



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7560th meeting

Monday, 16 November 2015, 3.10 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Greening.	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mr. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation.	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/862)

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15-36761 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/862)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/862, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I would like to begin my briefing by expressing my deepest condolences to those affected by the recent attacks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) perpetrated in France and Lebanon.

The Syria crisis is a chronicle of missed opportunities on the part of the Security Council, Member States with influence on the parties and the broader international community to bring the conflict to an end. More than five years since the unrest in Syria began, the parties to the conflict continue to commit unthinkable atrocities on a daily basis, plunging Syria and its citizens deeper into darkness. I very much welcome the recent international talks in Vienna. That momentum must be seized to leave no stone unturned to put an end to the horrendous war that has cost the lives of an estimated 250,000 people, given rise to extremist and terrorist groups and reduced much of

the country — a middle-income country — to rubble. The fighting has also propelled the world's largest humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century, with some 13.5 million people in Syria in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, including 6 million children, and it has driven over 4 million people to seek safe refuge outside their home country.

The neighbouring countries are shouldering most of the burden with remarkable generosity and sacrifice. Yet, many Syrians, who have lost hope and are fleeing unspeakable violence and whose resources are all but depleted, are willing to risk their lives in perilous journeys across the Mediterranean. Some 400,000 people — over 50 per cent of the arrivals by sea in 2015 — are Syrian. And still they flee — yesterday, today, and without a political settlement, tomorrow and the day after, and the day after that — each day, even as winter approaches and, I sadly predict, all the way through it.

Security Council members and the international community must also redouble their efforts to oblige the parties to finally comply with the demands made by the Council in resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). As we have sat in the Council Chamber month after month, we have borne witness to the failure of all the parties to the conflict to protect civilians. Each month, I speak of what seems like never-ending violence killing innocent civilians, including children.

The indiscriminate use of weapons continues unabated in the Syria conflict. In October, hundreds of civilians were killed or injured in direct or indiscriminate attacks by all parties, owing to the continued use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including through barrel bombs and other aerial weapons, shelling and car bombs. On 30 October, several air strikes hit the Al-Hal market in Douma, rural Damascus, killing at least 60 civilians and injuring 200 more. The day before, air strikes reportedly hit the main field hospital in Douma, killing at least 15 civilians and injuring 50 others. Following these attacks, Jaish Al-Islam reportedly used dozens of prisoners as human shields, placed in cages around heavily populated areas, to seek to deter further air strikes in civilian areas. Elsewhere, just a few days ago, on 10 November, more than 23 people were killed and 40 injured when non-State armed opposition groups caused two explosions in Lattakia city.

Meanwhile, ISIL and other terrorist and extremist groups continue to cause carnage across the country. For example, in Aleppo governorate, ISIL detonated a

vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Haritan, killing more than 20 people in early October. Not only are such indiscriminate attacks a tragedy that kills and injures innocent people; they may also amount to war crimes. The perpetrators must be aware that they will one day be held accountable for their actions.

The pace of displacement in Syria remains relentless. In Aleppo, at least 50,000 people are confirmed to have been displaced since early October following an escalation of fighting between non-State armed opposition groups and the Government of Syria. The number could be as high as 100,000. ISIL attacks on Mahin and Hawarin in eastern rural Homs in late October has led to the displacement of an estimated 25,000 people. Further displacement is expected to continue at a similar rate unless there is a reduction in the violence.

Attacks on civilian infrastructure also continue unabated, including relentless attacks against health-care facilities and personnel across the country. According to Physicians for Human Rights, in October there were 16 attacks on medical facilities — the highest in a single month since the conflict began — and seven medical staff were killed. Parties to the conflict must ensure respect for, and protection of, health facilities and personnel and patients under international humanitarian law.

Meanwhile, medicines and medical supplies continue to be prevented from reaching those who desperately need them. The overall impact on the health situation has been devastating, with many civilians, particularly in areas not controlled by the Government, unable to access even the most basic medical care. The routine immunization coverage in Syria has dropped from 95 per cent in 2010 to 64 per cent in 2015, and in some places, is as low as 20 per cent. This poses an acute risk for deadly epidemic disease in many areas. Surely, meeting the health needs of children, who represent our future, should be considered the lowest common denominator of our humanity. We need a firm commitment from the parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and stop the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools and key infrastructure networks.

In spite of repeated calls by the Council, humanitarian actors continue to be prevented from gaining sustained, unhindered access to millions of people in need. While active conflict and insecurity

are limiting factors, the parties continue to delay or obstruct assistance to people in need. We have only been able to reach a small proportion of the 4.5 million people in need in hard-to-reach areas in 2015. Nearly half of those in need in hard-to-reach areas — some 2.2 million — are living under terror and subjugation in ISIL-controlled areas, to which the United Nations and its partners continue to have virtually no access. We must spare no effort to ensure that these people receive the assistance they desperately need.

The parties to the conflict, largely ISIL and the Government of Syria, continue to use siege as a war tactic, with an estimated 393,700 people living under siege. This includes some 200,000 people under siege by ISIL in Deir-ez-Zor city; some 181,200 people besieged by the Syrian Government in various locations in eastern Ghutah, as well as Darayya and Zabadani in rural Damascus; and some 12,500 people under siege by non-State armed opposition groups and the Al-Nusra Front in Foah and Kefraya in Idlib. These people have next to no access to the basic essentials of life and our ability to reach them is extremely limited. So far in 2015, the United Nations has been able to reach only 3.5 per cent of people with health assistance and only 0.7 per cent of people with food per month in besieged areas. Such an inhumane tactic of war is unlawful and must end immediately.

As I have said to the Council before, we need to make urgent progress to reach people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas as living conditions in these areas continue to deteriorate and the onset of winter is not far away. So far this year, only 30 per cent of the convoy requests made by the United Nations have been approved in principle by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and less than half of those approved have been able to actually proceed due to a combination of lack of final security clearances from Syrian authorities, lack of safe passage from non-State armed opposition groups, and insecurity.

I call upon the Syrian authorities to urgently approve the 46 currently pending inter-agency convoy requests and allow convoys previously agreed in principle, which are awaiting their clearance, to proceed. I also call on non-State armed opposition groups, as well as listed terrorist groups, to allow the deliveries they are preventing. Over 1.4 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged locations would be assisted if these convoys were able to proceed. The planned humanitarian airlift to Deir ez-Zor, although approved, has been unable

to proceed due to the deteriorating security situation around the airport.

Despite all the challenges, the United Nations and partners continue to reach millions of people in need through all modalities. In the past month alone, the United Nations and its partners delivered food aid to over 4 million people; water, sanitation and hygiene support to over 3.5 million; and medicines and supplies for 717,000 treatments. The commitment and bravery of the thousands of aid workers who deliver much-needed aid at great personal risk — particularly Syrian organizations, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and volunteers, who are often the first responders on the front lines — are deeply humbling.

I once again stress the need for the United Nations to be able to use all modalities, across conflict lines and across borders, in order to reach people in need in Syria wherever they may be found. Resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) have made a difference by enabling the United Nations and partners to reach some people in need who were largely inaccessible before. Through cross-border deliveries, the United Nations and partners have been able to regularly reach millions of people. This complements the crucial work of international non-governmental actors, who continue to provide large-scale assistance across the country. We remain committed to reaching all those in need, and we need any and every route possible to do this.

The status quo in Syria simply cannot continue. We have seen the devastating consequences of failing to act. This failure has eroded confidence in the international community. The people of Syria deserve more than the discussions we are having or the aid we are providing. They deserve an end to this senseless violence.

The recent international talks in Vienna provide a glimmer of light that international diplomacy can provide a solution to the conflict. We must take advantage of this rare moment of diplomatic opportunity to push for a negotiated political solution and create the conditions for a nationwide ceasefire. At the same time, this new diplomatic momentum should be used to generate early dividends for the Syrian people. Most immediately, I urge the Council and relevant Member States to use their influence to press for an end to the use of indiscriminate weapons and to take steps to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need throughout Syria.

I sincerely hope that progress will be made and that the incoming year will finally see an end to the conflict in Syria. We cannot squander this moment or momentum; all of us must stand up and play our part to bring an end to this conflict for once and for all.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I would like to thank you, Madam, for extending an invitation to me to brief the Security Council. However, before beginning, I wish to express my solidarity with the survivors and families of all those who have lost loved ones in the horrific attacks in Paris, Beirut, Tunis, Sharm el-Sheikh and elsewhere. These depraved acts of terror must reinforce our collective resolve.

In my previous briefings to the Council, I have detailed the nature, trends and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence in Syria. Women and girls in the theatres of this conflict find themselves under assault every day and at every point of their lives, whether at border crossings or checkpoints, during house searches, or in detention centres, in areas under Government control or areas where the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and a plethora of armed groups operate. They have been affected in a unique and systematic manner as a result of numerous factors, including the extraordinary scale of the displacement and humanitarian situation so well described by my colleagues Stephen O'Brien, the sophistication and strategies of the key players, including extremist groups, as well as the regional nature of the conflict and the cross-border dimensions. Sexual violence has been a characteristic of the Syrian conflict and has been perpetrated by most of the belligerent parties as a tactic of war.

I am pleased, therefore, that the Council has now also expressed through resolution 2242 (2015) our evolving understanding of how sexual violence is being used as a tactic of terrorism to advance fundamental strategic objectives of extremist groups in Syria and elsewhere. It is critical that we unpack this concept further, and in the process take the protection and empowerment of women and girls from the periphery to the centre of our global, regional and national counterterrorism strategies.

Today, I would like to focus my remarks primarily on how we can respond. Since returning from my

scoping visit to the region this May, I have focused considerable energy on raising the level of awareness and understanding of the sexual violence crimes that are occurring. At the same time, we have been working to formulate a response strategy.

Our response has to go beyond security and military considerations. It must encompass legislative and service delivery dimensions, and accountability must be a central consideration. At the same time, we have to deepen the political commitment of leaders, particularly at the regional, national and local levels. We must deepen the base of information and analysis. Because of its cross-border dimensions, our strategy also requires a concerted regional response, including improved information-sharing across countries. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence in Syria and the region requires a unified, comprehensive and multisectoral approach. The strategy that is being developed under the auspices of my Office, the team of experts and UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, has seven areas under which a range of interventions will be required.

First, we must continue to mobilize political commitment, support and resources. This political commitment must come at all levels, starting in the conflict-affected countries themselves. Unfortunately, since my visit we have still not been able to agree on specific commitments and measures with authorities in Syria or Iraq. However, at the regional level, I am pleased to report that we are concluding a framework of cooperation with the League of Arab States that could catalyse some of the critical legislative reforms and protection policies that are required.

Secondly, as I have already emphasized, we must ensure that the protection and empowerment of women is consistently included as a central consideration in all efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism, including the Secretary-General's plan of action on preventing violent extremism.

Thirdly, we must undertake legislative and other measures to enhance protection, early warning and risk mitigation. This includes programmes to support civil society, local communities and women's groups, which are the front line. Legislative frameworks have to be strengthened to protect and mitigate risks for refugees and internally displaced persons, a majority of whom are women and girls, and to secure the status of thousands of children, who risk becoming a stateless generation.

Fourthly, we have to strengthen support for and services to survivors of sexual violence. There is an acute lack of health care and other critical services for survivors within Syria as well as in neighbouring countries, and these services should extend to livelihood-support and poverty-alleviation programmes.

Fifthly, no meaningful actions can be taken in the absence of knowledge. Therefore, we must invest in deepening information-gathering, analysis and documentation on the issue of sexual violence as a basis for advocacy and action at all levels.

Sixthly, we must be relentless in our pursuit of accountability through the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence crimes. Combating impunity is a key aspect of deterrence and, ultimately, prevention. This will primarily entail support for national institutions. At the global and regional levels, it will require new approaches and frameworks to deal with the unprecedented jurisdictional and other challenges associated with thousands of combatants from more than 100 different countries.

Finally, we must live up to our frequent declarations and ensure women's participation in peace and mediation processes and the explicit inclusion of conflict-related sexual violence concerns in these discussions. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, and they must have a seat at the table. As women themselves have stated, "Nothing about us without us".

The strategy envisions targeted initiatives under these seven priority areas. These initiatives are intended to be catalytic in nature, filling critical gaps and strengthening the overall response. In my capacity as Chair of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which brings together 13 United Nations entities, I will encourage the network to propose and take the lead on specific initiatives, in accordance with their respective mandates, expertise and comparative advantages. The strategy should articulate a shared vision of priorities, and, in so doing, enhance overall coordination.

The political and financial support of the Council, and that of other Member States and donors, will be absolutely crucial. I look forward in the coming weeks and months to sharing more details about the strategy and will rely on the Council's steadfast commitment.

Last week I was in Amman to attend a meeting organized by the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to

Protect, with 25 religious leaders and representatives of faith-based organizations from the Middle East and North Africa. The discussions reinforced my conviction that the role of community, religious and traditional leaders is critical to breaking the prevailing silence around the issue of conflict-related sexual violence and ensure that survivors are embraced by their families and communities rather than stigmatized and shunned.

The role of religious and traditional leaders is essential to develop and sustain a counter-narrative to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other extremist groups, which pervert the inherent message of peace, tolerance and respect for women that is at the heart of Islam. It is essential that we engage and empower them as one of the crucial vanguards in this battle. It will not be enough to defeat ISIL militarily; we must also defeat the ideology it is propagating.

I would like to conclude by flagging one of our greatest challenges of this agenda, for Syria and the Middle East, and beyond. How do we enforce compliance on the part of non-State actors, which are the main perpetrators around the world? This will also require new approaches and tools. Obviously, it will not be possible to engage with terrorist groups such as ISIL and other extremists of their kind. However, we will need to make calculated and strategic decisions regarding engagement with non-State actors, so as to ensure that they know that the light of justice will shine on them and that they must take specific measures to prevent and punish sexual violence.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to offer my condolences to the representative of France; the French people; the representative of Lebanon, who is here with us today; the Lebanese people; and all those who are the victims of extreme violence. The recent horrific attacks that took place in Paris and Beirut remind us in the most tragic fashion that we all are vulnerable to violent extremism. Today more than ever we must join forces and work together to find solutions to the extended conflicts that fuel such acts of terrorism.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to thank the United Kingdom, during its presidency of the Security Council, and the Secretary of State for International Development for

this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Syria.

The conflict in Syria continues to have disastrous humanitarian consequences for children, and I think that Stephen already highlighted some of what is happening. After five years of intensifying hostilities, and in the absence of a political solution, the fundamental principles of international humanitarian and human rights law continue to be violated daily. The increasing outflow of refugees and internal displacement demonstrate the deteriorating situation. Half of the Syrian population is now displaced, and half of the displaced are children.

Children are paying a high price for the ongoing conflict. They continue to be killed, maimed, recruited and used, abducted and exploited by parties to conflict. Their futures are jeopardized by attacks on schools. Drawing upon information documented through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in 2015, my briefing will focus on three of the six grave violations, namely the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of children, and attacks on schools. It will complement briefings by my colleagues.

Mr. O'Brien has already briefed the Council on the civilian casualties of the conflict. The cumulative death toll of children was estimated at 10,000 in 2014 and is expected to have increased significantly in 2015. The majority of those children were killed or injured as a result of indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, in violation of international humanitarian law.

Aerial bombardments of civilian areas by Syrian Government forces, including the use of barrel bombs and successive airstrikes, have continued to cause a significant proportion of verified child casualties in 2015. For example, in May a barrel bomb attack on a school in Aleppo killed six children and injured 20. The indiscriminate shelling of densely populated areas, including mortar and rocket attacks, is another major cause of child casualties.

For example, on 15 September, 19 children were killed and another 85 injured by more than 100 rockets and mortars fired by armed opposition groups into the Salah al-Din area of Aleppo. On 26 September, another 19 children were killed and 21 injured by a mortar fired from a Government position into a park in Homs.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has committed brutal atrocities against children. While it

has been difficult to verify cases of grave violations occurring in ISIL-controlled areas, the killing and maiming of children by this group continue to be reported. That includes recent horrific video footage allegedly portraying the mass execution of 200 children. It has also been reported that children recruited by ISIL have been executed for trying to escape.

With the growing number of parties involved in the conflict, the risk of grave violations against children increases. It is reported that children have been killed and maimed in air strikes conducted by international forces. I reiterate that all the parties to the conflict must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, and especially the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. The ongoing use of methods and means of warfare that fail to distinguish between civilians and combatants and the use of indiscriminate weapons in populated areas are a clear violation of those obligations.

A continuing feature of the conflict in Syria is the widespread recruitment and use of children by all non-State armed groups, including the Kurdish People's Protection Units, the Free Syrian Army and Government-affiliated groups. ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front have also recruited and used children to perpetrate acts of extreme violence. Reports have been received of armed groups targeting children as young as seven years of age and forcibly recruiting children through the coercion of families and abductions. ISIL allegedly recruited up to 400 children in the first quarter of 2015, and the United Nations has verified cases of the use by ISIL of foreign children.

Indoctrination and military training play an important role in the recruitment and use of children by ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front. Children have received military training in three ISIL centres: in Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqah. In addition, ISIL has opened kindergartens for boys in Raqqah, and the Al-Nusra Front has instructed communities in Idlib to send boys aged from 8 to 12 to its education camps. Syrian Government forces have arrested and detained children for alleged association with armed groups. There are verified cases of children who were subjected to torture during detention and of children who died in custody. I reiterate that children recruited and used by armed groups are victims and should be treated as such.

At the end of September, over a quarter of all the schools in Syria, about 6,000, were fully or partially destroyed. The United Nations has verified attacks

on schools by Syrian government forces, ISIL, the Al-Nusra Front and other non-State armed groups in 2015. In addition, the military use of schools by Syrian government forces in Idlib has led to their targeting by armed opposition groups.

Prior to the conflict, primary school enrolment was almost universal in Syria. Now, the right to education has been compromised by hostilities, displacement and restrictions in ISIL-held areas. An estimated 2 million internally displaced children and 700,000 refugee children are not attending school. We are witnessing a generation at risk of not receiving an education, with serious long-term consequences for the future of those children. We can mitigate those consequences if the international community makes significant investments in protecting education and in providing education in emergencies.

Five years of conflict in Syria have taken an immeasurable toll on the lives of children. I urge all parties to respect their obligations under international law, end grave violations against children and pursue accountability for violations. To that end, it is critical that every Member State with influence on the parties to the conflict play a constructive role.

Since my first visit to Syria in 2012, I have repeatedly stated that there is no military solution to the conflict in Syria. Finally, there is now a broader consensus that a political solution must be reached. The acknowledgement of the linkage between a ceasefire and a parallel political process by the International Syria Support Group, meeting in Vienna this past weekend, and the willingness of participants to encourage confidence-building measures that contribute to a viable political process and a nationwide ceasefire are important and constructive developments. In that context, I underscore that the issue of children has proved to be a positive entry point in a number of peace processes, and strengthening the protection of children must be at the centre of any peace talks.

It is our collective responsibility to support a political solution to the conflict, accompanied by concrete commitments and actions to bring an end to the conflict and suffering. I call on all of you to be voices for the children in Syria and to take collective action to allow them to live a life free from fear and violence.

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

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Let me thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Ms. Zainab Bangura and Ms. Leila Zerrougui for their sobering briefings.

The United Kingdom expresses its condolences in relation to the terrorist attacks of recent days in Paris, Beirut and elsewhere. They are a vivid reminder of the horrific human toll taken by the Syrian and regional crisis.

Like others in the Council today, I have met Syrian refugees who have fled the bloodshed and violence consuming their country for over four years now; their tales are of experiences that no one should have to go through. We must accept that these people have been let down. The generosity of the countries bearing the brunt of the refugees, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, have not been matched by similar generosity on the part of the whole international community. United Nations appeals are 45 per cent funded. Overwhelming suffering and loss have been matched by political deadlocks and an inadequate financial response.

My message to the Council today is that for Syria, for its people and for us all, time is now running out. Time is running out for us to meet the most basic needs of the Syrian people, whether they are inside Syria or have fled the country. Time is running out for the whole generation of Syria's children who have been robbed of a childhood, an education and a future. Time is running out for the international community as we try to cope with the overwhelming number of refugees who have themselves run out of hope and are now looking elsewhere to build a new life for themselves and their families.

Since day one, Britain has worked hard to help people on the ground and has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the crisis, pledging \$1.7 billion to date. But the need is immense and growing. Greater efforts are needed, not only to meet people's basic needs but to provide jobs and an education for Syria's children. That is why our Prime Minister has just announced that the United Kingdom will co-host a global conference on the Syrian crisis in February 2016. The conference must be a turning point. It must raise the resources and deliver the policy changes that are needed.

Let us not forget that our response to this crisis, the actions we take or do not take on Syria, will define how we respond to other protracted emergencies: the challenge of educating whole generations of children at risk of being left to conflict and, with forced displacement likely to remain a major feature of the global landscape, the challenge of supporting refugees and the countries that host them.

But we recognize that humanitarian action alone is not sufficient. Syria is not a natural disaster; it is a man-made one. We all know what is causing the deaths and suffering. The Al-Assad regime bears the primary responsibility. It is Al-Assad's barrel bombs, but the brutality of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is a major factor as well. It is the targeting and killing of aid workers. It is the deliberate disregard for international humanitarian law, all too often dressed up in a false and perverse argument of sovereignty.

A negotiated political transition is the sole way to end the conflict in Syria and is key to alleviating the humanitarian crisis. I am encouraged by the constructive discussions in Vienna and the new momentum behind the process working towards peace for the people of Syria. But until that political settlement is reached, we must recommit to ending the targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, particularly aerial attacks and shelling; to protecting health facilities, schools and essential infrastructure; to ensuring unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations; to ending the use of siege tactics and to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. As is the case in all conflicts, girls and women have been left the most vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation.

As we meet today, there is a long list of things that we will fail to agree on in relation to the Syrian crisis, but help for those caught up in the crisis and the ability of humanitarian aid to reach those in need should not be on that list. Those are things that we should be able to agree on. There can be no excuse for flouting humanitarian law. There can be no excuse for preventing humanitarian agencies from reaching those in need. The Council must make that clear. We agreed on resolution 2191 (2014) on allowing the United Nations to use cross-border routes. That resolution has been critical to helping us get aid to people who otherwise would have none. It is essential that we renew that resolution.

Syria is perhaps the defining conflict of our age, not just for those in the region, but for all of us. It has

shown all too clearly where there are failures in our humanitarian and political responses. And the World Humanitarian Summit next year will be a vital moment for us to commit to a new twenty-first century response to protracted crises that brings together our development and humanitarian work and human rights. In this age of crisis, that Summit will be a vital moment to recommit ourselves to our humanitarian values and law.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the International Committee of the Red Cross President Peter Maurer have said, now is the moment to rally for humankind. We must respond to that call for the sake of Syria and for the wider world and future generations. That is our shared responsibility and challenge. We must meet it.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand too expresses its condolences for the recent loss of life in Paris and Beirut, as well as in attacks in Ankara, Egypt, Iraq and beyond.

We must do all we can to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). That includes finding a political resolution to the Syrian conflict, which is a major driver of ISIL. The recent attacks show that the human cost of the conflict reaches well beyond Syria. Within Syria, however, it also continues to escalate. Twenty-one months ago, the Council adopted resolution 2139 (2014) on Syria, which demanded that all parties immediately cease and desist from all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses. That call has not been heeded. A brutal and lawless conflict continues.

Human rights violations and abuses can lead to and fuel conflict. They underpin many of the conflicts that come before the Council. That is especially evident in Syria. A common feature of conflict is the disproportional impact that it has on the most vulnerable. That is true in Syria for women and for children. As we have heard today, 2.7 million Syrian children have been deprived of their right to education — some for four years or more. The fact that more than half of all attacks on schools worldwide over the past four years have taken place in Syria says it all. As we have heard today from other colleagues, children continue to be recruited and indoctrinated by ISIL and non-State armed groups.

Women and girls inside Syria and those who have fled the conflict are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and harassment. The desperate economic situation of families is exploited, with young girls being coerced into early marriages. ISIL must be singled out for its brutal campaign of sexual violence. Sexual violence is not a women's issue. It is a weapon of war. It terrorizes individuals, and it destabilizes families and communities. We need to move beyond the narrative of women being victims of conflict. They must be provided with the opportunity to be powerful agents of change in transforming their societies.

Syrian women have shown immense resilience and strength. At the political level, Syrian women must be included in policy dialogues about Syria's future, as called for by Special Envoy De Mistura last week and echoed in the Chamber today. At the community level, the views of women must be included in needs assessments, programme design and the implementation and evaluations of humanitarian and development programmes. Accountability for international humanitarian law violations and human rights abuses in Syria is not optional. It is essential for justice; it is essential for healing.

New Zealand is working with Jordan and Spain to renew resolution 2191 (2014), which has enabled cross-border access for humanitarian assistance seeking to enter Syria. Resolution 2191 (2014) has enabled the delivery of food assistance, non-food humanitarian items and medical supplies for millions of people. However, millions more remain hard to reach, including those in besieged areas, who are intentionally denied basic necessities as a cruel tactic of war.

New Zealand is concerned that cross-line access continues to be obstructed, particularly by the Syrian Government. Humanitarian access into ISIL-controlled areas remains almost nonexistent. New Zealand supports the efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura, but he needs the support of the international community. In that regard, New Zealand welcomes the ongoing talks in Vienna. They are an important step towards a political solution, affirming the benefits of pragmatism and diplomacy.

We also welcome the agreement reached by the International Syria Support Group to encourage confidence-building measures by parties on the ground, including better implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), increased

humanitarian access and an end to the use of indiscriminate weapons. Such measures will advance the political process, which is the only real answer to the humanitarian crisis. They will also protect civilians in the short term. Their implementation is long overdue.

Finally, we welcome the strong role envisaged for the Security Council by the Vienna process. We look forward to working closely with Council members to reinforce the progress made in Vienna and to engage on questions emerging from the process. New Zealand is encouraged to see momentum building towards finding a political solution. It is shameful that it has taken nearly five years, with well over a quarter of a million people dead, and with 4.2 million people — almost the exact population of New Zealand — fleeing Syria, to get to where we are today.

We must commit to ensuring that now is the beginning of the end of the conflict in Syria. In that regard, we welcome the announcement by the United Kingdom of a global Syria crisis conference early next year.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in French*): Before beginning my statement, I reiterate my delegation's solidarity with the French people and Government during these days of mourning. More than ever, they can count on Spain as a neighbour, an ally and a friend.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would like to express my thanks to the President for convening today's meeting to consider the humanitarian situation in Syria from various angles, all of which are essential. I also thank Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Bangura and Ms. Zerrougui for their briefings, which are cause for concern and emotion but which should above all move us to action. The situation of women and children in the Syrian conflict constitutes the deepest circle of the hell which that country has become.

As Ms. Zerrougui noted in her briefing, millions of children have been affected by the war, and there is growing reason to expect that they will be marked for life after such a traumatic experience. While our present task is the basic one of protecting their lives, feeding them, caring for their health and educating them, even in conflict zones, we must keep in mind that many of them, perhaps the majority, will continue to need all kinds of help for a long time to come. In that regard, we emphasize once again the devastation of the Syrian education system, where there are 2 million

children out of school, with another 700,000 children living as refugees in neighbouring countries. More than 5,000 schools have been destroyed or are being used for purposes that have nothing to do with education, in contravention of international humanitarian law and the resolutions of this Council. It is crucial that we do something about that, beginning by answering the call for a Syria response plan, for which members will recall that an amount of less than \$224 million is needed to prevent Syria from losing a whole generation owing to war.

Without a doubt, one of the most pernicious effects on Syrian children is the recruitment of children and their use in combat by terrorist groups and other armed actors. With the indoctrination of children by such groups, there is the risk that a seed of hatred is being sown that could easily proliferate in the future. The use of sexual violence by all parties to the Syrian conflict is also devastating. The use of such violence as a terrorist tactic has been widely demonstrated and must cease immediately. It is critical for the victims of such violence to receive specialized medical attention, which unfortunately is not always readily available. The role of women in Syria should also be viewed from other perspectives. Central among them should be women's full participation in an inclusive political process that leads to a Syria at peace and, if we look ahead, a Syria participating in all spheres of life — that new Syria we all long to see.

I leave for the end, not because it is of less importance — far from it — our response to the briefing by Mr. O'Brien. In that regard, I take this opportunity to reiterate our condemnation of the indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population by all parties to the conflict, including in particular the use of barrel bombs. We urge the Council to rapidly adopt measures in that regard. As my colleague from New Zealand said before me, the Council will soon turn its attention to renewing resolution 2191 (2014), concerning cross-border humanitarian assistance, whose efficacy has been amply demonstrated since its entry into force. We should not squander the opportunity that such renewal provides of strengthening other aspects of humanitarian aid, such as access to areas under siege and medical neutrality.

Finally, I agree with most, if not all, of the other speakers that our humanitarian efforts will be in vain without the immediate launch of a political solution that leads to a transitional inclusive Government with

full executive powers that perfectly reflects the Syrian people and that has sufficient legitimacy to promote political change in the country in line with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). We are, of course, closely following the diplomatic process that began in Vienna, and we welcome the road map adopted in that capital on 14 November, which expresses our shared determination to put an end to the massacre in Syria.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Her Excellency the Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom, and to express our thanks and appreciation to the United Kingdom for convening this meeting. Our thanks and appreciation also go to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for their comprehensive briefings.

We express our sincere condolences to the friendly people of France and to the French Government. We condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks that befell Paris. We stand shoulder to shoulder with France and with all international efforts to combat terrorism. We condemn all the terrorist attacks that took place in Beirut, Ankara, Iraq and Egypt and in all fraternal and friendly countries. We affirm our solidarity with them in combating terrorism.

We are deeply saddened by the situation in our fraternal neighbour, Syria. Over the past five years, the humanitarian scene has been staggering. I will not offer statistics or figures, but the deep suffering surpasses the understanding of humankind and the civilized world. Violations of the basic norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law by the conflicting parties in Syria have become a hallmark of the conflict in that country. The indiscriminate bombing of innocent civilians, including children, has become a daily occurrence, alongside displacement, starvation, the destruction of infrastructure, the bombing of schools and health centres, hindering medical assistance and lifesaving assistance, intimidation, the obliteration of Syrian identity and the plunder of its historic artefacts. The international community should explore every possibility for improving humanitarian efforts in Syria. We will cooperate with New Zealand and Spain to renew resolution 2191 (2014), in order to ensure the continuing delivery of humanitarian assistance, which has saved millions of Syrians.

The international community should make concerted, unified efforts to fight terrorist groups, in particular the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which still controls large areas of Syria, where it continues to wreak havoc, especially through cowardly actions such as those that took place recently in France, Lebanon and Iraq. We are dealing with the world's most serious humanitarian asylum crisis since the end of the Second World War. Jordan hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, and the second largest number of Syrian refugees, in proportion to our population. Syrian citizens account for 1.5 million people living in different parts of Jordan.

Nine per cent of Syrian refugees live in refugee camps, which has put tremendous pressure on health care, education, food security and employment. It has also put tremendous pressure on Jordan's public treasury at a time when we are facing economic challenges resulting from the situation in the region. We are sharing both our resources and our infrastructure with the refugees, and both are being exhausted by the heavy burden that this entails.

The Kingdom of Jordan and its kind people have opened their homes to refugees from all over the region. We will continue to pursue this generous approach under the direction of our Hashemite leaders. However, it should be said that the countries hosting Syrian refugees are beginning to feel that the world is betraying them by not providing sufficient support, and they require the assistance of the international community. The countries hosting Syrian refugees are experiencing a serious deterioration in their ability to deliver basic services. They are also experiencing setbacks in development at all levels. The international community should coordinate and cooperate with the Governments of host countries in order to secure a reasonable future for those whose lives have been shattered by these tragedies. It should buttress the resilience of host countries, because it is in the interests of the whole world to do so. We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme for organizing the Resilience Development Forum, which initiates a new era of support for Syrian refugees and a new international partnership to that end.

We continue to advocate for the Security Council to keep the Syrian refugee issue on its agenda and in its deliberations owing to the seriousness of the consequences of the Syrian crisis for the entire world. We stress the importance of implementing the presidential

statement contained in document S/PRST/2015/10, adopted in April this year, and a resolution should be adopted to the same end. There is no military solution to the crisis in Syria; rather, a comprehensive political solution to the crisis must be found.

We welcome the meeting of the International Syria Support Group in Vienna, as well as the joint ministerial declaration. The large number of participants made the Vienna meeting a historic event. However, there needs to be a follow-up that will launch a political process leading to a political transition and the realization of the aspirations of the Syrian people.

A comprehensive political solution based on the Geneva I consensus is the only way out of this crisis. There is global agreement on that point. The solution should meet the aspirations of all Syrians, lead to a new political reality that enjoys their collective support, enable us to defeat terrorism in the country and restore stability and security there, inspire the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes, and preserve the independence of Syria.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we should again like to express our deep sympathy and condolences to the people and the Government of France, to Paris, and to all countries, all people, all cities that have fallen victim to these horrible terrorist attacks, some of which may be facing the terrorist threat on a daily basis. In expressing our condolences, we would like to state loudly and clearly our solidarity in the joint fight against terrorism.

We thank the Under-Secretary-General for having presented the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/862). We most certainly pay tribute to all the humanitarian workers, whether from the United Nations or from other international organizations, who are working in Syria and very often are risking their lives to help those who need medical assistance, food and housing.

Enormous humanitarian efforts are being undertaken. Every month, over 4 million individuals receive food assistance. The system for the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance across borders pursuant to resolution 2165 (2014) and under United Nations oversight is working effectively. By the end of October, over 207 convoys had crossed Syria's borders with Turkey and Jordan, which represents over 4,500 truckloads. A great deal is being done by the Syrian Government to ensure the delivery of humanitarian

consignments, not only in territory under its control, where most of the internally displaced persons are concentrated, but also in territory that is beyond its control, as the report of the Secretary-General indicates.

Praise is also due to the very noble actions of the people of Syria themselves, whether in the form of the Red Crescent volunteers who are providing basic necessities across front lines, or of the individuals who are hosting refugees in their homes. It is entirely clear that, regardless of the scope of the humanitarian efforts, and regardless of how many convoys are sent across borders or front lines, the problem will not be solved in this way. Only by reaching a political settlement and, in parallel, waging a determined fight against terrorism will we achieve a real and viable improvement in the situation.

The international community must unite its efforts in its fight against the terrorist threat, from which the people of Syria have already suffered for five years now. It is a threat that recognizes no limits to barbarism and pays no respect to geographical borders. That is something we have seen time and time again — in the tragedies in Beirut, Paris, Baghdad, Ankara and other cities. The participants in the meeting of the International Syria Support Group in Vienna on 14 November condemned these terrorist acts. Furthermore, they proposed a number of steps to move the political process in Syria forward and underscored the importance of ensuring humanitarian access to all parts of the country.

What is especially unacceptable at the current, very decisive stage in which political efforts are being stepped up is the politicization of human rights and humanitarian topics. Making specious observations in this respect in an attempt to score political points is simply immoral. We are outraged by various reports that have alleged civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure as a result of missile and air strikes by the Russian armed forces.

The operations of the Russian armed forces are covered in daily briefings for Russian and non-Russian journalists. During these briefings an objective picture is drawn and attempts at disinformation are exposed. For example, reporting on an airstrike on a hospital in Sarmin on 20 October, the media claimed and confirmed to have allegedly resulted in civilian casualties. Incidentally, that was also referred to in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report. The media circulated photographs of a destroyed building.

However, on satellite pictures taken on 31 October, the hospital in Sarmin is clearly whole and has not been damaged. Once again, we reiterate that the use of only information that is confirmed, verified and reliable is one of the main criteria for ensuring the unbiased and impartial nature of the United Nations system.

We note that the new report of the Secretary-General has been drawn up in a more balanced way, insofar as it does not contain any hasty assessments and unverified data on possible civilian casualties. We regret that the authors of the report did not have the courage to refute the disinformation regarding the actions of the Russian Aerospace Forces that was contained in the previous report on the humanitarian situation.

Russia continues to provide the Syrian population with humanitarian aid. Numerous flights of the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations are delivering basic goods to Syria. Russia has donated 100,000 tons of wheat to Damascus. We are also providing assistance through United Nations organizations, including through the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme.

The path to a sustainable political settlement and effectively fighting terrorism lies through a combination of international and regional efforts. There is growing understanding of the need to create a comprehensive anti-terrorist coalition under the aegis of the United Nations. The recent terrorist attacks have clearly shown that it is not only terrorism that cannot be justified in any way, but what also cannot be justified any longer is the passivity and the lack of unity in the fight against this evil. We stand ready to continue joint work in that field.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Our hearts go out to those who are mourning their loved ones after the latest terrorist attacks.

I thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for convening this Security Council briefing. I also thank the briefers for their statements — reports of unvarnished quality on the harrowing consequences of the nearly five years of brutal war on the people of Syria. As we consider the positive signals emerging from Vienna, all those people have is more bloodshed and displacement.

Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are approaching a dangerous saturation point as refugees continue to spill out of Syria. While criminals, smugglers and

traffickers are profiting, gaining millions from tragedy, refugees are literally dying to escape. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, Government forces dropped nearly 1,500 barrel bombs in October alone. Indiscriminate attacks against, and abuse of, civilians continue from all sides of the conflict. Starvation and siege are used as a tool of war. Daesh butchers keep committing gruesome atrocities — public executions, stonings, beheadings and rapes. It is unthinkable that in the twenty-first century slave markets are up and running, with women and girls paraded and sold like cattle.

Humanitarian access remains a huge problem, due to insecurity, as well as artificial hurdles. Administrative visa procedures continue to delay and limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies and their partners, including humanitarian non-governmental organizations. It is immoral and criminal to obstruct humanitarian access. Every minute counts. Every day means more lives lost.

All those acts constitute glaring violations of the provisions contained in resolution 2139 (2014) and subsequent resolutions. The Council's inability to enforce its own resolutions in the face of the biggest humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century undercuts its relevance and credibility. The Council should use all the tools at its disposal to ensure that the parties to this conflict allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines. We need to increase and expand access to the millions of people living in all hard-to-reach areas, also in view of the coming winter, which will further aggravate the immense suffering of the people in need.

The ongoing conflict has deprived the Syrian people of even basic medical care. Physicians for Human Rights documented 307 attacks on medical facilities and the deaths of 670 medical personnel in Syria since the start of the conflict in March 2011, with Syrian forces responsible for 90 per cent of those attacks. Concerns about the safety and security of humanitarian personnel too remain high, with United Nations vehicles attacked and humanitarian workers kidnapped and killed. We condemn the continued attacks on health-care and humanitarian facilities, transportation and personnel, and we reiterate that they hold a special protected status under international humanitarian law, which must be respected in all circumstances. Furthermore,

such attacks may constitute war crimes. They have to be taken most seriously.

Impunity runs rampant in Syria. A much-needed referral of the country's situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) was blocked by a veto last year — one of the four vetos that have allowed this crisis to deepen and expand by protecting the perpetrators, not the victims. We support the recent calls of the Secretary-General to refer Syria to the ICC, and we urge the international community not to let accountability become yet another victim of Syria's war. We commend the work done by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and human rights organizations to register the atrocities and human rights violations in Syria. We urge them to continue their important work with a hope that one day, hopefully sooner than later, the testimonies they collected will help to bring the perpetrators to account.

Syria remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child — and a veritable hell in which to be born a girl. Seven and a half million Syrian children have lost their parents, their homes and their schools and suffered immense emotional and physical traumas. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 140,000 Syrian children are stateless. What future do they have — illiterate, orphaned, malnourished and maimed? What future does a country have where its entire next generation is a lost generation? We applaud all those who shine a light on the plight of Syria's children and do their best to provide them with protection, support and sustenance. They too demand justice. Those children do not have the luxury of waiting for Geneva or Vienna or any other format to succeed. By then, many of them will have succumbed, will have been exchanged for food, recruited and ordered to kill, or will have succumbed to the shelling, the aerial attacks and the barrel bombs. The Council can and should at least act on the barrel bombs to protect those children and the remaining Syrian population.

To conclude, let me reiterate our long-standing position that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. The sides must choose the negotiation table over violence and proceed on the basis of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) building on the glimmer of hope that Vienna now offers. But that road will be long and full of hurdles. It requires time, which the people of Syria do not have. This Council

must do all within its power to make sure that those for whom the peace is being built will see it alive.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): First of all, let me express once again, on behalf of the Angolan delegation, our sincere condolences to and solidarity with the delegation of France on account of the attacks in Paris. We strongly condemn those barbaric acts.

We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, as well as Ms. Leila Zerrougui and Ms. Zainab Bangura for their comprehensive presentations on the humanitarian situation and the challenge facing the Syrian population.

It is deeply troubling to bear witness to constant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict and to the continued suffering of communities and individuals inside Syria. The massive refugee crisis facing Syria's neighbours and now Europe is one of the consequences on the international community's inability to promote and facilitate a political solution to this conflict. Additionally, growing extremism, radicalization and nationalism will truly leave a bitter legacy with long-term consequences that will affect the region and the world as a whole.

We have a common responsibility to resolve this crisis, and must therefore step up efforts to support the talks being held in Vienna on a political settlement to this irrational conflict. The countries participating in the political process, including the permanent members of the Security Council that have undisputed leverage over the warring parties, bear a special responsibility to work together to put resolute pressure on them to end the violence. The Vienna talks represent a global effort. We are pleased that an agreement has been reached on holding talks between the Government and the opposition in January and on ways to enforce a ceasefire. We believe that establishing a ceasefire and blocking the proliferation and supply of weapons and logistical support for the rebel groups on the ground is a top priority. Only then will the Syrian people feel a genuine commitment on the part of the relevant actors and stakeholders to reaching a comprehensive peace process that responds to their basic aspiration to peace and respite.

Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) represent a determined effort by the Security Council to address human rights issues underlying the

Syrian conflict and find ways to alleviate the people's suffering and despair under extremely stressful conditions. However, at this point, we must forcefully insist that the parties to the conflict show respect for civilians' right to access to basic necessities, including shelter, food, water and medical care. The conflict has been going on for far too long. Its irrational proportions and disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law are unacceptable. The circumstances require us to urge all actors, including the Syrian authorities and outside Powers, to cease all hostilities and reach a political settlement to the conflict. Moreover, we must ensure that the outcome of the peace process and political transition holds the perpetrators of atrocities and the worst violations of human rights accountable. That is a prerequisite for a true healing and reconciliation process among Syrians.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Special Representatives Bangura and Zerrougui for their deeply sobering briefings. Reflecting on their statements and on the Secretary-General's report on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2015/862), it is disturbing to hear yet again that the security situation has deteriorated and that humanitarian access to those most in need has not improved.

Before addressing some of the issues raised today, I also want to say that our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the attacks in Paris on Friday and in Beirut on Thursday. We condemn such vile terrorist attacks in the strongest terms. We must do everything in our power to fight back against what can only be considered as an assault on our common humanity.

As the Secretary-General and the representatives here today have said time and time again, the only solution there can be to the crisis in Syria, including the dire humanitarian situation, is a political one, through a Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva communiqué of 2012 (S/2012/522, annex). Just two days ago, we took a fundamentally important step towards that goal in Vienna. More than 20 stakeholders, including representatives of regional organizations and United Nations Special Envoy de Mistura, convened on Saturday, as members of the International Syria Support Group, to discuss how to bring an end to the Syrian conflict as quickly as possible.

The Group agreed to work to implement a nationwide ceasefire in Syria, which would come into

effect as soon as the representatives of the Syrian Government and the opposition have begun initial steps towards a transition based on the Geneva communiqué. A halt in the fighting is absolutely essential to our efforts to address the humanitarian needs of Syrians and to advance a political process to end the conflict. For our part, it will be critical for the Council to support that effort through a resolution on a United Nations-endorsed monitoring mission for such a ceasefire. As discussed in Vienna, in both the ministerial group and a working group, it is critical that all parties and the international community as a whole work diligently to ensure swift delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Syria, through unimpeded delivery approvals and improved access over borders and across conflict lines. As we look forward to the renewal of resolution 2191 (2014), especially, we must do all we can to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need in Syria.

While there is renewed energy for achieving a political solution, the situation on the ground continues to be of significant concern. Civilians' tragic suffering from the persistent fighting and rabid violations of international law has continued unabated. We are still shocked by the continuing use of barrel bombs and other destructive weapons in civilian areas, as well as by the attacks on schools, hospitals and medical personnel, arbitrary arrests and detentions, sexual and gender-based violence, torture and disappearances. The Syrian Network for Human Rights recorded 1,771 deaths in Syria just in the month of October, including 1,284 individuals who died at the hands of Government forces, which are clearly still responsible for the overwhelming majority of deaths in Syria. Furthermore, despite its claim to the contrary, the regime's ghastly use of barrel bombs did not end last month. Syrian documentation groups recorded its use of 1,438 barrel bombs in October alone. In recent weeks, air strikes, including some involving barrel bombs, intensified in the opposition-held eastern part of Ghouta, resulting in the destruction of medical centres, markets and other public locations. On 30 October, according to relief agencies, multiple air strikes on a public market in Douma killed at least 70 people and injured more than 500 others.

Such brutal tactics must stop. We underscore how important it is that Saturday's Vienna statement recalled resolution 2139 (2014), which includes the demand that all parties cease any indiscriminate use of

weapons in populated areas, and welcome the Vienna group's commitment to press the parties on the issue. In northern Syria, increased fighting, including Russian military operations, has also had a significant impact on the humanitarian situation. In Aleppo, Idlib and Hama we have seen about 130,000 newly displaced Syrians in October alone. As the Secretary-General has said, attacks on health-care facilities, transports and medical personnel have a devastating multiplier effect, not only by killing civilians but also by degrading the capacity to provide the care that people so desperately need. Medical facilities and personnel continue to be attacked, as Under-Secretary-General O'Brien noted.

Schools, too, continue to be attacked. More than 2 million children, one out of three, are not in school in Syria. That too has a devastating multiplier effect. If children cannot be protected and educated, Syria's future generations are at risk. As Ms. Bangura has reported, in Syria and elsewhere, rape and sexual violence continue to be used as an instrument of war. That is a vile crime against humankind that affects all walks of life in Syria — men, women, boys and girls — and it must end. As Ms. Zerrougui has reported, children are also suffering tremendously, as they are being forcibly recruited to be used in the conflict as child soldiers and, in some cases, as human shields by the Government, Government-affiliated and non-State armed groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in particular. The United States thanks the Special Representatives, Ms. Zerrougui and Ms. Bangura, for ensuring that the Council remains informed about the appalling acts taking place in Syria. We welcome future briefings that can lead the Council to make more informed decisions on Syria.

Human rights violations are also widespread, as thoroughly documented by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry, which briefed the Council just last week. As the Commission reported, many victims continue to be tortured. The Syrian Network for Human Rights recorded that 104 individuals had been tortured to death in October, including 99 who were tortured by the regime. ISIL continues to rampantly abuse the basic rights of Syrians. In Raqqah, ISIL arrested a married couple, for example, for teaching mixed groups of boys and girls. ISIL also continued to execute Syrians, whether for perceived spying or for their sexual orientation, and to kidnap, enslave and rape, including girls as young as nine years old. Of course, the overall situation in Syria remains deeply concerning.

According to the recently released United Nations humanitarian needs overview, those in need of urgent humanitarian assistance now total 13.5 million people — an increase of 1.2 million in just over 10 months. At least 8.7 million individuals are unable to fully meet their food needs at present. Meanwhile, 4.5 million people inside Syria continue to live in hard-to-reach areas, nearly half of which are ISIL-controlled. The nearly 400,000 individuals in besieged areas continue to survive in even more dire circumstances. The United States is supporting the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to prepare an active response for the upcoming winter season, including the distribution of seasonally appropriate relief supplies to more than 1 million people in Syria. As noted in Vienna this past weekend, the resolution of the refugee issue is also important to the final settlement of the Syrian conflict. Yet more needs to be done and soon.

The United Nations Syria assistance humanitarian response plan remains only 45 per cent funded. We urge all countries to consider increasing their contributions as soon as possible and to begin considering significant contributions for the 2016 international humanitarian pledging conference, to be held in London in February. While we pursue a ceasefire and a political solution, we also need to continue to address the critical needs of Syrians on the ground, and we must do so immediately.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the United Kingdom for its initiative to convene today's meeting and welcomes Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development, to preside over today's meeting. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and the two Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bangura and Ms. Zerrougui, for their briefings.

China extends its condolences to France for the series of terrorist attacks that took place in Paris and condemns, in the strongest terms, those barbaric acts of terror. We wish to extend our deep condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families of the victims and those injured.

Over the past five years, the armed conflict among the various Syrian parties has become ever more violent. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and other terrorist organizations are running rampant, bringing deep suffering to the Syrian people. The international community should continue its work in

a coordinated manner in all three areas, namely, the political process, counter-terrorism and easing the humanitarian situation, so as to find a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Syrian crisis.

Political settlement is the way to resolve the crisis. There are key opportunities for a political solution at the moment. Two meetings in Vienna, at the foreign minister level, were successfully convened recently. The participants at the meetings achieved important consensus on a comprehensive ceasefire and on initiating a political process to set up a Syrian transition authority and hold general elections. The International Syria Support Group was officially established, and the political settlement has entered a new phase. The key in the next phase is to ensure its implementation. The parties concerned should divide labour among themselves and coordinate efforts to initiate the process of political transition, under the auspices of the United Nations, and maintain the hard-won momentum.

Terrorism has become the most serious and pressing security challenge faced by the international community, which must attach great importance to the impact terrorism has on the situation in Syria and on the region. The Security Council has adopted a host of resolutions on counter terrorism and on combating ISIS and other terrorist forces and has reached broad-based consensus. The international community must join hands, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other generally recognized basic norms of international relations, to further strengthen cooperation in counter terrorism. We must pay particular attention to addressing both the symptoms and the root causes, and there must be no double standards. The leading role of the United Nations must be brought into full play so as to form a united front on counter terrorism.

China, too, has been a victim of terrorism. Combating the East Turkestan terrorist forces, headed by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, must also become an important component of the international fight against terrorism. Actively carrying out humanitarian assistance activities is crucial to easing the situation for the Syrian people.

China wishes to emphasize the following three points.

First, China hopes that the United Nations, guided by the principles governing humanitarian assistance, will strengthen its cooperation and engagement with

the Syrian Government and, based on the consent of the country concerned, scale up its assistance efforts. We call upon the various parties in Syria to put the future of the country and of the people first and to actively cooperate with the United Nations and other humanitarian actors, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, China calls upon the various parties to the conflict in Syria, based on international humanitarian law, to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, cease attacks, protect infrastructure, medical facilities and personnel and honour, in their actions, their obligations to protect civilians. To that end, countries that have influence on the various parties in Syria should do more.

Thirdly, China supports the international community, based on the principle of shared responsibility, in its efforts to scale up its support for Syria and neighbouring countries, based on the specific needs of the countries concerned, so as to ensure that aid reaches the people who need it and that it is put to effective use. We call upon donors to make pledges at the Syria humanitarian assistance response plan, so as to alleviate financial shortfalls. China has been helping to ease the situation in Syria, and we have provided over ¥230 million in aid to the Syrian people and to refugees outside Syria. Not long ago, China decided to provide ¥100 million to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. We will continue to do all we can to provide help, based on developments and the actual needs on the ground.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to welcome and pay tribute to you, Madam President. We thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing. We also congratulate him for the work he is doing as head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We also thank the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings.

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to express our deepest condolences to the people and Government of France for the recent brutal terrorist attacks on civilians. We offer our sympathy to the families of the victims of these criminal actions, which have shocked the world

with their brutality and cruelty. May the French people hear our expressions of solidarity and support at this dreadful moment.

We also repudiate the terrorist attacks in Lebanon and Turkey, which caused great loss of human life, as well as those taking place every day in Iraq and Syria, which continue to suffer the brutal terrorist activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and other violent non-State actors. Venezuela condemns the ongoing violence perpetrated by ISIS in Syria and Iraq, in which civilians — and children in particular — are the main victims of the cruelty of that terrorist group. These sad events teach us that terrorism knows no borders and remains a threat to international peace and security.

If the international community fails to act decisively to stop the financing, training and arming of those groups, as well as their use and incitement to undermine Governments, Europe and the rest of the world will continue to suffer the consequences of these entities' terrorist activities that have already struck the Middle East and North Africa. In that regard, Venezuela reiterates its categorical condemnation of terrorism in all its manifestations and violent extremism, whatever its motives and wherever it is perpetrated. Terrorists cannot be divided into the categories of good and bad.

Any solution of the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East must address the root causes of conflicts. In this regard, so long as outside interference is promoted through support for terrorist groups and the maintenance of foreign occupation and its policies repressive, we will continue to see the flow of refugees and internally displaced people fleeing war to save their own lives. The situations in Palestine, Iraq and Syria are emblematic of this tragic reality in the Middle East. In that context, our country expresses its deepest concern about the humanitarian situation in the conflict in Syria. Five years after the start of hostilities, the Syrian people have paid a very high price for the incursion of terrorism into their country, which has unleashed a veritable humanitarian catastrophe.

We acknowledge the noble efforts deployed by humanitarian agencies in Syria, working in adverse conditions created by the same conflict that has engulfed the country and its people in extremely dire circumstances, in which the actions of the terrorist entities ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front, the Army of Conquest and associated groups have made their assistance work even more dangerous. We therefore condemn the attacks

against humanitarian personnel and the facilities in which they do their noble work. Humanitarian agencies cannot be military targets in any circumstances.

We appreciate the level of cooperation achieved between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Syrian authorities in resolving pending issues on the humanitarian agenda, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/862). We hope that this relationship continues to be strengthened with a view to facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to alleviate the pressing needs of the population affected by war.

There are, however, some positive elements contained in the report of the Secretary-General, such as the agreements reached in Zabadani that have resulted in a ceasefire thanks to effective United Nations action. Another is the report that some 70 per cent of fighters in Qudsaya, Rif Dimashq, have surrendered their weapons in a clear attempt to launch reconciliation talks, which offers a glimmer of hope in a process that must be entrenched. Finally, the national vaccination campaign, launched in cooperation with the Syrian Ministry of Health to immunize over 2.3 million children nationwide, with the exception of Raqqah, is an encouraging sign within the overall tragedy.

The areas controlled by ISIS pose a real challenge to humanitarian organizations, as reflected in the report. The World Food Programme is unable to deliver assistance to more than 700,000 people in need of food. This constitutes an obstacle to humanitarian organizations. Similarly, we remain alarmed by the ongoing use of explosive devices and car bombs by ISIS, with their high toll in civilian casualties. Such attacks, together with the kidnappings and summary executions perpetrated by that terrorist organization, are only one part of its extensive record of violations of international law.

We also reject the deliberate attacks on schools carried out by that terrorist group in Syria, especially in Aleppo, which violate international humanitarian and international human rights law. These illegal actions constitute a litany of war crimes and crimes against humanity whose perpetrators must be brought to justice. In this context, we are highly conscious of the fact that the report does not refer directly to military operations involving the Al-Nusra Front during the reporting period. Regrettably, such lack of clarity in the information provided does not contribute to a full understanding of what is happening on the ground.

Moreover, we reject the use by militias associated with the Jaish al-Islam, also known as the Army of Conquest, of civilians from ethnic minorities as human shields. These actions should be unequivocally rejected by the international community because they violate human dignity. In that regard, we hope that organizations such as these will be added as soon as possible to the list maintained by the Committee pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities. It is time to end their activities as non-State actors.

We condemn the use by non-State actors and ISIS of basic services as weapons of war. The withholding of water and electricity to the civilian population must cease. These actions violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Likewise, we condemn the continued destruction of the cultural heritage of Syria, such as the razing of Palmyra, as a result of the totalitarian vision of ISIS, which is determined to eliminate all historical vestiges of the past that do not jibe with its dogmatic and extremist view of religion and history.

We wish to speak out in defence of Syrian children, who have been subjected to bloody, premeditated violence by terrorist groups and non-State actors. We denounce the ongoing crimes committed against Syrian children by terrorist organizations, and we urge the international community to mobilize in their defence.

We highly appreciate the fact that, in the search for a negotiated political solution to the conflict, the Vienna consultations have considered the participation of the Syrian Government, which is a major player in the search for a settlement. It is foolish to claim and insist otherwise and only condemns the Syrian people to further suffering and a labyrinth of uncertainty that foments violence and despair. Such a biased perspective on the settlement of this conflict has only delayed a solution and strengthened terrorism.

We reiterate our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura — who enjoys our full support — to achieve a peaceful political solution to the conflict, with the full participation of all parties involved, including the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad. We await the results of the negotiations in Vienna and the immediate implementation of a ceasefire to help alleviate the humanitarian situation. As an elected member of the Security Council, Venezuela expects to enjoy access to all agreements and commitments undertaken by

the parties in Vienna so that it can contribute with the required unanimity to the Council's actions.

In conclusion, we advocate a negotiated, peaceful solution to this terrible crisis. Foreign interference in Syria must cease. The Syrian people have paid the highest price in defending their territorial integrity and sovereignty from terrorism. The international community must act to end the violence and re-establish peace. Sadly, Syria has become a laboratory of horror and death. History will judge the perpetrators of these atrocities.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Madam President, I thank you for having convened this important meeting and for presiding over it. Like earlier speakers, I wish to convey our deepest condolences to the delegation and the people of France in connection with the appalling and repulsive terrorist attacks that took place in Paris last Friday. We stand in solidarity with France in this time of grief. In the same sentiment, our condolences are also extended to Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt.

I thank Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Bangura and Ms. Zerrougui for their respective contributions to this meeting, all of which have underscored the desperate situation and the need for urgent action in Syria. Alongside other Council members, Malaysia is following the outcome of the most recent talks in Vienna, and we note the announced road map towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Syria. My delegation stands ready to engage and looks forward to substantive deliberations by the Council on this matter.

Inasmuch as political will played a large part in securing agreement in Vienna, we remain deeply concerned by the astounding toll taken by the Syrian conflict to date: more than 250,000 people dead, over 1 million injured, more than 7.6 million displaced and roughly 13.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 5.6 million children. Average life expectancy has been shortened by almost 13 years. School attendance is at less than 50 per cent, and three out of four Syrians now live in poverty.

The parties to the conflict remain indifferent to the pain and suffering inflicted on the Syrian people. Acts of impunity continue unabated. We would remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations to adhere to and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Syrian conflict also continues to be characterized by indiscriminate attacks and the deliberate targeting of

civilians and civilian infrastructure. The use of barrel bombs and toxic chemicals by the parties to the conflict is particularly abhorrent.

Malaysia remains deeply concerned by continued reports of acts of sexual violence against women, girls and children committed by parties to the conflict. Women and girls not only face rape and sexual abuse; they are also sold as sex slaves and forced into marriage to foreign fighters. It is disgraceful that children are stripped of their innocence and deprived of protection.

The recruitment and use of children is becoming increasingly commonplace. Reports that children are being used for forced labour, as sex slaves and even as human shields are deeply disturbing. The siege-and-starve strategy, aimed at ensuring the submission and surrender of whole populations, adds a further disconcerting dimension to the Syrian conflict. It is appalling that in the twenty-first century such a method has been employed as a strategy of war by the parties to the conflict. The fact that even schools and hospitals have been deliberately targeted is a reflection of the absolute disrespect, disregard and contempt that the parties to the conflict have for the values of humanity.

In the face of such misery and desperation, we are heartened by the steadfast commitment of the various United Nations agencies and partners in providing much-needed humanitarian aid and support to the civilian population in Syria, and we commend their efforts. In this regard, we deeply regret the fact that cross-line access continues to face security and administrative obstacles. We are further concerned that access to populations in hard-to-reach and besieged areas remains critical. The Syrian Government must do more to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

On our part, my Government is currently taking steps to honour its commitment to take in 3,000 Syrian refugees. We call on the international community to do as much as possible to help the Syrian people in their time of need.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): Madam President, we welcome you to the Security Council and thank you for having convened today's meeting. We also want to thank Under-Secretary General O'Brien, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura for their soul-stirring briefings. We express

our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest monthly report on the subject (S/2015/862).

We also want to join other delegations in expressing our very deep condolences to the people of France and Lebanon on the horrific, despicable attacks on their population by the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham.

The briefings we have heard today and the report of the Secretary-General clearly indicate that the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. The conflict continues to take a heavy toll on the civilian population. Non-combatants, especially women and children, face grave hardship, with hundreds of thousands trapped in besieged areas. It is deeply troubling that international humanitarian law continues to be violated with impunity by the parties to the conflict. Over the past month, hundreds of civilians have been killed, injured or maimed in direct or indiscriminate attacks on populated areas. The warring parties must refrain from actions that jeopardize the safety and security of civilians.

We must emphasize that the deliberate targeting of civilians constitutes a war crime and that those responsible for such acts are war criminals who must be brought to justice. We take positive note of the commitments made by the Government of Syria to refrain from the indiscriminate use of weapons. We condemn the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, which is causing cuts to electricity and water supplies. This is compounding the already difficult humanitarian situation in Syria. We also condemn attacks on health-care facilities and medical personnel, as well as the denial of care to those in need. These are clear violations of international humanitarian law.

It is regrettable that the delivery of humanitarian assistance remains extremely challenging owing to active conflict, insecurity and administrative bottlenecks. There is a need for humanitarian actors to be allowed to perform their duties without hindrance. The parties must facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to affected people throughout the country.

We want to pay tribute to the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners for their unrelenting efforts to reach millions of people in need of aid, despite the challenges in the operating environment. We recognize that the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is fulfilling

its mandate by ensuring the strictly humanitarian nature of United Nations humanitarian shipments. We commend the Governments of Jordan and Turkey for their sustained cooperation with the Mechanism.

As clearly indicated this afternoon by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui in her briefing, the plight of children affected by the Syrian conflict is deeply disturbing. The recruitment and use of children in combat has become commonplace in Syria. We are particularly concerned about the cases of abduction, killing and maiming of children, as well as attacks on schools. We underscore the need for the international community to act in concert in order to shield Syrian children from the disastrous consequences of war.

Sexual violence in the Syrian conflict is also a matter of great concern. As succinctly stated by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, displaced women and girls are at risk of various forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual enslavement, mass rape and forced marriage. We condemn these heinous acts in the strongest terms. This state of affairs underscores the urgent need for more to be done to protect women and girls, and Ms. Bangura's seven-point strategy of what can be done is worth exploring.

We must all admit that the cause-and-effect relationship between the humanitarian situation and the conflict in Syria is what we must explore further. The sustainable solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria lies in ending the conflict, and the path to ending the conflict is that of dialogue and negotiation. After five years of fighting, it should be clear to the parties that there can be no military solution. We encourage the warring parties to sheathe their swords, lay down their arms and pursue a negotiated solution.

The recent meetings in Vienna involving an expanded group of international stakeholders have provided a much needed impetus to decide for peace in Syria. We believe that the sustenance of that initiative will provide an opportunity to develop a framework for peace along the key principles of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). We support without reservation those efforts, and we hope that they will lead to lasting peace and the restoration of stability in Syria.

Mr. Gombo Tchouli (Chad) (*spoke in French*): We thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this meeting.

Before I begin, allow me to add my voice to those of previous speakers to pay heartfelt tribute to the Government and the people of France for their steadfastness in the light of the barbaric acts of terrorism that took place recently. We condemn those horrendous acts. We would also like to extend our condolences to Lebanon and the Lebanese people, who have also fallen victim to terrorism.

I wish to convey my gratitude to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Ms. Zainab Bangura and Ms. Leila Zerrougui for their briefings.

For nearly five years now, violent fighting on an almost daily basis has marked the lives of the Syrian people. The daily horrendous statistics of the wounded, internally displaced persons, refugees and destruction plunge Syrians deeper into despair. The humanitarian situation in the country continues to deteriorate, despite the huge efforts undertaken by United Nations staff, to whom we pay tribute for their courage and dedication.

We condemn all attacks committed against innocent civilians, as well as on the basic vital infrastructure of the country, and ask all parties to immediately lift all obstacles hindering access to humanitarian aid for the civilian population in areas of combat, including in besieged zones. We would like to reiterate our call upon all the parties to the conflict to put an end to the violence, and we wish to underscore their obligation to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as all the relevant provisions of resolution 2139 (2014). It should be remembered that the systematic refusal to provide humanitarian access to the civilian population, depriving them of the basic necessities they require for their survival, such as water and medicine, constitutes a serious violation of human dignity and a flagrant violation of the most basic principles of international humanitarian law.

Security Council meetings on Syria succeed one another without any improvement in the situation experienced by the long-suffering Syrian people. It is high time for the Security Council to consider firmer, more robust and concrete measures to put an end to the human tragedy being experienced by Syria. The unending war, with unspeakable consequences, has led to a complete contempt for international humanitarian law and has diminished the credibility of the Security Council, and its role to that of a powerless observer.

We urge the donor community to respond to the various calls and appeals for humanitarian financing,

which would enable United Nations staff and their partners to provide the necessary assistance to the civilian population in need, both within as well as outside Syria. The arrival of winter will expose the civilian population to very difficult living conditions. For that reason, we require special mobilization by the entire international community.

As we have always said, humanitarian action, whatever its scale, cannot in itself be considered a substitute for a political solution. That is why we must intensify our efforts aimed at helping the parties to find a negotiated solution to the conflict, such that it can put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people and restore an inclusive political transition. From that perspective, it behooves States possessing any influence with the various parties to spare no effort to prompt them to commit themselves in good faith to direct negotiations to implement the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of the Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom, Ms. Justine Greening. We are also grateful for the briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien; the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura; and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui.

We extend our condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims, the people and the Government of France, as well as to the people and the Government of Lebanon. We also extend our condolences to all countries and regions that suffer daily from the scourge of terrorism. Any act of terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable, and the perpetrators, organizers and backers must be brought to justice for their crimes.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/862) is just one of several alerts that the situation in Syria has become untenable. The conflict breaks down the basic conditions for the identity, security and dignity of Syrian society. It is impossible to remain indifferent, faced with the enormous vulnerability and the effects of the crisis on the civilian population, which cannot access essential basic elements needed for their survival. All parties are aware of the grave consequences of those acts, which must not be shielded

by impunity. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

We reiterate the need to promote mechanisms to protect the civilian population, such as the reopening of humanitarian corridors to facilitate access for aid for the population found in the internally displaced persons camps, and especially in areas where it is difficult to gain access. It is imperative to generate conditions needed to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to effectively implement the humanitarian resolutions calling on the parties to refrain from ongoing attacks on medical facilities, schools and basic infrastructure.

The briefing that we have just heard from Special Representative Bangura simply confirms the gravity of the situation of sexual and gender violence in the Syrian conflict, in which such violence is being used not only as a tactic of war, but also as a terror tactic. It is essential that the United Nations system recommend and implement measures based on the situation observed on the ground. We must fully implement resolution 2106 (2013) and insist on zero tolerance for sexual violence.

We are also concerned about the devastating consequences of the ongoing attacks on children and about their limited access to education, among other fundamental rights. We cannot, as Ms. Zerrougui pointed out, allow a generation to be lost, and we have a responsibility as the Security Council when it comes to that tragedy. It is essential to implement the Oslo Safe Schools Declaration, the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict and resolution 2143 (2014), on protecting schools from military use during armed conflict.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that a political solution is the only path to respond to humanitarian needs. The recent talks in Vienna of the International Syria Support Group and the joint statements of 30 October and of 14 November are a reason for hope. We appreciate the fact that concrete goals have been sought in the humanitarian plan. A ceasefire is essential.

It is also crucial that the political process be led by the Syrians themselves, as enshrined in the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). However, a political solution will continue to be far off as long as the conflict is militarized. We therefore categorically call for an end to the supply and flow of weapons to all parties.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to start by thanking all the speakers for their briefings — Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Zerrougui and Ms. Bangura. They remind us, with their untiring work, how many civilians, women and children, suffer directly in Syria.

I would also like to warmly thank all those who extended to my country their sympathy and solidarity following the horrible attacks committed on 13 November. On that day, France was struck at its heart in Paris and in Saint-Denis by terrorist attacks that were masterminded and planned in Syria. The toll, as the Council knows, was heavy — at least 129 dead, over 300 injured and many people who, right now as we speak, are still hanging on between life and death. France has received a great many gestures of solidarity and friendship from the world over. Those gestures and messages touch us deeply and illustrate the unanimous support of the international community for my country.

France was not the only one to be lethally attacked Friday evening; at least 19 different nationalities were affected. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims, both in France and throughout the world. Our thoughts also go to all the families who have been affected in recent months by a terrorism that knows no colour or religion: Lebanon, Turkey, Denmark, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and still other countries.

I speak to the Council as the representative of a country that is still standing, united and more determined than ever. It is determined to combat terrorism relentlessly and with respect for the law. Liberty, equality, fraternity — the motto of the French Republic — has never had more meaning. France is a free country and an independent country. It is pluralistic and strong in its diversity. That is the France that was struck on 13 November.

The enemy is known, namely, Daesh. That organization feeds on ethnic and religious divisions in the region and is reinforced by hatred and the rejection of the other. It oppresses and murders entire populations in the Middle East on a daily basis and is methodically and systematically destroying the unique cultural wealth of the region, which is the common heritage of humankind.

Faced with that situation, we must be guided by two complementary objectives. First, there is a need for a resolute and determined fight against terrorism

and Daesh. The entire international community must be united in that fight. As the President of the Republic said this morning, France will convene a meeting of the Security Council to adopt a draft resolution aimed at combating terrorism. President Hollande also called for togetherness, within the framework of a great and unique international coalition to combine our strength and our means to destroy Daesh, which is our common enemy. We must put an end to those who destroy in such a determined, methodological, professional and tenacious way.

With regard to the search for a political solution in Syria, that is more necessary than ever. Syria has become the largest factory of terrorists that the world has ever known. The members of the Security Council and the countries of the region must unite to urgently implement a political transition in Syria in which Bashar Al-Assad is not part of the solution. There is an urgent need to achieve concrete progress in the humanitarian field and to demand respect for international humanitarian law, whether it be humanitarian access or the cessation of all indiscriminate attacks against civilians. In Vienna, France made a number of concrete proposals on that subject aimed at alleviating the suffering of the civilian population at a time when the situation on the ground, which is already alarming, is further deteriorating. As has been stated by others, the resolutions adopted by the Council must be implemented without delay.

It is crucial that we stand united, once again, to address those two goals.

The refugee crisis is one of the most direct consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe. If the current situation goes on, it will create a highly destabilizing situation. It is more important than ever to assist the countries along Syria's border, which have welcomed the greatest number of Syrian refugees. I wish to pay tribute to them.

In addition to the countries of the region, Europe is on the front line. The inhabitants of Iraq and Syria, in particular in territories controlled by Daesh, are fleeing because they are being tortured. Welcoming them with dignity is a moral obligation for Europe out of respect for the fundamental freedoms and the principles of law that are fundamental for Europe.

Despite the tragic events and the attempts at destabilization, France will never renounce what it is, namely, a free country. It will never renounce its values. We will overcome this trial. We, the international

community, must stand united and defend together these universal principles. France's determination is absolute.

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

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The way certain Security Council members address the situation in Syria reminds me of a quote that some say is from Shakespeare — “There is an elephant in the room” — meaning that there is a huge, visible problem that cannot be overlooked. Certain members in this Chamber pretend that the problem does not exist, and they choose not address it or seek a solution to it. That is precisely how certain Security Council members addressed the situation in Syria when their decision-makers ignored the main scourge destabilizing Syria, the region and the entire world. That scourge is the main reason for the humanitarian tragedy besetting several areas in Syria and for the suffering of Syrian women and children and for the transformation of entire segments of the Syrian population into internally displaced persons and refugees. That scourge is the transborder Takfiri terrorism funded by well-known States, chief among which is Saudi Arabia, which is the bloodline that provides the source of life to terrorism. The scourge of terrorism was unleashed from its Wahhabi nest. It has savagely and indiscriminately struck at Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut, Kuwait, the Sinai, Abuja, Mali, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Sydney, Boston, Paris and other locations.

While we condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist acts in Paris and express our condolences to the families of the victims, we recall that in this very Chamber there are members who prevented the Security Council nine times from issuing a mere press statement condemning similar attacks that targeted innocent civilians in Damascus, Aleppo and other Syrian cities. It stands to reason that what we have seen in those cities did not arise in a vacuum or happen by chance. It is the predictable outcome of an attempt by certain parties to ignore this issue and of the failure to address it with the seriousness it deserves. It is a certain outcome of the exploitation by certain parties who blackmail the Syrian Government.

We have said from the beginning that those who exploit and justify terrorism or remain silent will suffer it themselves, because it is a transborder phenomenon. But our words fell on deaf ears. Certain States succeeded

in drawing terrorism into the political arena through the front door, using rhetorical manoeuvres, dividing terrorists into “acceptable” and “unacceptable” groups and referring to certain terrorists as a “moderate opposition”, all the while disregarding the consequences of such a course. People do not realize that a political problem with the Syrian Government is a negotiable issue. But by resorting to sanctions, by financing terrorism and by refusing to take these issues up with the Syrian Government and army in order to combat this transborder crime, they are committing a crime as much against their own people as against the Syrian people.

In Syria we are fighting filthy terrorist groups on behalf of the whole world. Every time the Syrian army kills a foreign terrorist, dozens of innocent potential victims are protected. Otherwise, that terrorist returns home and does the same thing. Those who distort that reality are accomplices in the scourge of terrorism and partners in the bloodshed of the victims.

We would recall that among the perpetrators of many attacks in several cities around the world, including the recent bloody attacks in Paris, were thousands of Europeans whose entry to Syria was facilitated as jihadists after they were brainwashed by fatwabs funded by well-known Gulf States. There is a late awakening to the seriousness of terrorism that led the President of a permanent Security Council member to amend the Constitution of his country to face the Takfiri terrorism.

Acts should accompany words with regard to combating terrorism in Syria, which is funded by 40 States and by the illegal trade in oil, along with the illegal trade in artefacts across our borders with Turkey. That requires serious political will to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism, chief among them resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), which are underscored in the second Vienna communiqué. It also requires collective efforts under a single front against terrorism, excluding political opportunists or amateurs.

Time and again, we have expressed our readiness to cooperate with any State that is serious about combating terrorism. That is precisely what has happened through the joint Syrian-Russian military anti-terrorist action, as well as the intelligence cooperation among Syria, Iran, Iraq and Russia. That has led to practical results in the field, namely, a retreat by terrorist groups from

many areas, which led to the secure, safe, voluntary return of 1 million Syrian internally displaced persons to their homes.

Seriously and effectively combating terrorism will contribute to the success of a political solution to the crisis in Syria. From the outset, the Syrian Government has expressed its readiness to contribute to any serious efforts to achieve a political solution. That is why we cooperated with Mr. Kofi Annan and accepted his six-point plan. We have also cooperated with Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We contributed to the second Geneva Conference on Syria. And we cooperated with Mr. De Mistura and accepted his proposal on Aleppo and agreed to participate in his suggested four working groups.

Our political message today, following the conclusion of the meeting in Vienna, is that the Syrian Government stands ready to contribute to any sincere effort to achieve a political solution in which Syrians decide their own future and choices through dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership, without external intervention, in a manner that ensures the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, as has been asserted by the several resolutions adopted by the Council and the two Vienna communiqués.

Unfortunately, the recent report (S/2015/862) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) is politicized and biased and includes many gaps and much erroneous

information. We have addressed two identical letters to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General on that issue. But I would like here to address a serious issue in that report: it is based on unreliable sources whose connections are well known, which misleads Council members.

With regard to the allegation that the Syrian Government is using indiscriminate weapons, I assert that the Syrian army does not, has not and will not use any indiscriminate weapons. It acts in accordance with international law, within the context of combating terrorism. Those who are killing civilians are those who are using them as human shields in many areas of Syria.

Our deliberations and ongoing statements on the dangers of terrorism and the importance of combating it should not be misunderstood as indicating that we do not recognize the seriousness of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in particular the situation of our children and women. But that should not come at the expense of the crux of the problem and should not be politicized or subjected to double standards. We are in discussion with Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Zerroughi and Ms. Bangura. We have organized field missions to Syria in order to address any outstanding issues. I welcome Mr. O'Brien's visit to Syria next month.

We stand ready to cooperate with well-intentioned members of the Security Council in order to improve the situation in Syria.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.