



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9038**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Friday, 20 May 2022, 10.15 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield . . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Xing Jisheng
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Oye
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
India . . . . .	Mr. Raghoram
Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya . . . . .	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kariuki

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 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 the meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Dr. Farida Almouslem, OB/GYN, Syrian American Medical Society.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Ten days ago, we attended at the sixth Brussels Conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region. That event, organized by the European Union, was an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its continued commitment to the people of Syria, and they did so. Close to \$6.7 billion have been pledged for 2022 and beyond. My first message is one of sincere gratitude to all donors for their contributions to the funds that are so urgently needed, as I hope to outline in these remarks.

Brussels was also an opportunity to remind the world of the scope of humanitarian needs inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries. As the Security Council hears from me each month, they are immense and growing year by year. Madam President, you know them all too well.

Despite the considerable funding pledged, the commitments represent less than 50 per cent of the total funding requirement for 2022. We need \$10.5 billion for the humanitarian response plan and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for countries of the region. This is the largest appeal ever for the Syria crisis, because we have the largest-ever number of people in need. What does underfunding mean, though? It means that we will have to prioritize our response and make

difficult choices again this year, as we have discussed so often in the past.

The World Food Programme has warned that further cuts to its programme could materialize by July, driven by global food price rises and stagnant funding levels. That would have a devastating impact on people that depend on its assistance. Indeed, 1.9 million more could slide into hunger due to the impact of rising food prices and the effects of the Ukraine conflict, which I know has been discussed extensively this week in New York.

I was also pleased to see the level of consensus at the Brussels Conference on the need to prioritize and focus on early recovery programming, in which immediate investments are imperative to support the delivery of education, water and sanitation, health, electricity and social protection. Only through a sustainable commitment to basic services can we make good on our common commitment to leave no Syrian behind. It is now critical that the generous pledges announced in Brussels be converted into early disbursements of funding.

Hostilities, including air strikes and shelling in north-western Syria, continue to affect civilians, including women and children. Constant care must be taken to spare them.

Insecurity continues in Al-Hol camp. So far in 2022, 13 murders and four attempted murders have been reported in the camp. An incident on 10 May targeted an international non-governmental organization centre. As a result, all activities in phase 5 of our security arrangements are suspended until the safety and security to humanitarian workers can be reassessed and ensured.

As I and so many others have said before, the situation in Al-Hol camp is a disgrace for the 56,000 civilians living there, the vast majority of whom are women and children, which makes it much worse. In fact, nearly 10,000 children and their mothers in the north-east are detained in prisons and prison-like camps.

So, of course, we need to take action. Children should not be detained based solely on alleged association with armed groups. They should be released into suitable care. They need protection and basic services. They need a family life, and they need a future. Thus we call once again on all Member States involved to take urgent action to fulfil their responsibility to repatriate their citizens through all available routes.

People living in Al-Hol and the humanitarian partners serving them desperately need an approach to safety and security that maintains the civilian character of the camp and gives them a horizon and a future beyond the camp.

We are fast approaching summer and its scorching heat in most parts of Syria. That will lead to increasing demand for water. Already, water levels in the Euphrates River are dropping to a critically low point. Nearly 5.5 million people in Syria rely on the Euphrates and its subsidiaries for drinking water.

The Tishreen Dam Authority has warned that due to low water levels, the dam is going to be operational only six hours a day, compromising the provision of water and the supply of electricity. The supply of electricity is not a luxury; it is critical to essential services, as I saw very clearly when I was there last year in Aleppo. Without electricity, irrigation pumps cannot function, hospitals and other critical services cannot be supported and residents must purchase drinking water, further eroding their purchasing power. Electricity therefore has an impact on many aspects of emergency needs.

The Allouk water station continues to work only intermittently, and pumping has been interrupted several times in the past month owing to electricity shortages, resulting, again, in limited water flows. Al-Hasakah city continues to be supplied through water trucking. That is not a sustainable solution. It is the last one that anyone would consider, with its expense and its inevitable lack of reliability, but it is better than not having it.

The United Nations and our partners are currently supporting more than 12,000 students to cross between areas of control to take examinations at the end of this month; I remember this also from last year. Those children are so active in seeking the opportunities to finish their education; they are our only hope for Syria's future, because when we see a generation of children not having access to education, which is in one sense one of the worst aspects of conflict, it is the responsibility of all parties to respect that right, to provide every support to allow children to travel safely to where they can take those exams.

We continue our efforts to expand cross-line humanitarian access. In the north-east, the United Nations is planning to carry out a cross-line mission

in the coming days or week to Ras Al-Ayn to provide medical supplies, including leishmaniosis medication.

On 16 May, the fourth cross-line convoy delivered food assistance to north-west Syria to more than 40,000 people. The United Nations is now working on the modalities of a fifth inter-agency cross-line convoy, in line with the operational plan that we had submitted to the Council and discussed before for cross-line convoys to north-west Syria. The plan focuses on the implementation of those inter-agency cross-line convoys to communities in Idlib and Aleppo, and that plan has been extended through December.

As we all know, the Security Council authorization for United Nations and partners cross-border assistance into the north-west expires in just over six weeks. While we are doing our utmost to expand cross-line access, leaving no stone unturned in that endeavour, let me reiterate, as I have done on every occasion in the past, that cross-line operations cannot under current conditions replace the size or the scope of the massive United Nations cross-border operation.

Failure to renew the authorization will disrupt life-saving aid for the people living in the north-west, including more than 1 million children.

As we speak, I am delighted to say that my Deputy, Joyce Msuya, whom members have already seen frequently in the Council, is completing a visit to Syria and Jordan to support the humanitarian partners' response to the crisis there and to identify strategies to meet the challenges that the coming months will bring. I will be meeting Joyce and other colleagues on Sunday, and I will be hearing a lot more about the issues and priorities that we need to address. We will be all the better briefed when we meet again, and I look forward to doing that at our next meeting.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Dr. Almouslem.

**Dr. Almouslem:** I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Council today. I am also grateful to brief alongside Under-Secretary-General Griffiths.

My name is Farida Almouslem. I am an obstetrician/gynaecologist from Aleppo, Syria. I spent nearly 10 years working in hospitals throughout Syria, supported by the Syrian American Medical Society and other humanitarian organizations. I have dedicated my life

to helping Syrian women through their pregnancies and have delivered thousands of newborns.

From 2011 to 2016, I worked as an obstetrician/gynaecologist in Aleppo, including in the eastern part of the city, which was placed under siege and subjected to ruthless aerial bombardments. I witnessed hundreds of atrocities, which are still stuck in my mind. I will never, ever forget the tears of a woman in her 40s who was begging me to help her to get pregnant again after losing her four children all at once because of a barrel bomb. I cannot forget those moments.

My hospital — called M2 — was repeatedly targeted by air strikes, including the use of cluster munitions, barrel bombs and bunker-buster bombs. On 10 December 2016, I was working in an underground hospital alongside my husband, who is also a physician, and the other medical staff. We had moved the operating rooms to the basement due to the heavy bombardment. After bunker-buster bombs failed to penetrate the basement, a munition containing chlorine gas was dropped directly onto the hospital. Because the gas is heavier than air, it sank into the basement. The operating rooms quickly turned into gas chambers, yet we had only one oxygen mask for all of the patients and doctors. My 8-year-old daughter was there with me. She struggled to breathe and began to cry. Even though I myself was struggling to breathe, I gave her the oxygen mask. Can those here who are parents imagine that happening to their child, watching him or her suffocating right in front of their eyes?

The second day, 11 December, another munition containing chlorine gas was dropped in front of the hospital. At the time, there was a woman in labour, and her baby's first breath was saturated with chlorine. Can you imagine?

After that, we evacuated the hospital, and within days we were forcibly displaced from Aleppo to Idlib on the green buses. My family and I lost everything — our home, our memories and, most of all, our dignity when we evacuated. As a survivor, I ask: where is the accountability?

After that displacement, I continued to work in hospitals throughout northern Syria. I also directed schools that trained new midwives and nurses. If I could summarize my experiences working throughout those 10 years in Syria, it would be this: tremendous human suffering. I think of the pregnant woman who suffered a shrapnel wound to her abdomen, and when I

went to perform an emergency caesarian, I discovered that the baby had been cut in two. I think of the many women — and the many newborns who died in my arms — because I did not have any medicine to give them. I think of the many Syrian women and children who continue to live in complete poverty. I think of my own friends and family who remain in Syria, suffering — educated people who earn the equivalent of \$30 a month in salary, and my parent's home which receives electricity only one or two hours a day. Syrians throughout the country are suffering, and every one of us has an obligation to help.

I would like to focus on three key points today. The first is the growing humanitarian needs. As the Emergency Relief Coordinator explained, the humanitarian needs continue to grow, while funding decreases. There must be additional funds provided in order to prevent further closures of hospitals and to provide critical nutrition assistance. For the Syrian American Medical Society alone, nine hospitals will close at the end of September unless new funding is secured. These hospitals average a total of 260,000 beneficiaries each year. The Non-Governmental Organization Forum for non-governmental organizations operating in north-west Syria estimates that as many as 3 million beneficiaries will lose access to services if more funding is not secured. A lack of funding has already led to difficulties in purchasing drugs for diabetes, heart disease and chronic respiratory illnesses. There are also growing gaps in support for prenatal care and maternal health care, including for neonatal intensive care units. Combined with the ongoing high rate of malnutrition, this is resulting in more complications in pregnancies, and a rising infant mortality rate.

While funding is urgently needed to support the humanitarian response, it is also needed to increase the capacity of the health-care system throughout all of Syria. Efforts are needed to increase capacity, and they must also be made to educate new health workers, particularly nurses and midwives. My own experience directing nursing and midwifery schools in Syria showed the tremendous potential in young women who earn their degrees and serve their communities.

Secondly, I would now like to turn to the cross-border mechanism. The reality is that the enormous humanitarian needs in Syria require humanitarian access for all modalities, especially through the cross-border mechanism. The numbers are clear: 4.1 million

people in north-west Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 700,000 from last year. To date, the impact of crossline deliveries to north-west Syria has been minimal when compared to the needs, and these deliveries have been marked by poor coordination with non-governmental organization partners and a lack of proper needs assessments. Crossline access must be improved through greater planning and coordination, and it must be ensured that urgently needed items are delivered. At the same time, crossline activity cannot replace the enormous cross-border operation currently taking place. Instead, these modalities should be viewed as complementary tools to be utilized to meet the humanitarian needs in Syria. If one looks at the resolution solely through the lens of humanitarian needs, it is clear that a renewal of 12 months at a minimum is the right thing to do.

Corruption also remains a challenge in every part of Syria. The Council can address this by requiring the same strict levels of reporting and oversight for humanitarian projects in all parts of Syria. If corruption or aid diversion is uncovered, then there must be accountability. For those Member States with concerns about armed groups in north-west Syria, the cross-border mechanism is the single most effective tool to push back on those groups' attempts to gain further control over the civilian population or to divert aid.

My final point is on the mental-health situation in Syria. After more than a decade of brutal conflict, the entire population is suffering from psychological wounds. For some, this trauma can be too much to bear. One of my closest friends took her own life. Only 24 years old, she was a well-educated midwife who lost hope and could not find proper psychiatric support. I was devastated to see someone so young, with so much to offer the world, feel that there was no hope for the future. Sadly, her story is not unique.

My own daughter, Huda, has endured many traumas during her childhood. By the age of eight, she had experienced siege, starvation, constant aerial bombardment, chemical weapons, the bombing of her school and her friends, and forced displacement. Even her cat and pet bird were killed in air strikes. No child should have to endure these traumas. Huda is still affected by these traumas, and she, like millions of other Syrian children, needs access to quality mental-health services. More resources must be committed for such services to be provided throughout all of Syria. We are already seeing the negative consequences of this lack

of services: an increase in suicides, growing cases of domestic and gender-based violence, and higher rates of substance abuse. The children of Syria are the future — what will become of them if they do not get the help they desperately need?

Over the years, many people have asked me why I do this work. For me, the answer is simple: it is my duty. In a conflict in which there have been countless examples of evil, atrocity and hatred, doctors and humanitarian workers have been a source of inspiration. They are the true unsung heroes as they risk their lives for the sake of others. It is the Council's duty to support them. It is the Council's duty to ensure that they are able to perform their work freely and without threat of arrest, torture or aerial bombardment. And if these incidents do occur, the Council must pursue accountability on their behalf. It is the Council's duty to renew the cross-border resolution so that they continue to have the medicine and tools they need to help their patients. It is the Council's duty to fully fund this work. It is the duty of all of us to require proper monitoring and oversight, so that what resources do go into Syria are properly utilized. As doctors and other humanitarian workers bravely continue this work in Syria, they and the people they serve need the Security Council's support now more than ever.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Almouslem for her briefing.

I would 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.

**Ms. Juul (Norway):** I make this statement on behalf of the co-penholders of the Syria humanitarian file, Ireland and Norway.

I offer many thanks to the briefers for making clear the sheer breadth and depth of the humanitarian needs across Syria. As co-penholders, we remain deeply concerned about the almost 15 million Syrians who need humanitarian protection and assistance for their survival.

Soaring food prices have led to widespread and deepening food insecurity. Humanitarian assistance is

keeping people alive. We must scale up. We welcome the substantial pledges made at the Brussels Conference. They show the continued commitment of donors to supporting the people of Syria.

Syria is a dangerous place for children to grow up, as we just heard. In many parts, children and their families live in fear of death, violence and sexual assault. Women and girls are put in a particularly vulnerable situation, underscoring the need for their continued participation in the design and implementation of the humanitarian response. We are deeply concerned that violence and forced displacement have resulted in limited access to education and health care and have had dire psychosocial effects on children. Parties to the conflict must immediately cease the grave violations and abuses of the rights of children.

We urge all parties listed in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2021/437) to develop, and fully implement, action plans to end, and prevent, violations against children in Syria.

With the overwhelming and increasing humanitarian needs in Syria, it remains critical that the Security Council stand unified in its resolve to mitigate them. In resolution 2585 (2021), the Council recalled the need for all parties to respect the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, which includes ensuring full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Ireland and Norway, as co-penholders, strongly support the use of all modalities to deliver aid to the millions of Syrians in need.

This week's arrival of another humanitarian convoy across the conflict line into the north-west is very welcome. We commend the United Nations and its partners for making progress on those cross-line deliveries. However, more can, and must, be done. We call on all parties to support cross-line deliveries to all parts of Syria, depoliticize aid deliveries and grant the necessary security guarantees to ensure the safe passage of cross-line convoys and their personnel.

With several hundred trucks every month, the cross-border mechanism remains a critical lifeline for millions in need in north-west Syria. Month after month, it delivers food, medical items and shelter — all monitored and checked. It is clear that there is no other alternative that could replicate the scale, scope and benefits of that operation. Without the cross-border

mechanism, millions of lives would be at even greater risk. The Council must prevent that from happening.

As co-penholders, we also welcome the progress in implementing early recovery projects. The increased funding and recognition of early recovery in the humanitarian response are important steps. Sustainable solutions are key to preventing a further increase in the number of people in need. That work must continue.

The devastating humanitarian situation means that the Security Council must abide by its unified and collective duty to support the Syrian people. The people of Syria are counting on the Council. We must not fail them.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), comprising Gabon, Kenya and Ghana.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Dr. Farida Almouslem, of the Syrian American Medical Society, for their briefings. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey at this meeting.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire and deserves the continued attention of the international community to help alleviate the challenges faced by the people. We therefore welcome the ongoing efforts by the United Nations and humanitarian partners to address the increasing protection needs and provide aid to populations in both Government-controlled and non-Government-controlled areas.

We note with concern that several factors, including the protracted conflict, a deteriorating economy, climate change, the prevalence of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the lack of access to basic needs, continue to compound the protection and humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. Many Syrians today live under increasing pressure arising from the limited resources available to both internally displaced persons and the host communities. Such conditions have further exacerbated pre-existing levels of poverty and unemployment, especially in rural areas. The economic crisis, in particular, has impacted the prices of basic commodities and contributed to growing food insecurity. We note with concern that food prices have been at record levels over the past seven months and increased by 24 per cent between February and March alone this year.

As a result of those daily struggles, negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour and early marriages, have been adopted to meet basic needs. Furthermore, women and girls have increasingly become victims of sexual and gender-related violence, with poor access to medical and reproductive health care.

While noting the present strain on global financial systems, we stress the need for international funding support to meet the protection, legal and psychosocial needs of those affected. We heard Dr. Almouslem discuss the issue of psychological needs quite eloquently. Without adequate and sustainable resource backing, many more Syrians, especially women, girls and children, will continue to suffer disproportionately from the prevailing conditions in the country.

We condemn all human rights abuses, especially at the Al-Hol camp, where murder cases are on the rise, and call for thorough investigations to hold all offenders accountable for their actions.

We are also concerned by reports of the emerging use of laser-guided weapons, targeted at civilian-populated areas, humanitarian centres and hospitals. In that regard, we emphasize the obligations of the conflicting parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure from harm.

In view of the worsening humanitarian situation, it is vital that humanitarian access be granted to all areas where people are in need. We urge the parties, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law, to eliminate, as much as possible, the physical and administrative obstructions to the delivery of life-saving aid to the people.

We urge continuous support for all mechanisms of aid delivery, noting, however, the extensive reach of the cross-border delivery mechanisms, which serve as a crucial lifeline for some 2.5 million Syrians in north-western Syria. As rightly noted by the Secretary-General, the cross-line mechanism should continue to function to complement United Nations-facilitated cross-border deliveries. Ultimately, humanitarian action anywhere should be guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

The perils being visited upon innocent lives by Security Council-listed groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham continue to be of grave concern. The A3 underscores the imperative

for decisive collective actions to combat those terrorist groups in a manner that ensures that the victims receive justice.

Also deserving of urgent attention is the threat posed by explosive-ordnance contamination in Syria. A recent report issued by the International Humanitarian Mine Action actors operating in Syria suggests that explosive ordnance puts one in two people at risk of death and injury and impedes the delivery of crucial humanitarian assistance. Apart from the destruction to infrastructure, innocent children, in particular, stand the risk of injury from, or being killed by, unexploded devices.

Finally, we support United Nations-led efforts in several parts of the country that are aimed at enhancing resilience in the communities and stabilizing livelihoods through early-recovery programmes, thereby avoiding further destitution and reducing dependence on humanitarian aid. Early recovery forms part of the measures needed to help Syria transition from conflict to peace and to lay the foundation for the subsequent reconstruction process and sustainable development.

In conclusion, I want to note that the A3 remains collectively supportive of a comprehensive solution to the crises in Syria. In that regard, we stress the urgency of a political process that involves a nationwide ceasefire and a political settlement negotiated between the parties that creates stability and at the same time deals with the drivers of the humanitarian crisis.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I would first like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Dr. Almouslem for their briefings and for the vital work that they and their colleagues are doing for the Syrian people.

Over the coming weeks, the Council will be deliberating on the future of the United Nations mandate to deliver cross-border assistance for Syria. When we authorized the United Nations to deliver that aid, in 2014, more than 10 million people required assistance. Today around 14.6 million Syrians, more than 80 per cent of the population, require such assistance. Against the backdrop of a growing global food crisis, the ongoing effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and increasing violence, it is clear that the people of Syria need more support from the international community. The United Kingdom has supported the Syrian people from the start of the conflict, having spent more than \$4 billion in aid to date. In the past six

months, United Kingdom funding on early recovery, a key element of resolution 2585 (2021), has enabled the rehabilitation of water networks, agricultural training and inputs for livestock and vegetable production, as well as apprenticeships and small business grants to help create jobs and fill key gaps in the market. At the Brussels Conference last week, the United Kingdom committed to contributing nearly \$200 million over the course of 2022. That funding will help further scale up early recovery and resilience interventions inside Syria and support vital humanitarian efforts to rebuild Syrians' lives.

The United Nations cross-border mandate is at the heart of that humanitarian support, serving more than 4 million people in north-western Syria. We have heard time and time again from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations on the ground that there is no viable alternative to the mechanism. Dr. Almouslem also made that point very clearly and powerfully today. Closing the Bab Al-Hawa crossing would reduce women and girls' access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, severely disrupt early-recovery efforts and create a devastating obstacle to ongoing efforts to vaccinate Syrians against COVID-19. Moreover, without the United Nations gold-standard monitoring mechanism, closing the crossing would make it easier for aid to fall into the hands of terrorists. The Council needs to support the Syrian people, who are trying to build a better future. We therefore urge members to support the renewal and expansion of the United Nations cross-border mandate in July.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Almouslem for their briefings. I would also like to commend the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations on the ground for their remarkable work.

The Syrian population continues to pay the price of this war. Hostilities continue daily. The air strikes in the north-west intensified in late April. The protection of civilians is still the top priority. After 11 years of conflict, the humanitarian needs have never been higher. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is exacerbating food insecurity throughout the world. Syria is bearing the brunt of the consequences. Nearly 10 million Syrian children need humanitarian aid, a grim record, and many of them have known nothing but war.

The international community once again showed up for the sixth Brussels Conference. The European Union (EU) and its member States have provided more than €27 billion in humanitarian aid since 2011. The pledges from the EU and its member States at the Conference accounted for three quarters of total pledges, of which France's announced contribution was €373 million in aid.

We should make it clear that the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism has never been more crucial. The Secretary-General has said unequivocally that it is a moral and humanitarian imperative. The number of people in the north-west in need of assistance has now reached 4.1 million, an increase of more than 20 per cent since last year. The cross-border mechanism sends close to 800 aid trucks to around 2.4 million people every month. Progress in cross-line access must continue. But as the Secretary General has pointed out, even if cross-line convoys were deployed regularly they could not replace cross-border operations. In the north-east, 2.1 million people need humanitarian aid, 16 per cent more than last year. The cross-line convoys, which depend on the goodwill as well as the whims of the Syrian regime, have never been able to compensate for the closure of the Al-Yarubiyah crossing point.

France reiterates its call for safe and unhindered humanitarian access to be guaranteed throughout Syria. Only a credible, lasting and inclusive political solution, based on resolution 2254 (2015), will put an end to this war and finally pave the way for a safe, dignified and voluntary return for refugees. In the absence of a credible political settlement, France and its partners will remain consistent in their position on reconstruction, normalization and sanctions.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for sharing his insights.

It would not be overstating things to say that in the context of the issue under discussion today, we are all concerned first and foremost about the question of the future of the cross-border mechanism for delivering humanitarian assistance to Syria, which will expire in July. Today we heard and will probably continue to hear opinions about the importance of this mechanism for Syrian refugees and the need for its extension or even expansion. The Council members are aware that we have a different take on this issue and that we cannot

ignore the fact that if we call a spade a spade, the cross-border mechanism violates Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nonetheless, a year ago we allowed our colleagues to persuade us of the need to temporarily retain the mechanism until deliveries across the line of contact were fully operational. Resolution 2585 (2021) was adopted as a result and included a number of other elements, including support for early-recovery projects. However, from the very beginning, the resolution's implementation was stymied, and the reason for that immediately became clear. Quite simply, no Council member wanted to be responsible for working with the terrorists in Idlib to ensure that they stopped sabotaging the cross-line convoys. In fact it was only in January, facing the six-month extension, that they suddenly recollected the problem and began trying to persuade us that there were positive trends on the ground that needed support.

We tried to see things from our colleagues' perspective and agreed to extend the mechanism for six months, as a serious down payment, so to speak. And what do we have now? In principle, we are back to square one. In terms of establishing sustained humanitarian deliveries from Damascus, especially to Idlib, four cross-line convoys in a year can hardly be called a success. Stories of a lack of security in the region essential to the convoys' passage come up solely in the context of the cross-line deliveries, while nothing seems to prevent the constant transport of goods across the Bab Al-Hawa checkpoint. And even if the total will be six or seven convoys by the time the mechanism is terminated, that will not change the picture. We see no systematic efforts happening here.

Despite the vital need for early-recovery projects outlined in resolution 2585 (2021) in order to establish normal conditions for Syrians' lives and livelihoods, at this stage we can only welcome the intention of the United Nations to expand those efforts. Martin Griffiths repeatedly spoke in support of stepping up efforts in that area. The fact is that the cumulative effect of restoring basic infrastructure to increase Syrian society's resilience post-conflict could represent considerable savings for donors. We fully support Mr. Griffiths in that regard, and it is unfortunate that the fundamental logic of ensuring humanitarian recovery in Syria has not elicited the same response from donors, who include countries that signed on to resolution 2585 (2021).

The main problem, which runs counter to the principles of the work of the United Nations, is that the implementation of early-recovery and reconstruction projects continues to be hedged about by donor countries' political preconditions. It is deplorable that the United Nations finds it extremely difficult to resist that pressure. The Secretariat leadership's shameful internal guidelines, "Parameters and principles of United Nations assistance in Syria", which have never been abrogated, are an obvious example of that, including as they do political conditions.

Frankly speaking, in their efforts to preserve the mechanism at any cost, my colleagues on the Council increasingly resemble the parents of a lazy, sloppy student who is threatened with expulsion from school, pleading for keeping him in school for one more year. As we are all well aware from our own life experience, nothing good generally comes of such spoiled children. And yet for some reason my colleagues are doing everything they can, despite the facts, in an obstinate attempt to portray their offspring as an excellent student. The choice of one of the briefers for today's meeting was unfortunately a perfect example of that.

We have frequently pointed out that in general the discussions on the situation in the Idlib terrorist enclave and the extremely one-sided attitude of some members to it have been rather protracted. They are trying to maintain a status quo that is exceedingly uncomfortable even for them, without proposing any solutions or trying to meet any of Damascus's legitimate demands. We are not okay with that. We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that the terrorists of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, who have been recognized as such by the international community, have usurped power and are manipulating humanitarian assistance that could easily be organized from Damascus if the will were there. But my colleagues have shown no such desire, leaving us with no reason to maintain the cross-border mechanism. And the Al-Nusra Front is openly saying that it will not let humanitarian cargo from Damascus go through to the detriment of the cross-border measures. As for the three zones of Turkish operations in northern Syria, internal deliveries to those areas have still not begun, despite the fact that Damascus promptly accommodates all United Nations requests.

We also feel compelled to point out that the United Nations continues to try to circumvent the problem of the destructive consequences of the illegitimate unilateral sanctions of the European Union and the

United States for Syria's economy and the supply of international humanitarian assistance to it. It is ordinary Syrians who end up becoming hostages, deprived of access not just to their oil resources but to agricultural lands that once fed the entire region. In its lengthy occupation of these lands of Syria's, Washington has essentially been deliberately creating famine in a country that was once agriculturally self-sufficient. On 12 May, the United States Treasury issued General License no. 22, giving foreign private investors access to north-western and north-eastern Syria, effectively legalizing Washington's plundering of Syrian grain east of the Euphrates. We are sorry to see that since then the United Nations leadership has been unable to find an opportunity to comment on this illegal activity of the United States in Syria, including yesterday, when we were discussing issues of food security around the world (see S/PV.9036). And yet ending a situation counter to international law such as this one would ease the lives not only of many ordinary Syrians but also their neighbours, who used to buy Syria's surplus food products before the Americans intervened.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): Syria has entered its twelfth year of conflict. There is no end in sight to the suffering of its people. It remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian and protection emergencies, and one that seems to be going on forever. Syrians inside and outside the country find themselves, endlessly, at the centre of a calamitous mix of terrible violence, worsening hunger, continued poverty and isolation. Millions of Syrians struggle to survive every month.

The data are depressing. Ninety per cent of Syrians live in poverty. More than 70 per cent of the country's population is in dire need. Sixty per cent suffer from food insecurity, and in the past two days we heard a great deal about the fact that more than 800,000 children are malnourished. Almost 20 per cent of children in Syria are not in school. More than 150,000 people have disappeared or are still detained somewhere in Syria or elsewhere. They must not be forgotten just because they cannot be seen. More than 36,000 children continued to be detained for alleged association with armed groups or for security reasons. Millions of Syrians in the north-east rely mostly on aid that is delivered through cross-border assistance. In July, as we heard and as many colleagues have mentioned, the cross-border operation regime will end. With needs growing, it is vital that aid can reach all who need it.

Within that bleak and depressing picture, I would like to call attention to a particularly and visibly forgotten place, the Rukban camp, a makeshift settlement housing about 10,000 internally displaced Syrians in the arid no-man's land between the Jordanian, Iraqi and Syrian borders. Nearly 80 per cent of the camp's residents are women and children living in what can only be termed squalid conditions. It is situated in Government-controlled territory, but the Syrian Government has kept it under a tight blockade. For more than three years the Al-Assad regime has blocked United Nations aid from entering the camp, forcing its residents to survive on pitiful amounts of smuggled goods. Children in the camp, who make up half of the population, are at extreme risk of severe illness and malnutrition. There is no education, of course, and pregnant women lack proper attention and service. We call on the regime to allow unhindered access for humanitarian goods and personnel to the camp. When people are hungry and in need, it does not matter who they are or where they are — there is only need. We have long highlighted the crucial importance of the July renewal and possible expansion of the cross-border mandate outlined in resolution 2585 (2021). Millions of people depend on it, including, as we heard Under-Secretary-General Griffiths say, 1 million children.

We reiterate our concern about the humanitarian situation of women and children in camps and places of detention in the north-east. We call for the release of all children deprived of their liberty and support their reintegration and their reunification with their families. We reiterate our position that a mechanism on missing persons and a consultative group would provide needed support to detainees and forced disappeared and missing persons in Syria. Humanitarian needs must come first, but we should not forget that ensuring accountability and justice for victims remains fundamental to enabling Syria to make progress towards sustainable peace and reconciliation.

If we do not help people in need, we fail, morally and practically. We would only be left with heartbreaking accounts of helpless victims, as Dr. Almouslem reminded us this morning. That must not be allowed. Let us not forget that if we do not assist people in need, we inadvertently fuel future conflicts. Our commitment is and should continue to be supporting Syrians in rebuilding their lives and designing their futures. Our responsibility is to help and provide solutions. Geopolitical gains cannot and must not be

placed above people's lives. Humanitarian assistance must always be non-political, based solely on the needs of the population, and must reach everyone. We must do more to help Syrians get out of their nightmare. We must nourish and support their hopes, because no one has ever built a future without hope.

**Mr. Raghuram** (India): I join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing today. I also thank Dr. Farida Almouslem for her very insightful briefing.

The humanitarian situation in Syria, as is evident from today's briefing, has seen no major improvement in the past month. The number of people needing humanitarian assistance now exceeds 14 million, with essential food items and fuel in short supply. While the international community's focus is on the humanitarian situation arising out of Ukraine, we must not lose sight of the suffering of the Syrian people. Making decisive progress on the political track in Syria is vitally urgent if we are to alleviate its people's suffering. In order to achieve that, all the parties, particularly the external players, have to show tangible commitment to a political process that is Syrian-led and -owned and facilitated by the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Initiatives taken by the countries of the region to normalize relations with Syria can also make a positive contribution to addressing the humanitarian situation.

We need to avoid tying humanitarian and development assistance to progress in the political process, which will only exacerbate the human suffering. There is an urgent need to scale up assistance and ensure that humanitarian agencies receive the funding they need to fully execute their plans without politicizing the people's basic needs. The international community needs to take a constructive approach to promoting projects that can bring much-needed jobs and economic opportunities to the Syrian people and thereby help to ease shortfalls. In the face of falling production of food staples and problems related to water shortages, it is crucial to address the collective concerns of the Syrian people with deep seriousness.

We also believe that a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire is in the larger interests of the Syrian people. While cross-border operations are predictable and important, they cannot continue in perpetuity. We note the ongoing efforts, including the fourth convoy from Aleppo, facilitated by Syria, and reiterate that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA) and United Nations agencies should focus more on enhancing cross-line operations.

India has repeatedly pointed to the looming threat posed by the resurgence of terrorist groups in Syria. We cannot discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria in isolation without mentioning the growing activities of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh. ISIL's January attack on a prison in the city of Al-Hasakah demonstrated the severity of the problem. Hostilities, including air strikes and shelling in north-western Syria, continue to have an adverse impact on civilians, including women and children. India has consistently highlighted how external players have contributed to the growth of terrorist groups in Syria. The international community's continuing neglect of this issue will cause irreparable damage to our collective fight against terrorism. The situation regarding camps for internally displaced persons housing women and children also remains serious, with continuing grave concerns about the conditions in the camps, where much criminal activity, including murder, has been reported this year.

We are concerned about the fact that humanitarian assistance to Syria in 2021 was lower than the previous year. There is an urgent need to scale it up. In that regard, we request that OCHA harmonize the data related to early-recovery and resilience projects in a comprehensive manner so that the Council can have a holistic view of it by the end of June, well before the cross-border authorization expires.

In conclusion, India has continued to extend development assistance and human resource development support to Syria through grants and lines of credits for development projects, supplies of medicine and food, artificial-limb fitment camps, a next-generation information technology centre and capacity-building training programmes. Since the beginning of the conflict, India has always stood by the Syrian people in their hour of need and will continue to do so.

**Mr. Xing Jisheng** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing, and I listened carefully to the statement by the representative of civil society.

Throughout the 11-year Syrian conflict, humanitarian issues have been at the centre of the efforts of the Syrian parties and the international community. However, the humanitarian needs in the

country have increased rather than lessened and are currently at the highest level ever. According to figures published by the United Nations, 14.6 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, representing 80 per cent of its total population. Among them, 12 million are food-insecure. These deeply alarming and troubling numbers compel the international community to look more closely at the situation, consider the issues and take action that is specifically tailored to them. Humanitarian assistance to Syria should put the well-being of the Syrian population first. All parties should work together to maintain the humanitarian nature of aid and avoid politicizing humanitarian issues. China has noted the information from the sixth Brussels Conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region. We maintain our position that humanitarian assistance to Syria should fully respect Syria's sovereignty and ownership and serve its people as a whole, free of any political preconditions.

There has been some progress in cross-line humanitarian operations since the adoption of resolution 2585 (2021), with four convoys dispatched by the United Nations to north-western Syria and the cross-line programme extended until the end of the year, which is worthy of positive recognition. In the interests of safeguarding the Syrian Government's sovereignty over humanitarian issues, and in line with the common practice of international humanitarian relief, the cross-border operations should gradually transition to cross-line operations. At present, cross-line relief is on a smaller scale than cross-border deliveries. The international community should strive as diligently to remove the barriers to cross-line operations as it has done to invest in cross-border relief. The priorities include ensuring that the relevant parties grant access to north-western Syria, that humanitarian workers are safe and secure and that an enabling environment is created for the distribution of supplies.

The recovery of the Syrian economy will ultimately be the conclusive way to reduce the country's humanitarian needs and overcome its humanitarian woes, but at the moment it is in the grip of grim challenges. The Syrian pound continues to depreciate, and food prices remain at high levels. The Syrian Government has launched a number of initiatives to support agricultural development, build infrastructure and initiate energy cooperation, with some positive results. China welcomes the allocation by the United

Nations of 26 per cent of the Syrian humanitarian response plan to some 570 early-recovery projects. We hope that donors will provide adequate funding for those projects, to the benefit of the entire Syrian population.

The unilateral coercive measures against Syria have greatly hampered the Syrian Government's capacity to mobilize resources, control the pandemic and undertake reconstruction, and should all be lifted without delay. Since March, Syria has also been hit by a fresh fuel crisis, while rampant oil pillaging has persisted. The entire Syrian people is the rightful owner of its petroleum resources and the unlawful practice of pillaging and smuggling the country's oil must stop immediately.

**Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Mark Griffiths, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing. Mexico commends his work and determination. We also thank Dr. Farida Almouslem for her message to us today and welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey.

Mexico, like the vast majority of the members of the United Nations, regrets the increasingly critical situation facing the civilian population in Syria, whether due to the direct effect of hostilities or the multiple consequences resulting from 11 years of conflict, which have caused massive displacement of the population and now growing and increasingly serious food insecurity. That is why Mexico believes that our discussions on this issue in the Council should be guided by the humanitarian needs of the population, which are increasing every month and leaving the people in extremely dire circumstances. What other proof do we need of their fundamental needs when 90 per cent of the population is living below the poverty line? We would like to focus specifically on some factors that require urgent attention.

First, mines and explosive devices continue to be a threat to the population. In 2021 alone they caused the deaths of 805 people and injured more than 3,000. The impact and potential risk of mines and unexploded ordnance require urgent action to prevent further suffering and devastating consequences for the population. That is why we must prioritize demining action.

Secondly, the situation of the more than 56,000 inhabitants of the Al-Hol camp, as Mr. Griffiths

explained, is truly deplorable and particularly affects women and children. The insecurity in that camp, in addition to the lack of basic services for its inhabitants, in no way makes it a nurturing environment for children. We cannot lose sight of this crisis, which is why we reiterate our call to prioritize the repatriation and reintegration of nationals of other countries who are still in Syria.

Thirdly, regarding humanitarian access, we welcomed the crossing to Sarmada on 16 May of a fourth humanitarian aid convoy, and the plans to continue developing that access route until December, and we recognize the progress it represents in the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021). However, given the growing humanitarian needs of the population, as was said this morning, the humanitarian aid that enters through the north-west between the conflict lines is still only complementary to that of the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing. At the moment, cross-line convoys cannot replace the more than 800 trucks carrying humanitarian assistance that enter through the Bab Al-Hawa cross-border crossing every month. Through Bab Al-Hawa alone, 1.8 million people receive food assistance. That is why Mexico firmly believes in the vital importance of renewing the authorization of that single transborder crossing, which constitutes a last hope of survival for thousands and thousands of Syrians. Likewise, we take note of the visit of Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. We hope that her mission will translate into concrete actions that can expand humanitarian access. We look forward to the next report from Mr. Griffiths.

Fourthly, we consider it a positive that the humanitarian response plan for Syria emphasizes the priority of early-recovery projects, an essential component of resolution 2585 (2021). Those projects also enable the discussion on the situation in Syria to focus on longer-term options, particularly with regard to solving the problems of temporary housing and other aspects of human development. Mexico reiterates the fundamental importance of achieving an end to hostilities in order to concentrate efforts on the political process.

In conclusion, we hope that Council members will negotiate in good faith so that in July the Council will remain united, focused solely on the humanitarian situation in Syria and thereby demonstrating by its deeds its genuine desire to alleviate the human suffering

resulting from 11 years of conflict, particularly with regard to a generation of young girls and boys who, as others have said today, have known nothing but war.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for his important briefing today. We welcome the recent visit of Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya. We also thank Dr. Farida Almouslem for her briefing, which highlighted the difficult conditions for women in Syria.

At the outset, we would like to commend the convening of the sixth Brussels Conference earlier this month, which we believe is a positive step that we can build on to support the future of Syria and the region. The Conference also emphasized the international community's continuing solidarity with the Syrian people. Although the provision of basic humanitarian assistance remains a critical issue, the scope of current talks should be broadened to include discussions on how to restore security, stability, and prosperity to Syria. After 12 years of crisis, Syrians are still living in camps that do not meet the most basic human needs. In order to move beyond short-term solutions, the international community must take concrete steps to end the humanitarian crisis in a sustainable manner and ensure that the Syrian people live in dignified conditions.

In the light of the upcoming mandate renewal of resolution 2585 (2021), I would like to reiterate our calls to consider the renewal of the cross-border aid mechanism to Syria as a critical decision that must be made in an objective and logical manner that reflects the facts on the ground. Regardless of any differences over other dossiers, we need to work together on this one to ensure that cross-border and cross-line aid reaches those in need.

While the cross-border aid delivery mechanism is not perfect, it remains necessary at this stage in order to ensure the delivery of all aid to all in need in north-western Syria. In that context, the United Arab Emirates supports the delivery of humanitarian aid by every means, including cross-line assistance. We welcomed the extension of the United Nations operational plan until December, as well as the deployment of a fourth cross-line convoy to north-western Syria, which included vital food aid. Given that the Bab Al-Hawa crossing is the only humanitarian passage for cross-border aid delivery to Syria, its security and stability must be maintained by all parties. At the same time, we must work to increase the number of cross-line aid

deliveries, and all the parties on the ground should work together to remove any security obstacles that could hinder the delivery of aid.

We are deeply concerned about the dire security situation and the accompanying deteriorating humanitarian situation in Al-Hol camp, especially with the recent increase in murders and violence this past week, including violence committed against humanitarian actors. We want to stress that our success in addressing the humanitarian conditions in the camp depends on addressing the security conditions there, which are impeding the delivery of drinking water and halting life-saving activities. In that context, it is important for the camp to preserve its humanitarian and civilian nature and for citizens of other countries to be repatriated. In that regard, we welcome the recent repatriation of 500 families from Al-Hol to Iraq, most of them women and children. We encourage other countries that have citizens in the camp to take similar steps. Syrian women must also be supported and protected, and their resilience strengthened, especially in the camps, where women and girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Finally, we urge the international community to make additional efforts to support the speedy restoration of civilian infrastructure and vital sectors, especially education and health, that have been affected by the conflict. That is particularly important because the current humanitarian response is unsustainable, owing to persistent gaps in funding. It is therefore important to scale up international investment in food and water as part of early-recovery efforts in order to help to strengthen the humanitarian response for Syrians.

**Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil):** I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Dr. Almouslem for their briefings and reiterating my delegation's concern about the situation in Syria. I also want to welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey to today's meeting.

Yesterday we met here for a timely open debate on conflict and food security (see S/PV.9036). As the monthly average price for the standard reference food basket continues to reach record levels in Syria, much of what we said yesterday applies to our discussion today. But I would like to highlight one key message. As the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme have repeatedly pointed out, food insecurity is not a by-product of food

scarcity but rather of a lack of affordability and access. We must therefore ensure that international agencies are adequately equipped and financed so that food supplies can continue to reach those in Syria who need them most.

Brazil also highlights the need for a thorough and permanent review of the consequences of unilateral sanctions for the civilian population in a scenario of acute economic crisis and escalating hunger. We hope the resources made available after last week's donor conference in Brussels will help provide the immediate assistance needed and contribute to the ongoing early-recovery and resilience initiatives aimed at restoring the provision of essential services such as health, education, electricity, water and sanitation. We were happy to hear from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that another cross-line convoy took place earlier this month and that there is already a plan to enable more deliveries through the rest of the year. Since humanitarian assistance remains indispensable and life-saving for millions across Syria, we must continue to work here for predictable and regular delivery of international aid to the Syrian people, through both cross-line and cross-border operations.

In that regard, Brazil reiterates the call to all parties to comply with their obligation to ensure free and unimpeded humanitarian access that accords with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We also underline the importance of monitoring all humanitarian operations closely and meticulously, and of seeking ways to help increase cross-line modality operations. We have no choice. The conflict in Syria must remain at the top of our list of priorities. Today we are here to discuss the immediate humanitarian needs of the people of Syria. However, we know that a path through a nationwide ceasefire and a political solution pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015) is still the only way out of this decade-long conflict, which has caused so much destruction and suffering.

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

Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his tireless work and informative briefing. My special thanks also go to Dr. Farida Almouslem and the entire Syrian American Medical Society. Her statement is an important reminder that millions of Syrians still lack access to even the most basic health care, let alone trauma care, for visible and invisible

injuries. I thank her for her amazing work, which she describes as doing her duty. It is life-saving work and carries so many risks in Syria, and I therefore want to reiterate my gratitude to her.

After more than 11 long years of conflict in Syria, I worry that the world is in danger of becoming desensitized to this war — to the plight of the 14 million Syrians who rely on humanitarian assistance, and to the dreams of the Syrian people who wish for nothing more than a peaceful, just and secure future. It does not matter that we have a host of other crises on our plate. It does not matter that the Al-Assad regime continues to impede progress towards a political solution. We cannot turn our backs on the Syrian people.

As the humanitarian crisis reaches disturbing new heights, we must fully commit to supporting the needs of vulnerable Syrians. That is why we are having three meetings devoted to Syria during our Security Council presidency this month. It is why I wanted to make a point of travelling in person to Brussels to announce that the United States will provide more than \$800 million in new humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people — the largest pledge we have ever made at the annual Brussels Conference. That assistance includes essential food, health, shelter, water and other critical relief that will go to helping those in dire need, but also towards early recovery, so that we can prevent people from getting to that dire stage in the first place. And that is why I will be traveling back to Bab Al-Hawa in the coming weeks for briefings and meetings on the Turkish-Syrian border so that I am up-to-date on the situation on the ground, because, as I have said many times before, no amount of aid will be enough if we cannot actually get it to those in need.

The United States is firmly committed to implementing all aspects of resolution 2585 (2021) to ensure that aid can reach Syria, including via both cross-line and cross-border assistance. And we are doing everything possible to facilitate additional aid to Syria, including through our recent issuance of a General License intended to promote investment in north-western and north-eastern Syria. We applaud the fourth cross-line delivery, made on 16 May, and hope to see such deliveries become more frequent. But we know that cross-line aid delivery cannot match the volume or the efficiency of cross-border deliveries. That is not conjecture — it is fact. The Secretary-General made it abundantly clear, in paragraph 77 of his most recent report (S/2022/330), that

“cross-line convoys, even if deployed regularly, cannot replicate the size and scope of the United Nations cross-border operation, which remains a life-saving modality for millions of people in need in the north-west.”

Attesting to that reality, the May cross-line delivery provided food for 43,500 people. By contrast, in a typical month, United Nations cross-border aid through Bab Al-Hawa delivers enough food for 1.4 million. There is simply no comparison, and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths reiterated that fact.

Last year, the Council voted unanimously to continue the mandate for the mechanism (see S/PV.8817) in an important, life-saving decision for millions of people. It demonstrated the best of what we can do when we work together. That is why I found it odd that the Russian Federation suggested that it was somehow misled into supporting the mandate, whose benefits are obvious to all of us. This year, we urge the Security Council not only to renew the mandate for the United Nations cross-border assistance delivery mechanism but also to increase the number of crossing points to meet the rising demand for humanitarian aid in Syria. The United Nations estimates that 14.6 million Syrians need humanitarian assistance in 2022, a nearly 10 per cent increase over the past year. We simply have to get this done, both the renewal and the expansion. It is vital to so many people, especially at a time when food and fuel prices are skyrocketing, forcing families to make difficult decisions about whether to buy food, medicine or fuel.

Nearly 2 million Syrians are on the brink of being unable to meet their basic food needs, and 12 million are already suffering from acute food insecurity. Those are impossibly large numbers — more than the entire populations of New York City and Paris combined. And they are not just sobering statistics, these are real people who are going hungry and do not know where they will get their next meal. They live every single day with uncertainty about how they will eat, how they will get water, medicine or fuel and when they will know peace. We cannot become desensitized to their needs and dreams. We have to stay focused on this crisis. And right now, that means renewing and expanding cross-border assistance.

It is in the interests of all of us, including Russia and Syria, to prevent a dire humanitarian situation in Syria from growing worse and more desperate. It is in

everyone's interests, in fact. That is why I repeat that last year the Council voted unanimously to renew the mandate and why we must do so again this year, in the interests of all Syrians. This past week we have been working together to address global food insecurity. Renewing and expanding cross-border assistance is one clear way for us to take on hunger. It is fully within our power. The actions we took in the Council last year saved countless lives, and we can do it again this year.

I resume my functions as President of the Council. I would again 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 now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by mentioning an exceptional and extremely important development, which is the President of the Syrian Arab Republic's granting of a general amnesty, pursuant to Syria's legislative decree no. 7 of 30 April, for terrorist crimes committed by Syrians prior to the date of its issuance, except for crimes that led to a person's death, as laid down in Syria's anti-terrorism law and penal code. We want to emphasize that the decree does not include foreign terrorists and that their countries of origin remain responsible for repatriating them and their families from Syria. That legally, socially and politically exceptional decree comes under the framework of measures that the Syrian State has been taking for years to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria, consolidate national reconciliation, deepen the values of tolerance, provide appropriate conditions for the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homeland, reintegrate all Syrian citizens into their local communities and restore security and stability in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Syria's Ministry of Justice and competent legal and judicial authorities began implementing the decree's provisions throughout the country immediately after it was issued. They have released large numbers of detainees and cancelled all warrants for prosecutions, searches, arrests and summons or judgments in absentia issued against any Syrian citizen inside or outside the

country, with immediate effect, and without the need to refer to any judicial, legal or security authority.

I would like to recall that since 2011, the President of the Republic has issued 20 general amnesty decrees benefiting tens of thousands of Syrian citizens inside and outside the country. The terrorism court has released 28,864 detainees. Additionally, more than 272,000 Syrian citizens have been involved in the processes of settlement and national reconciliation in Syria's various governorates, enabling them to return to their normal lives. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls for an objective and balanced consideration of the steps it has taken. It urges various countries to abandon their mistaken policies and take a positive and constructive political approach by engaging responsibly with the Syrian Government, free from any political considerations that are not consistent with the interests, security and well-being of the Syrian people.

The Syrian Government's efforts to achieve economic and social stability and to improve its people's living conditions have come up against the persistently hostile practices of some Western countries and their allies and their continuing violations of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. A case in point is the Turkish and United States armed forces' continuing illegal foreign military presence on the Syrian territories and their sponsorship of terrorist organizations and separatist militias and looting of our national wealth, including oil, gas and agricultural crops, not to mention the economic terrorism that results from the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian people.

The recent decision of the United States Administration to grant a licence for economic activities in specific areas in north-eastern and north-western Syria controlled by separatist militias and terrorist organizations demonstrates its direct support for such illegal entities and constitutes a flagrant violation of the sovereignty, independence and unity of the land and people of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is a grave breach of the relevant Security Council resolutions and an attempt to impose an illegitimate situation and a discriminatory approach on Syrian citizens, based on offering support to those who are loyal to and influenced by the United States Administration while punishing those who reside in areas under the control of the Syrian State.

Furthermore, this month we witnessed the holding of another so-called Brussels Conference, identical to the others, on supporting the future of Syria and the region. The fact that the organizers of the Conference excluded the Syrian Government from its work and barred Russia's participation, in addition to its lacking United Nations sponsorship, has reduced the Conference to a gathering of Western countries known for their politicization of humanitarian issues and deviation from the internationally approved guiding principles for humanitarian action. Those Conferences are nothing but a smokescreen created by their organizers to cover up their practices against my country, at a time when they are imposing collective punishment and a stifling, inhumane siege on the Syrian people that prevents them from meeting their basic living needs. Meanwhile, they continue to insist on attaching politicized conditions to humanitarian and development work, hindering the implementation of resilience and early-recovery projects and the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure that would allow for the dignified, voluntary and safe return of refugees and displaced persons.

Those aggressive policies against my country were accompanied by direct military aggression carried out by the Israeli occupation forces on Syrian territory, the latest of which was the firing of missiles at some parts of the central region on the evening of Friday, 13 May. That aggression resulted in the martyrdom of five people, including one civilian. Seven civilians, including a girl, were also injured, heavy material losses were suffered and several fires broke out in the forests of the Masyaf countryside. That Israeli aggression coincided with a terrorist attack launched by terrorist groups in north-western Syria against units of the Syrian Arab Army, which led to the martyrdom of 10 soldiers and the wounding of others. That confirms once again the continuous coordination between the Israeli occupying authorities and their terrorist tools. The Government of my country has informed the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council of those attacks and demanded that they assume their responsibilities and put an end to the repeated Israeli attacks, which pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

My country facilitated the passage of a fourth United Nations convoy from Aleppo to north-west Syria this week, including 14 humanitarian aid trucks, and we look forward to enhancing cross-line aid delivery and removing the obstacles imposed by the Turkish regime

and its tools of terrorist organizations. Syria reiterates its position regarding the so-called cross-border aid mechanism in view of the mechanism's continuous violation of Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and of its serious flaws, which some are trying to cover up.

Before I conclude, I would like to stress that with regard to what the Turkish regime has stated about creating a safe zone in the north of my country, such an attempt is an anti-Syria project. Its aim is to achieve a divisive, colonial goal while establishing a certain area that helps implement terrorist plots against the Syrian people. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns such statements and projects, which undermine the unity and sovereignty of the Syrian territories. We urge the international community not to bargain with the Erdoğan regime over the lands of others and not to support or fund such projects, which are based on genocide, changing the demographic status and harming the rights of the Syrian people. That would have catastrophic repercussions on security, peace and stability in the region and the world.

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

**Mr. Takht Ravanchi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank the briefers for their statements.

Conflict, foreign intervention, terrorism, and occupation have wreaked havoc on the Syrian people for more than a decade. In recent years, unilateral sanctions have also exacerbated the economic and humanitarian crises in Syria. Despite the fact that resolution 2585 (2021) supports early-recovery and reconstruction projects, as well as the provision of basic services, the continued unilateral sanctions have unfortunately stymied the resolution's implementation, impeding Syria's reconstruction efforts and hampering humanitarian aid delivery in various ways, even delaying the return of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, those illegal measures have also hampered the Syrian Government's ability to achieve economic and social stability and improve the living conditions of Syrians. It is irresponsible, immoral and illegal under international law to use unilateral sanctions to starve Syrian civilians. Those illegal and destructive measures must end immediately. Claiming to care about the difficult humanitarian situation in Syria while backing and imposing unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people is hypocritical.

We support the Syrian Government's full cooperation with the United Nations and the numerous humanitarian organizations involved in cross-line aid delivery as a safe and legal method to help the people in need. Under the current circumstances, the provision of humanitarian aid is critical, and political circumstances should not be allowed to prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid. In that context, full respect for Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity must be observed. We also reiterate that the cross-border aid delivery mechanism is an exceptional temporary measure imposed by certain circumstances and that humanitarian aid to those in need must be delivered in cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government and from within the Syrian territory. That will help prevent aid from being diverted to terrorist groups.

We applaud Syria's Government, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners for continuing to expand the scope and frequency of humanitarian relief operations. In that regard, we commend the Syrian Government's efforts in facilitating the passage of a fourth United Nations convoy from Aleppo to north-west Syria earlier this week. We also welcome the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs' three-day visit to Syria on 17 May, as well as her meeting with Syrian officials. We reaffirm our commitment to Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence, as well as its efforts to combat terrorism. We strongly condemn Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan, as well as its repeated violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly those that are targeting civilians and civilian objects. We demand that the Security Council hold that regime accountable for such acts of aggression and malice. Moreover, the illegal presence of foreign forces in parts of Syria, which has created ideal conditions for terrorist activities, must end immediately.

Finally, we support the initiatives to facilitate the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons and are willing to provide assistance to ensure the success of such endeavours. Any initiative on Syria must be supported by the Syrian Government and the United Nations and respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey):** I would first like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing. I also thank Dr. Farida Almouslem for her remarks.

The conflict in Syria has now entered its twelfth year. As the war persists year after year, the scale of the humanitarian suffering also continues to grow. This year, an estimated 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, a number that has grown by 9 per cent since 2021. We may reference such statistics somewhat easily in this Chamber, but behind each number and percentage there are real human beings — mothers, fathers, children, wives and husbands — each with their own story, pain and loss, and very often with their own shattered hopes for the future.

Since the war broke out in Ukraine, the international community has engaged in a colossal mobilization to help the millions of innocent civilians in the middle of Europe. We have done so rightly and will continue to put forward all the efforts that we can. By the same token, we cannot and should not forget our responsibility towards the millions of Syrians who have been suffering all kinds of attacks and violations at the hands of a brutal regime and terrorist organizations for more than a decade now. We simply cannot afford to let the humanitarian situation in Syria be sidelined on our global agenda.

Let us not forget that the Syrian conflict continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. This war is still the primary breeding ground for one of the most urgent humanitarian crises in the world — a crisis of catastrophic proportions. Yet the United Nations Syria humanitarian response plan received only 46 per cent of the funds required for the year 2021. That comes at a time when the needs have reached unprecedented levels. For the 2020 to 2023 period, the United Nations will require \$4.4 billion in funding to be able to fully support everyone in need within the country. To put it simply, more will be needed, not less. The international community has to ensure that humanitarian aid continues in an increasing manner and without interruption.

We are now weeks away from the renewal of the United Nations cross-border mechanism. The humanitarian situation in north-west Syria continues to deteriorate. That is evidenced by United Nations reports indicating that the number of people in need of humanitarian aid in north-west Syria rose from

3.4 million in 2021 to 4.1 million in 2022, for an increase of more than 20 per cent. That means that 93 per cent of the entire population in north-west Syria depends on international aid. Some 3.1 million people need medical assistance, while more than 2.8 million people remain internally displaced — not to mention the fact that 58 per cent of the people in displacement sites are children. According to the World Food Programme, food prices are up by as much as 67 per cent since the start of the war in Ukraine, which has become an added cause of food insecurity, impacting 3.1 million people in north-west Syria.

In the face of the extremely precarious humanitarian situation, the United Nations cross-border mechanism has proved itself to be a life-saving instrument for millions of Syrians. It is one of the most sophisticated, scrutinized and transparent humanitarian assistance systems ever put in place. The most recent cross-line humanitarian aid delivery to Idlib took place this week. Turkey remains committed to facilitating the safe continuation of those missions. However, the cross-line convoys cannot in any way replace or replicate the size and scope of the enormous cross-border operation. There is simply no alternative to the cross-border operation for addressing the acute needs. The members of the Council have an obligation to provide the millions of Syrians squeezed in the north-west with long-term

support and certainty. The extension of the cross-border mandate is a moral and humanitarian imperative, which should be guided solely by humanitarian considerations and not be politicized.

This week the United Nations is hosting the first-ever International Migration Review Forum. We have heard many wise words and strong commitments from Member States in that regard. As the representative of the largest refugee-hosting country in the world since 2014, let me also highlight the burden on the shoulders of the neighbouring countries, which should not be forgotten. We all know that the only way to stop the suffering in Syria is a comprehensive political solution to the conflict, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The longer we fail to effectively address the root causes of the crisis, the more acute its repercussions will become. Principled, responsive and effective action is needed now more than ever to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and produce a lasting political solution to the Syrian conflict.

Regarding the hallucinatory statement made by the representative of the criminal Syrian regime — I repeat that I do not consider him as my legitimate counterpart — I will therefore not respond to his delusional accusations.

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*