Special Envoy, Mr. Pedersen, and his team in their good-offices efforts to bring the Syrian parties together, building confidence and resolving controversial issues in line with resolution 2254 (2015), while respecting the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

In that context, we urge that efforts be redoubled to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in Syria and to guarantee the dignified return of refugees and displaced persons, while improving the daily living conditions of the Syrian people and combating terrorist groups in the country, as well as to make headway on the issue of detained persons and the constitutional and political process.

We hope that the actors involved will be able in coming days to agree on a common vision on the various aspects of the crisis and promote a constitutional and political process that is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, facilitated by the United Nations. Tunisia supports the resumption of the Constitutional Committee's work in the framework of its sixth session, to be convened in Geneva very soon. We encourage the Syrian parties once again to constructively contribute to the Committee's work and to find common ground, focusing as a priority on the best interests of the Syrian people and achieving constitutional reform.

Tunisia expresses its deep concern about the current negative trends in terms of renewed violence and tension in many parts of Syria. Violations continue, and we are also deeply concerned about the escalation of attacks committed by the Da'esh terrorist organization in the region, including its cross-border action, which undermines the unity and territorial integrity of Syria and the stability of the entire region.

Tunisia last year sounded the alarm about the recurring actions of Da'esh in Syria during the spread of the coronavirus disease, exploiting the impact of the pandemic, the security vacuum and the deterioration of the economic situation for its own interests. We reiterate the importance of putting an end to the crisis and the exacerbated suffering of the Syrian people. There is no option other than to reach a comprehensive political settlement, with the participation of women, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, notably resolution 2254 (2015). It is important to accelerate efforts to combat terrorism and to put an end through cooperation to organizations that have been listed by the Council, based on international law as a foundation for achieving security, stability and a lasting political solution in Syria.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Geir Pedersen, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Ms. Abeer Hussain for their briefings.

In spite of the overall stabilization of the military and political situation, the situation remains tense in Syria. Indeed, 60 per cent of the population is facing the real threat of hunger. The socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the country has deteriorated, first and foremost due to the illegal economic restrictions imposed by the West, in contravention of Security Council resolutions and in spite of the appeals of the

Secretary-General to ease the pressure of sanctions at the height of the pandemic. We consider this a continuing attempt to oust the legitimate authorities of the country through economic suffocation.

The areas not under the control of the Syrian Government remain zones of instability. They are controlled by terrorists from Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham — we are speaking here about Idlib and the regions of the north-east.

We are concerned about reports of continued clashes in the Euphrates region in the north of Syria. The fact that the issue of restoring the full sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic remains unresolved and that the related security challenges persist is exploited by terrorists from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

No less of a threat to the stability and security both inside Syria and in the region as a whole are the artificially concocted projects to divide the country along ethnic and religious lines. We also condemn the increasing number of air strikes conducted by Israel against Syrian territory. That seriously complicates the efforts to stabilize the situation in Syria and the region as a whole.

For our part, we are convinced that the Syrian conflict does not have a military solution and can be resolved only by promoting a sustainable political process on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015), with the support of the United Nations. Respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the country remains essential.

On the political track, we support the efforts of Geir Pedersen. We believe that it is important to convene a sixth session of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. We call on all parties to engage constructively in order to enhance the productivity of the intra-Syrian dialogue. The dialogue is not easy, but it is important to support the process in every way possible. At the same time, it is vital that it remain Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, without external interference or artificial timelines and with neutral United Nations mediation. We are also convinced that the intra-Syrian dialogue must not become hostage to technical modalities. The Russian Federation will continue to encourage negotiations among the Syrians, both in its national capacity and together with Turkey and Iran within the framework of the Astana format. We are planning another meeting in that format in the near future.

Russia is doing its utmost to promote a peaceful settlement in Syria. However, literally every aspect of that is encountering opposition. In the hands of our partners, the chemical dossier, where through our common efforts we managed to achieve the elimination of the Syrian chemical arsenal, has degenerated into yet another element of pressure against Syria.

We are also trying to ease the politicization of the Syrian humanitarian track and to help establish constructive cooperation between the United Nations and Damascus to provide humanitarian assistance to all Syrians, in compliance with the basic principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

We commend the efforts of the Government of Syria to rebuild the country after the conflict and establish normal living conditions for the citizens of the country, including refugees. However, the Syrian authorities cannot shoulder the burden of post-war reconstruction by themselves. There is a need for the international community to work together to establish a peaceful life through infrastructure projects for the country's initial reconstruction. In that connection, we call in particular for support for the initiative of the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, to restore basic infrastructure facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. We support the ICRC's assessment that a lack of solutions in that regard threatens to extend the humanitarian disaster not only within Syria itself but also into the neighbouring countries.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Estonia.

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing on the political situation in Syria. My special gratitude goes to Ms. Hussein for joining us today. Her honest testimony on the situation on the ground was extremely informative.

It is clear that repression in Syria continue. Millions have been displaced. Violence prevails, while thousands remain arbitrarily detained and missing. Under those difficult circumstances, it is even more encouraging to see Syrian activists standing up and making a change, even when the Constitutional Committee is in a deadlock.

The work that the members of the Syrian Women's Political Movement are doing is a vivid example of the will that people have to participate in the political

life. Estonia insists on the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and finding a political solution for the Syrian conflict. The United Nations, including the Security Council, cannot let down women who have risked their lives to take part in deciding their country's future.

The Security Council needs to act decisively against the widespread and systematic violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in Syria. Attacks against civilians and the use of chemical weapons amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Such violations often take place with almost absolute impunity.

Estonia reiterates the call of the European Union with regard to the need to create an international mechanism to locate missing people or their remains. There must be accountability for the many war crimes and crimes against humanity and an end to impunity. Without justice for the victims, there will not be any real peace in Syria.

I further highlight resolution 2474 (2019), championed by our Kuwaiti colleagues two years ago. In that resolution, the Security Council calls upon parties to actively search for persons reported missing and enable the return of their remains. Estonia will keep demanding that from the Syrian Government.

Investigative mechanisms such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, established by the General Assembly, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic of the Human Rights Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic all play a central role in collecting evidence and moving towards accountability.

Estonia and the European Union remain committed to finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Pedersen to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Pedersen: I have been listening very carefully to what everyone had to say. I must thank everyone for the strong support that came from all for the work that I am doing together with my team. I also very much appreciate the deep understanding of the challenges that we are facing. Of course, after 10 years of conflict, that is not something that is going to change overnight.

However, I think the shared frustration we have that we are not really making progress on the political front should serve as an impetus and as a reminder that we need to increase the dialogue on how to move that process forward. I have been asked a few questions on more details in that regard, and I hope, with the engagement that I am now having with the different foreign ministers in the days ahead — and I indicated my travel plans — that when we meet next, it will be possible to go into a little more detail as to how we can move forward together on this particular file,

I indicated the areas where I think that there is potential room for cooperation. Listening to Council members today, I have to some extent been strengthened in my view that this is indeed the way forward. I hope that, after my visit to Rome and, as I said, hopefully soon to Moscow, also after consultations with Iran and with Turkey and then indeed also of the entire Astana format, we will hopefully have some more clarity. It is also my hope that when I next brief the Council, I will be able to say that the Security Council has successfully come to unified action on the issue of cross-border and cross-line operations. Once again, I thank everyone very much for their continued support. It is needed, and we need to do even more than we have been able to do so far.

The President: I thank Mr. Pedersen for the clarifications he provided.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hussain to respond to comments and questions raised.

Ms. Hussain (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this great opportunity to provide the Security Council with a picture of what is taking place inside Syria. I sincerely thank the Council for prioritizing the voice of Syrian women and for the fact that the international community heeds the suffering of Syrian women, as well as the entire Syrian people.

I note that, as a movement, we stand on an equal footing with all forms of the demographic change that has taken place in Syria. Many areas have experienced

demographic changes. In addition to eastern Ghouta, changes have taken place in Homs, Dara'a and Al-Qusayr, as well as in Kefraya, Al-Fo'ah, Madaya and Zabadani.

The political solution that we seek in Syria entails putting an end to all actions and practices that have led to this painful situation of forceful displacement and demographic change. We look forward to establishing a comprehensive vision that yields an inclusive political solution which we hope to get from the Council.

The President: I thank Ms. Hussain for the clarifications she provided.

I would like again to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): On 26 May, the Syrians raised their voice and sent a clear message to the whole world that it must acknowledge the choice of the Syrian people, who supported the re-election of Mr. Bashar Al-Assad as President of the Syrian Arab Republic by an absolute majority of votes. The significant success in achieving this national constitutional entitlement, and the impressive public participation inside as well as outside the country, have clearly demonstrated the Syrians' ability to uphold the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of their country, and of their independent national choices. They have also demonstrated the Syrians' support of their leadership and rejection of occupation practices, aggression, terrorism, sanctions, pressures and dictations, which are still being defended and glossed over with deceptive slogans by some countries within the Council and beyond it.

The results announced by the Speaker of the People's Assembly in the Syrian Arab Republic showed that Mr. Bashar Al-Assad had obtained an absolute majority of votes, with a percentage of 95.1 per cent of the number of valid ballots. The Supreme Constitutional Court also indicated that the total number of voters who were entitled to vote inside and outside the Syrian Arab Republic is 18,107,109 voters, while the total number of voters who voted at home and abroad reached

14,239,140 voters, representing 78.64 per cent of those eligible to vote.

The statements of certain countries about the confusion between this constitutional entitlement and the implications of resolution 2254 (2015) are wrong and misleading. We have stressed over and over again that the holding of the presidential elections on time is in line with the constitutional entitlement to ensure the continuity of the Syrian State and its various institutions, while preventing any constitutional vacuum. There is thus no link between the elections and resolution 2254 (2015).

The insistence of some countries on not listening to the voice of the Syrian people and not deviating from their erroneous policies in Syria and in our Arab region has only brought terrorism and chaos, the destabilization of security and stability, the plundering of wealth, and harm to the lives and welfare of civilians. We therefore call on those countries to conduct an honest review of the catastrophic repercussions of their policies and to put an end to their practices that violate the principles of international law, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the foundations of friendly relations among States.

My country, Syria, is committed to a political solution that is based on the Syrian national dialogue and is Syrian-owned and Syrian-led, and has been positively engaged in working to achieve it and provided support and facilities for its success, in the light of its full commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, which represents a firm and constant principle that cannot be conceded. In this context, the Syrian Government continues to follow up on the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen as a facilitator of this process, and looks forward to soon holding the sixth round of the Constitutional Committee to discuss the constitution, stressing the need for no interference in its work and no attempts to impose artificial timetables or preconceived conclusions on its work. We also affirm that Syria, represented by its national team in the Constitutional Committee, has met all requirements for the continuation of the work of the Committee, as presented by Mr. Pedersen, and that there is no need for any party to distort the facts, falsify what has been agreed or complicate the work of the Committee with pretexts that do not stand up to facts. We stress that any attempt to that end is aimed at hindering the work of the Committee and preventing its progress.

Within the framework of the Syrian Government's efforts to establish national reconciliation and settle the conditions of detainees, on 2 May the President of the Republic issued Legislative Decree No. 13, granting a general amnesty to perpetrators of misdemeanours, violations and felonies occurring before the date of its issuance, and falling within a series of decrees that have been issued in this regard. The Syrian Government has also released dozens of detainees in a number of towns in the countryside of Damascus, including Douma, Irbeen, Kafr Batna and others. It has continued to make every effort to secure the release of the hostages and abductees held by terrorist organizations and to ensure their safe return to their families. Unfortunately, these efforts have been met with the Turkish regime's repudiation of its commitments under the Astana process and its obstruction of any progress in conducting serious exchanges by deliberately reducing the number of hostages and abductees proposed to be exchanged.

It is unacceptable that some members of the Council deal selectively and discriminately with this humanitarian issue by continuing to accuse the Syrian authorities, ignoring the situation of hostages and abductees held by terrorist organizations and their various entities, and the need to identify the fate of thousands of missing persons in areas under the control of these organizations.

My delegation has continued to brief the Security Council and the Secretariat on the aggressive practices carried out by the occupying forces of the United States and Turkey on the territories of my country, in cooperation with their proxy separatist militias and terrorist entities. It also continues to report on the repeated Israeli attacks, all of which represent flagrant violations of international law, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the sovereignty and independence of the Syrian Arab Republic, as affirmed by all the relevant resolutions to the situation in my country.

In this context, and on behalf of my country's Government, I have addressed official letters to the President of the Council about the conduct of several Western Governments, including those of three permanent members of the Security Council. These Governments are violating the sovereignty of my country by seeking to establish an illegal and artificial status quo through their support for separatist militias and by infiltrating their delegations into Syrian territories like thieves, without the permission or prior

approval of the Syrian Government. The most recent of these was the United States delegation headed by the acting Assistant Secretary of State.

In that regard, I would like to ask if it is permissible for United States forces to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border — as if they were crossing from New York to New Jersey — to loot Syrian oil and wheat and kill Syrians in flagrant defiance of the resolutions of the Security Council and the Charter of the United Nations? Does this behaviour reflect a commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria by a country that is supposed to be entrusted with contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security? My country will soon submit a request to compel the United States to pay the value of what it has stolen in terms of oil, wheat and other assets belonging to the Syrian State, pursuant to the principle of accountability. We want compensation for what the Syrian people have lost as a result of the United States looting of their wealth.

We have also addressed dozens of letters to the President of the Security Council on the Erdoğan regime's sponsorship of terrorist organizations in the areas it occupies in northern and north-western Syria, as well as its Turkification practices there, where it seeks the obliteration of the Syrian identity through a change in the demographic and administrative character of those areas, raises the Turkish flag over Government offices and service institutions, and appoints a governor and Turkish Government employees to supervise them. It is also confiscating lands, building a so-called separation wall, changing the names of roads and public squares and giving them Turkish and Ottoman names. The Turkification extends to school curriculums and related documents and license plates. Turkish telecommunications and postal companies are operating in the area, the electric power grids have been linked to the Turkish grid, and the Turkish lira has replaced the Syrian lira as the local currency. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is not allowed to operate in the humanitarian field, having been replaced by the Turkish Red Crescent.

My question is: How long will the Security Council continue to remain silent on the Turkish regime's violations, which its NATO allies are covering up?

In conclusion, after 10 years of failure of some countries' aggressive practices — which are known to all and which totally contradict those countries' claims of concern to respect Syria's sovereignty and

independence, to achieve a political solution and support the restoration of security and stability in Syria — is it not time for these countries to review their policies and realistically consider the results of their hostile practices against Syria, in particular, and the region in general? Is it not time for these countries to lift their inhumane siege of Syria and put an end to their unilateral, coercive measures, which have denied Syrians their livelihoods and their ability to benefit from their country's wealth? Is it not time for them to follow the path of political dialogue and diplomacy to address differences, instead of following the path of aggression, threats to use force, pressure, diktats and coercive measures?

The President: I now give the floor to Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Abeer Hussain for her remarks.

As always, we actively support Mr. Pedersen's efforts aimed at finding a political solution to the Syrian conflict, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). However, as Mr. Pedersen rightly pointed out in his briefing, the political process is not advancing. Despite his intense efforts over the last months, the sixth round of the Constitutional Committee has not been convened. Following the fake elections held last month in violation of United Nations resolutions, the regime is again trying to derail the Constitutional Committee. Deputy Special Envoy Matar has devoted sustained efforts to engage the regime in Damascus, but to no avail. Al-Assad and his fellow criminals are ignoring the opposition and acting in contravention of the rules of procedure.

This situation cannot simply be described as a standstill. Rather, it shows a dangerous trend of regression in terms of the work of the Constitutional Committee. The Security Council should stand against the regime's tactics to avoid negotiating a genuine political solution.

We have been urging the opposition to continue its constructive engagement despite all these difficulties and challenges. We still believe that the Constitutional Committee can make progress if the regime adopts a similar approach. It is important that the Astana process continues to function and should aim at contributing to the efforts towards achieving a political solution in Syria. The sixteenth meeting of Astana process is planned to be held soon.

The international community must give new impetus to efforts aimed at reaching a political solution in Syria. It is a major mistake not to devote enough attention to this issue. I would like to take this opportunity to invite key actors to come together and re-energize the political process. For such joint efforts to yield meaningful results, it is imperative that calm on the ground be preserved.

We are deeply concerned that the regime has intensified its ceasefire violations following the sham elections. Attacks carried out in June have taken a heavy civilian toll. We call on the regime and its backers to uphold the ceasefire. Attacks targeting civilians must stop. On 23 June, Turkish soldiers were wounded as a result of the regime's attack in Idlib. We cannot and will not remain silent in the face of such attacks. There is going to be a heavy price for any adventurous steps.

Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) ramped up their attacks on civilians. This cold-blooded terrorist organization targeted the United Nations-supported Al-Shifa hospital in Afrin on 12 June, killing scores of innocent civilians and injuring many. Al-Shifa hospital was one of the largest health facilities in northern Syria, which offered thousands of medical-service interventions each month. Its coordinates were shared with the United Nations de-confliction mechanism. This terrorist attack is a crime against humanity, and it must be investigated by the United Nations. These acts of terrorism will continue as long as the perpetrators of these attacks are not held accountable and continue to receive outside support.

The most recent incidents in Manbij bear witness to the local population's resistance to the PKK/YPG's operations and acts of persecution. At least eight people were killed, and scores more have been injured, as a result of live rounds fired by the PKK-YPG to disperse locals protesting against their forced-recruitment policies. It is time to acknowledge that the support provided to the PKK/YPG is channelled to oppress local Syrians and forcefully recruit them for terrorist acts. I would like to remind the Security Council once again that there are not good terrorists and bad terrorists; terrorists are all the same: evil. Turkey will continue to stand against the PKK-YPG's acts to terrorize the local population and attempts to consolidate its grip over the north-east through oppression.

Let me reiterate our strong determination to address the plight of the Syrian people. Against all odds, Turkey will persevere in seeking a political settlement that will meet the legitimate aspirations of Syrians. While doing so, we will also continue to extend a helping hand to safeguard their lives against the military campaign of the Al-Assad regime.

Syrian women are the unsung heroes of the conflict, which has lasted for more than a decade. Millions of Syrian women's lives have dramatically changed overnight. They have had no choice but to cope with war, on the one hand, while struggling to make it through the day, on the other. They have become the main breadwinners and have taken on many challenges away from their communities and traditional support systems, upon which they have always relied. I salute all the brave women of Syria, like the physician Dr. Amani Ballour, who saved countless lives in an underground hospital for years in eastern Ghouta, and Nujeen Mustafa, a staunch supporter and advocate for refugees, who travelled across countries in her wheelchair. Syrian women have an essential role to play in the political process and the future of the country, as Ms. Hussain said. We should not fail them.

The dignity of the Syrian people should be restored. That can be achieved only with the strong support of the Security Council. In the face of increased humanitarian needs, we need the United Nations cross-border mechanism more than ever. Any failure on that front will have a serious negative impact on the lives of the people. The Council must authorize the mechanism without delay, with additional crossings for a period of at least 12 months.

The previous speaker once again repeated his usual delusional allegations and shameless lies. As he is not my legitimate counterpart, he does not deserve a response from me. The answer to the criminal regime that he represents will be given by the Syrian people when they save and rebuild Syria.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Despite relative calm, Syria continues to face serious challenges. Parts of Syria continue to be occupied by foreign forces, dominated by groups with separatist tendencies or controlled by Security Council-designated terrorist groups. At the same time, the

Israeli regime continues to commit acts of aggression against Syria, in flagrant violation of international law.

That unstable situation has far-reaching implications for the security and stability of a volatile region and for international peace and security at large. The Security Council must live up to its responsibilities and ensure Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In that context, all foreign forces unlawfully present in Syria must leave without any precondition or delay. Terrorist groups must not be allowed to use millions of civilians as human shields to continue their heinous activities, and the Israeli regime must be forced to end its aggression against Syria.

In addition to those severe challenges, unlawful unilateral sanctions are creating serious problems for Syrians, who have already been suffering from the adverse impacts of more than 10 years of conflict.

Despite all the unjust measures I just mentioned, the Constitutional Committee must continue its work. The slow progress in the work of the Committee should not give us any reason for pessimism with regard to the extremely important role it can play in the future of Syria. We hope that, with the constructive engagement of the Committee's co-Chairs with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the Constitutional Committee's sixth session will be held soon. In that context, we are in close coordination within the Astana format with the United Nations.

At the same time, parallel efforts must be made to ensure progress on other areas creating challenges for Syria and its people. Indeed, linking in any way Syria's reconstruction or return of refugees and displaced persons with progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee or similar conditions will only prolong the sufferings of the Syrian people, who have already paid a heavy price as a result of the hegemonic policies of certain Western countries that pursue their geopolitical objectives in Syria through all means.

We reiterate once again that the Syrian crisis must be settled peacefully in accordance with principles of international law, particularly respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal and external affairs and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

In our commitment to the restoration of the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, we will continue our

efforts in assisting the Government and the people of Syria to overcome the enormous challenges they face. In addition to our continued consultations with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria,

we will continue our constructive contribution to international efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.