



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

**8817**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Friday, 9 July 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière. . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
	India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya . . . . .	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
	Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ben Lagha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 11.25 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

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

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2021/636, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Ireland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

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

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour:*

China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2585 (2021).

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

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): Let me start by expressing deep gratitude to the co-penholders for the extraordinary efforts they made to get us to this point today. I also want to thank all of the members of the Security Council for their support.

Thanks to resolution 2585 (2021), millions of Syrians can breathe a sigh of relief tonight knowing that vital humanitarian aid will continue to flow into Idlib through the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing after tomorrow. Parents can sleep tonight knowing that their children will be fed for the next 12 months. The

humanitarian agreement we have reached here will literally save lives.

Today's vote is therefore an important moment. It is a moment for millions of Syrians who will not have to worry about starving to death in the coming weeks. It is an important moment for our global recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, because vaccines can now flow into Syria.

It is important that the United States and Russia were able to come together on a humanitarian initiative that serves the interests of the Syrian people. It is an important moment for the United Nations and for the Security Council, which today showed we can do more than just talk — we can work together to find solutions and deliver action on the world's most pressing challenges.

With the reauthorization of the Syria cross-border humanitarian mechanism for the next 12 months, the United Nations can now get back to its important business of saving lives through the delivery of food, shelter, medicine and other humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

Today's successful adoption averted a catastrophe for a population that has already suffered too much. Courageous United Nations front-line and non-governmental organization workers can now make their plans and secure their procurements to deliver necessary aid through this literal lifeline. Starving children will receive food. Sick mothers will receive medicine. A people ravaged by COVID-19 will receive vaccines.

While we had urged the Security Council to go even further and expand the humanitarian access that is so desperately needed today, the Council has made a decision to save lives. I am therefore thankful for our humanitarian agreement. Today's reauthorization will not completely fill the vast needs on the ground, but it will provide crucial relief. We will continue working to expand all forms of access. There is more we can do — and should do — in the weeks and months ahead.

I want to conclude where I started, that is, by thanking the co-penholders — Ireland and Norway — for their strong leadership and responsible stewardship of the negotiations. They made this humanitarian agreement possible. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all my colleagues, whose alignment on this agreement will save countless lives.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased that, despite all the difficulties and contradictions, the Security Council today managed to find an important point of contact on such a complex issue as a cross-border mechanism for the supply of humanitarian aid in Syria. We are grateful to our American colleagues, who worked in the spirit of the agreements reached during the Geneva summit between Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden.

The text of today's resolution 2585 (2021) is a major milestone on the way to resolving the Syrian crisis and overcoming its consequences. For the first time, it emphasizes the need to improve supplies across the contact lines. That is fully consistent with the United Nations principles for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Council members agree that humanitarian action must also address the urgent needs of the Syrian population, in particular with regard to water, health and education.

Council members thereby gave the green light for the cross-border mechanism to be gradually supplemented and then replaced by supplies across the contact lines. We will closely monitor this process over the next 6 months, after which the Secretary-General is to submit a substantive report on the operation of the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing, with a particular focus on the transparency of cross-line operations and supply processes. Moreover, the Secretary-General will regularly report on trends in the launch of supplies across the contact lines, as well as on improvements in humanitarian delivery modalities and recovery projects.

We expect to have detailed information on the provision of humanitarian assistance through the cross-border mechanism, in particular United Nations mechanisms for distribution on the ground, location and storage of such assistance. That will be the best way to guarantee that humanitarian workers are protected.

Today we are witnessing a historic moment. For the first time, Russia and the United States managed not only to reach agreement but also to present a joint text that was supported by all our colleagues in the Council. We hope that this kind of day will be a turning point and that this will represent a win not only for Syria but also the Middle East region and the world as a whole.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I would like to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all Council members for their uniquely close and constructive cooperation throughout the six-month period during which we have been working to renew this very

important resolution 2585 (2021). It is in fact the first time since 2016 that we have unanimously adopted this life-saving cross-border resolution. So once again, I would say a huge thank you to all Council members for their cooperation.

**Mr. Tirumurti** (India): I take the floor to explain India's position on resolution 2585 (2021), which was just adopted.

Allow me at the outset to thank the co-penholders, Ireland and Norway, for their efforts. The decade-long violence and terror has had a devastating impact on the lives of Syrians. Syria, which was the fulcrum of Arab culture and the leading voice in the region, is now facing a precarious situation. India has been calling for enhanced and effective humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country, without discrimination, politicization or preconditions.

More than 13 million people across Syria need humanitarian assistance in one form or another. Syrian women and children and the elderly have been severely impacted in disproportionate ways. Today's adoption, therefore, will reassure 3.4 million people in north-west Syria.

We also need to reflect on the humanitarian situation not just in the north-west but also on the rest of the territory of Syria. Both the Secretary-General and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have repeatedly spoken about the worsening situation with respect to humanitarian operations on the ground. There is an urgent need for an active engagement between the international donor community, humanitarian agencies and financial institutions with Syria, consistent with the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria to address the humanitarian situation and reconstruction needs.

Concrete steps need to be taken to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of cross-line operations as well. We need a realistic basis to move forward. India firmly believes that the long-term security and stability of the region can be achieved only by preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We are deeply concerned at the involvement of external actors in Syria, which is making the situation worse. We also remain convinced that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirm our commitment to advancing a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the fact that the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2585 (2021), on the extension of the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Syria. China attaches great importance to the humanitarian situation in Syria and supports the international community and United Nations agencies in scaling up humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, in line with the guiding principles of emergency humanitarian assistance, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

China has for a long time, through bilateral channels, provided various forms of assistance to Syria in terms of food, medicine, education and public services, inter alia, and has played a positive role in improving the humanitarian situation on the ground. In our view, all humanitarian operations in Syria should be premised on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

The cross-border humanitarian delivery mechanism is a special arrangement conceived under specific circumstances and as such should be subjected to a timely assessment and the necessary adjustments as to its efficacy and applicability in the light of the situation on the ground, with a view to transitioning from cross-border to cross-line delivery.

It should be stressed here that unilateral sanctions are the main obstacles to improving the humanitarian situation in the country. Secretary-General Guterres, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have repeatedly expressed concerns as to the negative humanitarian consequences brought about by unilateral sanctions and called for lifting them. The international community enjoys a broad consensus on this issue.

Since last year, on each and every occasion, including this one, on which the Council held deliberations on this draft resolution, China and many Council members have repeatedly expressed this concern. At the same time, China wishes to stress that the cross-border mechanism is a controversial matter, both politically and legally, whereas the cross-line mechanism should be the dominant channel for delivering humanitarian assistance. Expressions of support for cross-line assistance must not remain empty words. The Council should identify what stands in the way of cross-line delivery and urge the parties concerned to open up as

early as possible the delivery route from Damascus to the north-west part of Syria.

At the same time it is of critical importance to enhance the monitoring of cross-border delivery, as this will help prevent crossing points from being used in a manner that goes beyond the Council's mandate. As it is the Council that has mandated the establishment of the cross-border mechanism, it naturally bears the responsibility for ensuring the transparency and impartiality of the mechanism and guarantee its humanitarian nature.

As we just saw, thanks to the joint efforts of all the parties concerned with respect to the draft that the Council just acted on, elements included with regard to enhancing cross-line delivery, strengthening the transparency of the cross-border mechanism, post-war reconstruction and the coronavirus disease response. Those elements reflect the legitimate concerns of China and other Council members and are the right steps to take to properly and comprehensively resolve the Syrian humanitarian issue under the new circumstances that prevail today. That is why China voted in favour of the resolution.

However, at the same time, we continue to believe that there was much to improve in the draft, especially when it comes to calling in clear terms for the lifting of unilateral sanctions. Now we expect Council members to continue to take effective measures to eliminate the negative impact of unilateral sanctions and to create favourable conditions for fundamentally overcoming the challenging humanitarian situation in Syria and guaranteeing the well-being of the Syrian people.

Finally, I wish to especially thank Ireland and Norway as the co-penholders of the draft for maintaining constructive communication with Council members and for their tremendous efforts in pushing for the final consensus among the parties.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): I thank the co-penholders for their immense work and persistent efforts to maintain the cross-border humanitarian mechanism. Ireland and Norway have worked closely with all Council members to reach an outcome based on humanitarian needs, aiming to support Syrian people across the country.

Because of that determination, we voted in favour of renewing the mandate for 12 months. Estonia thanks the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies, which,

despite hardships, have continued to provide life-saving and life-sustaining aid to the people in urgent need inside Syria.

**Dame. Woodward** (United Kingdom): Like others, the United Kingdom would like to start by thanking Ireland and Norway for their tireless efforts over the past few weeks to engage Council members to find a way to meet Syrians' humanitarian needs. Without their superb efforts and consultation, we would not have gotten to where we are today.

The United Nations has been clear, over the past few months, that the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people cannot be met without the renewal of the Organization's cross-border mandate for a further 12 months. We are therefore pleased that resolution 2585 (2021) is a 12-month renewal of humanitarian access.

With regard to addressing the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, it remains our firm view that the Security Council's action should be determined by the Organization's assessments of humanitarian need. We recognize that the draft text put forward by the penholders represents a significant compromise to take into account the views of all Council members and is the minimum necessary to meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people over the next 12 months. That is why we have voted in favour of the resolution put forward by Ireland and Norway today.

I would like to stress, however, that Syria remains one of the most dangerous places for humanitarian actors. We therefore call for maximum effort to ensure that any reporting does not place their safety at further risk. We hope that we, as a whole Council, can use this spirit of compromise to find a political solution to this decade-long conflict and the suffering of the Syrian people.

**Mrs. Toroitich** (Kenya): Kenya takes the floor to explain its vote.

We would like to sincerely thank and commend the co-penholders for their resolute efforts. We also applaud the cooperation that has produced this text — sponsored by the co-penholders, the United States and Russia — in a spirit of compromise and unity.

Our affirmative vote reflects our strong commitment to the well-being of all Syrian people. Our applause for resolution 2585 (2021) is a clear signal that common ground can be found even on the most complex matters. Month after month, Kenya has reiterated

its position to stand with the Syrian people and has continued to underscore that the Council's decision on the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism should be underpinned primarily by the needs of the Syrian people and the practicalities ensuring that those needs are met. We are therefore delighted that we resolutely made the decision to pursue this endeavour.

Kenya continues to support the provision of humanitarian assistance through all available modalities, including cross-border and cross-line deliveries, in line with applicable commitments of international humanitarian law.

My delegation also commends the efforts of the international community and international humanitarian organizations, people who risk their lives every day in their commitment to provide humanitarian assistance to the people across Syria with great efforts and efficiency.

In conclusion, I reiterate that the only sustainable solution to the humanitarian crisis is a political solution to the conflict in Syria. As we have stated time and time again, Kenya's firm conviction is that the solution is a Syrian-led and -owned process that ensures that a wide spectrum of Syrians are at the forefront.

**Mr. Ben Lagha** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Tunisia welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021), on extending the cross-border mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria. My country's delegation would like to thank the penholders, Ireland and Norway, for their efforts to reach this consensual text. We would also like to thank the other members of the Security Council for their positive engagement throughout the negotiations in order to preserve the unity of the Council and enable it to speak with one voice on the humanitarian dossier in Syria. We hope that the resolution will contribute to achieving the main goal of easing the humanitarian suffering of our brotherly Syrian people in all parts of Syria, particularly in the light of the repercussions of the coronavirus disease pandemic, which, as we know, has a greater impact on the most vulnerable.

We are totally satisfied that the resolution refers to promoting cross-line delivery of humanitarian assistance and to intensifying recovery efforts, in line with Tunisia's principled position in favour of putting an end to the suffering of the Syrian people by any means possible. We hope that the consensus achieved in the Council reflects a collective determination to find

the solutions necessary to permanently alleviating the suffering of the Syrians while maintaining their dignity and sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Syria.

We would like to reiterate that the only lasting solution is a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution, as established in resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ireland and Norway for their efforts as co-penholders of resolution 2585 (2021), particularly for keeping the discussions focused on humanitarian needs in Syria and for submitting a very reasonable and concrete draft text.

The resolution adopted today represents an agreement that will extend the operations of the cross-border mechanism for 12 additional months. That is why Mexico voted in favour of the resolution. However, it is important to point out that this result is not ideal, as we would have preferred a more ambitious text to address the complex humanitarian situation that Syria is experiencing.

However, we understand that the renewal of the Bab Al-Hawa for 12 months will enable the continuation of humanitarian operations because, at the very least, it will add certainty to the planning of activities and budget, which require a minimum time frame of one year.

With regard to the references to humanitarian actors, Mexico would also have preferred a more general formulation without making specific references.

The decision to adopt resolution 2585 (2021) was taken with the humanitarian needs of the Syrian population in mind. We reiterate that all discussions on this issue must be and remain focused on humanitarian needs.

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

France is relieved that the cross-border humanitarian mechanism in Syria has been renewed for 12 months. There is currently no alternative to this mechanism for providing vital assistance to thousands of people every day. Indeed, the Syrian regime continues to use humanitarian aid for political purposes.

We welcome the tireless efforts of Norway and Ireland to reach a compromise. But let us be clear — the mechanism we have just renewed is not and will not be sufficient to meeting the humanitarian needs. We regret

that the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah crossings have not been reopened, since, in the last year, humanitarian needs have increased by more than 20 per cent in the north-west of the country and by 38 per cent in the north-east.

Let me also be clear about this point — our position and that of our European partners remains unchanged. We will not fund reconstruction and we will not lift sanctions until a credible political process is firmly in place, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, nor will we fund development activities that would help strengthen the Syrian regime in the absence of progress towards a political solution.

Nothing in resolution 2585 (2021) can be interpreted as indicating a change in our well-known position on this issue. Instead, we will continue to fully assume our humanitarian responsibilities in the spirit of the Secretary-General's Parameters and Principles for United Nations assistance in Syria. Furthermore, nothing in this resolution can be interpreted as implying the transmission of data on aid recipients and humanitarian partners that are not intended to be made public.

Lastly, we reaffirm our commitment to the full respect of the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian organizations. In such a politicized context, it is in no one's interest to mention impartial humanitarian organizations — neutral actors — in a resolution.

Finally, I would like to add that the fact that resolution 2585 (2021) was put to the vote without the draft being available in all official languages should not constitute a precedent.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council has met once again to adopt a resolution on the so called a cross-border mechanism for humanitarian aid (resolution 2585 (2021)).

Undoubtedly, the Permanent Missions of Russia and China, along with other missions, made efforts during the negotiations to bring to light important elements to improve the humanitarian situation and deliver

aid to those in need of it in Syria, in accordance with United Nations principles for delivering humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, as well as to support Syria in addressing the coronavirus disease pandemic and its effects on various aspects of life, lifting unilateral coercive measures and stressing that humanitarian activities are broader than merely responding to the emergency needs of affected populations. Indeed, humanitarian activities must also include support for projects involving such basic services as water, sewage, health care, education, shelter and early recovery that the Syrians need. That would help to provide an environment conducive to the dignified and voluntary return of refugees and displaces to their homes.

However, Western States have focused their efforts only on the extension of a mechanism that serves their agendas while emphasizing once again their indifference to the suffering of the entire Syrian people. They explicitly continue to target my country politically and insist on violating its sovereignty and besieging its people.

It is misleading by way of exaggeration on the part of those States when they promote the mechanism by saying that it is a lifeline. Their objective is to manipulate the feelings of public opinion and blackmail its emotions. The promotional tours undertaken by representatives of some of those States to the areas adjacent to the Bab Al-Hawa crossing are flagrant expressions of unilateralism, selectivity and bias. They ignore the suffering of millions of Syrians in various Syrian provinces as a result of the unilateral coercive measures that they themselves have imposed. They are suspiciously silent about the withholding of water by the Turkish regime as a weapon of war against civilians, let alone the ongoing looting of Syrian wealth by American and Turkish occupation forces.

My delegation reaffirms its firm, principled position rejecting this politicized mechanism, which is a flagrant violation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian territories. There are serious defects in the work of this mechanism, including lack of transparency, credibility and professionalism in controlling and distributing humanitarian assistance and the failure to direct this assistance to those in need of it, instead of directing it to terrorist organizations. In addition, the mechanism ensures that the Turkish regime profits financially while supporting the Al-Nusra Front/Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which is on the sanctions list of the Security Council, and letting it control Idlib for a prolonged time.

In conclusion, my delegation stresses that the Syrian Government will spare no effort to meet the humanitarian needs of and provide support to those in need of it in order to alleviate the negative effects of the terrorist war that has been imposed on Syria. We will continue to support and facilitate access for United Nations agencies and national and international partners in the area of humanitarian work in order to ensure that assistance reaches all those who need it in the Syrian Arab Republic. My country stresses that improving the humanitarian situation requires positive and constructive engagement with the Syrian Government through the humanitarian assistance centre located in Damascus, free of all pressure, blackmailing and repeated refusals and dictates.

My country's delegation regrets that the two humanitarian penholders did not consult with it on resolution 2585 (2021), thereby disregarding the point of view of the country concerned. This constitutes a breach of their obligations as two members of the Security Council and as penholders.

*The meeting rose at noon.*