



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

8978th meeting

Friday, 25 February 2022, 10.15 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Ms. Oye
Ghana	Mrs. Hackman
India	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland	Mr. Kelly
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Juul
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021) (S/2022/135)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021) (S/2022/135)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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/2022/135, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021).

I now give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: Every month, I draw your attention to the fact that Syrians across the country and those who are displaced are facing poverty and hunger at levels higher than at any point in the conflict. Ms. Msuya will brief the Council on the latest humanitarian situation. However, let me emphasize that the full implementation of resolution 2585 (2021) is important not only on humanitarian grounds, but also in the context of building trust and confidence. For my part, I remain steadfastly committed to implementing my mandate in resolution 2254 (2015) to convene the Syrian parties in a formal political process and to exercising good offices

to promote the full implementation of the resolution in a manner that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and restores the full sovereignty, unity independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

Militarily, the front lines remain unshifted, but we still see all the signs of an ongoing hot conflict. Any of a number of flashpoints could ignite a broader conflagration. We continue to see mutual shelling, skirmishes, improvised explosive devices and security incidents across the front lines in the north-west, the north-east and the south-west. Yet again, we have seen more violence across international borders — drone strikes in the north-east; Israeli strikes in the south and in Damascus; and further security incidents on the Syrian-Jordanian border, which Amman states are related to drug smuggling. We have also seen Security Council-listed terrorist groups active across Syria. We note the United States ground operation that killed the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

It is plain that there is a stalemate, that there is acute suffering and that a political solution is the only way out. That requires a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process, which must be supported by constructive international diplomacy, however hard that is, especially right now.

I am glad to report that we have now set a date for convening the seventh session of the small body of the Syrian-owned, Syrian-led United Nations-facilitated Constitutional Committee in Geneva on 21 March. In that regard, the background is that, on the last day of the sixth session, the co-Chairs agreed with each other on the fifth day of the session that the Committee needed a mechanism to improve the workings, and, with my facilitation, they reached an agreement on how that could be done.

It is important that the small body's work continue, including in such a manner that it builds trust and confidence. The parties' positions are substantively far apart and narrowing their differences will inevitably be an incremental process. However, in line with the terms of reference and core rules of procedure, what we need is a sense of compromise and constructive engagement from all delegations so that the Committee works expeditiously and continuously to produce results and continued progress, without foreign interference or externally imposed timelines. The co-Chairs have agreed to future sessions in May and June 2022 and to discuss a workplan, which is plainly needed.

In the meantime, I have continued, and will continue, to work on the broader process to implement other elements of resolution 2254 (2015) that lie outside the constitutional basket. I am conducting a rolling process of consultations to identify how that might be done. In parallel, I have also continued to engage with the Syrian parties, meeting with the Syrian Government in Damascus and the Syrian Negotiations Commission in Istanbul and here in Geneva. I also held in-depth discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Turkey and Russia in their capitals this month.

Resolution 2254 (2015) speaks of the need for a political negotiation and for confidence-building measures to support progress, and it enumerates a range of specifics in that regard. In that spirit, as I continue to facilitate the Constitutional Committee, I have been seeking to identify areas where consensus might be found on a series of reciprocal confidence-building measures in resolution 2254 (2015) that could be implemented in parallel, step for step and, in the process, to explore how a broader political process could be constructed to tackle all the issues in the resolution.

As I told the Council last month (see S/PV.8955), I am asking interlocutors not only what they would demand, but also what they would be able to put on the table. The aim would be to make progress, step for step, on issues through commitments that are made with precision, that are verifiable and that are implemented in parallel. I am listening carefully to all interlocutors as to how they believe it is possible to make progress. I thank all who have engaged so far, and I appreciate the constructive ideas that have been shared to date. I look forward to continuing the consultations with those whom I have not yet been able to consult and to further rounds of engagement.

Following my last briefing to the Council, I consulted with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board in Norway and look forward to welcoming it in Switzerland from 14 to 21 March. Meanwhile, on Sunday, I will meet with a diverse group of Syrian civil society representatives invited for thematic consultations through the Civil Society Support Room in Geneva. I very much look forward to resuming that direct engagement and to hearing their feedback, suggestions and ideas. I am always encouraged and inspired to see them engage constructively on how to rebuild a Syrian society based on common civic values of independence, participation, plurality, transparency, dialogue and equality despite their own life stories and diverse narratives.

I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of the Syrian people desperately want the conflict to end, to see some basic improvements to their shattered lives and to live in safety and dignity. They also want to see progress on the file of detainees, abductees and missing persons, which continues to affect the lives of so many families in every corner of Syria. Scaled-up action with regard to releases, particularly of women, children, the sick and the elderly, and the sharing of information on the fate and whereabouts of missing persons is more vital than ever.

Through my most recent round of consultations, I had hoped that we might be starting to find a way into a functioning political process to implement resolution 2254 (2015). I am obviously very concerned that the constructive international diplomacy required to push that forward may prove more difficult than it already was against the backdrop of the military operations in Ukraine.

For my part, I will continue to focus on engaging and convening the Syrian parties and consulting widely. We will convene a series of Constitutional Committee meetings in March, May and June, and we will continue to roll out a set of consultations on step-for-step approaches within the wider issues in resolution 2254 (2015) and on how we can make progress.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing.

I understand that this is Ms. Msuya's first briefing to the Security Council. I welcome her to this meeting, and I now give her the floor.

Ms. Msuya: This is my first briefing to the Council in my role as Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. I look forward to engaging closely with all Council members.

A few days ago, the United Nations, together with its humanitarian partners, published its evidence-based assessment of humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic for the coming year. The findings are clear and paint a very bleak picture. More people are in need now than at any time since the start of the conflict. A total of 14.6 million people will be dependent on humanitarian assistance. That is 9 per cent more than last year and 32 per cent more than the year before. The world is failing the people of Syria. That cannot be our strategy.

Hostilities, primarily along front lines, continue to claim civilian lives and damage critical civilian

infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and water facilities. Another 14 civilians were killed this January alone. Mines and explosive ordnance have claimed additional lives, including children. Hostilities also restrict freedom of movement, which in turn places women and children at greater risk of abuse. As we saw last month with the attack on a prison in Al-Hasakah, the incredibly precarious situation of the hundreds of children who remain in detention centres and camps continues. They should never have been there in the first place. They need protection. They need services and hope for the future. The time to act is long overdue.

Syria now ranks among the 10 most food-insecure countries in the world, with a staggering 12 million people considered food-insecure. Syria's economy is spiralling further downward. Food keeps getting more expensive and people are going hungry. Over the past year, the cost of feeding a family of five for a month with only the most basic items has almost doubled. A household now spends on average 50 per cent more than it earns. To get by, families must borrow money without much hope of being able to repay their loans, continuing the trend of an ever-increasing financial burden for them that forces them to make unbearable choices. Children, and girls especially, are being pulled out of school. Child marriages are on the rise. Female-headed households, older people without family support, persons with disabilities and children have been disproportionately affected.

We are ramping up early-recovery programming this year. I know that Under-Secretary-General Griffiths also briefed the Council on that recently (see S/PV.8957). Our 2022 humanitarian response plan is nearing finalization. We expect that roughly one quarter of the total appeal will be geared to increasing resilience and access to basic services, which is a significant increase from last year. Part of our focus will be on revitalizing access to some basic services such as water, but we need more support and we are counting on the generosity of donors to deliver. It is critical that the various parties facilitate our efforts. Millions of people in north-western Syria depend on our support to survive. Winter has compounded their suffering, especially for the millions living in tents. Through our cross-border operations, we deliver food, medicine and other essential items each month and support the delivery of essential services, and we do all of it in a transparent and principled manner.

Last year we also expanded access into north-western Syria by restarting cross-line operations. In December and January, after setting up a new distribution system, cross-line aid began reaching people in need. We have a plan in place for additional deliveries and we are ready to move. What we need now is the support of all the parties concerned to enable the cross-line missions to go ahead. Let me reiterate, however, that there is no alternative in place now that can match the scale and scope of the massive United Nations cross-border operation, providing food, vaccines and other vital aid to 2.4 million people.

The people of Syria have suffered for so long. They deserve a better future. They now need aid to survive, but that should not be the case. They need a chance to build a dignified life for themselves and their families. They need to be able to give their children hope for a better future. To achieve that, we need sustainable and reliable access. We need more funding. We also need to scale up early-recovery programming, alongside our life-saving work. But most importantly, Syrians need peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Msuya for her briefing.

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

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings and would like to welcome the Assistant Secretary-General, who is here for the first time. Their briefings are important because it is imperative that the Security Council continue to publicly discuss the ongoing political, humanitarian and security crises in Syria. Today I would like to focus on three aspects of the Syrian crisis — the need for progress on the stalled political track, the threat from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and the imperative of expanding humanitarian access, including through the cross-border humanitarian mechanism.

First, the United States reaffirms its strong support for Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to advance a political solution in Syria and fully implement resolution 2254 (2015). We welcome the announcement of a new round of meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee and call on all parties to participate in good faith and adhere to the meeting format. We look forward to further discussion of the Special Envoy's steps-for-steps approach. We hope that all Syrian parties, as well

as other stakeholders, engage constructively on ways to advance all aspects of the political process.

We remain deeply concerned about the lack of progress on releasing the thousands of people who have been arbitrarily detained and again call on the Al-Assad regime to undertake unilateral releases. We also urge the regime to provide information on the tens of thousands of missing persons. As we have heard in countless briefings, that issue affects almost every Syrian family, and the lack of action on the file underscores why nations should not be normalizing relations with a regime that locks up and forcibly disappears its own people.

Secondly, the attack on the ISIS detention facility in Al-Hasakah in January is a stark reminder that ISIS remains a dangerous threat and that the global coalition to defeat ISIS must continue its efforts. We credit the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for taking swift action to spoil that attack and deny ISIS the reinforcements that it sought. The SDF sustained significant casualties in responding to that attack. We call on all Member States to take action to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate and prosecute, where appropriate, their nationals who remain in north-eastern Syria. The removal of former ISIS leader Haji Abdullah from the battlefield demonstrates our steadfast commitment to denying ISIS any opportunity to reconstitute, retake and hold territory in Syria and Iraq.

Thirdly, as detailed by the Assistant Secretary-General, the dire humanitarian situation in Syria confirms once again what the humanitarian assistance community and the Syrian people have been saying for years — not enough aid is getting to those who need it. And not only that, because according to the 2022 outlook of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of people in need in Syria is now higher than at any point in the 11-year conflict. The Syrian people do not have enough food, medicine, fuel, blankets or winter clothes. The situation in north-eastern Syria, which was already tragically bad before the closure of the Al-Yarubiyah crossing with Iraq, has become empirically worse since the Council failed to authorize its continued use.

We commend all States that are providing coronavirus-disease-related assistance to Syria, including a recent major donation of vaccines from Italy, but in order to get the vaccines into arms faster, we need to expand humanitarian access. Continued

cross-border and cross-line access remains essential. It is our collective responsibility to renew and expand the cross-border mechanism this summer. We support all modalities for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. That includes cross-line shipments, and we call on all parties to work constructively with the United Nations to facilitate cross-line deliveries. However, as we and the Secretary-General have often said, cross-line aid cannot match the scale of cross-border aid. The Council must therefore work together to ensure not only that Bab Al-Hawa remains open, but that all cross-border options are available to meet the pressing humanitarian needs. While the United States and other donors continue to support the humanitarian response in Syria, we must all remain vigilant about detecting any attempt by the Al-Assad regime and its cronies to manipulate humanitarian aid. The regime's record on that, dating back to the start of the conflict, is clear and disgraceful. We therefore want to take this opportunity to recall the critical importance of the parameters and principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance in Syria, which aim to ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered in a principled manner based on need alone. We call on all actors to allow the United Nations and all humanitarian organizations to operate without interference in the service of the Syrian people.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): I am making this statement today on behalf of Norway and Ireland, the co-penholders of the Syria humanitarian file. I want to welcome Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and to thank her for her very sobering briefing, which has once again underlined the sheer depth of ongoing humanitarian needs on the ground. She has also reminded us of the complex challenge of delivering the humanitarian response throughout Syria.

Since the start of 2022, Syria has seen increased insecurity and violence. Hostilities have resulted in the deaths of at least 92 civilians during the reporting period, including 19 children. Their deaths are deplorable, as is the systematic harming of civilians perpetrated by parties to the conflict. The flagrant disregard for the lives of Syrians is simply unacceptable yet has tragically become the norm. We urge all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in the conduct of military operations.

More than a decade of armed conflict on multiple fronts in Syria has left vast stretches of the country

littered with mines and all kinds of explosive ordnance. Innocent civilians seeking only to go about their daily lives pay a terrible price through loss of life or limb. Explosive ordnance contamination is not only a major protection concern, it also stands in the way of expanding humanitarian access, as well as efforts to build livelihoods and resilience in Syria. Mine clearance capacity has long been a missing link in the broader chain of humanitarian interventions in Syria. We welcome the commencement of clearance operations supported by the Mine Action Service in western Ghouta. The arrival of capable mine action organizations in Syria offers donors and other humanitarian stakeholders an opportunity to begin filling the gap, as a matter of urgency, in line with humanitarian principles.

We are deeply concerned about the continually deteriorating security situation at Al-Hol camp, with four murders reported in January alone. We urge that the review of security protocols be concluded swiftly. It is crucial that security provided at the camp protect civilians and humanitarian workers without constraining humanitarian access.

Syrians continue to struggle through a harsh and cruel winter to devastating effect. Camps have been flooded, destroying tents, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of civilians and resulting in the deaths of men, women and children. The economic crisis has deepened, driving food prices ever higher and contributing to food insecurity. Water access has been further affected by hostilities, low rainfall and disruptions to the water systems. We commend the continued efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations in delivering early-recovery activities and welcome the progress that has been made in that regard during the reporting period.

Through this bleak season, the humanitarian cross-border operation has continued to provide critical humanitarian support for millions of people in desperate need in north-west Syria. As the Secretary-General has said once again, there is currently no alternative that can match the scale and scope of the cross-border operation. As co-penholders, Ireland and Norway continue to emphasize their support for all modalities to meet the humanitarian needs of all the people of Syria. The humanitarian access landscape in Syria remains complex. The delivery and distribution of the second cross-line delivery to north-western Syria is welcome, but the lack of a cross-line delivery so far in 2022 is a disappointment. It is vital that the necessary

approvals and security guarantees be provided. We encourage continued efforts and call on all parties to commit to ensuring that humanitarian deliveries can reach everyone in need. It is the people of Syria, already in dire need, who continue to suffer when humanitarian access is not possible. I would like to reiterate that our guiding principle on this file is, and will remain, addressing the significant humanitarian needs of all the Syrian people. The Security Council must continue to work as one to ensure that those needs are met.

I would now like to turn to the political situation and make some additional remarks in my national capacity. I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. Ireland commends his continued efforts to reconvene the drafting body of the Constitutional Committee for the planned seventh meeting to be held from 21 to 25 March. The Committee must achieve substantive progress but cannot do so without meaningful engagement on texts, especially by the Syrian authorities. We welcome Mr. Pedersen's ongoing consultation with the Women's Advisory Board. It is essential that the Committee have a clear understanding of the gendered effects of the current situation. Gender equality and respect for international human rights law must be priorities, underpinned by a gender-responsive constitution. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership should be a norm at every stage and for every party.

Ireland calls on all the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international law. We reiterate our calls for those responsible for violations of international law to be held to account. Ireland will continue to support the work of the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. Both have vital roles in ensuring accountability and justice, which is essential if the Syrian people are to have lasting peace and stability.

Ireland remains gravely concerned about the tens of thousands of people in Syria who have been unlawfully detained or forcibly disappeared. We look forward to the forthcoming study from the Secretary-General on how to bolster the efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria, as requested in General Assembly resolution 76/228. This will be

a valuable addition to existing work, including by the Office of the Special Envoy.

The Council was reminded last month of the severe threat Da'esh continues to pose in Syria. The international community must remain committed to ensuring its lasting defeat. To help overcome those and other challenges, Ireland will continue to support Special Envoy Pedersen in all of his efforts to facilitate a political resolution that delivers for all Syrian people. We look forward to further engagement on his step-for-steps initiative. We call on all parties to the conflict, as well as other international and Syrian stakeholders, to do likewise.

In conclusion, resolution 2254 (2015) must remain our lodestar. We all know that the only sustainable solution to the crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. Only then can the Syrian people be assured that an end to their suffering is in sight. That is the only way forward.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Geir Pedersen and Ms. Joyce Msuya for their important briefings, and we welcome Ms. Msuya to her first Security Council meeting. Today I would first like to address the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and then turn to the political issue.

Where the former is concerned, it is essential to focus on meeting the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, who have borne the brunt of the crisis. Separating political and humanitarian positions should be a priority. The task of providing the Syrian people with humanitarian aid and relief should be a matter of consensus, regardless of political differences, especially in the light of Ms. Msuya's statement that 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. It is a moral and humanitarian imperative to ensure that Syrians are not left to face difficult conditions while lacking the most basic services such as water and electricity. In that regard, we underscore that the water crisis is one of the most critical humanitarian challenges facing the Syrian people, especially those who depend on the Allouk water station or who are residents of the city of Al-Bab. We stress that restrictions on access to water will have serious humanitarian repercussions. My country also stresses the need for the relevant parties in Syria to cooperate in ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches all in need. In that regard, we commend the continued

delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria in accordance with resolution 2585 (2021) and the resumption of cross-line delivery of humanitarian aid over the past few months.

Turning to the political situation, we welcome the agreement of the two parties to convene the seventh round of meetings of the Constitutional Committee on 21 March, including their agreement on the modalities for the session, steps that will help to build confidence between them in preparation for addressing more complex challenges. We encourage them to continue their dialogue to build on these positive developments. We reiterate the importance of the active participation of Syrian women in the Constitutional Committee, especially given their pivotal role in social development across every sector.

The reality that Syria is an Arab country and that its stability is linked to that of the Arab region as a whole cannot be ignored. We stress the importance of rejecting foreign interference in Syrian affairs. We also highlight the importance of ensuring a greater Arab role in the Syrian crisis, as that approach is the most viable for supporting mediation efforts under the auspices of the United Nations with the aim of resolving the crisis and preserving the security of the region.

If progress is to be made on the political process, action must be taken to address security challenges through de-escalation and a nationwide ceasefire. The repercussions that have resulted from the fragile security situation in Syria and extended to neighbouring countries, especially Jordan, must be taken into consideration. The recent clashes on the Jordan-Syria border between Jordanian armed forces and various groups trying to smuggle drugs into Jordanian territories and neighbouring countries resulted in death or injury for a number of Jordanian border guards. That is unacceptable.

In conclusion, we emphasize that a political solution to the Syrian crisis is still possible. It demands that we display the necessary flexibility while consolidating efforts to overcome the current obstacles and to move from managing the crisis to resolving it, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), so as to meet the aspirations and basic needs of our brother people of Syria.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Special Representative Pedersen for his briefing. We also welcome Assistant Secretary-General Msuya to the Security Council and thank her for her briefing. I will be brief because I have a feeling that I am likely to

be repeating myself. No one needs reminding of the unbearable suffering of the Syrian people under the current stalemate and, as we heard today, the tragic, persistent and worsening humanitarian situation. Every month, as we hear about the overall depressing picture in Syria, we ask ourselves how many more helpless millions of people must go hungry and how many victims and children have to freeze to death for the Council to use its power to upend the current status quo.

We have highlighted before that cross-border access is of paramount importance, and I reiterate that. It should be expanded so that at the next meeting or those that follow in the months to come, we do not get the same picture, or a worsening one, of frightening neglect and disrespect for human life.

Syrians need everything. They need food and all the help they can get to survive, but most of all they need peace, hope and prospects. That is why the key to this issue is a political transition process, without which no progress can be made towards the normalization of life in the country in general, including the humanitarian situation.

There can be no alternative to the full and expeditious implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). Delays and derailments will only make a horrible situation worse. The Syrian regime, which bears the primary responsibility for the massive suffering inflicted on the Syrian people and the perpetuation of this deadly status quo, also bears primary responsibility for the practically non-existent progress towards a political resolution of the conflict. We support a Syrian-owned and -led process, but we also strongly believe that efforts to rehabilitate the Syrian regime should not precede but should rather follow real and tangible progress towards a genuine transition in Syria. Rewarding the regime without any acceptance on its part of responsibility to overcome the status quo will only embolden it in its refusal — as we have seen — to engage in good faith with the opposition and its ability to continue to undermine the political transition with impunity.

We reiterate our full and unreserved support for the Special Envoy in his incremental approach to bringing the relevant parties together to put Syria back on track. We remain anxious to seek and create actionable results that can pave the way for a free and democratic Syria. We look forward to the next meeting of the Constitutional Committee and to a sustained process for making progress on the participation of women.

We continue to believe that free and fair elections, held under a new constitution that reflects the will and aspirations of the Syrian people, constitute the path to opening a new chapter for Syria. The release of all political detainees, a complete halt to attacks on civilian areas and full accountability for crimes committed are important preconditions for rebuilding the process that can move Syria along the right path towards its future.

Mr. Raguttaballi (India): I join others in thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their updates today.

It has been India's consistent stand that imposing external solutions will not help to resolve the Syrian conflict. It is for the Syrians to determine and decide what is best for Syria and for their own future. The Special Envoy has been working consistently to facilitate the political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015), and we support his active diplomatic efforts to end the stalemate in the Constitutional Committee process. We take note of the announcement that the seventh Constitutional Committee meeting will be held in Geneva next month. We also take positive note of the Special Envoy's recent visits to Damascus and Moscow and his meetings with the Syrian and Russian leaderships. He has also engaged with other leaders in the region, including in Egypt. We believe that regional actors and Syria's neighbours will have an important role to play in the peaceful resolution of the conflict and in achieving lasting progress through the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

Regarding confidence-building measures, we look forward to receiving the Special Envoy's paper on his new ideas, as was conveyed to the Council in January (see S/PV.8955). We hope the paper will address issues related to reconstruction as well. We also welcome the efforts by the Syrian authorities to prioritize the return of displaced Syrians to their own areas.

On the security front, we remain concerned about the overall situation, including increasing incidents of ceasefire violations in north-western Syria. We call on all sides to refrain from actions that could cause the situation to deteriorate further. India has repeatedly emphasized the looming threat posed by resurgent terrorist groups in Syria. The brutality of the attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in north-eastern Syria and Al-Hasakah last month demonstrates the severity of the problem. The re-emergence of ISIL/Da'esh in Syria and Iraq calls

for urgent action by the international community. We reiterate that the global fight against terrorism cannot and should not be compromised for narrow political gains. Terrorists cannot be defeated by forming alliances with non-sovereign entities or by pushing narrow political agendas.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has seen no significant improvement in recent months. We believe that a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire is vital to the interests of the Syrian people. It will also help to expand cross-line humanitarian aid operations. We note the progress that has been made on expanding the overall humanitarian response and facilitating cross-line access, including drafting a six-month plan for ensuring a predictable and sustainable flow of aid. In the north-east, however, we believe there is considerable scope for expanding operations. It should also be noted that the ongoing cross-border operations continue to have a negative impact on the sovereignty of the Syrian State. We therefore encourage the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies to pursue efforts to enhance cross-line operations as well.

It will be necessary to scale up humanitarian assistance and shore up donor support for the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Syria, which is still underfunded. We also continue to believe that it is crucial to achieve progress on the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021) with regard to early recovery. The support of the international community in addressing the economic and humanitarian challenges remains integral to the success of the political process. For its part, India has continued to extend developmental assistance and human resource development support to Syria. In response to a request from the Government of Syria for emergency humanitarian assistance, India gifted 2,000 metric tons of rice to strengthen food security in Syria last year in two consignments, and in July 2020 we gifted 10 metric tons of life-saving medicines to Syria as part of coronavirus-disease-related assistance. More than 500 Syrians have benefited from the artificial-limb fitment camp that we organized in 2020.

In conclusion, the fact that the political and humanitarian aspects of the conflict in Syria are strongly interlinked must not be overlooked. India remains strongly committed to supporting the ongoing United Nations-facilitated, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned reconciliation process as the credible way forward.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), Gabon, Ghana and Kenya. We thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey. Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situation in Syria.

The situation in Syria continues to demand our collective responsibility to protect and empower the Syrian people in their quest for sustained peace and stability. Progress on the political track is a lifeline in that regard. We commend the Special Envoy's efforts, which after a four-month hiatus have led to an agreement to hold a seventh round of the Constitutional Committee meetings in the latter part of next month. We commend the parties for their willingness to find agreement on the methodology, which we see as a promising development. We reiterate our plea to the parties to engage meaningfully and constructively in the interests of the millions of Syrians who are counting on their leadership for a bright future. We further look forward to the upcoming Astana format meeting at the Foreign Minister level next month. It is our hope that the meeting will yield fruitful paths that can gain headway and promise for Syria. The A3 also supports other innovative avenues aimed at moving the political process forward. We take note of the Special Envoy's ongoing consultations on a step-for-step approach and urge that its implementation, particularly regarding humanitarian matters, be in clear accord with international humanitarian law.

Regional efforts play a critical role in supporting the people of Syria in their quest for lasting peace. Our experience in Africa is that the active positive engagement of neighbouring and nearby countries, particularly in a coordinated manner, is key to resolving difficult political and security crises. We therefore encourage regional support, bearing in mind that resolution 2254 (2015) remains the primary road map for achieving the desired political solution to the crisis.

With regard to the security situation, the A3 condemns the unrelenting violence along the contact lines in north-western Syria and in Dara'a through air strikes, ground-based strikes, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. The escalation of violence continues to damage public infrastructure and hampers the population's access to public services, including health care, educational facilities, potable

water and essential items such as heating, fuel and food. The resulting destruction of human lives and livelihoods, especially those of women, children and other vulnerable groups, is repulsive and should be stopped at all costs.

It is crucial to ensure that the nationwide ceasefire is respected and adhered to by all concerned parties, as it is increasingly clear that military options cannot end the war. In addition, the perils being visited on innocent lives by groups that the Security Council has listed as terrorists, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, continue to be of grave concern. The A3 underscores the imperative for decisive collective action to combat such terrorist groups so as to ensure that the victims get justice.

We also stress the imperative for the protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

That leads me to the humanitarian situation. The A3 notes with regret that 14.6 million people continue to be in need. The cross-border aid mechanism, complemented by cross-line deliveries, remains a crucial avenue for humanitarian assistance and must be sustained in the interest of the people. We further commend the continued deliveries of cross-line aid in the north-west as a result of the six-month plan and encourage the addition of medical supplies as part of that response.

We must caution against the politicization or diversion of aid and call for clear standards of oversight and transparency of aid delivery for the cross-border mechanism as well as for cross-line deliveries while ensuring the protection of all humanitarian personnel and convoys.

We are also concerned about the impact of the pandemic, which continues to disproportionately put women's social and economic prospects in jeopardy given the fragile state of the country and the destruction as a result of years of conflict.

Furthermore, given the dire economic situation, marked by vast food insecurity, we urge all actors to support economic recovery measures as a key component of the longer-term peace that Syria and the region need.

The A3 commends the early recovery and livelihoods activities under the United Nations humanitarian response and encourages the expansion of such activities to include psychosocial support for the population, especially for women and children, who have been disproportionately affected by the conflict. It is imperative that those programmes be adequately funded so that they can meet their intended goal of sustained peace.

In closing, we reiterate the importance of respect for Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The A3 stands in solidarity with the people of Syria in their quest for peace, which can be delivered only by a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, with international support.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their updates, as well as the Secretary-General for the report presented earlier this week.

Once again we are hearing no encouraging news or positive developments coming from Syria. Civilians and basic civilian infrastructure continue to be impacted by active hostilities; high food prices and food insecurity have left millions of Syrians even more dependent on international assistance. Special Envoy Pedersen's words remain sadly appropriate: it is an unacceptable status quo.

Access to safe drinking water is a fundamental human right. It is disturbing to hear that millions of people remain without reliable access to water and that the prevalence of water-borne disease places additional pressure on the public health system. Brazil reiterates its call upon all parties to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, including by taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Early recovery efforts must be strengthened, and humanitarian exemptions for any sanctions be strictly observed to ensure that they do not undermine access to food, shelter and essential health supplies for those most in need.

The growing presence of terrorist groups in Syria is of particular concern, especially in the aftermath of the Al-Hasakah attacks. Brazil remains concerned at the situation of children detained at the Ghwayran detention centre. We support UNICEF's call for access

to the boys and girls detained in facilities across north-east Syria in order to provide the care needed.

Brazil reiterates its support for the continuous flow of life-saving international aid to the Syrian people, especially those living in camps and informal settlements.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/135) confirms that cross-border operations remain critical to ensuring that basic assistance can reach millions of civilians in need. It also points out that the Syrian cross-border operation is one of the most closely monitored operations in the world, subject to multiple layers of checks to ensure a high degree of transparency.

Brazil underlines the importance of keeping those cross-border humanitarian operations under scrutiny while cross-line operations expand in a safe, regular and predictable way. We echo the Secretary-General's call on all parties to overcome the ongoing challenges to cross-line operations by complying with their obligation to ensure free and unimpeded humanitarian access, in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Brazil remains convinced that only a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led United Nations-facilitated political process, with due regard for the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity, will bring lasting peace and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population.

We support Mr. Pedersen's efforts to re-engage key stakeholders and to try new ideas with the aim of building trust and confidence among the parties in order to advance the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

Brazil welcomes the prospect of a seventh meeting of the Constitutional Committee next month and remains hopeful that a new methodology can be agreed for the submission of substantive revisions of constitutional elements. After a decade of suffering, the Syrian people deserve to see effective progress towards a long-aspired-to political agreement that can end the conflict and pave the way for sustainable peace.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their detailed briefings. I wish Assistant Secretary-General Msuya every success in her new task. I also welcome

the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

I will focus my remarks on the political situation, the violence and the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

In just a few more days, it will have been 11 years since the conflict in Syria began. Unfortunately, we do not anticipate any improvement. The number of people needing humanitarian assistance has already reached 14.6 million. Of particular concern is the crisis in the provision of basic services such as water and electricity.

My country, Mexico, reiterates that there can be no military solution to this conflict. However, for political dialogue to succeed and to avert increased costs and human tragedy, political will on the part of all stakeholders is required.

We reiterate the importance of observing a national ceasefire and at the same time moving forward with the political process in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). On that last point, we welcome the Special Envoy's strategy of ensuring meetings among the various parties as well as consultations with regional and international stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria. We also welcome the agreement to conduct the seventh session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee in March. We call for the parties to participate constructively in those discussions in a committed manner.

The release of five detainees and the issuance of 40 death certificates in eastern Ghouta is a positive step forward. However, in our assessment it is not commensurate with the scale of the problem, given that thousands of people remain disappeared or in detention. We reiterate the call for their immediate release and for the facilitation of access for humanitarian organizations to detention centres.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2021/1030) and the latest two-monthly briefing make clear that safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access is essential to meet the basic needs of the population and to mitigate the cumulative effects of more than a decade of conflict. In addition to medical care, services such as mental-health care and psychosocial support are needed.

My country, Mexico, welcomes the progress in cross-line operations to the north-west. However, it is clear that that is not a substitute for the more than

1,200 truckloads of humanitarian aid that enter through Bab Al-Hawa each month. The spirit that led to the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021) in July 2021 must continue to guide the Council's work.

The ongoing issues surrounding the Allouk water station, in addition to the attacks affecting the distribution of water, exemplify the consequences that the protracted conflict has had on Syria. Resolution 2585 (2021) highlights the importance of early-recovery projects. Their implementation is a priority, particularly for the recovery and resilience of the Syrian people.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Msuya for their briefings.

A lasting solution to the conflict can only be political. The war is not over: a bombardment by forces of the Syrian regime in Idlib province on 12 February resulted in the deaths of many civilians, including children. France condemns those bombings and reiterates its call for an immediate nation-wide cessation of hostilities. The protection of civilians remains an absolute priority.

The Council unanimously adopted resolution 2254 (2015). It remains our common road map for a political solution to the conflict. Without its full implementation, there will be no lasting peace.

France supports the efforts of the Special Envoy in the context of a step-by-step approach. The political process must make progress and each actor must assume its responsibilities, first and foremost the Syrian regime, which is still not willing to make the slightest move.

Humanitarian needs have never been as great: 14.6 million people are in need of assistance. Full humanitarian access to all those people must be ensured. All parties to the conflict, in particular the regime, must respect their international obligations.

The cross-border humanitarian mechanism remains essential. Last year, 10,000 trucks delivered aid to approximately 2.4 million people in the north-west every month. Progress on cross-line access must continue in both the north-west and the north-east. However, the cross-border mechanism will remain necessary as long as aid does not reach all those in need throughout the country.

In the absence of a political solution, the French and European positions on the lifting of sanctions and reconstruction will remain unchanged. Reconstruction

can begin only once a political process is firmly under way. I repeat: the regime must also assume its responsibilities in that regard.

Furthermore, the regime's systematic violation of the rights of refugees who have returned to Syria shows that the conditions for a voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees have not been met. Once again, it is up to the regime to assume its responsibilities. It is also imperative that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have access to returning refugees.

Finally, France will continue its relentless fight against impunity for the perpetrators of crimes committed in Syria. They will have to answer for their actions.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings.

China appreciates the efforts made by the United Nations to advance the political process in Syria and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. Today I would like to make the following brief comments.

First, we should adhere to the correct direction of political settlement. China firmly supports the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, and calls on all parties in Syria to strengthen dialogue, narrow differences and promote substantive progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee. China appreciates the political mediation of Special Envoy Pedersen and hopes that the seventh round of the Constitutional Committee will be held as scheduled in March. The work of the Constitutional Committee must remain independent and free from external interference and Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be upheld.

Secondly, terrorism in Syria must be eradicated. The counter-terrorism situation in Syria remains grim. In accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions, the international community should adopt unified standards, strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation and resolutely crack down on terrorist forces in Syria to ensure secure conditions for the political process. The recent Islamic State jailbreak reminds the international community that the problem of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq is flagrant and has had spillover effects. That long-standing issue is a common threat to the countries of origin, the

countries concerned and the countries of the region. All parties concerned must work together to resolve it.

Thirdly, every effort must be made to improve the economic and humanitarian situations in Syria. The economic crisis has affected all aspects of Syrian society, with food and oil prices soaring. China calls on the international community to increase its assistance to Syria by implementing resolution 2585 (2021) based on Syria's actual needs and by carrying out large-scale early-recovery and reconstruction projects to safeguard the livelihoods of the Syrian people. China welcomes the progress made by the United Nations on cross-line humanitarian relief operations in north-western Syria, and hopes that the relevant relief operations will fully utilize the role of the Syrian Government. The countries concerned should immediately lift the unilateral sanctions and economic blockade against Syria to create favourable conditions for humanitarian relief and post-war reconstruction in Syria.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): May I start by thanking our briefers, Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya, whom I welcome to her role.

Today we are reminded of the long-term consequences of war. After nearly 11 years of conflict in Syria, where we have seen appalling violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, 14.6 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance. The decimation of civilian infrastructure has left 76 per cent of the population unable to meet the most basic needs. That means chronic malnutrition, rising bread prices, families camping in freezing cold conditions and the stunted growth of young children — levels of suffering that will take a generation of recovery.

As we look at the horror of the unfolding situation in Ukraine, the daily struggles of men, women and children in Syria should serve as a dire warning to the international community. The untold suffering of millions, leading to mass displacement, regional instability and economic shock, serves no purpose.

The need for a continued and consistent humanitarian response in Syria is clear. Assistance needs to be delivered through all modalities possible. Resolution 2585 (2021) needs to be implemented in full, and, as we look ahead to July, the renewal of the United Nations cross-border mandate remains essential.

The United Kingdom supports all efforts to improve cross-line access and early-recovery efforts. However, to end the conflict and bring lasting peace to Syria, a United-Nations led political process, as set out in resolution 2254 (2015), remains essential. The United Kingdom welcomes Special Envoy Pedersen's continued efforts and the intention to reconvene the Constitutional Committee talks in Geneva in the second half of March. The Syrian regime must engage meaningfully with that process. We urge all parties, including the regime's backers, to redouble their efforts to find a way forward.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I, too, thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings.

Let me begin today by underlining Norway's continued commitment to an inclusive Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political solution. That, alongside addressing the humanitarian, economic and security situation on the ground, is essential to bringing the more than decade-long suffering of the Syrian people to an end. In that regard, advancing the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), a consensus-based resolution adopted by the Council, is paramount. The resolution must be implemented by the Syrian parties themselves, as well as by all of us in the international community.

Norway maintains its steadfast support to Special Envoy Pedersen in his efforts to further the step-for-step approach as a way to seek progress on the political track and in the work of the Constitutional Committee. We welcome the fact that invitations have been sent out for the seventh session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee, to be held at the end of March. The parties should use that opportunity to bring the constitutional process forward. Progress in the constitutional process will be welcomed not only by the Council, but by the whole international community.

We urge all actors involved in the Syrian conflict to contribute constructively and in good faith. There are many issues of common interest in resolution 2254 (2015) that will benefit not only the people of Syria but also neighbouring countries, and be supported by the broader international community. The release of detainees and information about missing family members are crucial and will affect so many Syrians. That is also the case for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees, combating terrorism and inclusive political reform.

Let me also emphasize the important work and role of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, which convened in Norway in January. Its members conveyed a clear message to the international community about the need for an inclusive political solution. Their role is crucial, as is the role of the Syrian Civil Society Support Room in the effort to take the political process forward.

Although the front lines in Syria have been quite stable for some time, warfare, shelling and air strikes continue to take place, and civilians are being killed or injured as a result. We need a political solution, but it is also clear that a nationwide ceasefire is needed — a crucial part of resolution 2254 (2015).

Let me also stress the importance of continuing the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria. The need for that has been shown by the most recent developments, as the terrorist group continues to use Syria as an operating base. The security situation remains fragile and the current political stalemate is untenable. It is time for a new dynamic of genuine progress for the sake of the Syrian people, their neighbours and the larger international community.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Geir Pedersen for his briefing and welcome the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and new Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, to today's meeting. We thank her for her briefing.

We believe that constructive intra-Syrian dialogue must be established, first and foremost, within the framework of the Constitutional Committee. We are convinced that there is no alternative to promoting Syrian-owned and Syrian-led settlement process, under United Nations mediation, without any external interference and artificially imposed deadlines. In that regard, we welcome Special Envoy Pedersen's plans to convene the seventh round of meetings of the Constitutional Committee's editorial board in Switzerland next month. We hope that its work will focus primarily on dialogue among the Syrian parties in order to encourage them to agree on constitutional reform, without being distracted by minor issues.

Therefore, we will continue our engagement with the Syrians, the Special Envoy and other stakeholders.

To that end, this week in Moscow Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with his Syrian counterpart, Minister Fayssal Mekdad, and Special Envoy Pedersen. The main focus of the meeting was a comprehensive resolution on Syria, based on resolution 2254 (2015).

We hope that Mr. Pedersen will focus on the work of the Constitutional Committee and not be distracted by initiatives that do not enjoy the support of the Syrian Government or the Syrian opposition. Those initiatives should not replace intra-Syrian consultations, which the Special Envoy is mandated to promote. The work of the Committee should be seamless, without artificial interruptions. It should hold regular sessions, in similar fashion to the editorial board. Frequently postponing meetings in order to fine-tune and perfect the rules of procedure is clearly not helping advance the process.

Political efforts are now required in the light of the fact that the situation in some regions not controlled by Damascus remains tense. The large-scale terrorist attack on the Al-Sinaa prison in Al-Hasakah was a clear confirmation of the dangerous destabilization. The attack, which was followed by an operation to neutralize the terrorists and clear the area, with the help of aviation and armoured vehicles, led to dozens of peaceful Syrians being killed or injured. More than 45,000 people were forced to leave their homes. That confirms the need for an uncompromising fight against terrorism in Syria, and not the need to indulge them.

We note that, to date, nearly all internally displaced persons have returned home. However, more than 700 children remain in detention facilities, which is cause for concern. Let me highlight the efforts of Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights. On 24 February, 14 children, age three to 15, were returned to Russia from Syria. Five of them had stayed at orphanages in Damascus and the other nine had been evacuated from refugee camps in the area beyond the Euphrates. We will continue searching for Russian children in Syrian refugee camps and work to repatriate them. Such efforts began in 2017 on the instructions of the President of Russia. Since December 2018, 364 Russian children have been repatriated from conflict zones in the Middle East. Documents have been prepared for the repatriation of an additional 128 children.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains complex. Some 14 million Syrians are in need of assistance. Socioeconomic challenges, exacerbated by suffocating unilateral sanctions, are becoming

increasingly complex. Progress in implementing resolution 2585 (2021), which was adopted to increase comprehensive humanitarian assistance to Syria, remains limited. Over the past six months, only two domestic convoys were dispatched to Idlib. There is still no access to areas of Turkish operations. Western donors continue to politicize the funding of early recovery projects.

Resolution 2585 (2021) was renewed for another six months following the publication of the Secretary-General's special report (S/2021/1030). We expect that the United Nations and other members of the global community will galvanize efforts to ensure the full and good faith implementation of the resolution. Our discussions, as well as the decision to be made in July this year, will largely depend on whether or not that approach is duly upheld and brings about tangible results. Attempts to cherry-pick the most attractive elements of the document, such as prioritizing cross-border humanitarian assistance, and ignore early recovery projects and the task of extending humanitarian access over the contact line, are unacceptable. They do not help solve Syria's humanitarian and socioeconomic problems.

I shall now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time I have taken the floor in the Security Council this month, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Council for February, and to commend your able leadership. We value your country's positions in upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We listened to the briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Msuya, who highlighted some aspects related to the suffering of the Syrian people, which continues within and outside the country as a result of wrongful policies and grave violations of international law and the Charter, including the imposition of unilateral coercive measures by the Governments of certain Western countries that have prioritized their interests and agendas over the lives and welfare of Syrians as well as the security and stability of Syria and the region. At a time when the Syrian Government is making every effort to improve the

humanitarian situation, meet basic needs and provide services, rebuild what terrorism has destroyed, return Syria to a path of sustainable development and at the same time guarantee the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees to their homes and normal lives, our efforts have met with major obstacles that limit our ability to achieve our desired goals. In that regard, I would like to highlight some of those obstacles.

First, until recently, Syria was self-sufficient in much agricultural production but has now found itself forced to import huge amounts of the same products. For instance, our annual wheat production before the war was estimated at 2.5 million tons. Today we have to import 1.5 million tons of wheat annually to provide Syrians with bread. That is because the United States forces illegally present in north-eastern Syria and the separatist militias that it backs have taken control of Syrian wheat production there and are looting it.

Secondly, the dire shortage of water for agricultural irrigation is due to the fact that the Turkish regime is violating our bilateral agreements regulating the use of water from the Euphrates, in addition to using water as a weapon against civilians and depriving more than a million Syrian citizens of access to drinking water.

Thirdly, before the crisis, Syria consistently produced 9,500 megawatts of electricity, whereas its current production is now less than 2,600 megawatts. This drop in electricity generation is due partly to the fact that the United States occupying forces and their agents have been looting oil and gas from our pipelines and partly to the crimes committed by terrorist organizations and the illegitimate international coalition's acts of aggression, which have significantly damaged our power plants and our transmission and distribution networks, resulting in the decommissioning of 50 per cent of our electricity system and thereby depriving Syrians of heating during this harsh winter.

Fourthly, with regard to health care, medical services and the Syrian pharmaceuticals industry — all of which were on the cutting edge before the war and had become self-sufficient in terms of most medicines, in addition to exporting our products to dozens of countries — thanks to the embargo, today that important sector is experiencing acute shortages, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic and have deprived the Syrians of their right to access critical health care and medicines.

Fifthly, the unilateral coercive measures illegitimately imposed on the Syrian people by the United States and the European Union have affected various sectors, including banking, energy, and communications, as well as land, air and maritime transportation. In the past few years they have been ramped up to inhumane and unprecedented levels, exacerbating the suffering of the Syrian people and the decline of Syria's sustainable development indicators since 2011, when we had achieved substantial progress, with economic growth at 9 per cent. The consequences of the illegitimate measures imposed on Syria have also affected the work of the United Nations organizations and other international organizations operating in Syria. While the cost of the food basket provided by the World Food Programme to those in need has increased fivefold, its nutritional value has fallen by more than 50 per cent. Exchange rates, inflation and purchasing power have also worsened. It is worth noting that some Western countries that have deliberately worked to damage the Syrian economy have been complaining about fluctuations in the exchange rate of our national currency.

In the entire eight months since the Security Council adopted resolution 2585 (2021), Syria has cooperated diligently in facilitating the United Nations in its implementation of assistance, especially with regard to promoting humanitarian cross-line access and early-recovery projects. We have waited for too long, and our patience is exceeded only by our frustration. We are at the end of February, and the mandate of the resolution will end in only four months. Unfortunately, we have not witnessed any notable progress in the implementation of the early-recovery projects, owing to a lack of political will on the part of certain Western countries with regard to implementing the substance of resolution 2585 (2021), which the Council adopted unanimously. Nor have we seen any desired improvement in cross-line activities. While 16 convoys, including 1,261 trucks, were sent across the border in December 2021 and January of this year alone, in the past eight months the United Nations has been able to send only two convoys, with 28 trucks, across the lines in the north-western areas of the country. That is owing to the fact that the Turkish regime and its terrorist organizations, with their hostile agendas, have been creating obstacles to access and distribution for that humanitarian assistance. It is now clear that the Turkish Government, which sponsors and is the chief protector of the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist entities

controlling Idlib and its neighbourhoods, is hindering the implementation of the cross-border mechanism in order to maintain its interests and those of its affiliates derived from the cross-border mechanism.

With regard to the political situation, Special Envoy Pedersen met with Syria's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the co-Chair of the Constitutional Committee for talks in Damascus last week. The Special Envoy took note of the important achievements that are being made with regard to reconciliation and compromises that happened and continue to happen in various areas of Syria, including Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hasakah and liberated areas in Raqqa governorate. That has enabled a great number of Syrians to return to their normal livelihoods. It was also noted that general amnesty decrees were issued by the President of the Republic, and thousands of Syrians benefited from them. Those are extremely important measures that should be highlighted instead of being ignored.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its commitment to a political solution that is based on a Syrian national dialogue and is Syrian-owned and Syrian-led, while being fully committed to Syrian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

We also reiterate the importance of implementing the provisions that organize the work of the Constitutional Committee, without exceeding them under any pretext. Syria emphasizes that the work of the Constitutional Committee is the exclusive purview of the Syrians and that no foreign party has the right to interfere in it, obstruct it, impose timelines or preconceive its outcome. We look forward to the seventh round of the Constitutional Committee on 21 March.

In conclusion, Syria stresses the need to realistically improve the humanitarian situation in Syria and restore security and stability by changing the political approach and undertaking rational talks based principally on meeting the interests of the Syrian people and ending the foreign occupation of Syrian territories by Turkey, the United States and Israel, while ceasing their continuous hostilities against Syrian sovereignty and their sponsorship of terrorist organizations and separatist militias.

In addition, that requires closing all illegitimate camps on Syrian territories, deporting foreign terrorists and their families from Syria and sending them back to their countries of origin. It also requires ending dangerous schemes to recycle terrorists, the

immediate, unconditional lifting of the economic embargo imposed by the United States and Europe on Syria, and supporting the efforts of the Syrian State to achieve sustainable development in order to improve the humanitarian situation and provide basic services.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings.

As we have just heard, the humanitarian situation in Syria is growing worse day by day; 14.6 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. That indicates a shocking increase of 1.2 million from last year. Harsh winter circumstances have brought the living conditions of displaced persons, especially in Edlib, to the brink of destitution. The international community has to do more to ensure that humanitarian aid continues to increase without interruption.

There is simply no alternative to the United Nations cross-border humanitarian operation in addressing those acute needs. This is a fact, and empty promises will not change it. For its part, Turkey will also continue to facilitate cross-line convoys. However, it is hypocritical, if not malicious, to call for more cross-line access for the local populations and, at the same time, carry out attacks against the very same people.

I wish to ask a very clear question: What is the use of cross-line operations if the regime and its backers bomb civilians and intentionally target water and fuel facilities? The regime and its backers must stop killing civilians so that the cross-line mechanism can deliver humanitarian aid. It must also be underlined that humanitarian aid has become a part of the regime's shameless corruption. The regime diverts international humanitarian aid channelled to the country for its own purposes. That is unacceptable.

The Syrian people's last resort is the generosity of international donors. Yet the regime takes away even that. It is shameful. We expect the United Nations to answer our earlier queries on the issue. We trust that the donors are closely monitoring the situation. Due attention should be paid to the issue in the subsequent reporting period.

Water and electricity problems caused by the regime and the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) in the Al-Bab and Rasalayn-Tel

Abyad region should not be ignored. We cannot allow the propaganda of those groups to find their way into the reports.

Delays in the political process prolong the suffering of the Syrian people. We support and appreciate the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen, which we hope will lead to the success of the Constitutional Committee. However, the regime has been unwilling to seriously engage in United Nations-led peace talks in Geneva. It is clear that it intends to stall the process until it eliminates the opposition on the ground.

The next round of the Constitutional Committee must produce tangible results. For that to happen, its backers must exert pressure on the regime. Otherwise, the regime will continue to abuse the platform and further stall the political process.

Turkey will consistently support efforts to continue de-escalation on the ground in order to create an environment in which the political solution will last. We will also continue to support United Nations initiatives backing a political solution. It is critical that those consultations align with the international community's acquis on the Syrian conflict, as well as with the letter and spirit of resolution 2254 (2015).

We wish call on those countries that intend to normalize their relations with the regime. They should not confuse normalization with legitimizing a criminal regime. We need to normalize the lives of the millions of Syrians who have been suffering at the hands of the regime for more than a decade. We need to normalize the implementation of the universal human rights that the people of Syria deserve to enjoy. We need to normalize Syria to become a democratic, secular, prosperous and secure country.

Da'esh remains a common threat to humankind, the complete eradication of which requires unified, coordinated strategies. Genuine intelligence-sharing is essential to the fight against Da'esh. The repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters is another necessary step in that fight.

Thirdly, we must address the root causes of the conflict. Da'esh and other terrorist organizations found fertile ground in Syria because the regime not only failed to protect its own people, but began attacking them. Until a political solution is found to the crisis in Syria, terrorist organizations like Da'esh will continue to recruit people.

Some actors in the region have misguidedly tied their hopes of eradicating Da'esh to another terrorist organization — the PKK/YPG. Make no mistake, the PKK/YPG's goal is not to end the threat of Da'esh in Syria, but rather to maintain the support it receives from certain members of the international community by keeping Da'esh on the agenda. The real fight against Da'esh can be waged only with the support of legitimate actors. Those who support the PKK/YPG must immediately break their ties with that illegitimate organization.

I also would like to recall that we have yet to receive a response to our request for a United Nations investigation into the attack on Al-Shifa hospital on 12 June 2021.

For 10 years, the Syrian people have fled the horrors of an unjust war that the regime has perpetrated against its people. Yet what most of those women, children and elderly and disabled people have found is purgatory. It is a cruel world in which we live where such a treacherous journey has led them to a tent that is no match for snow, the cruelties of the regime, Da'esh, the PKK/YPG, barrel bombs or air strikes. A tent cannot allow for social distancing in the coronavirus disease era, and a damaged tent even less so. Enough is enough.

In the light of the hallucinatory statement made by the representative of the criminal Syrian regime, I have to repeat that I do not consider him to be my legitimate counterpart. His presence here is an affront to the millions of Syrians who have suffered countless crimes at the hands of his regime. I will therefore not dignify his delusional accusations with a response.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Msuya for their briefings.

The Syrian people continue to face numerous challenges, and meeting them requires hard work in a multitude of sectors. Nothing is more important or urgent than ending the unilateral coercive measures that have harmed the Syrian people to a point where they have been deprived of their basic human rights, including the right to medicine, health care, food, water, electricity and communications. Those illegal measures

have a negative impact on the delivery of life-saving humanitarian supplies where they are needed most.

Given the dire humanitarian situation in Syria, where major portions of civilian infrastructure have been destroyed, the Security Council must work diligently to ensure that resolution 2585 (2021) is fully implemented in a balanced and effective manner, especially in terms of early-recovery projects and the lifting of unilateral sanctions. We fully support the Secretary-General's call for further expanding early-recovery operations in Syria, and agree that such initiatives are crucial to the sustained success of the humanitarian response in the country. It is particularly disheartening that due to a lack of collaboration by other parties, progress on cross-line operations in areas not controlled by the Government has been far less than envisaged. We condemn the robbery of the Syrian people's natural resources, particularly oil and agricultural products, in areas controlled by foreign forces, and recognize the Government's legitimate right to combat such criminal acts.

More importantly, Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity continue to be significantly violated by the unlawful presence of foreign forces, including those of the United States. We strongly condemn the Israeli regime's repeated violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Israel's recent attacks in Syria, which targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, constitute flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. We call on the Security Council to hold that regime accountable for those acts of aggression and other malign activities, as well as its open threats to use force against other countries in the region, jeopardizing regional peace and security.

The Astana format will continue its efforts to bring the crisis to an end and alleviate the sufferings of the Syrian people. In support of those efforts, the Foreign Ministers of the Astana guarantors will meet on 10 March. We commend Mr. Pedersen's recent visit to Damascus and support his ongoing efforts to hold the Constitutional Committee's next meeting, which is scheduled for 21 March. We underscore once more that the Committee must work in strict conformity with its terms of reference and rules of procedure, without any outside influence or pressure or any artificial deadlines. It must be a truly Syrian-led and Syrian-owned endeavour, with the role of the United Nations limited to facilitating that process.

The free movement of terrorist groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, in Syria's territory, where foreign forces are illegally present, as well as their transfer to other countries, endanger regional and international peace and security. The fight against terrorism cannot be used as an excuse to undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The illegal presence of foreign forces in parts of Syria, which has provided favourable conditions for terrorist activities in Syria, must end immediately. Iran continues to support Syria's efforts to tackle terrorist threats and preserve its unity and territorial integrity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): To be honest, I did not ask for the floor to respond to the lies and allegations put forward by the representative of the Turkish regime but to draw the attention of Council members to his fake expressions of concern about the presence of terrorist organizations on Syrian territory. The leader of the terrorist organization

Da'esh, Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi, was killed by United States forces. The place where he was killed was only a few metres from where the Turkish occupying forces are located in Idlib, in north-western Syria. Al-Qurashi always stayed close to the location of the Turkish forces. And Abu Mohammad Al-Jawlani, the leader of the Al-Nusra Front, is able to move around freely in Idlib under the watch and protection of the Turkish forces present illegally in that area.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey, who has asked to make a further statement.

Mrs. Özgür (Turkey): My Permanent Representative has just said what needed to be said. We are not going to respond to that shameless individual.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.