



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9022nd meeting

Tuesday, 26 April 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

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| <i>President:</i> | Dame Barbara Woodward | (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Albania | Mr. Hoxha |
| | Brazil | Mr. De Almeida Filho |
| | China | Mr. Dai Bing |
| | France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| | Gabon | Mr. Biang |
| | Ghana | Mrs. Hackman |
| | India | Mr. Raguttahalli |
| | Ireland | Ms. Byrne Nason |
| | Kenya | Mr. Kiboino |
| | Mexico | Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu |
| | Norway | Ms. Juul |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | United Arab Emirates | Mr. Abushahab |
| | United States of America | Mr. Mills |

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021) (S/2022/330)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021) (S/2022/330)

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/330, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021).

I now give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: Syria is a hot conflict, not a frozen one. We have seen air strikes in the northwest pick up again and intensified clashes around Afrin and the northeast, and there are continuing exchanges of rocket fire and shelling across all front lines, improvised explosive devices, car bombs and other security incidents.

The conflict also continues to give rise to threats to international peace and security of the first order. Notwithstanding their legal status, the sheer fact

that five foreign armies operate in different sites of the Syrian conflict is concerning. Regular incidents between or involving international actors are troubling.

For instance, this month saw, once again, strikes in Syria attributed to Israel, drone strikes in the northeast attributed to Turkey, air strikes in Idlib and west of the Euphrates attributed to Russia and reports of rocket fire on United States troops in Deir-ez-Zor. I worry that any of those flashpoints could be further exacerbated by heightened geopolitical tensions outside of Syria.

Terrorism is still a significant threat, with at least two listed terrorist groups carrying out operations or holding territory. It is worrying that attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are picking up once again, following a relative low in February.

Syria is still among the greatest humanitarian crises of our era. We should be appalled at what this means for Syrian civilians, who continue to be killed by violence. Humanitarian suffering is at its highest level since the conflict began, and millions are displaced inside and outside of the country. We should be deeply concerned about what this scale of suffering will translate into in terms of the fabric of Syrian society and Syrian and regional stability if there is no political path out of the conflict.

My message today is simple: the Security Council must focus on Syria. The current strategic stalemate on the ground and Syria's absence from the headlines should not mislead anyone into thinking that the conflict needs less attention or fewer resources, or that the political solution is not urgent. Indeed, a conflict of this scale requires a comprehensive political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

A constitutional track could contribute to such a solution, but to do so it must build trust and confidence. On 25 March, we concluded the seventh session of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. The session was under way when I briefed the Council last time (see S/PV.9003). By that stage, the Committee had spent four days discussing draft constitution texts, presented by delegations on four basic constitutional principles.

The expectation was that on the fifth and final day, delegations would submit revisions to the texts they had submitted to reflect the content of those discussions, and those revisions would then be discussed by the Committee members. I can report that delegations offered, at least, some revisions to some of the texts

presented. Some of those amendments indicated an attempt to reflect the content of the discussions and narrow differences. Still, others contained no changes.

Deputy Special Envoy Khawla Matar has since been to Damascus and Istanbul for further discussions with the two Constitutional Committee co-Chairs. I have today issued invitations for the eighth session, to be held from 28 May to 3 June here in Geneva. In doing so, I have affirmed the methodology, including the expectation that revisions will be submitted on the fifth day, to reflect the content of the discussion, and I stress the importance of that expectation being fulfilled.

I also appeal to both co-Chairs and their delegations, and the Middle Third, to submit any new titles to my Office as early as possible before the next session and to make a good-faith effort to identify titles and prepare texts for them for discussion during the session and revisions on the fifth day that focus on matters on which most Syrians could agree. That spirit would make meaningful the commitment stated in the terms of reference to which both the Government of Syria and the Syrian National Coalition opposition agreed, namely, that the Constitutional Committee's work shall be governed by a sense of compromise and constructive engagement, aimed at reaching general agreement among its members. Only with that positive intent will the process move forward.

I have spoken of the suffering of the Syrian people and, on the humanitarian front, I urge all concerned to expand cross-line and cross-border assistance to enhance efforts for early recovery to build resilience, in line with resolution 2585 (2021) and to be generous with the resources needed for humanitarian work. However, we have to go beyond stemming the tide of deepening suffering. Many of the things from which Syrians suffer from are actually inherently political in nature. They require difficult steps by political actors, involving negotiations and give and take. They ultimately require the comprehensive implementation of all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015).

Tens of thousands of Syrians remain detained, abducted or missing, and their plight is a central element of suffering among Syrians. As High Commissioner Bachelet told the General Assembly this month, the impact of that unresolved issue on women relatives and children is particularly severe. As we are often reminded, without progress on this file many Syrians will be unable even to begin to think of moving on,

and sustainable peace will remain elusive. The lack of progress is frustrating because all sides say that they indeed agree that action is needed, and all sides stand to benefit from progress. We need modest but concrete steps on this file that can help build the necessary confidence for bigger steps.

The displacement crisis that I already mentioned is another key layer of suffering. While the displacement caused by the war in Ukraine is tragically catching up, Syria remains the largest displacement crisis in the world, with 6.8 million refugees and 6.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), half the pre-war population — a whole generation born and brought up in displacement. Yet, even as conditions worsen in many places of displacement, we see little sign of returns. Indeed, some data show that the rate of return continues to decrease. We need to start to address the fears and concerns that Syrian refugees and IDPs express, and which prevent them from returning. That will require concrete steps from a range of Syrian and international stakeholders in various areas, including on issues inherent to resolution 2254 (2015).

Syrians across the country still face a devastating economic crisis after more than a decade of war and conflict, corruption, mismanagement, the Lebanese financial crisis, the coronavirus disease, sanctions and now the war in Ukraine and its economic spillover. The World Food Programme notes that between 2019 and 2021, the price of basic food items increased by a staggering 800 per cent. Syrians have been forced to ration energy products or to choose whether to buy food, fuel or medicine. That economic predicament will only fuel the displacement crisis and the humanitarian crisis, with knock-on effects for stability in the region and beyond.

We can always do more to alleviate the worst effects of this crisis with humanitarian assistance and, indeed, we should continue to do so. However, there are plainly also other steps that can be taken to address the various measures and dynamics, internal or external, that contribute to the crisis. I believe that in areas such as those and potentially others, too, it should be possible to identify concrete, reciprocal, verifiable measures that could be taken in parallel and that could begin to shift conflict dynamics. In so doing, we would create a safe, calm and neutral environment and, in the process, explore how a broader political process could be constructed to tackle all issues addressed in resolution 2254 (2015).

We must remain focused on achieving a comprehensive political resolution to the conflict, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), while respecting the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria and enabling the Syrian people to realize their legitimate aspirations.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: As the eyes of the world turn to other conflicts, Syria is on the verge of becoming yet another forgotten crisis. Yet millions of Syrians struggle each month to survive, to feed their families and to provide a future for their children. For many, the situation has never been more dire since violence erupted in 2011.

Fighting in many areas continues, and civilians, including women and children, are being injured or killed. In February and March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights verified the death of 92 civilians, including 25 children. I wish we did not have to say this every month. Civilians must be protected, and constant efforts made to spare their lives. The obligations under international humanitarian law in that regard could not be any clearer, but they continue to be flouted.

We also need to address the dire situation of Al-Hol camp residents, most of them women and children. Murders, looting, and vandalism occur frequently — five women were killed in the camp in the past week alone. The camp is simply not safe. Living conditions also remain precarious. Residents struggle to get food, medical care, clean water, protection and other basic services. I reiterate the call for the full repatriation of third-country nationals from camps in north-east Syria, as well as for improvements to security that are consistent with the civilian character of the camp.

The economic crisis continues unabated. Fuel shortages and lack of electricity affect the delivery of basic services, including in water and sanitation, health and education. Food and fuel prices are spiralling higher every month, putting the basic necessities for a healthy and dignified life even further out of reach for millions of people. Food prices rose another 18 per cent between February and March. The economic crisis and related cuts in family expenses often disproportionately affect women's and children's mobility and access to

basic services, including to reproductive-health and protection services.

Reliable access to sufficient and safe water across the north remains a major challenge. Unprecedented water shortages last year are already taking their toll on farmers and livestock producers. Some subdistricts in the north-east are reporting harvest losses of over 75 per cent. The loss of crops and agricultural livelihoods will likely worsen already high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition. Women and girls are disproportionately affected owing to their prominent role in the agriculture sector.

For Syrians living through the twelfth year of this crisis, the future looks bleak. As the economic and food-security outlook worsens, the resources available for our emergency response are dwindling. We simply do not have the money needed. For far too many people, we are not able to provide the bare minimum in assistance. It is clear that we cannot continue business as usual. We must support Syrians in need to find a more sustainable path forward.

As the Emergency Relief Coordinator said in his most recent briefing to this Council (see S/PV.9003), we have significantly scaled up our plans to invest in resilience and early recovery. Over 25 per cent of the overall request for humanitarian aid to Syria will contribute to early recovery and resilience, as featured in 570 projects in our humanitarian appeal for Syria this year. For example, to improve access to education in newly accessible areas of Raqqa, UNICEF rehabilitated 69 classrooms and three water, sanitation and hygiene facilities over the past two months, benefiting 1,100 students. UNICEF plans this year to increase the resilience of at least 10,000 younger children by supporting them through access to early childhood education. Such initiatives as these will enable vulnerable Syrians to lead more dignified lives, give children hope and reduce the need for assistance in the longer run.

But the challenges remain enormous. There are more than 2.4 million children out of school in Syria, and, unless we are significantly scale up our support, even more are at risk of dropping out. Rapid and substantial investments are now required to help us break the vicious cycle of suffering, violence and despair. We count on the generous support of donors and the cooperation of the Syrian authorities.

We are expanding access. Three cross-line convoys have now deployed to north-west Syria. The third convoy crossed conflict lines on 30 March. These convoys delivered food and nutrition support to children and carried other essential humanitarian items, including health supplies. We are working to see further interagency convoys deploy in May, and we are continuing to work to improve the distribution of this vital aid.

This is important progress, but it is modest in the face of the tremendous needs, and the United Nations will continue to work with all relevant parties to expand it. We are planning to extend our initial six-month plan for regular and sustained cross-line deliveries to the end of the year. We need the continued support of all concerned parties to make these missions timely and predictable. In the north-east, the United Nations should be given the space to coordinate the humanitarian response from within the country from its hub in Qamishli.

A staggering 4.1 million people in north-west Syria need humanitarian aid. Almost a million people — mostly women and children — are living in tents, half of which are being used beyond their normal lifespan. These people depend on us to survive. They deserve to live with dignity.

Last year, the United Nations dispatched some 800 trucks of cross-border aid each month, consistently reaching 2.4 million people. While current cross-line missions complement the massive cross-border operation, they cannot substitute its size or scope at this point.

When it comes to delivering life-saving aid to people in need across Syria, all channels should remain open and available. The renewal of the United Nations cross-border authorization in July remains essential to saving lives in north-west Syria. I echo the call of the Secretary-General for the Security Council to maintain consensus on renewing resolution 2585 (2021) in July this year. What he said at the time of his call remains entirely relevant: there is a moral and humanitarian imperative to do so. Ultimately, our actions need to translate into a better future for the people of Syria.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Shawky.

Ms. Shawky: I thank members for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council today on

behalf of my organization, CARE International, which is an independent development and humanitarian organization operating in more than 100 countries globally since 1945.

CARE has been working in Syria since 2013. In total, we have reached more than 9 million people since the beginning of the crisis. We partner with Syrian organizations across the country, and we also implement programmes directly. We have thousands of people working day in and day out in the north-east and north-west of Syria, providing food, access to clean drinking water, shelter, health service assistance and education, and supporting women's economic empowerment. All our programmes are planned and scrutinized through a gender lens to implement and promote gender justice in all stages of our interventions. We strive to strengthen people's resilience and support them in adapting to the recurring shocks and stresses that come with more than a decade of conflict.

As the world experiences economic breakdown from rising inflation, astronomical food and energy prices and growing crises, people in the Middle East are struggling to keep their head above water. For the Syrian people, who are now in the eleventh year of an ongoing conflict, the situation is exceptionally dire.

Early this year, CARE conducted a rapid gender analysis across northern Syria to better understand the impacts of the conflict on women and girls. The respondents told us that they resort to very high-risk coping strategies in order to survive: they reduce their food intake, as Mr. Pedersen just highlighted; they increase household debts; and they sell the few assets they might still have left.

There are three staggering findings that I would like to highlight to the Council.

First, 60 per cent of the people are reducing their food intake to ensure that their children are fed. People also compromise on the quality of food, unable to buy vegetables or even cooking oil. Currently, food rations are approximately 50 per cent of the internationally recommended dietary intake.

Many of the women we spoke to told us that they are collapsing. One of them is Dalal, a displaced mother in north-western Syria. Dalal told us: "My kids are hungry. We have not tasted any fruit or vegetables for more than two months now." Without additional funding beyond June this year, food rations will be

cut further and beneficiary coverage is expected to reduce by 2 million people in order to stretch available resources until the end of the year.

The second area of concern I would like to share with the Council is water and sanitation. Only 35 per cent of those women we spoke to have access to safe toilets. Collecting water can take more than an hour and most women rely on a male family member to fetch water, simply because it is unsafe to do otherwise. Bayan, who lives with her children in a camp in north-western Syria, told us that she can bathe her children only once every 10 days.

The third concern is access to health care, as half of the health facilities across northern Syria — including mental health clinics — have been destroyed. Health needs in the region were immense even before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) struck and we have struggled to respond to the pandemic since then. We should all be alarmed by the latest report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the fact that, as of March 2022, only 4.4 per cent of the population in north-western Syria had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Unfortunately, it is clear that the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources required to meet them was already growing into a chasm, even before Syrians and their neighbours in the region began to feel the impacts of the Ukraine crisis. I particularly want to highlight the situation of children.

From CARE's recent rapid gender analysis, 71 per cent of the communities we spoke to told us that child and early forced marriage is a growing problem. We are also seeing increasing rates of child labour, particularly as the economic situation continues to decline. In short, we are collectively failing to safeguard the future of generations to come in Syria. As though that were not enough, the more than 5 million people in Syria today who directly depend on the Euphrates River are at risk of losing all access to drinking water and water for agriculture. Climate change and conflict are compounding water security for millions of people in north-eastern Syria. This is, in fact, north-eastern Syria's worst drought in 70 years.

At the same time, we must not discount the dire humanitarian needs throughout the whole of Syria. As of this month, 14.6 million Syrians are in need of assistance and protection. That is a staggering increase of 1.2 million people compared to last year alone. A

few days ago, the World Food Programme also reported that three out of every four households are unable to meet their basic needs. It is easy to disassociate from those figures, but in reality the lack of political will and reductions in funding mean that people's coping capacities are quickly eroding.

Despite that, the humanitarian community remains obligated to respond to the humanitarian imperative to ease the suffering of our fellow citizens in Syria. It is essential that humanitarian access not become an annual obstruction to our responsibility as humanitarian organizations. The ability to reach vulnerable families through the most direct, efficient and timely modalities is not a nice thing to have but a matter of life and death. To achieve that, we need the Security Council, at a minimum, to reauthorize resolution 2585 (2021) for at least another 12 months.

Why is the reauthorization of that resolution important? Allow me to highlight three reasons.

First, humanitarian needs are growing, not shrinking. Now is the time to increase lifesaving assistance. The United Nations cross-border operation cannot be ended without a long-term and concerted commitment to addressing the challenges Syrians are facing, which is, in turn, predicated on the Syrian conflict ending.

Secondly, we have stated and continue to believe that the size and scale of the massive United Nations cross-border operation currently in place cannot be replicated by non-governmental organizations or any other modalities.

Thirdly, we strongly support a continued commitment to early recovery and resilience programming. That will make schools available for children, allow hospitals to reopen and generate livelihood opportunities for families. Then and only then will mothers like Dalal be able to buy the food she needs to sustain her family until the time comes when she and countless others can return home safely.

Additionally, in two weeks, the United Nations, civil society, policymakers and donors will come together for the sixth Brussels Conference. We urge the organizers and participating States, first and foremost, to listen to the voices of Syrians and Syrian civil society, who must be at the centre of any discussions and decisions about the future of Syria. At this stage in the crisis, listening and being accountable to Syrians

should be non-negotiable. We need to come prepared to turn the important outcomes of that dialogue into action, with funding commitments that meet the urgency of the moment.

In conclusion, I wish to leave the Council not with a sense of hopelessness, but rather inspired and challenged to use the tools it already has at its disposal — namely, resources and diplomacy — to catalyse a Syrian-centred aid and policy response. The next few months present several key opportunities to work collectively to meet the challenges faced by Syria today. The renewed authorization of resolution 2585 (2021), as well as a renewed commitment to emergency and long-term funding for Syria, can help us achieve that outcome and provide the support that the Syrian people deserve.

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

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

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. My delegation would also like to express its gratitude to Ms. Shawky, not only for her detailed briefing but, most importantly for the life-saving work done by her organization and so many other international humanitarian organizations operating in the difficult environment in Syria.

Ms. Shawky said that she did not want to leave us hopeless, but the crisis she has described in Syria is certainly staggering. Nearly 15 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and the number is increasing, not decreasing, while 90 per cent of the people in Syria are facing extreme poverty. As she described, it is clear that vulnerable populations are having to make horrible choices between paying for food, medicine, fuel, education or housing. I agree. We all need to do better for the Syrian people.

Last year the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2585 (2021), underscoring our shared imperative to address the humanitarian crisis. The United States is firmly committed to fully implementing all aspects of the resolution, including by providing financial support for early recovery. We support all modalities to enable aid to reach those in need, and we welcomed the cross-line convoy to the north-west in March. Those missions are not easy to undertake, and we know that they pose great risks to

the humanitarian personnel. We are very grateful to the United Nations and others who worked collectively to make those deliveries happen.

Yet I believe that as we heard, it is undeniable that cross-line aid still cannot meet the vast needs of Syria's population. The cross-border mechanism remains an irreplaceable lifeline for millions of Syrians. The United Nations has consistently demonstrated that it has the ability to facilitate the transparent delivery of humanitarian aid into north-western Syria, and there is no substitute for the 1,000 truckloads that transit Bab Al-Hawa with food, medicine and supplies that reach millions every month. The Council must reauthorize and expand the cross-border humanitarian mandate this summer. Without that reauthorization, millions more will be subjected to even greater deprivation and hardship. I agree with the Secretary-General, just quoted by the Assistant Secretary-General as saying that the renewal of resolution 2285 (2021) is a moral and humanitarian imperative.

Next month, as we heard from Ms. Shawky, in addition to our work here in the Council the European Union and the United Nations will co-host the sixth Brussels conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region. It will be an opportunity to demonstrate our continued commitment to the Syrian people and the communities that host refugees. The United States strongly encourages robust pledges to address the increasing humanitarian needs in Syria and assist the host countries in the region.

While we work collectively to address the humanitarian crisis, we must acknowledge the primary cause of the 11 years of conflict. It is what the Al-Assad regime has perpetrated on its own people. We commend the United Nations and all humanitarian actors who continue to work tirelessly to address the devastating reality for millions of people, but humanitarian aid continues to be only a stopgap. The most effective and sustainable way to resolve the humanitarian situation is through a nationwide ceasefire and a political solution, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). To that end, the United States appreciates the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen and his team to promote an inclusive political process. We support the Constitutional Committee as a mechanism for dialogue. We urged the regime's delegation to the Constitutional Committee to engage meaningfully in line with the format agreed by all participants and not to obstruct the talks.

In addition to the efforts through the Constitutional Committee, I would like to urge Special Envoy Pedersen to continue to redouble his efforts with regard to all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including on the protracted issue of people arbitrarily detained or missing. As Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said earlier this month, there has been a clear lack of progress on this file, even as we are entering the twelfth year of the conflict. During the Human Rights Council's forty-ninth session, the United States joined other members of the Council in condemning the ongoing abuses in Syria, including abuses of detainees. At least 152,000 persons are still missing or arbitrarily detained in Syria, and tens of thousands have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment and lack access to legal representation and medical care in detention. We await the United Nations recommendations for measures aimed at enhancing attention in order to hasten the release of those arbitrarily detained souls in Syria. And we urge those with influence on the Al-Assad regime to encourage it to undertake large-scale unilateral releases, including of women, children and the disabled, to cease additional arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and egregious abuses against prisoners and allow immediate unhindered access to third-party prison monitors and medical services for all detainees.

In conclusion, pursuing accountability and justice is essential both to building confidence in the political process that we called for in resolution 2254 (2015) and to securing the stable, just and enduring peace that the Syrian people so need and deserve.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome Geir Pedersen and Joyce Msuya to the meeting and thank them for their briefings. We also listened to Nirvana Shawky's comments.

On the political track, we note the holding in Geneva of the seventh session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee from 21 to 25 March. It is important that Syrians have the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue and discuss the future foundations of their own State. We believe that there is no alternative to continuing the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, with the assistance of the United Nations, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We believe it is important to ensure that the Special Envoy adheres to his mandate as laid out in resolution 2254 (2015) and especially that he engages more actively with the Syrian parties. I say that because we have a

growing number of questions about the Special Envoy's attempts to advance his step-for-step initiative, whose specific content, participants and added value are still unclear. After all, both Damascus and the opposition reject his ideas. I must confess that we are becoming increasingly concerned that such a scenario could have a very negative impact on the effectiveness of the Special Envoy's efforts to support the work in the Constitutional Committee, including in the context of the preparations for its next meeting.

Despite the fact that there have been no large-scale hostilities in Syria since March 2020, the situation on the ground remains volatile. Tensions persist around the Idlib de-escalation zone, which Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham militants have turned into a terrorist enclave where they are essentially holding Syrian civilians hostage. At the same time, we are seeing attempts to whitewash the terrorists by including them in the pseudo-authorities being created in Idlib. That should fool no one. Categorizing terrorists as good or bad is impermissible.

Regular clashes are occurring on the perimeter of three other zones of Turkish operations in northern Syria. The events around the Al-Sinaa prison in Al-Hasakah earlier this year were another clear confirmation of the significant strengthening of the terrorists east of the Euphrates, where the virtual inaction of the United States and its allies has allowed fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to raise their heads. The security zone at Al-Tanf occupied by Washington is another source of threats. Militants prepared and trained by American instructors are launching raids against Syrian forces and detaining refugees in Rukban, blocking humanitarian assistance's access to the camp. Another serious destabilizing factor is Israel's arbitrary rocket attacks, which are violating Syria's air space and that of Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. According to various reports there have been approximately 40 such attacks in the past year, resulting in victims among both Syrian servicemen and civilians, including women and children.

Western countries' suffocating unilateral sanctions and politicized approaches to providing humanitarian assistance have continued to worsen the socioeconomic situation in Syria. Food prices have reached new highs, the Syrian pound is collapsing and the numbers of those in urgent need have already reached a record 14.6 million. We can see that the Western States' illegitimate sanctions policies against a number of countries, including Syria, whose policies are not to

the liking of Washington and its satellites, have long ago become a inhumane war against civilians using economic coercion instead of guns and shells.

We note that the United Nations 2022 humanitarian plan for Syria provides for a considerable share — 25 per cent — of early-recovery projects to be allocated to the restoration of medical and educational facilities and water-supply systems. However, we have seen in practice that those plans often remain substantially underfunded, and the implementation of development and reconstruction projects is often constricted by donors' politically aimed preconditions. Largely as a result of those factors, more than half of all Syrians are still living in areas that need to be cleared of mines, and a third of households have no more than two hours of electricity a day. It is notable that we are seeing this unacceptable situation nine months after the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021), which is supposed to establish regular domestic access throughout Syria and boost its early recovery. It is particularly significant that during that time only three cross-line convoys have been able to access Idlib, and no supplies at all have reached northern Syria from Damascus.

As a justification, we are always hearing about the lack of necessary agreement from the aforementioned Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists and complaints about unsafe working conditions for humanitarian workers on the ground. We view all that as a basic unwillingness to address the problem of humanitarian deliveries from Damascus, including to Idlib. There is no point in pretending that in such circumstances we see any real reasons to renew the cross-border resolution.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I am making this statement today on behalf of the co-penholders of the Syria humanitarian file, Norway and Ireland. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya Mpanju, and in particular Ms. Shawky. Their excellent briefings today have once again made clear the breadth and depth of the humanitarian needs on the ground across Syria.

More than 11 years after its outbreak, the terrible conflict in Syria continues. In February and March alone a further 92 civilians were killed, including 25 children. Not only do lives continue to be lost, but access to basic services remains perilous for many Syrians. In particular, we remain concerned about the attacks on health-care and education personnel and facilities. We call on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international law

and to protect civilian infrastructure and civilians, including those working in education, health services, the media and humanitarian operations. Such violations of international humanitarian law are unacceptable.

Humanitarian needs throughout Syria are at their highest level ever. A staggering 12 million people in Syria are food-insecure, including more than 75 per cent of the population in the north-west. Food prices continue to reach record highs, as we heard in the briefing. Men, women and children go hungry every day as families face the choice between eating and staying warm. Twenty-five per cent of children in 58 districts across Syria are stunted. Stunting is a major public health issue that will have severe long-term effects unless urgent action is taken. Those children, who have known nothing but war, are at risk of irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development. The food insecurity is exacerbated by the economic crisis, which puts women and girls at particular risk. Gender-based violence is a continuing threat. The increase in child marriages reflects the desperation of families to find money, while the rise in suicides among women speaks to the hopeless reality of many lives on the ground. It is vital that the United Nations and the Security Council continue to strive to reach those who are experiencing such severe challenges daily across Syria.

Last July the Council collectively adopted resolution 2585 (2021), which recalled the need for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. We welcome the ongoing efforts to implement that resolution. As co-penholders, Ireland and Norway strongly support the use of all modalities to supply aid to the significant number of Syrians in need. We welcomed the third cross-line delivery, which took place during this period, and I commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies for their efforts to advance cross-line deliveries and urge further progress. We call on all the parties to support cross-line deliveries, grant the necessary security guarantees and allow the safe passage of cross-line convoys and their personnel.

We welcome the significant progress made in terms of early-recovery activities during the reporting period. We thank the United Nations for identifying significant opportunities in its programming for investment in early recovery, with 26 per cent of the total requests for assistance targeting early recovery and resilience. Major donors such as the European Union are stepping up their support and investment for early recovery, and

thousands of civilians are already benefiting from the rehabilitation of infrastructure and utilities, sewage networks and irrigation networks. We encourage continued efforts to increase support to early recovery in all of Syria. Aid provided through the cross-border operation also remains indispensable. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/330) makes clear, millions in the north-west rely on that lifeline for vital support. It is clear that at this point there is no alternative that could replicate the scale and scope of this operation. Relieving the desperate and ever-growing humanitarian needs of the Syrian people will continue to be our guiding principle. Syrians, who have already borne 11 years of conflict and hardship, deserve every effort of the Security Council to mitigate their suffering.

I would now like to turn to the political file in my national capacity. I thank Geir Pedersen for his briefing and his ongoing work on the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). We want to commend his continued efforts on the Constitutional Committee and look forward to hearing his report of the next meeting, planned for the week of 28 May. Ireland renews its call to the Syrian authorities to engage in meaningful discussions leading to substantive outcomes. During last month's session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we heard from Syrian women. Their right to determine the future of their country cannot be overstated. For that right to be fulfilled, nothing less than their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of the political process will suffice. We believe lasting peace can be achieved only with Syrian women in the room and at the negotiating table. We support Geir Pedersen's engagement with the Women's Advisory Board.

Ireland remains deeply concerned about the fragile security situation in several parts of Syria, particularly the north-west. We renew our calls for a nationwide ceasefire and call on all the parties, particularly the Syrian authorities, to cease all indiscriminate attacks and direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. It is reprehensible that grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including torture and sexual and gender-based violence, continue to be documented across Syria. Ireland supports all efforts towards accountability, including through the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most

Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We commend national efforts to assist in tackling impunity, such as the proceedings in Koblenz, Germany, which can supplement those at the international level.

The forced disappearance of individuals is one of the cruellest tactics of war. Ireland urges the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained and the clarification of the fate and whereabouts of the missing, whose families are entitled to know the truth. We call for immediate access for humanitarian actors to detention centres and look forward to the Secretary-General's study on bolstering efforts to locate the missing, identify remains and support families, as mandated in General Assembly resolution 76/228.

In conclusion, the political process called for in resolution 2254 (2015) can succeed only if accompanied by true accountability and justice, which are essential if the Syrian people are to achieve a stable, just and lasting peace.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank both Mr. Geir Pedersen and Ms. Joyce Msuya for their briefings today. We also thank Ms. Nirvana Shawky for her briefing.

Just as the Syrian people recently commemorated the seventy-sixth anniversary of the country's evacuation day, we hope that one day they will also overcome the ongoing crisis in Syria in a way that preserves Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

After more than a decade of war in Syria, it is now imperative for us to reconsider how the Security Council has handled this file. Over the past several years, polarization and existing divisions in the Council have caused paralysis. In addition, the periodic meetings of the Council on Syria have been confined to a repetition of national positions without a serious discussion on a peaceful solution that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people.

Turning to the political situation, we emphasize the importance of all parties engaging in negotiations and dialogue, particularly through the work of the Constitutional Committee. It is important that the discussion focus on common constitutional elements and for that to be through a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process. We also welcome the agreement to hold the eighth round of talks in May, and we urge the

Committee to continue its work periodically so that all parties can engage in substantive discussions.

Progress in the political process requires addressing security challenges, including through de-escalation and by securing a ceasefire throughout Syria. That is particularly pertinent given the recent deterioration in the security situation, as seen in Al-Hol camp and in the recent increase in murders and violence against women. In that regard, it is important to preserve the humanitarian foundations and purpose of the camp, while also addressing the root causes of extremism and terrorism that threaten the security and stability of Syria and the region, particularly given attacks by Da'esh against civilians in Deir ez-Zor, Al-Hasakah and eastern Homs.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we underline the importance of focusing on providing basic needs and essential services to the Syrian people, including electricity, water and food. We also note that the living conditions in Syria remain difficult, particularly given the unprecedented rise in the prices of basic commodities due to the economic crisis in Syria, which coincides with increasing international prices of food and energy, in addition to the significant damage to the electricity sector as a result of terrorism and war. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates supports the efforts to increase early recovery projects in Syria.

We would also like to specifically draw attention to the difficult conditions of women and girls in Syria, which is manifested in the alarming increase in suicide among women and the continued crimes of sexual violence. We stress the importance of providing those women with the necessary support to alleviate their suffering.

As the July renewal of the cross-border aid mechanism to Syria approaches, we hope that the Council will consider the matter in an objective and logical manner. We need to cooperate on this file, regardless of any differences on other files, to ensure that aid reaches those in need, both through cross-border and crossline operations. In that context, the United Arab Emirates welcomes the crossing of the third humanitarian aid convoy from Aleppo to north-west Syria, based on resolution 2585 (2021).

In conclusion, the positions of all members of the Security Council on this file are clear. In the coming months, it is important to focus on how to revive

meaningful discussions in order to resolve the Syrian crisis, rather than merely managing it.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I should like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen for his tireless efforts and his briefing today. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Ms. Shawky for their updated information.

There is no other way to put it: Syria, this hot conflict, is a tragedy without an end. Every time we need to discuss the situation on the ground, we note yet another grim milestone. As we just heard, the humanitarian catastrophe deepens; the humanitarian needs increase by the day; and the violence continues to claim innocent lives, including women and children.

As dark as that is, there seems to be no limit to the depravity of the regime. It has knowingly committed egregious crimes against the civilian population that qualify as crimes against humanity, including enforced disappearance, torture, murder, imprisonment and rape. It has abducted and forcefully disappeared thousands of people — an issue that is highlighted in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/330).

More than 150,000 persons have disappeared or are still detained somewhere in the dark side of Syria. Only the Al-Assad regime knows about the fate of those who are either languishing in some inhuman detention or are dead without a trace. The regime does not even care to reveal any information about their whereabouts, keeping suspended the lives of families who still search for their loved ones in vain, since, due to this vicious choice of the regime, they may never get their much-needed closure. Not only does the regime show unseemly disregard for the fate of missing people and their families; it oversees what I can call an economy of anguish, where prison guards and other regime cronies sell false information to desperate family members of the missing persons, who have been living in endless torment in search for answers for more than a decade now. That is widely recognized as a major obstacle to peace and justice in Syria. Addressing it has rightfully been one of the foremost demands of victims and civil society over the past decade.

We remain deeply concerned about the fate and well-being of children detained in the Ghuguayran detention centre and other detention centres across north-east Syria. We echo the call of Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for an immediate sustainable solution for the children. We commend the efforts of the Syrian victim

groups and civil society in developing the Truth and Justice Charter, launched in February 2021, with a clear vision and demands to deal with the question of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention in Syria.

We call upon the Special Envoy and Member States to support the creation of a mechanism for missing people, as well as of a consultative or contact group to provide urgent actions and support with regard to detainees and forced disappearances and missing persons files in Syria.

We support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism regarding the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes and the referral of this situation to the International Criminal Court.

What we continue to witness in Syria, beyond the obvious humanitarian catastrophe, is a total breakdown of morality. It is our responsibility in the Council to take a firm stance and to demonstrate to the Syrian people, as well as to the world, that a regime that has inflicted, and continues to inflict, unspeakable misery and suffering on its own people, without remorse and with total impunity, is an affront to human civilization. Such a monument to savagery and the personification of evil should not prevail. We should not have to be reminded that failing to uphold international law and the profoundest respect for human rights has direct consequences in other parts of the world. Impunity emboldens autocratic regimes to commit further crimes. It is a licence to kill. Therefore, silence is not a choice. It is not our choice.

The ongoing political process should not be a political process in name only. Meetings on a constitutional framework succeed one another without any results beyond their numbering. Fresh pressure must be exerted on all stakeholders, including the regime, at all levels to begin a serious and genuine political process in Syria, including with the meaningful participation of women. That is important to support the tireless and commendable efforts of the Special Envoy to produce tangible results.

Keeping in mind what has been spoken of many, many times during this meeting and every time we meet on Syria, that is, the worsening humanitarian situation, the Council must renew resolution 2585 (2021), reauthorize the Bab Al-Hawa crossing and reopen other border crossings so that vital humanitarian aid can reach those who depend on it. It is the only lifeline

for millions in desperate need. To refuse that would be tantamount to knowingly condemn an innocent people to death by starvation. That is a crime and should not happen. Humanitarian assistance needs to be non-political, based on the needs of the population, and reach everyone.

Let me end by recalling that the consequences of our action or inaction, as we have seen over the course of the last 11 years, will have a direct impact on Syrian civilians today and on the generations to come.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the three African countries members of the Security Council (A3), that is, Ghana, Kenya and my country, Gabon.

We thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings. We take note of the important work that they are doing along with their teams in a complex environment, and we thank them for their commitment. We also listened closely to Ms. Nirvana Shawky. In addition, we welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of Syria.

Our statement will relate to the political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

Although there have been few new developments since our last review of the situation in Syria (see S/PV.9003), that situation remains concerning and requires the full attention of the international community. We must continue to extend to Syria the lifeline that it so sorely requires, not only for its humanitarian needs but also, and above all, for a political solution.

We believe that a political solution is the most promising path towards peace in Syria. It requires the immediate establishment of a nationwide ceasefire, an inclusive and pluralist dialogue that takes into account the interests of a broad range of Syrians, and the restoration of State authority across all the Syrian territory.

We take note of the important work achieved by the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated Constitutional Committee during its seventh meeting, held in Geneva from 21 to 25 March, and encourage the spirit of compromise so as to achieve substantial and constructive progress in ensuring mutually acceptable constitutional reform proposals. The parties must maintain their political will and

momentum if they want to make headway at the eighth meeting of the Constitutional Committee, to be held next month.

The need to push ahead with a broader political process is increasingly crucial. Confidence-building measures such as the release of vulnerable detainees, in particular older persons, women and children, as well as information on the fate of disappeared persons, must be part and parcel of that political process aimed at achieving peace. We recall the important role of women in settling the political climate in Syria and welcome their participation in the peace process, in particular in the context of discussions with the Women's Advisory Board.

The A3 is concerned by the presence of foreign military forces, which could undermine regional and international security. We underscore that Syria must not serve as a stage for other States to settle their scores. The A3 encourages the efforts of regional and international actors to achieve political stability in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), with respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. That resolution remains the most important road map to achieve the political solution to the Syrian crisis that we truly hope to see.

(spoke in English)

The destruction of basic infrastructure resulting from the continued hostilities is aggravating the already dire economic and social crises, amplifying the humanitarian needs in Syria. A significant increase in the price of gasoline derivatives, resulting in fuel shortages and prolonged power cuts, have affected the delivery of basic services, including education, access to water and, more concerning, access to essential health services for the population, particularly women and teen-age girls.

On a daily basis, innocent civilians are exposed to the dangers created by the hostilities, characterized by air and ground strikes, bombardments and anti-personnel landmines. Millions of Syrians have lost their lives. Millions of others have suffered serious physical and psychological trauma as a result of those brutal violations, which contravene international law and international humanitarian law.

Those hostilities, which continue in particular in the north-west and north-east as well as the south of the country, include air and ground strikes, bombardments

and clashes between non-State armed opposition groups and Government and pro-Government forces. The continued frequent use of anti-personnel landmines is causing multiple long-lasting impacts, including injuries, psychological trauma and loss of livelihoods.

The A3 condemns all those acts of violence as well as those emanating from the activities of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which continue to increase the toll of civilian victims, many of whom are women and children.

While commending the work of United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners in Syria, we remain concerned about the deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers and facilities at Al-Hol camp, which have led to the suspension of humanitarian activities since 16 March. We call on the parties to uphold and respect their international obligation to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and grant unhindered access to humanitarian assistance throughout the territory.

The continuation of the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism remains critical to ensuring that millions of Syrians in dire humanitarian conditions can be assisted with both food and non-food aid. We also take note of the fact that cross-line aid deliveries have been scaled up, with the development of the six-month plan to complement the cross-border mechanism and expand the reach of humanitarian aid.

At this juncture, I would like to commend the efforts of United Nations agencies and its partners, which continue to support humanitarian action in Syria. Syria remains the world's largest displacement crisis, with an impact on neighbouring countries, which need continued international support. Those countries are under increased financial pressure, especially in the light of the devastating socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

At the national level, it is important to work for the establishment of the conditions necessary for the return of State refugees to their homes by guaranteeing them safety, security and adequate housing, which are essential to their sustainable recovery and the stabilization of the country.

In conclusion, the Council must build on the unity shown by its members in the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 (2021), on the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism in July. The same unity is needed

to make the necessary progress on the political track. In solidarity with the Syrian people in their quest for peace, the A3 urges all parties to the conflict to cease fire and encourages all stakeholders and actors in the subregion to show greater commitment to finding a solution to the political process in Syria.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Ms. Nirvana Shawky for their briefings.

It is clear that advancing the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) must be central in the weeks and months ahead. We urge all Syrian and international parties to commit to prioritizing a sustainable political solution to end this 11-year war.

We welcome the seventh session of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, which took place in Geneva a few weeks ago. We are encouraged that all delegations offered at least some revisions to some of the texts. However, much more determination will be needed to make real progress. We take note of what the Special Envoy said about plans to reconvene another round of negotiations on 28 May. And we call on all participants to prioritize constructive engagement towards concrete outcomes. That is vital for building trust and confidence.

Norway will continue supporting the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, and we reiterate our support to the Special Envoy's "step for step" approach.

Let me also highlight again the issue of persons who are missing and unlawfully deprived of their liberty. We are deeply concerned about the lack of progress on the release of detainees and the dissemination of information to families of the missing. So many Syrians are personally affected and have no information on what happened to their family members. We underline that progress on this file is essential for breaking through the current political stalemate. We call on all parties to allow humanitarian actors, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to visit detention centres and carry out their important work providing information to the families of victims.

Earlier in April, we all heard the briefing of Mariana Karkoutly at the open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (S/PV.9016). She drew particular attention to the troubling reports of the use of sexual violence in detention settings in Syria and provided a grim picture of how sexual violence is used to humiliate,

punish and silence the voices of politically active women. We must heed her words. We call for an end to all sexual and gender-based violence in Syria and simultaneously underline the irreplaceable value of women's full, safe, equal and meaningful participation in political processes.

Let me conclude by addressing the situation in the north-east. We are concerned about increased tensions, exacerbated by bombing, sieges, price hikes and water shortages. The situation is explosive and may spiral out of control. Such a situation would strengthen terrorist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We therefore urge all parties involved to urgently contribute to lowering tensions.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, Ms. Joyce Msuya and Ms. Nirvana Shawky for their very comprehensive briefings.

The war in Syria continues. As we say every month, the war is unfortunately not over. Idlib continues to be subjected to indiscriminate shelling and bombing by the regime and its allies. On 4 April, at least four schoolchildren died on their way to school. We condemn those attacks. The people of Dara'a, subjugated by force in the summer of 2021, also continue to challenge the regime.

Arms have never been a lasting solution to a conflict. We therefore wish to reiterate that a one-sided rehabilitation of the Syrian regime will not bring stability to Syria or to the region. That is why France will continue its relentless fight against impunity in Syria. Those responsible, particularly for war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be held accountable for their actions.

The Syrian population continues to pay a high price for this conflict. Humanitarian needs in Syria, as explained this afternoon, are at an all-time high. Food insecurity is increasing and the loss of supplies from Ukraine, due to Russian aggression against that country, is exacerbating the situation.

The situation in the north-west and north-east is particularly worrying in that regard. Vaccination rates against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are also particularly low. In the north-west, more than half the population has no access to medical care and 4.1 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, an increase of more than 20 per cent since last year. France

has provided vaccination doses to north-western Syria via the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. In the north-east, 2.1 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance, 16 per cent more than last year.

The cross-border humanitarian mechanism therefore remains indispensable. France is determined that the mechanism be renewed because it saves lives. The Secretary-General has been very clear that this is a moral and humanitarian imperative. The cross-border mechanism and all its associated safeguards will be necessary as long as aid does not reach all populations in need throughout the territory.

At the same time, progress on cross-line access must continue, both in the north-west and north-east.

It is essential to ensure full humanitarian access to all people in need. All parties to the conflict, in particular the regime, must therefore respect international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

As emphasized today, the sixth Brussels Conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region, to be held on 9 and 10 May, is a key step in that direction. France and the European Union will be there. Since 2011, more than €25 billion have been mobilized by the European Union (EU) and its member States in response to this crisis.

Only a political solution will make it possible to establish lasting peace. Resolution 2254 (2015), unanimously adopted by the Council, remains the only common path to create the conditions for lasting peace in Syria. This is incumbent upon everyone. We therefore reiterate our support for the Special Envoy's efforts to make progress on the full implementation of this road map.

It is regrettable that the seventh session of the Constitutional Committee at the end of March did not produce any tangible results. The regime has once again refused to amend the working document, even though the very purpose of these rounds of meetings is to allow all Syrians to jointly draft constitutional elements. The political process must make progress, and each actor must take its responsibilities, first and foremost the regime and its Russian ally.

Without a political solution, the French and European positions on the lifting of sanctions, normalization and reconstruction will remain unchanged.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings. I carefully listened to the statement delivered by Ms. Nirvana Shawky.

Last month, the seventh session of the Syrian Constitutional Committee core group was held in Geneva. According to the consensus reached in advance, representatives held in-depth discussions on constitutional texts and submitted their revisions. This is a result of the diligent mediation efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen, which China welcomes. China calls on all parties in Syria to maintain communications with the Special Envoy, enhance consultations on specific texts and continue to advance the Syrian-led and -owned political process.

It is worth noting that Syria still faces a complex security situation. Therefore, making progress on resolving major issues for Syria's national security such as foreign occupation and terrorism can help create the conditions necessary for the political process. China stands ready to work with the United Nations, the guarantor States of the Astana process and relevant countries in the region to make greater efforts to resolve the two aforementioned outstanding issues.

The economic and humanitarian situation in Syria does not inspire optimism. It is the responsibility of the international community to help the Syrian people overcome difficulties and move forward with reconstruction. Resolution 2585 (2021) emphasizes the importance of helping Syrian cope with the economic and social impacts of the pandemic and promote reconstruction projects in such areas as water resources, medical care and education. The international community should earnestly implement the provisions of the resolution by providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Syrian people without preconditions and help them obtain sustainable basic services.

China welcomes the fact that the United Nations will allocate 26 per cent of the resources for the Syrian humanitarian response plan to carry out 570 early-recovery projects. We hope that these projects can truly improve people's livelihoods, reduce humanitarian needs and save more lives in Syria.

China welcomes the third cross-line aid operation recently launched by the United Nations in north-west Syria. We appreciate the Syrian Government's

active cooperation in the operation and urge relevant parties in the north-west to provide access and security guarantees for the cross-line operations so as to facilitate the distribution of assistance.

The cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism is controversial, politically, legally and in practice. Previous reports of the Secretary General pointed out that the environment for cross-border aid operations is complex and that the risk of humanitarian supplies being misappropriated by terrorists cannot be ruled out. The United Nations should strengthen the monitoring of cross-border aid operations to ensure their humanitarian nature and at the same time strive to promote the gradual transition of cross-border operations to cross-line operations.

Finally, I would like once again to call on the countries concerned to lift the unilateral coercive measures against Syria and restore the rights of the Syrian people to develop their economy, conduct trade and rebuild their country.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on Syria (S/2022/330), as well as the briefers for today's updates. My delegation welcomes the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran to today's meeting.

The briefings by Ms. Msuya and Mr. Pedersen add to the discouraging information presented in the latest report of the Secretary-General. After 11 years of conflict, the humanitarian situation on the ground in Syria is getting worse as the political process remains stalled. The list of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by all parties keeps on growing, as does the list of perpetrators who remain unaccountable for those crimes.

Civilians, including children, continue to die as a direct consequence of the hostilities. Food insecurity has reached its highest recorded level. Basic services such as water and electricity are severely compromised. Children continue to be recruited and deprived of liberty on security grounds for alleged or actual links with parties to the conflict.

Although immunization rates have recently improved, the coronavirus disease continues to spread as health services deteriorate. Gender-based violence

is on the rise. Terrorist groups keep finding fertile grounds to recruit and carry out attacks.

At this point, it should be unnecessary to recall that only a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led United Nations-facilitated political process, with due regard to the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity, will bring lasting peace. A military solution is an illusion, evidenced in practice by the continuous stalemate on the ground. An agreement towards a sustainable nationwide ceasefire is urgently needed, as that would help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population, as would ongoing early-recovery and resilience initiatives aimed at preventing a further increase in the number of people in need of aid and at restoring the provision of such essential services as health, education, electricity, water and sanitation.

Civilians should be protected at all times. The physical integrity and well-being of children should be a fundamental priority, and all efforts should be made to provide them with essential services, including education and health care. They should be primarily treated as victims, detained only as a last resort and for the shortest amount of time possible, and not be recruited. They need to be reunited with their families whenever and as soon as possible.

Rising humanitarian needs demand the maintenance of predictable and regular delivery of international aid to the Syrian people, both through cross-line and cross-border operations. Humanitarian assistance remains indispensable and life-saving for millions of people across Syria, especially those living in camps and informal settlements. Brazil reiterates the call on all parties to comply with their obligation to ensure free and unimpeded humanitarian access in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

We also underline the importance of keeping all humanitarian operations under detailed and close monitoring and of seeking ways to facilitate expanding operations in the cross-line modality. In that regard, we welcome the news of a third cross-line convoy at the end of last month, which carried humanitarian aid from the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization.

As pointed out by the World Food Programme in a recent report, the conflict in Ukraine risks increasing

food insecurity in many places around the world as well as the operational costs of humanitarian assistance at a time when it is most needed. Brazil favours initiatives that include independent assessments of the impact of sanctions on the daily life of the civilian population, particularly on vulnerable groups. Sanctions should never undermine access to food, shelter and essential health supplies for those most in need.

In conclusion, Brazil thanks Mr. Pedersen for his tireless efforts aimed at trying to restore hope in the dialogue foreseen by resolution 2254 (2015) and to move us away from this unacceptable status quo. We are glad to hear that the discussions on the seventh session of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva last month reached some results and that invitations for an eighth session have already been sent out. We call on all members of the Constitutional Committee to engage in constructive work with a genuine goal in mind: to narrow differences in order to carry out the Committee's drafting mandate.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Msuya and Ms. Nirvana Shawky for their briefings. I also welcome the delegations of Syria, Iran and Turkey to today's meeting.

First of all, with regard to the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021), Mexico acknowledges the efforts and the progress made in dispatching the third cross-line humanitarian aid convoy to Sarmada on 30 March. We hope that the delivery of cross-line humanitarian aid in the north-west will continue and that this route will soon be predictable and sustainable. However, despite that progress, Mexico agrees with the Secretary-General that the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing must remain open. As we have seen, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate month after month. Some 4.1 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance in the north-west, and food-insecurity rates are 51 per cent higher than in 2019. Mexico welcomes the update on early-recovery projects and calls for their continued expansion.

Secondly, we want to emphasize the impact of the critical humanitarian situation on women and girls, including the risk they run of being victims of gender-based violence. The increase in the number of suicides among women is extremely worrying. That tragic

reality underscores the importance of a humanitarian response that includes mental health and psychosocial support services that are accessible, inclusive and have a gender perspective.

Thirdly, with regard to the situation in north-eastern Syria, we again express our concern about the violence and killings in Al-Hol, as well as about the plight of children who remain in Ghwayran prison and other detention centres. We stress that their repatriation and reintegration into their countries of origin is a priority, while always keeping in mind the principle of the best interests of the child.

Fourthly, with regard to accountability, we take note of the interim report on missing persons submitted on 8 April by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We look forward to the publication of the final report and advocate strengthening the cooperation and complementarity among existing investigative and accountability mechanisms. Similarly, Mexico reiterates its support for the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. We call on States to work with them to identify and bring to justice those responsible for crimes in Syria.

Fifthly, we welcome the organization of the seventh session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee, held at the end of March. However, we deplore the fact that once again the outcome of that meeting fell short of the stated objectives. We urge the parties to commit to engaging in the work facilitated by the Special Envoy, and we welcome the fact that the Committee's next session will take place May.

Lastly, the constitutional process is only one of the pillars of resolution 2254 (2015). However, it remains the key to restoring trust, promoting social reconciliation and building lasting peace. A cessation of hostilities is essential if we are to focus efforts on the political process. To that end, Mexico urges a definitive national ceasefire.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): I join others in thanking Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Nirvana Shawky of CARE International for her insights. I acknowledge

and welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran in today's meeting.

On the political track, there has been very little progress since the meeting of the seventh session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee held last month. We note that the Special Envoy has remained in touch with the two co-Chairs with regard to convening the next session. We are of the view that convening the next session is important to maintaining momentum in the talks. In that regard, we note the announcement by the Special Envoy today about the holding of the next session on 28 May. In order to ensure credible progress, all sides need to engage constructively and purposefully, with a sense of compromise. Efforts to exert external influence on them can only be detrimental to the overall political process. It is for the Syrians to determine and decide what is best for Syria and their own future. The Special Envoy has been making efforts to bring out all sides and facilitate the political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We support his proactive diplomacy aimed at building momentum for the political track, including through the step-for-step process. India has consistently called for support for regional efforts to find a long-term solution to the conflict. The progressive normalization of Syria's relations with its Arab neighbours in recent months is an encouraging development. We also welcome the proactive engagement of the United Arab Emirates with Syria.

On the security front, we remain concerned about the overall situation in Syria. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's recent 60-day report (S/2022/330), violence continued in the Idlib de-escalation area in the north-west, including through air strikes, mutual shelling and clashes. There is an urgent need for genuinely serious attempts to broker a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire in Syria. We believe that the withdrawal of foreign forces is essential to realizing that objective.

India has also continued to point to the looming threat posed by the resurgence of terrorist groups in Syria. United Nations-designated terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham are gaining influence in Iraq as well as Syria. We reiterate that the global fight against terrorism cannot and should not be compromised for narrow political gains. The credibility of the international community's collective fight against terrorism can be strengthened only by ensuring

accountability for the grave and inhuman acts of terror committed by terrorists and terrorist groups. To that end, India has contributed \$200,000 to support the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, including on the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq.

On the humanitarian front, with the conflict in its twelfth year, the needs of the population continue to grow. More than 14 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance, the largest number at any time since the start of the conflict in 2011. We must not lose sight of the suffering that the Syrian people endure on a daily basis. The ongoing cross-border operations continue to negatively impact the sovereignty of the Syrian State. In the north-west, we believe there is considerable scope for expanding cross-line operations, and we welcomed the recent operation that took place last month. We continue to encourage the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies to expand efforts to enhance cross-line operations. There is also a need to scale up humanitarian assistance and shore up donor support for the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Syria. It is still underfunded, particularly with regard to building resilience and access to basic services. We also continue to believe that it is critical to achieve progress on the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021) concerning early recovery and infrastructure.

In conclusion, for its part, India has continued to extend development assistance and human resource development support to Syria, and will continue to support the people of Syria in their quest for lasting peace and stability.

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

I would like to start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Ms. Nirvana Shawky for their valuable briefings.

The Syrian conflict continues to have a profound impact on the population. The hostilities have driven record levels of need, with 14.6 million Syrians — 80 per cent of the population — requiring humanitarian assistance. The monthly cost of food has reached an all-time high, exacerbated by the impact of Russia's premeditated and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

The Council needs to support the United Nations in its efforts to assist millions of Syrians. The Secretary-General has highlighted the continuing life-saving importance of the United Nations cross-border mandate, which is due for renewal in July. In the past few years, when the Council has regrettably closed border crossings, needs have increased. Without the mandate, another generation of women and girls, as we heard today in Ms. Shawky's powerful statement, will face increased suffering. Access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services would be severely hit and survivors of gender-based violence would not get the support they need. The United Kingdom therefore supports both the renewal and the expansion of the United Nations cross-border mandate. For our part, we have worked to support the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021). Our support for early recovery over the past six months has provided agricultural training and inputs for livestock and vegetable production, as well as apprenticeships and small business grants to help create jobs and address market gaps.

We urge all Council members to support the renewal of the United Nations cross-border mandate in July. Indeed, as the Secretary-General clearly states, the Council has a moral and humanitarian imperative to do so. But we should also be clear that cross-border assistance alone is not enough. The United Kingdom continues to support the United Nations-facilitated, Syrian-led process outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). Special Envoy Pedersen has the United Kingdom's full support for his continued efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution of the conflict.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): On 17 April, Syria commemorated the seventy-sixth anniversary of the withdrawal of the last French soldier from its lands, thanks to the great sacrifices made by the Syrian people. Today, Syrians are once again demonstrating their determination to continue their struggle to ensure that any occupation of Syrian territories is stamped out, however long it takes. That applies to the current illegitimate presence of United States and Turkish forces in the north-east and north-west of my country, as well as the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Ending that illegitimate foreign presence will assure Syria's sovereignty, independence,

unity and territorial integrity. It will also end those forces' sponsorship of separatist militias and terrorist groups and help to eliminate the terrorist outposts of Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra and their affiliate entities and groups.

Ending the illegitimate foreign presence will put an end to the terrible conditions in the Al-Hol and Rukban camps and enable foreign terrorists and their families to be repatriated to their countries of origin. It will also put an end to all forms of displacement, demographic change and the looting of Syria's national wealth. Restoring Syrians' national economic resources to them will eventually strengthen security and stability in Syria and throughout the region and improve the humanitarian situation and living conditions. It will also help to create the conditions conducive to the voluntary, dignified and safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The plight that Syria has endured over the past 10 years as a result of various Western countries' destructive and criminal policies demands that those countries be held accountable for their crimes. In that regard, I would like to refer to a letter dated 18 April from Syria's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. It concerns the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the forces of the so-called international United States-led coalition on Syrian territories in the city of Raqqa and the Baghuz area around Deir ez-Zor. Their crimes have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, and have destroyed infrastructure, public and private property, health and educational facilities and a number of places of worship. The Syrian Arab Republic holds the United States Administration and its allies involved in those attacks fully responsible for the crimes committed by the military forces that have joined the ranks of that illegitimate coalition. If the Security Council is serious about stopping and preventing war crimes and crimes against humanity, it should immediately launch an investigation into what happened in demolished Raqqa and martyred Baghuz.

My delegation listened attentively to the briefings by Mr. Geir Pedersen and Ms. Joyce Msuya, whom we will welcome when she visits Syria in mid-May with a view to enhancing the existing cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It will also

be an opportunity for Ms. Msuya to familiarize herself with the situation on the ground. Despite the fact that these periodic briefings tackle the dire humanitarian conditions experienced by Syrians in various parts of the country, certain countries continue to be tone-deaf to the disastrous effects of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States and the European Union (EU). Those economic terrorism measures have led to declines in economic and development indicators, investment and trade exchange, a rise in inflation rates, the depreciation of Syria's currency and a growing gap in the funding needed to provide basic services.

These inhumane measures have also impeded imports of food, medicine and pharmaceutical raw materials, as well as medical equipment and agricultural and industrial production requirements, including seeds, fertilizers and machinery. That has had a negative effect on food security and put our citizens' right to nourishment in jeopardy, leading to a significant decline in Syrians' standard of living. And the repercussions of those illegal measures are not limited to the livelihoods of Syrians. They have also caused problems for humanitarian, international, governmental and non-governmental organizations as a result of the reluctance of banks, insurance and shipping companies and suppliers to meet the demands of those organizations for fear of being subject to Western sanctions. That has spiked the costs of meeting essential humanitarian needs. The facts show that any talk of exemptions from those unjust coercive measures are baseless allegations propagated by the United States and the EU to cover up their violations of human rights, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, certain Western countries — which prioritize their own interests and agendas over any humanitarian or operational considerations — continue to obstruct the implementation of resolution 2585 (2021), on promoting and increasing early-recovery projects, by cutting their funding and linking its implementation to politicized conditions, while simultaneously delaying the adoption of the strategic framework and country programmes governing cooperation between the Syrian Government and the United Nations agencies operating in Syria. Some donors have even stopped supporting a number of Syrian Arab Red Crescent programmes, including the children's hospital in Aleppo, the community first-aid programme and programmes addressing malnutrition.

The United States and its Western allies, including Turkey and their separatist militias and terrorist groups, continue to hinder the delivery of aid within Syrian territory in order to justify their continued violation of Syria's sovereignty through the so-called cross-border aid delivery mechanism, which has been a lifeline for terrorist organizations and beneficiaries of the war economy. Thanks to those policies, in the nine months since resolution 2585 (2021) was adopted only three cross-line convoys, amounting to a mere 42 trucks — out of the hundreds that have been sent across the borders in total — have been dispatched to the north-west.

As the Syrian Arab Republic commemorates the seventy-sixth anniversary of its independence, it is more committed than ever to its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and the unity of its people, and more resolved to restore security and stability, exercise State authority over all of its territories and provide decent livelihoods for its people. We reaffirm our commitment to a political solution aimed at fulfilling the hopes of our people based on an intra-Syrian national dialogue and a Syrian-owned and -led political process, without any external interference. Syria commends the efforts of the national delegation during the seventh round of meetings of the Constitutional Committee and looks forward to the holding of the next round, while stressing the need to ensure that its terms of reference and rules of procedure are fully adhered to. At the same time, we reject any form of external interference in the Committee's work and the imposition of predetermined results or artificial timelines.

The Syrian Government will continue its efforts to achieve national reconciliation, including through local reconciliation efforts that enjoy large-scale participation in many Syrian cities and regions, thanks to the amnesty decrees issued by our President, which have enabled thousands of Syrians within and outside the country to return to their normal lives.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. I also thank the civil-society briefer, Ms. Nirvana Shawky of CARE.

This month at the United Nations we have been discussing the fate of the thousands of missing persons and detainees who have disappeared at the hands of the

Syrian regime, and the recent report (A/76/690) of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The updates are a constant reminder of the unimaginable levels of suffering that the Syrian people continue to endure. Their stories cannot be sidelined.

As we repeat in this Chamber every month, a sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict can be achieved only through political means in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The only functioning mechanism for the political process is the Constitutional Committee, which must start producing tangible outcomes. Yet once again, owing to the regime's uncompromising attitude, the seventh round of the Committee's meetings yielded no concrete results. On the other hand, we commend the Syrian Negotiation Commission, whose flexible stance has contributed constructively to the work of the Committee. We will continue to support the work of the United Nations and Special Envoy Pedersen in seeking a political solution based on resolution 2254 (2015).

Maintaining the ceasefire and uninterrupted humanitarian aid in Idlib is crucial not only to preventing a new humanitarian crisis but also to supporting the efforts to find a permanent solution to the Syrian conflict. Yet the regime and its backers' attacks on civilians, and ceasefire violations, continue. We want to repeat our warning that an escalation in Idlib will have serious consequences for all involved, especially the regime. It is the international community's collective responsibility to prevent a new humanitarian crisis or wave of migration, which could be triggered by such an escalation.

Some actors in the region have misguidedly tied their hopes of eradicating Da'esh and other terrorist organizations to the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG). We have consistently warned the international community about that terrorist organization. On numerous occasions we have expressed our concerns about the fact that members of Da'esh are being released in exchange for bribes, which will only aid Da'esh in its resurgence. We also want to briefly address the PKK/YPG's acts of aggression. Last year it attacked Al-Shifa hospital in Afrin, recruited child soldiers, prevented civilians, including Kurds and Yazidis, from returning to their homes, violently suppressed peaceful civilian protests and arrested

teachers of Arabic. Those acts and atrocities have been well documented in the reports of international and non-governmental organizations. Most recently, on 20 April, the PKK/YPG targeted a family in Jarabulus and attacked the civil-defence teams that subsequently came to the family's help, killing one person and injuring five others. While all that was happening, the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces issued statements of open support for the PKK, revealing once again that they are part of the same terrorist entity. We assure the Council that all terror organizations, whether PKK/YPG or Da'esh, will pay for the atrocities they commit. We will not tolerate the presence of any terrorist organizations, and neither will they find safe haven along our borders.

Humanitarian needs in Syria are at their highest level since the conflict began, with 14.6 million people across the country in need of humanitarian assistance. Syrians living in the north-west are among the most vulnerable, with increasing protection and humanitarian needs. The need for the continuation of the United Nations cross-border mechanism in July is therefore first and foremost a humanitarian imperative. We have also heard from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths about the developments concerning cross-line access through Idlib. Continuing the United Nations dialogue with relevant local actors will be useful with regard to the request for additional cross-line convoys. The preservation of the parameters in this area, which continue to function, will facilitate the planning and execution of that activity. Similarly, coordination between the United Nations and Syria's interim Government is crucial to cross-line requests to that region, where medicines and childhood vaccines are a priority.

For our part, we will continue to constructively engage in and facilitate the efforts for cross-line convoys. But we would like to caution against preparing plans based on the regime's unilateral timetables without prior agreement with the Syrian opposition and local actors. Additionally, we want to point out that cross-line aid cannot replace or replicate the size and scope of the cross-border operation. There is simply no alternative to the cross-border mechanism.

The Syrian people deserve our collective action. Turkey will continue to do its utmost to bring peace and justice to the brave Syrians, who have suffered too much for too long. Yet that is a moral and legal responsibility that rests with all of us, especially the members of the Security Council. The world has

entrusted the permanent members of the Council with maintaining world peace, upholding the Charter of the United Nations and protecting the people we have pledged to serve. We have elected the non-permanent members to do the same thing. So far, the Security Council has failed the Syrian people. We implore all Council members to act now and save the people of Syria and their future.

As for the hallucinatory statement made by the criminal representative of the Syrian regime, I repeat that I do not consider him my legitimate counterpart and therefore will not give him a response.

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

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the briefers for their information.

Since the conflict began more than a decade ago, Syria's humanitarian needs have reached an all-time high. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/330) indicates that 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 1.2 million from 2021. According to the report, acute and rapid economic downturns, as well as climate-related effects, have emerged as major new drivers of humanitarian needs. The current economic crisis has affected civilians across the country, particularly children, women, the elderly and those with disabilities. Given the dire humanitarian situation, it is more vital than ever to end the unilateral coercive measures against the Syrian people. The illegal measures have had disastrous consequences for every aspect of people's lives and run counter to resolution 2585 (2021), relating to early-recovery projects.

In his report, the Secretary-General called for waiving sanctions that are preventing access to critical health supplies, coronavirus disease-related medical assistance and food. In that context, it is essential that the ongoing technical dialogue on sanctions and humanitarian operations in Syria among the relevant Member States and humanitarian actors provide solutions to the challenges that a number of humanitarian actors in the country face in ensuring adequate and reliable access to financial services. As the Secretary-General emphasized in his report, the current humanitarian relief efforts should focus on supporting early-recovery and reconstruction projects, ensuring the continuous operation of water, electricity,

education and medical facilities and the provision of basic services, as mandated in resolution 2585 (2021).

The Security Council must therefore work diligently to ensure that resolution 2585 (2021) is properly implemented in a balanced and effective manner, particularly in terms of early-recovery projects and the lifting of unilateral sanctions. At the same time, political conditions should not be allowed to block early-recovery projects or humanitarian assistance. We commend the efforts of the Syrian Government, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners to expand the scope and frequency of humanitarian relief operations on a continued basis. In that context, we salute the United Nations agencies for successfully completing the third cross-line delivery to Sarmada since the adoption of resolution 2585 (2021).

We reiterate our call for ending the plunder by foreign forces of Syria's natural resources, particularly oil and agricultural products. Such criminal acts not only violate Syrian territorial sovereignty, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations, they also have a negative impact on efforts and measures aimed at restoring the Syrian economy. We support the initiatives to facilitate the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons and are willing to provide assistance for the success of such endeavours.

After more than a decade of conflict in Syria, it has become evident that only one solution exists. That is a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process facilitated by the United Nations. We support the continuation of inter-Syrian talks in Geneva. We warmly welcome the convening of the Constitutional Committee's seventh session. We also commend Mr. Pedersen's efforts to streamline the process. We reiterate that the Committee must work in strict accordance with its terms of reference and rules of procedure, free from outside interference or pressure, and with no artificial timetables. It must be a fully Syrian-led and Syrian-owned effort and the United Nations role should be limited to facilitation. We are looking forward to the next meeting of the Committee, which will be held in the second half of May. We hope that by working efficiently, independently and without outside intervention, the Constitutional Committee will produce positive results.

The Syrian crisis cannot be resolved without putting an end to the occupation and uprooting the terrorist threats. We once again reaffirm our commitment

to Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence and its efforts to combat terrorism. We strongly condemn the Israeli regime's repeated violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we call on the Security Council to hold it accountable for such acts of aggression and malice, as well as its blatant threats to use force against other countries of the region, thereby endangering regional peace and security. The war on terrorism must not be used to undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial

integrity. The illegal presence of foreign forces in parts of Syria, which has created ideal conditions for terrorist activities, must end immediately. We are maintaining our contacts with the Syrian Government, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and our partners in the Astana format in order to help end the crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.