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New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Byrne Nason	(Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Estonia	Mr. Lipand
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Niger	Mr. Aougi
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Chumakov
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Ms. Amany Qaddour, Regional Director of Syria Relief and Development.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I returned last week from a visit to Syria, Lebanon and Turkey — my first mission to the region in my new capacity. The visit offered an opportunity for candid and constructive discussions, including in Damascus with Foreign Minister Fayssal Mekdad and Deputy Foreign Minister Bashar Al-Ja'afari, and in Ankara with presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin and the Deputy Foreign Minister.

My primary conclusion from my visit is that humanitarian needs in Syria are greater than they have ever been, as many people told me, although we may read about that less in the front pages of newspapers. The most recent assessments tell us that that is the case. As authorities in Damascus reminded me, an estimated 13.4 million people across Syria require humanitarian assistance. That is a 21 per cent increase compared to the year before and the highest since 2017. As I am sure Ms. Qaddour will say, the lived reality in Syria is even more dire than figures can describe.

During my time in Syria, my visit to Aleppo gave me a first-hand glimpse. I spoke with women, men and children about the profound effects of more than 10 years of conflict. Children asked for help to learn and receive health care and for fuel to survive the upcoming winter. Women who head households spoke about the

challenges they have in finding income for their families to survive. Almost none of them has an income.

Thanks to a Syrian non-governmental organization, supported by the Syria Humanitarian Fund, a nearby clinic in the areas I visited, provides life-saving care, including for children with cancer. I met a young boy suffering exactly from that terrible affliction. The clinic provides care with limited electricity, running water and medication. Patients and their families must travel from the outskirts of Aleppo city, where I was visiting, to receive treatment, assuming they are even available.

Mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers are in anguish —indeed, they spoke to me about this — over their separation from family members, many of them located across front lines nearby. Families live with daily heartbreak because of the lack of documentation, safe passage and security guarantees, which prevents family reunification.

I also learned in those discussions about the protracted water crisis affecting many parts of Syria. It was brought up by Syrian and Turkish authorities in Damascus, Aleppo, Ankara and Antakya alike. People simply do not have clean water. The lack of access to safe water has a disproportionate impact on the general health and reproductive health of women and girls.

The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient safe, acceptable, accessible and affordable water. Mechanisms established over the years to manage transboundary water issues are no longer tenable and that impasse must be removed. Council members can see the consequence of it. The lack of water leads to the lack of electricity, which leads to the absence of schooling and difficulties at clinics. Members can see the cascade of consequences of the problem, which is also affected by climate change. As I mentioned to all those I met, we need to work together to find an agreed solution to that particular problem.

Donors remain generous in their support for the humanitarian response plan for Syria, which is, at \$4.2 billion a year, the largest and most expensive plan worldwide. I have no doubt about the basis of needs, but I also observe the quantity desired. Of course, humanitarian needs tragically outstrip available resources. Only 27 per cent of the response is funded. Just over a quarter of the people in need in Syria have a chance of having their needs met through that humanitarian operation. Even if that total were to increase in the coming months because of the response

and generosity of donors — and I hope it will — funding is not keeping pace with the growing needs of Syrians. That is a fundamental and objective reality.

Communities I met are determined, as are those elsewhere, to restart their lives. However, they desperately need early recovery support to do so. Children want to learn, and families want to prosper. Young adults want to work. They want support, as people everywhere else in the world, to find their own dignified path to a better future. Greater investment in resilience activities is an important way — and one of the few ways — to do just that. Put another way, a failure to invest in resilience activities will inevitably lead to greater humanitarian needs and increased tensions.

As I saw, early recovery and livelihood programmes are already an essential part of the humanitarian response in Syria and have been the subject of debates in the Council recently. The United Nations and its partners, and perhaps particularly its partners, help students have drinking water in their schools, displaced families afford more sustainable accommodation and farmers replant their fields and focus on their livelihoods. However, much more needs to be done to put people in Syria on the path to recovery. That is the central part of my conclusions of the visit.

The United Nations and its partners need to design new programmes. Authorities need to facilitate even more activities and we need donors to invest further in early recovery. I might add that early recovery is approximately 10 per cent of the overall humanitarian response plan and that needs to be increased if essential access to basic services is to be met. Such activities should be based on assessed and objective needs and should be in addition to ongoing and urgently needed relief efforts. It is not a matter of one or the other, but both. Many people I have spoken to — including Syrian families, of course, but also people in the humanitarian community who have been there over the past 10 years — have told me that their needs have never been greater or more urgent. Self-reliance is the best way to help the Syrian people to regain a sense of the future in Syria, despite the many other issues that must cloud that vision.

I returned from Syria with positive news. While I was in Aleppo, the World Food Programme (WFP) completed the first cross-line operation, as I am sure the Council is aware, into north-western Syria since 2017 — four years ago. The operation transported food

rations for some 50,000 people in need to a warehouse in Idlib, in north-western Syria. I was in Aleppo by chance that day, and I met an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs staff member who described to me the tension on both sides of the front line as those initial trucks crossed from Government-controlled areas, across a no man's land, into north-western Syria. That mission required considerable effort, trust and negotiation. Tragically, it also cost a Syrian soldier his life. He was killed by a landmine at the final checkpoint in the operation.

I am sure that the Council joins me in commending all parties for taking that important step. The cross-line operation, which has been much discussed in the Council, shows the resolve of the United Nations and our partners to assist people in need through all possible modalities, sparing no effort. However, much more is needed. The WFP supplies need to be distributed and are sufficient to cover only a fraction of the enormous food needs in north-west Syria.

Moreover, the challenges faced highlight both the difficulty in deploying cross-line operations and the clear reality that cross-border operations conducted from Turkey remain the most efficient and predictable way to reach millions of people in need. Nonetheless, the United Nations aims to build on the WFP operation and its experience. An interagency cross-line operation is being planned with a view to delivering more varied assistance to people in need in north-west Syria. I will be happy to update the Council on those processes next month.

My visit to Damascus, as the Council is well aware, also coincided with continued tensions in southern Syria, particularly around the neighbourhood of Dara'a Al-Balad. I discussed those issues with the Syrian authorities and others, as well as the need for the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and the well-being of the over 36,000 people displaced due to the recent hostilities. News about the recent agreement is welcome. The ceasefire is an important development, and we will need to see how it develops, hopefully in the right way. It is important that the terms of the agreement are honoured and that the restoration of humanitarian access, as we have heard about, is also welcomed and sustained.

Food distribution resumed across the governorate this week and emergency assistance entered Dara'a Al-Balad. Most displaced persons have reportedly

returned to the area. I do not want to state that without any sense of the tragedy that affected the population in that governorate and in Dara'a Al-Balad in the many weeks of the crisis that overtook their lives. Further assessments are planned in the coming days to assess outstanding humanitarian needs. We will, of course, use those assessments to guide our future relief efforts.

My conclusion is very simple in humanitarian terms. Syria is caught in a downward spiral. The country will continue to be a place of tragedy, so long as the conflict continues. Need and suffering will continue to grow in the near-term. I came away with a renewed commitment and conviction to identify, develop and invest in sustainable and effect ways to help. I acknowledge the complexity and sensitivity of that task. That is what we, the Council and the countries represented here owe to the people of Syria because, at the moment, we are not meeting the needs of the Syrian people, who continue to suffer. The futures of the children I met in that classroom in Aleppo continue to be uncertain. It is our job to bring them some form of consolation.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Qaddour.

Ms. Qaddour: I thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to brief the Security Council once again after my previous briefing over a year ago (see S/2020/758). I also wish to thank Mr. Griffiths for his powerful briefing and congratulate him on his new role as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

I am here on behalf of an incredible team of over 2,000 aid workers on the ground in Syria from Syria Relief and Development, many of whom have been providing vital life-saving services for the past 10 years. Through my messages today, I am hoping to serve as a conduit on behalf of those aid workers and the many other outstanding non-governmental organizations in Syria that have continued to work in a context that is akin to hell.

That is why I want to open by complementing what Mr. Griffith emphasized in his briefing, namely, that the protection needs of the population are inextricably linked to every other concern we see in north-western Syria. Specifically, in the most recent period, we have seen an escalation of hostilities that has impacted civilians and aid workers themselves, including the

recent attacks on Jabal Al-Zawiya, where populations were displaced to areas further north such as Salqin, Atme and Sarmada, among others. With the shrinking amount of space for people to find safety from the most rudimentary, physical standpoint, we are seeing other protection needs continue to rise. With so many residing in crowded camps and other temporary settlements, as I am sure Mr. Griffiths saw, the security risks have become exponential.

Specifically in terms of some of the most vulnerable groups, we are seeing increased violence in such overcrowded, contentious settings, especially for women in terms of intimate partner violence. We have also seen an increase in rape cases and other forms of sexual violence against children and adolescents in particular. Beyond addressing those incidents from a health standpoint, such as the clinical management of rape and individual psychological support, we have found that other key service areas, such as mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable and safe housing measures, have not been fully integrated within the immediate needs of the population, given the volatile context.

Similarly, the exploitation of children, including child recruitment and child labour, is on the rise. Recently, we have seen an increase in children as young as 10 years old forced into heavy manual labour in construction and even mining. Those precarious working conditions pose risks for adults, let alone children who have been stripped of their ability to maintain a semblance of a normal and safe childhood and be afforded the right to healthy development. We have seen an increase in suicides, including among young people and even children, whose entire lives have been permeated by conflict. The atmosphere is palpable with hopelessness and despair.

Many children are unable to go to school, in part due to continuous displacements but also to economic desperation in the country as a whole. Many families must make very difficult decisions to survive, often with regard to their children, who must work in order to support their household. Another critical barrier to accessing school and the cause of delays to starting the school year is the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The crippled education system simply does not have the capacity to maintain or even facilitate remote learning in the way that one would see in other more stable and developed settings.

That brings me to a more general reflection of where the COVID-19 pandemic and response stands in Syria — where less than 1.5 per cent of the population is vaccinated relative to the United States, where more than 50 per cent of the population is vaccinated. In north-west Syria, cases are dramatically increasing. Intensive care unit beds in hospitals are full. There is a massive shortage of vaccines and a delay in the roll-out, with in some areas, such as in Ras Al-Ayn and Tel Abyad, having no vaccines delivered to date. Other areas are on lockdown, such as Harem, Salqin and Kafr Takhareem. And in the past, I have noted how lockdowns in a context where the economy has crumbled and people rely on a daily wage is essentially a death sentence, particularly as we see the inability to obtain food has led to numerous cases of malnutrition and instances starvation, specifically among infants and pregnant women. Throughout the pandemic, certain parts of the population have become more isolated, such as the elderly, who have been hard to reach and at the same time unable to access vital services that they need outside of their homes. That has also been the case with persons who live with disabilities, and although there has been some progress made with more tailored and specialized services for those individuals, we still have a very long way to go to ensure that their needs are fully met.

Although COVID-19 seems to be the most salient concern for many countries, there are many other pressing health concerns occurring in parallel in Syria that still remain a priority, specifically in terms of chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. And as we approach the winter, we anticipate that the need to address those will become more necessary, since so many people will have inadequate shelter and warmth.

A major concern is the gaps that have emerged for women, specifically in terms of access to maternal health services, which are so closely linked with children's services. That gap in service provision has been one of the most concerning recently. There are multiple facilities in those regions that are the only ones servicing those populations. A big reason for that is diminished funding. Certainly, there has been generosity from donors, but it must be said that in some cases there has been a 40 to 50 per cent decrease in funding for health services in Syria. That includes countless facilities managed by different health actors, including Al-Firdous Hospital in Daret Ezza, Al-Salam Hospital in Harem and Al-Rahma Hospital in Darkoush.

Funding is one key element of the operational environment, but we also know the access piece has been at the top of all discussions leading up to the vote this past July. I know that, leading up to the mandate renewal, the Security Council heard a series of briefings and perspectives on the vital need for access. I will therefore not go into as much detail on that particular decision since it is in our close periphery. But I will say that difficult decisions have been made regarding how to reach different populations because of restricted access. The unfortunate thing is that, when you look at certain areas on the ground, there is often an over-saturation of services in areas with more fluid access — and, conversely, a visible neglect of other hard-to-reach areas. The bottom line is that access capability is not what should decide which communities are able to receive assistance.

With operational considerations, I want to take this opportunity to expand on the risks aid agencies and aid workers face on the front line.

Even with tremendous collaboration and a spirit of partnership with agencies further upstream, organizations that are on the ground will always be zero degrees of separation from the violence, fear and insecurity that comes with an imperative to provide services. Those actors will always be on unequal footing with agencies that are not on the ground, simply because the risks will never be shared in the same way. I know that might sound negative, but I say that rather to emphasize the reality and the need to explore those risks together, as Mr. Griffiths emphasized, and to share them with agencies at the forefront. The irony is that, although those organizations have absorbed the most risks as time has passed in Syria, often times those risks are passed down to them. Many organizations have therefore endured greater scrutiny over time and been forced to deal with more and more bureaucratic impediments. The notions of duty of care and the protection of aid workers and civilian populations still has a long way to go before being applied in a meaningful way that aligns with, and is proportional to, the risks faced by those agencies on a daily basis.

Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and commemorate those who lost their lives this past year during their service, including Mariam Fathallah, Ammar Sheikh Ahmad, Anwar Al-Daher, Samira Al-Souqi, Subhi Al-Assi and countless others from agencies such as Hand in Hand, Big Heart, the

Syrian American Medical Society, Shafak and Violet, among other incredible actors working on the ground.

Lastly, I want to leave Council members with words not from myself, but from Ghaith, a Syrian nurse who administers vaccines to children in Syria, as his words perfectly capture the plight of aid workers and the dark reality on the ground:

“Between one bomb and the next, it would feel like our life was flashing before our eyes, not just for me but for the children who hadn’t yet seen anything in this world.”

Although Ghaith’s words are haunting, I think that compelling testimonies like his should propel us with the power and resolve to continue to protect those in peril.

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

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

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I make this statement on behalf of the co-penholders on the Syrian humanitarian file, that is, Ireland and Norway.

We would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his briefing today. I also want to thank Amany Qaddour, Regional Director at Syria Relief and Development, for her powerful account of the breadth of the humanitarian needs in Syria and the continued suffering of the Syrian people 10 years into this conflict. We salute her courage and commitment to advocating for those in need.

We welcome Mr. Griffiths’ account of his visit to Syria and the region. We appreciate his engagement with all stakeholders in addressing the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, as well as the challenges faced by neighbouring countries that have generously hosted Syrians fleeing the conflict.

Coinciding with Mr. Griffiths’ trip to Syria, we in particular welcome the two World Food Programme convoys that went from Aleppo across the conflict line into the Idlib governorate at the end of August. That was the first cross-line humanitarian operation into north-west Syria since 2017. Together with the relative increase in cross-line deliveries to the north-east, those long-awaited pilot convoys across the conflict line to the north-west represent much-needed progress in cross-line access for life-saving humanitarian aid in Syria.

We encourage the United Nations to continue to pursue cross-line deliveries and urge all actors to facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid.

As co-penholders, we remain guided by the underlying principle that humanitarian aid must reach all people in need, and we welcome all modalities — both cross-line and cross-border — to reach the millions of people in need throughout Syria.

The fragile situation in Dara’a and the humanitarian suffering of its people remain of serious concern. The internal displacement of more than 36,000 civilians, the shortage of food, the limited access to medical services and the disruption of electricity and water supplies underline the need to protect the civilian population, including by ensuring humanitarian access in accordance with international humanitarian law. Women and children are among those who are in an especially vulnerable situation.

The mortar hits on the Al-Shifa Hospital and the National Hospital of Dara’a on 30 of August — and also the reported damage to a medical point and two civilian deaths during the bombardment of Jabal Al-Zawiya in the north-west on 7 September — are grim reminders of the security risks facing medical staff in Syria. At least 25 health workers have died this year alone owing to attacks. We call on all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and protect those who risk their lives while saving others. Health workers must be protected, not attacked.

The damage to a school in Dara’a Al-Balad, also on 30 August, is yet another example of how the conflict has impeded access to education for the next generation of young Syrian boys and girls. The crisis has left over 7,000 schools damaged or destroyed and roughly 2 million children out of school.

With the school year starting now in September, we reiterate the Security Council’s condemnation of attacks against schools in contravention of international humanitarian law, and we are urging all parties to the armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children’s access to education.

Attacks on health-care facilities, the destruction of schools, increased displacement and civilian deaths, compounded by the widespread food insecurity and economic decline, have led to increased humanitarian needs in Syria. These challenges are magnified by the ongoing threat of the coronavirus disease, and we

note with alarm the recent rapid increase in cases, particularly in north-west Syria.

The water crisis in Syria in particular demonstrates the complexity of the humanitarian response. The closure of water stations has not only disrupted water supply, but reduced the supply of electricity, with a consequent negative impact on the operation of hospitals and schools. On this note, we welcome the recent news that the Allouk water plant is again operating, which must continue.

All of the foregoing underlines the need for a broader humanitarian response, including in the areas of water, sanitation, health, education and shelter, as well as early-recovery projects geared towards providing for the immediate needs of Syrians. As penholders, we remain guided by the humanitarian needs of the people in Syria, and we fully support the United Nations and all humanitarian actors in their efforts to deliver life-saving aid to those in need.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the civil society representative, Ms. Amany Qaddour, for their briefings. We value the work of humanitarian organizations and civil society actors in Syria that are rendering humanitarian assistance to the Syrians. I also welcome the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran to today's meeting.

At the outset, I reiterate the position of Tunisia that there is no sustainable alternative to the solution in Syria but through a political settlement under resolution 2254 (2015), which should be accelerated so as to end the humanitarian suffering of the Syrians and put Syria back on track towards security and development. In the meantime, it will be necessary to expand the scope of humanitarian assistance throughout Syria in order to meet the increasing needs of the people and to reduce the manifestations of vulnerability and the aggravated risks they face as a result of more than a decade of violence and conflict, the deterioration of the economic, humanitarian and climate situation, and the ramifications of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Tunisia expresses its satisfaction with the recent positive signs of a return to calm in Dara'a as the Syrian parties — the Government and local actors — have agreed to take steps towards a settlement that would end escalation of tensions, restore stability and preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

In this respect, we value the priority given to dialogue and negotiation in conjunction with mediation and reconciliation efforts between Syrians.

We note the decrease in violence in the north-west and the north of Syria in recent days, leading to the restoration of stability across the country and to a sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire. We also note with satisfaction the restoration of humanitarian access in Dara'a, in conjunction with the return of displaced persons to their homes in the region. We look forward to the United Nations and its partners supporting the efforts of the Syrian Government aimed at helping Syrians return to their normal lives by addressing the humanitarian situation and achieving recovery after the recent challenging period.

We commend the fruitful efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Griffiths, during his recent visit to Syria, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as his meaningful engagement with the Syrian Government and other stakeholders, with a view to pushing forward humanitarian relief efforts, saving lives and promoting the livelihoods of Syrians.

We have taken note of the deployment of the first cross-line food convoy by the World Food Programme to north-western Syria, in line with the provisions of resolution 2585 (2021). We reiterate the need for all parties on the ground to engage positively, commit to the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance according to the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, and work to improve the ways that humanitarian assistance is delivered, using them effectively and transparently.

We also look forward to promoting the recovery and resilience efforts through the integration of humanitarian and development programmes and projects in Syria, pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2585 (2021), and enabling the United Nations to provide the resources needed for a comprehensive and effective response. We also commend the regional cooperation aimed at achieving economic stability in the region and facilitating the fulfilment of vital humanitarian needs and services.

We are following with concern the refugee, displacement and terrorism trends in Syria and the region. Accordingly, we stress the importance of making concerted and coordinated regional and international efforts to address these phenomena, while respecting international law and international human rights law,

so that Syria does not remain a target for terrorists and the Syrian people are able to restore security and meet their aspiration for a better future and dignified life.

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

More than 10 years after the Syrian tragedy began, the violence continues, as evidenced by the recent increase in hostilities in the north-west and in Dara'a. Civilians continue to pay a heavy price. The priority now is an immediate cessation of hostilities under United Nations supervision, as well as a humanitarian pause, in accordance with resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2254 (2015) and the Secretary-General's appeal.

International humanitarian law must be strictly respected, as should the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Since last March, 19 humanitarian workers have been killed in the north-west of the country. These attacks will not go unpunished. France will continue to give its full support to mechanisms to fight impunity.

Humanitarian access must be fully guaranteed. The priority must remain emergency aid. All parties, in particular the Syrian regime, must respect their obligations. Humanitarian needs continue to grow in the context of food insecurity and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In this respect, it is essential to accelerate vaccination campaigns against COVID-19.

France welcomes the first crossline convoy delivery to the north-west, which is a concrete translation of the terms of resolution 2585 (2021). It is important, however, that cross-line aid not be limited to food aid and that it be delivered in full compliance with humanitarian principles.

But let us be clear — the cross-border mechanism will be necessary as long as humanitarian aid does not reach all the populations in need throughout Syria, based on objective needs assessments. The renewal of this mechanism for 12 months was a relief. But we all know that it is insufficient to meet the needs. We encourage United Nations agencies to intensify cross-border convoys to pre-position humanitarian aid before the winter.

Only a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015) will bring an end to the tragedy and bring lasting stability to the country. Supported by its allies, the regime pursues a logic of obstruction to the political process, in defiance of the aspirations of the

Syrian people and the commitments made before the Security Council.

Without a credible political solution, the position of France and its partners on normalization, reconstruction and sanctions will remain unchanged. Exploiting the sanctions issue to cover up the overwhelming responsibility of the regime is fooling no one. Without a political solution, there will be no safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for sharing with us the outcome of his visit to Syria and the region. We welcome the fact that the visit took place in a timely manner, in tandem with the beginning of his new mandate. Engaging with actors involved in the humanitarian response in Syria is crucial to building trust and facilitating access to humanitarian assistance. I also commend Ms. Amany Qaddour on her valuable briefing and the services that she is providing for the population. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey at this meeting.

I will focus on two points: access to humanitarian assistance and the hostilities that are mainly affecting the civilian population.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, Mexico welcomes all efforts to improve access for the more than 13.4 million people in need of it. Accordingly, we welcome the fact that the first conflict cross-line operation in the north-west finally took place, which is undeniably an encouraging step. We acknowledge the efforts of the World Food Programme and all the actors involved that enabled the crossing of 14 trucks with food products from areas under the control of the Syrian Government to Sarmada, and we trust that this mechanism will continue to be strengthened.

However, it is worth noting that the number of trucks that came through that route contrasts significantly with the 1,000 trucks that on average cross through Bab Al-Hawa every month. Both crossings are necessary and complement one another. For example, in order to address the rise in cases of coronavirus disease, the number of vaccines reaching the population must be increased. The 350,000 delivered doses are welcome but clearly insufficient.

Secondly, my delegation is concerned about the hostilities that have taken place in recent months in

north-western and south-western Syria. Although Russia facilitated a ceasefire agreement in Dara, the situation remains extremely precarious. The fact that more than 36,000 people have been displaced in the area by the violence in recent months is of concern.

Moreover, in Idlib, we have once again recorded the deaths of innocent civilians, for example, those of Joud, a 21-year-old recent university graduate, who had much to contribute to her country, and a father who died while trying to rescue his son, who was also wounded by the explosions. Unfortunately, those are not isolated incidents but many people's reality. We express our condolences to those who have suffered losses as a result of those events.

The violence must stop now. Mexico calls for the observance of a lasting and sustainable nationwide ceasefire in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Without a definitive cessation of hostilities, humanitarian needs will continue to increase. We urgently call for unconditional respect for the norms of international humanitarian law and stress the need for those responsible for acts of violence to be held accountable and the need for acts leading to the deaths of civilians not to go unpunished.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Ms. Amany Qaddour for their briefings.

First, we reiterate our serious concerns about the continuing escalation of violence in north-western Syria. Air strikes and artillery bombardment, which violate the ceasefire agreement, have become the new normal in southern Idlib, with approximately 10 to 20 air strikes currently recorded every day, directly affecting civilians and humanitarian workers, as Ms. Qaddour briefed us earlier.

In recent weeks, eight civilians, including two women and one child, have been killed, including in heavy artillery shelling on residential areas of the city of Idlib by the regime and its allies. Since March 2021, 19 humanitarian workers have been killed and 36 injured in the violence. We urge all parties to respect the ceasefire agreement and comply with their obligations to protect civilians and humanitarian workers.

Secondly, turning to the situation in Dara, we welcome the recent ceasefire agreement, which we hope will provide a lasting reprieve from violence for civilians living there, but brutal shelling by the regime

military, backed by Iranian-affiliated militias, together with fierce street fighting between regime forces and opposition fighters, has resulted in the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. The estimated 20,000 people who remain in the area continue to have limited access to food, water and medication. With approximately 45,000 people displaced, it is more vital that humanitarian agencies are granted unhindered access to Dara Al-Balad.

Thirdly, we note with concern the water crisis in north-eastern Syria. We welcome the United Nations consolidated whole-of-Syria response plan to the crisis and look forward to updates on efforts to address the situation.

Fourthly, we commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and its partners to scale up cross-border humanitarian shipments into north-western Syria in order to meet the vast needs of the 3.4 million people there. We also welcome the recent cross-line World Food Programme delivery to Sarmada, as part of the effort to address those needs.

Lastly, we wish to express our condolences for all those who have lost their lives to maintain ceasefires and humanitarian operations, including an attack in north-western Syria in which Turkish soldiers were killed last weekend. We welcome Turkey's efforts to uphold the ceasefire agreement and protect civilians from a further regime offensive.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): Let me begin by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his update. We welcome his latest insights provided by his recent visit to the region. I also thank Ms. Amany Qaddour, Regional Director of Syria Relief and Development, for her briefing on the issue.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has not seen much improvement in recent months. More than 13 million people across Syria are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, which has been further aggravated and compounded by the water crisis. One million people have been affected by the disruption of the Allouk water station. The drought conditions and reduced water flows in the Euphrates River have further added to problem. Active coronavirus disease cases are increasing every day, particularly in north-western Syria, while vaccination levels have remained very low.

In that context, the visit by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and his assessment of the current situation have again reminded us what needs to be done urgently. We welcome his visit and his engagement with the Government and the leadership of Syria.

We have consistently emphasized that the answer to the humanitarian crisis lies in a political solution. Without forward movement on the political front, the humanitarian crisis will persist and the people of Syria, particularly women, youth, children and the elderly, will continue to suffer.

The presence of foreign forces, as well as external support to armed groups, is only making the situation worse. There are reports from the ground that United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, are attacking civilians in rural Idlib and Hama and in the north-east of Syria. That has further exacerbated the humanitarian situation.

We have been calling for enhanced and effective humanitarian assistance for all Syrians throughout the country, without discrimination, politicization or preconditions. The international community needs to engage purposefully to address the situation and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. We also need to look into the worsening situation in camps for internally displaced persons, such as Al-Hol, where nearly 10,000 third-country nationals, including women and children, are suffering in worsening conditions.

Access for humanitarian aid and assistance is pivotal, and concrete steps need to be taken to address the hurdles that obstruct the functioning of both cross-border and cross-line operations.

With regard to cross-line aid delivery, we welcome the first such convoy to Aleppo from Damascus, which coincided with the Under-Secretary-General's visit. We once again stress the need for an effective monitoring mechanism, which involves Syrian Government authorities, to enable the smooth and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance. Serious efforts are needed to expand cross-line assistance, including to areas currently not accessible.

Reconstruction efforts and funding concerns related to the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Syria also need to be examined as a priority by the international community.

In conclusion, India has contributed to humanitarian efforts by extending development assistance and human resource development support to Syria through grants and lines of credits for development projects, the supply of medicine and food, artificial limb-fitment camps and capacity-building training programmes. India remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the people of Syria through development and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Ms. Qaddour for their briefings.

China welcomes the recent visit to Syria by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, which brought us first-hand information on the humanitarian situation on the ground. We hope that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will maintain communication and coordination with the Syrian Government on the issue of humanitarian relief work.

According to United Nations assessments, humanitarian needs in Syria have reached the highest level since the outbreak of the crisis, with more than 13 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The international community should make joint efforts to increase humanitarian assistance to Syria and strive for substantive improvement in its humanitarian situation as soon as possible. We would like to make the following three points.

First, it is important to rigorously conduct early-recovery projects that are closely tailored to the needs of the Syrian people, while providing emergency humanitarian assistance. The international community should implement resolution 2585 (2021) by promoting early-recovery projects in areas such as water resources, health care, education and shelter, while helping Syria fight the pandemic, so as to promote its economic and social development. Recently, the Syrian Government has taken measures to promote vaccination, develop agriculture, help small and medium-sized enterprises strengthen market management and carry out energy cooperation, with considerable results that merit acknowledgement. It must be stressed that unilateral sanctions imposed by some countries aggravate the humanitarian crisis in Syria, hinder its economic and social development and run counter to the efforts of the international community. They must be lifted immediately.

Secondly, we should strengthen the monitoring of the cross-border mechanism and promote the transition

from cross-border to cross-line rescue. The Security Council has an obligation to step up the monitoring of the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism in order to ensure that it is neutral and transparent and that it remain true to its humanitarian nature. It must be made clear that the cross-border mechanism is a special arrangement, made under specific circumstances, while the cross-line mechanism should be the main channel for humanitarian assistance to Syria.

China supports the World Health Organization in its ongoing efforts to conduct humanitarian operations in the north of Syria through the cross-line mechanism. The World Food Programme's first cross-line delivery of humanitarian supplies from Aleppo to Idlib marks a major breakthrough in humanitarian relief operations in Syria. It is hoped that relevant parties can work together to scale up the cross-line mechanism and better meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

Thirdly, we need to support the Syrian Government in stabilizing the security situation across the country and in creating the necessary conditions for humanitarian operations and political processes. China welcomes the ceasefire agreement reached by the relevant parties in Dara'a and supports the Syrian Government in stabilizing the local situation with regard to civilian resettlement and providing relief.

Several Council members are concerned about terrorist activities in Syria and their spillover risks. Addressing the counter-terrorism issue is the prerequisite for restoring peace and order in Syria. Terrorist forces in Idlib pose a major threat to Syria's national security. With regard to Idlib, the international community should categorically condemn terrorism, support the Syrian Government's counter-terrorism efforts and maintain the positive momentum for peace and reconstruction in Syria.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I too thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his usual insightful updates. I also thank Ms. Amany Qaddour for her vivid and heart-wrenching account of the plight of Syrians, in particular Syria's children and Syrian relief workers.

We remain profoundly concerned about the security situation in Syria. Sporadic and indiscriminate violence across the country continues to threaten civilians and civilian objects. Hostilities have further exacerbated displacement and obstructed vital humanitarian

access. It is past time for a nationwide ceasefire to be implemented and fully respected by all.

Civilian protection remains the highest priority. Military objectives and counter-terrorism operations, although necessary, should never take precedence over civilian protection, and impunity for violations of international law should not be tolerated. Syrians should no longer continue to pay the highest price for a conflict that they did not create and over which they have no control.

The economic crisis plaguing the country and its people is undoubtedly made worse by the effects of the global pandemic. Millions remain food insecure, and basic commodities are inaccessible, even as we approach the winter months. Unquestionably, Syrians must continue to be supported through humanitarian aid, and the cross-border mechanism is of critical importance. However, the mechanism is not enough on its own. Other indispensable modalities, such as cross-line deliveries, are necessary to complement the mechanism and ensure sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access.

We are therefore pleased to note that the first cross-line operation to the north-west took place at the end of August. We urge all parties to continue working together to expand that modality and to ensure that existing access arrangements are preserved and scaled up to reach every Syrian in need. That is especially important to assist in the effective and efficient distribution of coronavirus disease vaccines.

Beyond humanitarian aid, further practical steps must be taken to assist Syria and Syrians in need. That requires the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures that have been imposed on the country. Those measures have had an indirect adverse impact on the civilian population and are incompatible with international law.

It further requires assistance for Syria's reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The conflict has devastated Syria's infrastructure, leaving millions vulnerable without access to shelter and essential services. Reconstruction is a costly undertaking that requires support from the international community. We ought to be reminded that it is also a necessary condition for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin. Therefore, we encourage Syria's partners to assist in their reconstruction and to help the country achieve its long-term development goals.

The water crisis demands immediate attention. The worst drought in decades, precipitated by the existential threat of climate change and in combination with other troubling factors, has put millions of lives and livelihoods in peril. A sustainable solution must be urgently pursued. On that point, we reiterate and recall that water and water systems should never be weaponized. As Mr. Griffiths reminded us earlier, access to clean water is a human right.

Syria is a grim humanitarian emergency with multidimensional challenges. Geopolitical dynamics have compounded the complexities of the conflict, including through the continued presence of unauthorized foreign forces on Syria's sovereign territory. The Syrian people should be our primary concern and constructive international diplomacy ought to be encouraged and prioritized to ensure support for them.

The well-being of the Syrian people is paramount, and they deserve peace and stability. The conflict and the attendant humanitarian crisis will only continue in the absence of a political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We therefore have a duty to engage constructively towards a political solution with the Syrian people at the forefront.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Qaddour for their presentations. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran in this meeting.

The various briefings to the Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria show that it is far from improving. In addition to food insecurity, rising prices for basic necessities and the weakening of the health system, which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, there is a water shortage affecting people and crops due to the falling water level and low flow of the Euphrates River.

On the security front, although the Russian-Turkish agreement on the demilitarized zone in the north-west still stands, the persistence of violence and sporadic clashes, which continue to affect the civilian population trapped in the area, is deplorable. We welcome the agreement reached between the armed opposition and Government forces in Dara'a. We hope that will result in an improvement in the provision of basic services for the city's population.

The security situation in Al-Hol camp must be addressed by the international community. The unbearable living conditions and violence in the camp, which is populated mainly by women, children and the elderly, must be addressed. The rate of COVID-19 infections in the camps remains alarming, as social distancing is virtually impossible in such overcrowded settings. We encourage the World Health Organization and the Syrian Government to collaborate further on this issue.

We welcome the news that the first aid delivery operation across the border in north-western Syria began on 30 and 31 August. It marks a crucial step forward and we would like to see more such cooperation between all humanitarian actors on both sides. We reiterate our call on the warring parties to continue to cooperate with the United Nations and its partners in order to improve and strengthen the delivery of humanitarian aid across the lines of conflict.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for the easing or suspension of the unilateral economic sanctions that are weighing heavily on Syria's ability to cope with the pandemic and the current economic crisis. Those sanctions are an aggravating factor as regards the humanitarian situation — not only for Syria, but also for its neighbours and the international organizations working on the ground.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing and thank Ms. Qaddour for her moving statement.

Estonia remains worried about the ongoing tensions and violence in several parts of Syria, which continue to impact civilians and contribute to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Estonia strongly condemns the continued shelling of urban areas in Idlib, where several civilians have been killed in a series of attacks conducted by the forces of the Syrian regime and its allies. Civilians must be protected at all times and attacks on civilian objects must stop.

We are also concerned about the situation in Dara'a. Despite the agreement reached between the Syrian regime and the local forces, tensions remain high. There is an urgent need to improve the dire humanitarian situation, where access is restricted, food and basic services are limited and over 36,000 people, mostly women and children, have been displaced.

In addition to the dire humanitarian situation caused by ongoing violence and corruption, we are also worried about the increase of coronavirus disease infections, especially in north-western Syria, as well as the water crisis in north-east Syria, which is causing a rise in outbreaks of water-borne diseases. We call upon all parties to ensure safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all Syrian people in need.

Estonia notes the first cross-line delivery to north-western Syria as a step in a right direction. However, given the challenges and instability of cross-line aid, it is clear that it does not replace cross-border deliveries, which remain essential.

In the context of the ongoing conflict, more attention should also be addressed to the impact on women and vulnerable groups, such as children and persons with disabilities, who remain exposed to increased protection risks. Women are also particularly impacted when they or their family members are detained. We demand the release of all arbitrarily detained persons and political prisoners. We also call for accountability for the many war crimes and crimes against humanity so as to put an end to impunity.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his informative briefing and Ms. Amany Qaddour for sharing her insights. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey in today's meeting.

Month after month, we grow accustomed to hearing about the continuing dire predicament of over 13 million people in Syria as a result of the ongoing security, economic, food, water and health crises. As Mr. Griffiths just said, we all own our individual and collective responsibility to the Syrian people to help alleviate their suffering.

The protection of civilians continues to attract special attention. Regardless of the current relatively calm situation in the north-west, there still were security incidents that claimed lives and destroyed infrastructure. Considerable efforts are required to maintain the most recent ceasefire deal in Dara'a city so as to avoid human suffering and address humanitarian need due to recent violence, including the return of over 36,000 displaced persons. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and to ensure respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

Apart from the severe economic meltdown and the food crisis, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the growing water crisis are exacerbating the hardship and vulnerability suffered by the population. The current situation above all necessitates safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to provide assistance for all people in need. We once again stress the importance of the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021) in order to continue cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery in the north-west.

It is very encouraging to see that cross-line deliveries also finally reached that region, on 30 and 31 August, after months of negotiations. We encourage further coordination among relevant parties in order to enhance the frequency and quantity of that delivery method. Humanitarian aid should also be prioritized in the north-west through all appropriate channels in order to prepare for possible deterioration during the winter months ahead. We are also genuinely delighted with the progress on cross-line delivery to the north-east, where there is a need to tackle the shortage of medical items, the current water crisis and the potential loss of harvests right before winter.

Given the recent complicated developments with regard to COVID-19 in Syria, we are of the view that particular focus should also be placed on the distribution of vaccines all over the country. My delegation supports the Secretary-General's appeal for the waiving of sanctions that hinder the humanitarian response to the pandemic.

My delegation calls for continued support for Syria during this challenging time. We take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of humanitarian organizations and personnel on the ground, as well as the generous contributions of international donors.

We also welcome the first visit to Syria and the region by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in his new capacity. We fully support his focus on enhancing humanitarian access, protecting civilians and building resilience to help people in Syria.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress the utmost importance of unity in order to meet the common goal of assisting people in need. The spirit of cooperation in recent months has actually borne fruit. It needs to be maintained and built upon. In the long run, it is unquestionable that the only viable way to end the current humanitarian crisis is through the achievement

of a comprehensive political solution, led and owned by the Syrians, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and in full accordance with international law.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Ms. Amany Qaddour for their briefings on the humanitarian situation in Syria. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey at this meeting.

Kenya commends Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his recent visit to the region, where he held useful engagements with the Government of Syria and other stakeholders in efforts to expand humanitarian access, enhance the protection of civilians and ensure that Syrians have an opportunity to rebuild their lives through early recovery and livelihood activities. We encourage the Under-Secretary-General to continue with those engagements towards the timely, efficient and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance for every Syrian in need.

As we have said before, Kenya stands with the Syrian people and supports the Security Council's deliberations and actions that are underpinned primarily by the people's needs and the practicalities of ensuring that those needs are in fact met.

We remain gravely concerned by the deteriorating security across parts of the north-west, north-east and the south of Syria, where unrelenting shelling and air strikes have resulted in deaths, injuries, displacement and the destruction of civilian property, with the most affected being women, children and the elderly, as well as humanitarian workers.

Also worrisome is the persistent insecurity in Al-Hol camp, where 59,000 people, most of whom are women and children, reside in a constant state of fear owing to rampant attacks. Kenya calls on source countries to repatriate their citizens in order to ease tensions within the camp so that a semblance of normalcy can return.

We reiterate the imperative on the protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure. It is critical that all parties honour the nationwide ceasefire and that all those responsible for violations be fully investigated and held accountable.

Turning to the economic situation, it is alarming that the prices of basic food baskets have doubled and continue to be out of reach for many. Indeed, as we speak, about 60 per cent of the population is food

insecure. The situation is compounded by the water crisis fuelled by reduced water levels and reduced access to the Euphrates River and the Allouk water station, leading to harvest losses and a lack of electricity for schools, hospitals and other objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

It is against that backdrop that Kenya is persuaded that all modalities for access to humanitarian assistance are crucial. We particularly commend continued deliveries and anticipated increases of the most essential supplies, including the distribution of coronavirus disease vaccines, through the cross-border mechanism.

Kenya also welcomes the first cross-line food mission to north-west Syria, conducted at the end of August. We commend the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and encourage the consideration of an intersectoral delivery so that medical supplies are also included in future deliveries. Those modalities should continue to complement each other with a view to ensuring continued principled humanitarian aid to the millions in need.

Kenya notes that unilateral coercive measures have contributed significantly to the economic situation and the ability of the Government to provide for the vulnerable members of society. We call for the lifting of such measures, especially when humanitarian operations are affected.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that the multilateral system, and in particular the Security Council, should continue to speak with one voice, as it did two months ago with the adoption of resolution 2585 (2021), to facilitate consensus and collaborative approaches to peace and reconciliation through a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his report on his recent visit to the region, and I thank Amany Qaddour for her urgent reminder of the dire situation on the ground.

It is hard to imagine after more than 10 years of conflict, but with each passing month somehow the situation in Syria gets worse, as we have heard today. Basic services are not being delivered, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is running rampant. Resources for diagnosing COVID-19 in Syria remain extremely limited, with international organizations warning that testing materials could be severely

depleted in the near term. This widespread suffering is not sustainable, and, as the Syrian people head into another winter, we know humanitarian protection needs will spike. We must do everything in our power to support the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations in their efforts to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to the millions of Syrians in need.

Today I would like to discuss three aspects of that situation: our concerns in Dara'a, the north-west, Rukban and the Al-Hol camp; progress and updates from cross-border aid operations; and our commitment to all modalities to bring aid to Syrians in need.

First, we continue to closely watch the situation in Dara'a. We condemn the Al-Assad regime's ruthless assault that has killed civilians, displaced thousands and led to shortages of food and medicine for many more. The regime is reportedly using threats of forced displacement as a pressure tactic in ceasefire negotiations. This is unacceptable. An effective ceasefire requires commitment from all sides, and we urge all parties to respect the ceasefire in Dara'a. We are thankful that, at the very least, aid deliveries have resumed. The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations must have unimpeded access to those in need.

We are similarly concerned with the intensification in air strikes and shelling in north-west Syria in recent months, leading to dozens of civilian casualties. All sides must respect the ceasefire and comply with their obligations to protect civilians and medical facilities. Two years have passed since the Syrian regime permitted the last humanitarian convoy into Rukban. The regime and its backers must enable full humanitarian access to the camp and its residents. Any plans to resettle the nearly 10,000 inhabitants must be safe, voluntary and dignified. We are also concerned with the ongoing tragedy at Al-Hol camp, and we call on all parties to facilitate a long-term solution.

Secondly, on 30 and 31 August, the World Food Programme (WFP) was able to dispatch a 14-truck crossline humanitarian convoy to Sarmada in Idlib, transporting almost 600 metric tons of food. This will help meet the vast needs in the north-west. The United States is proud to have supported this work. We offer thanks to Turkey, the United Nations, the WFP and all other parties for facilitating this access. Sadly, a Syrian soldier was killed while removing mines to allow this

convoy to get through. This only underscores the serious dangers and complexities of delivering crossline aid.

Thirdly, and finally, the United States supports all modalities that bring aid to Syrians in need — all of them. We are committed to facilitating more cross-border and crossline assistance and early-recovery projects that respond to the overwhelming humanitarian needs in Syria. At the same time, we echo what we have heard from the Under-Secretary-General: crossline is not a replacement for cross-border access. To the Al-Assad regime and its backers, we say that it is time to stop politicizing crossline assistance. Aid should not be used as a cudgel against Syrians who disagree with Al-Assad's brutal policies. Similarly, one single cross-border point, even when complemented by crossline assistance, cannot possibly meet all the needs of all Syrians. We must reauthorize the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah crossings to meet the dire needs of the Syrian people.

Immediately, the humanitarian needs are immense. We must address them with vigour, and as we do this difficult work, we must commit ourselves to addressing the root causes of these needs. The only solution is a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015), which represents the only sustainable path to the peace and prosperity the Syrian people deserve.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for his briefing and for providing a detailed account of the outcomes of his trip to Syria and its neighbouring States. We commend the active and constructive position of the new head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the Syrian track. We also note the input of Ms. Amany Qaddour to this discussion.

We welcome the first successful humanitarian campaign of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Idlib, which was carried out through the crossline mechanism. We realize that there were major difficulties in endorsing the dispatch of this humanitarian convoy to the warehouse in Sarmada. At the same time, we call on all the stakeholders not to be satisfied with the modest and one-time result. It was a modest outcome because the WFP mission has only been partially completed; in the absence of a distribution mechanism, the task has not been completed. The assistance has not reached those who need it, and it continues to be stored in a warehouse under the supervision of unnamed but so-

called reliable partners. We would like to understand whether or not these partners are listed among the 80 non-governmental organizations that appear in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/784). How, then, can we be sure that the humanitarian assistance will not be stolen or actually sold out to those who need it?

We would also like to ask Mr. Griffiths about the fate of the joint convoy of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Is there any chance that it will be dispatched to Atareb and Daret Izza, as was agreed with Damascus in April last year? What efforts are being made by the United Nations to achieve that end?

We would also like to reiterate our firm position on the need to establish reliable crossline deliveries of humanitarian aid in the north-west. Half-measures will not solve this problem. It is an extremely important task, and it is enshrined in the unanimously adopted resolution 2585 (2021). Nevertheless, with regard to this task, Western members of the Security Council, as far as we can tell, continue show a lack of due enthusiasm it. They are in no hurry to put pressure on the terrorist groups operating under their auspices in Idlib.

At the same time, they are absolutely unforgiving towards Damascus for delays in issuing authorization to United Nations workers to operate in territory under its control. Our Western colleagues have a clearly equivocal attitude with regard to the legitimate authorities and the remaining terrorists in Idlib, who have not been held accountable despite the fact that, according to the United Nations Population Fund, the number of early and child marriages in the Idlib enclave is on the rise. Indeed, when it comes to the Idlib enclave, the rights of women and girls appear to be of far less concern to our colleagues than the rights of women and girls in, say, Afghanistan. Once again, we are facing double standards.

We note with satisfaction the normalization of the situation in the Dara'a province, in particular in the area around Dara'a Al-Balad. That was made possible thanks to the efforts of Damascus and the assistance of Russian troops. Civilians are already returning to their homes, and unimpeded humanitarian assistance is being delivered to the governorate both by the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. I do not believe that

we need to belabour the issue any further. The Syrians have other more important issues to deal with.

In particular, we continue to hear in the Council from representatives of Western States about the so-called targeted impact of the sanctions introduced against certain Syrian officials and how they in no way affect the lives of ordinary Syrians. Meanwhile, in August, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) published a curious report analysing the situation in Syria during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic for the period from July 2020 to July 2021. I should like to cite the following passages from the report:

“[t]he United States sanctions, which came into effect in June 2020, significantly contributed to the devaluation of the Syrian pound and the spiraling economic crisis;

“[t]he combined effects of COVID-19 related restrictions imposed from March to May 2020 and in June, along with the US Caesar [act] sanctions led the exchange rate to devalue even more;

“[i]n January 2021, the United States administration announced the continuation of sanctions against Syria to reduce flows of funding to the Government ..., which led to even further devaluation;

“coinciding with the implementation of the US economic sanctions and the end of a two-month lockdown, inadequate food consumption rates kept increasing sharply;

“[t]rade was also further limited by US sanctions, resulting in an increase in criminal activity and unofficial trade in the black market instead;

“COVID-19 precautionary measures and fuel shortages, currency depreciation and economic sanctions, importation constraints, and high transportation costs, all contributed to a general rise in the prices of key agriculture inputs and products from March 2020”.

The data published by USAID demonstrates the true extent of the impact of anti-Syrian sanctions by the United States on every individual Syrian. Some of our European colleagues are following close behind in making life difficult for ordinary Syrians and shifting blame onto Damascus despite the glaring statistics and international calls, including from the Secretary-General.

We are also extremely dismayed by the situation in the Al-Hol camp for internally displaced persons, in which the majority of residents are women and children. Since the beginning of the year, 74 premeditated murders have been committed there. The situation risks spiralling out of control. Against that background, according to reports we have received, active efforts to radicalize residents in the camp are being made. A similarly dangerous situation can be seen in the Al-Tanf region. We recall that the occupying party bears responsibility for everything that is taking place in those areas.

We are also very concerned about the issue of water supply in the northern part of Syria and the Euphrates region. In those areas, 70 per cent of the population is currently encountering difficulties in accessing drinking water. The grain harvest is at serious risk. The problem lies not only in the reduced levels of the Euphrates River, but also the continuous interruptions at the Allouk water station, which, like a large share of infrastructure and facilities in Syria, requires serious repairs and subsequent maintenance. We urgently draw donors' attention to that and call on them to provide the necessary support to the United Nations for implementing the relevant provisions of resolution 2585 (2021).

In conclusion, we would like to commend the Secretary-General on his new approach to reporting on the humanitarian situation in Syria. However, much work lies ahead of us. In order to ensure that the Council avoid difficulties this winter in renewing the mandate of the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism, we call on the United Nations and all Council members to work on ensuring smooth cross-line deliveries, as well as to do their part to normalize the humanitarian situation in Syria and strengthen its territorial integrity. We again emphasize that resolution 2585 (2021) does not provide for any automaticity in that regard; everything will depend upon progress in implementing its provisions.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Griffiths: Although I do not have any specific comments to make, I would say only the following.

My key observation is that we are not meeting the needs of the people of Syria. There are many reasons for that, and many members of the Security Council have given their own various different reasons. Amany

Qaddour gave us a vivid example of the plight of the people of Syria, and I tried to do so in my own way. There are efforts to carry out cross-line operations and resolve the issue of Dara'a Al-Balad. There are problems involving the water supply in the Euphrates River. There are families in Aleppo who are unable to access schooling and health care.

We are not meeting our obligations. That is my overriding message, and I call on all Council members to come together on this issue — rather than find differences — in order to see how we can better meet our obligations. I think that the cross-line operation was a very important action. It took a long time. It led to the death of the soldier. There was danger for all those involved. The aid has yet to be distributed. In response to the question from the representative of the Russian Federation, the World Food Programme is responsible for its distribution.

Let us be very clear. The people of Syria are in a situation of increasing need, with basic services fraying before their eyes and no outcome to the conflict in sight. Like all others, I of course support the call for a nationwide ceasefire and political solution, but in a more immediate way to meet the basic needs of Syrians wherever they may be, without contest, distinction or differentiation.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his clarifications and additional comments.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Since the previous Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria (see S/PV.8841), a number of meetings and visits have taken place in the country with representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes, as the Syrian Government has continued its constructive engagement with the United Nations and other partners to improve the humanitarian situation and provide services and support to Syrians in need throughout the country.

We listened today to the briefing by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, in which he spoke of his visit to Syria and the meetings he held there. We hope that his visit will contribute to correcting the course in our relationship with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA) and strengthening cooperation with it, in accordance with the principles of humanitarian action set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the criteria of professionalism and objectivity, while avoiding politicization and the diktats of some Western Governments.

After a long period of obstruction by the Turkish occupation forces and their proxy terrorist groups, the convoy of the World Food Programme, which was approved by the Syrian Government several months ago, was able to reach Sarmada, in north-west Syria, via a cross-line route from Aleppo, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. That operation was successful, as confirmed by Mr. Griffiths. Relevant Syrian authorities took all the measures necessary to ensure safe passage for the convoy and the security and safety of United Nations and national staff.

The soldier Monawar Hasan Salim paid the ultimate price and became a martyr in the line of duty. As he was securing the passage of the convoy, he was killed by a mine that had been planted by terrorist proxies of the Turkish occupation forces on the trucks crossing road.

It is reprehensible and to be condemned that some countries commend the Turkish regime at a time when it still obstructs the deployment of an aid convoy from within Syria to the Atarib region, in north-west Syria. The United Nations had been granted approval by the Syrian Government to deploy the convoy a year and a half prior, and approval had been renewed, but to no avail.

On the other hand, upon approval of the Syrian Government and in close coordination with United Nations agencies and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, an inter-agency aid convoy was deployed to Dara'a in the south of the country. The World Food Programme resumed its monthly programmes and started to distribute food baskets after the convoy and humanitarian staff had safely arrived there, and aid reached those who needed it.

With regard to the north-east, I refer to the recent relevant report (S/2021/735) of the Secretary-General, which confirms that

“Between January and July, 1,588 trucks providing humanitarian assistance crossed lines into the north-east compared with 199 trucks during the same period in 2020. The World Health Organization

(WHO) delivered three cross-line shipments, including two airlifts and one road convoy”.

The report also confirmed the provision of aid to millions of Syrians in all 14 governorates, including food aid to approximately 4.8 million people. All those achievements would not have been possible without the cooperation, facilities and support provided by the Syrian Government.

Although some Western countries hostile to my country continue their efforts to cover up those achievements and continue to promote the so-called cross-border mechanism and the fabricated reports presented by the Gaziantep office, my country will remain committed to working to deliver aid from within Syria. We will maintain our position and continue to call for an end to the politicized cross-border mechanism, which violates our sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will expose the hostile role played by the Gaziantep office.

I must point out the inhumane effects of the coercive measures imposed by some Western countries on Syria, which have led to significant shortages of food, medicine and medical supplies, fuel and electricity. My delegation stresses the need to urgently address the issue, especially with the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which poses an additional threat to the health of Syrians. Syria's health sector is overburdened due to the lack of medicines, supplies and equipment of all kinds, in particular those needed to treat respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Those measures prevent us from securing those supplies. Britain, for example, which continues to claim to be committed to humanitarian action, obstructs efforts to enhance the capacity of the Syrian health sector to respond to COVID-19. It prevents specialized laboratories from obtaining the necessary equipment to conduct the relevant tests.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that improving the humanitarian situation requires the following.

First, it requires full respect for Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity — a principle stressed by all of the Council's resolutions related to the situation in my country.

Secondly, it requires an end to the illegal military presence of the United States and Turkey on Syrian territories and an end to the crimes and practices committed by their occupying forces, which seek

to prolong the crisis, support terrorism and its proxy militias and plunder our wealth and economic resources. My delegation stresses the need to compel the Turkish regime to stop using water as a weapon of war against Syrians for political purposes, in order to ensure the continuity of the functioning of the Allouk water station and the flow of drinking water to more than 1 million citizens, as well as the flow of the Euphrates River according to the rates agreed upon between the two countries.

Thirdly, it requires the immediate and unconditional lifting of the immoral, inhumane and illegal siege imposed by the United States of America and the European Union on the Syrian people, which represents collective punishment and economic terrorism that seriously harms the Syrian Government's humanitarian and development efforts and the ability of Syrians to meet their basic needs.

Fourthly, it requires the fulfilment of the pledges announced to finance the humanitarian response plan, which is funded only at 27 per cent to date — and we are in the last quarter of the year.

Fifthly, it requires supporting the implementation of early-recovery projects, as called for in resolution 2585 (2021), increasing them in quantity and quality and rejecting any attempts by hostile countries to impose programmes and projects that are inconsistent with Syrian national interests.

And, sixthly, it requires enabling the United Nations to finalize the agreement with the Syrian Government on the strategic framework that some Western Governments continue to obstruct, and to start implementing it to ensure support for efforts to achieve sustainable development and not be "left behind." The United States and its allies must desist from that destructive approach and stop investing in terrorism and forming illegitimate alliances under the pretext of combating it. They should stop spending billions of dollars to wage futile and useless wars that destabilize States Members of the Organization.

In conclusion, our hand is stretched out to embark upon a new stage of cooperation. We will continue to provide the facilities necessary for the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies while fully adhering to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We look forward to genuine partnerships that support the efforts of the Syrian State to restore peace and stability,

provide assistance to civilians in need, enhance development efforts and rehabilitate the infrastructure and facilities that are necessary for the dignified, voluntary and safe return of displaced persons to their homes.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Qaddour for her insightful statement.

This month, Turkey welcomed United Nations high-level officials who observed, first-hand, the impact of a decade-long war in Syria. They met with Syrians who had fled the brutal war waged against innocent civilians. They also witnessed the dire conditions of those living under constant threat and fear across our borders with Syria. Both Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and High Commissioner Grandi highlighted the need to keep Syria high on our collective agenda and strengthen our response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Turkey continues to facilitate the work of the United Nations towards that objective while hosting the largest population of Syrian refugees and shouldering all humanitarian and security consequences of the Syrian conflict.

Throughout Syria, the United Nations and its partners strive to address record levels of needs under difficult circumstances. Humanitarian agencies report that the north-west is at the height of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, where the fragile health system operates at its maximum capacity.

At the same time, the escalation of violence by the Al-Assad regime continues to result in increasing numbers of civilian casualties and significant displacement since the ceasefire in Idlib. The heinous attack against the Turkish armed forces in Idlib on 11 September resulted in the death of two Turkish soldiers, with three others injured. We thank our friends and allies who have extended messages of condolences in that regard. We will continue our efforts to preserve the ceasefire in Idlib.

Under the current conditions, the United Nations cross-border mechanism remains the only tool to help the 4 million people stuck in the north-west. They desperately need that assistance for their most basic needs, including medical equipment and vaccines. On several occasions in the Security Council, many of

us have underlined the urgency of maintaining cross-border operations in order to prevent the spillover effect of COVID-19 in the region. The largest shipment of vaccines to the north-west from Turkey, with 350,000 doses, took place at the beginning of the month. We aim to increase the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in the coming weeks. It is clear that the absence of the mechanism at such a critical time would be devastating.

We all applauded the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021) in July. Millions of vulnerable people in the north-west will continue to benefit from cross-border aid, at least for another year. Two months after its adoption, important progress has already been made regarding cross-line access into the north-west, despite all the difficulties posed by conducting such an operation.

Between 30 August and 1 September, 14 World Food Programme trucks containing 600 tons of food items made the journey from Aleppo to Sarmada, Idlib. That operation required a total-risk assessment and negotiations with different actors. It also validated our concerns in relation to the safety of cross-line assistance in the region.

Allow me to recall once again that resolution 2585 (2021) covers the entire country and requests progress on cross-line access throughout Syria. In that regard, I will repeat our call for cross-line operations to be conducted into the north-east, including into Ras Al-Ayn and Tel Abyad, where needs are severe, but no aid has been delivered until now. We expect to see equal attention paid to the most vulnerable in the north-west and north-east of the country, as well as in the south-west, in Dara'a, who require our immediate attention.

There will be no sustainable peace without accountability. Year after year, Syrians have continued to confront gross violations and abuses at the hands of the Al-Assad regime and terrorist organizations. Countless people have been deprived of their liberty in Syria, with many waiting for news from their disappeared and missing family members. The atrocities committed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units and its Syrian offshoot, the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces, vary from bomb attacks on hospitals and schools to the recruitment of children to assassinations and kidnappings. Their war crimes and crimes against humanity test our conscience every day.

Independent mechanisms such as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian

Arab Republic and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism have a vital role to play in ensuring that impunity does not take root in a post-conflict Syria. The latest report (A/HRC/48/70) of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry reveals a bleak picture of the situation in Syria, documenting torture and sexual violence in detention, deaths in custody and enforced disappearances. We should closely follow up on its recommendations and accelerate efforts to ensure accountability.

The Syrian people have endured a decade of loss and heartbreak, but they have not given up on justice or respect for their rights. We must show our determination to support them along that path. Despite the false accusations and fabricated lies we just heard, the regime will not be able to cover up its crimes and walk away. When the time comes, the regime will be held accountable for the systematic massacres and mass destruction it has committed throughout Syria,

With regard to the insulting statement made by the representative of the Syrian regime, I reiterate that I do not consider him to be my legitimate counterpart. His presence here is an affront to the millions of Syrians who are victims of the regime's countless crimes. I will therefore not honour his delusional accusations with a response.

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

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): For well over 10 years, the Syrian people have greatly suffered from one of the gravest humanitarian situations in the world. Unfortunately, people are suffering more now than ever before, as Under-Secretary-General Griffiths was told by Syrians and humanitarian workers alike during his recent visit to Syria.

The international community has a serious political, moral and ethical responsibility to address the dire situation. The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator's visit to Syria, which enabled him to collect first-hand information and assess the actual situation on the ground, was a welcome act. It is promising that, according to his account, he was encouraged by his discussions with Syrian Government officials and by subsequent developments on the ground, including the first humanitarian cross-line operation into north-west Syria since 2017.

We value all the efforts undertaken to make that happen, including preparations by the Syrian Government and the cooperation of the humanitarian community. More important, we salute the dedication of the Syrian soldier who lost his life while demining to clear the road for the humanitarian convoy. The transfer of humanitarian aid to Dara'a with the cooperation of the Syrian Government is also an important development.

As the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator has been notified by the humanitarian community, the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation continues to deteriorate. There is an urgent need for recovery assistance and improved provision of basic services.

That serves to underline the importance of the full and effective implementation of resolution 2585 (2021), through which the Security Council calls upon all Member States to respond with practical steps to address the urgent needs of the Syrian people. Through that resolution, the Council also stresses that such efforts must include supporting essential services, such as water, sanitation, health, education, shelter and early recovery projects.

In that context, we welcome the statement by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his call to dramatically increase our early recovery assistance. However, it is disappointing that, according to him, needs in Syria continue to grow while funding continues to shrink. That means that financial contributions for humanitarian activities in Syria must increase. But that alone is not enough.

Therefore, efforts towards early-recovery projects and reconstruction must be redoubled and expedited.

Unilateral sanctions, which have a devastating role in aggravating the humanitarian situation, must be removed fully and immediately. The looting of Syrian oil and wealth must stop. Water must not be weaponized. And the return of refugees and displaced persons must be facilitated.

Further efforts must also be made to ensure that Syrians no longer need to rely on humanitarian aid. The ultimate solution, of course, is ending the conflict, the full withdrawal of all uninvited foreign forces, defeating terrorists and ensuring Syria's territorial integrity, unity and political independence. We hope that the recent positive developments as a result of the coordination and cooperation of the Syrian Government and the humanitarian community will yield further results and replace confrontational approaches with cooperation.

The touching story told by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths of a 4-year-old Syrian boy with leukaemia under treatment at a clinic in rural Aleppo that has no electricity, running water or access to medication is only one example of the hardship faced daily by many Syrians. We must not leave this proud nation alone. We should not let them down.

As in the past, we will continue to assist the people and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to overcome the challenges they face.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I shall now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.