



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9089th meeting
 Tuesday, 12 July 2022, 9 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Costa Filho | (Brazil) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Albania | Mr. Hoxha |
| | China | Mr. Dai Bing |
| | France | Mr. De Rivière |
| | Gabon | Ms. Bongo |
| | Ghana | Ms. Oppong-Ntiri |
| | India | Mr. Raguttahalli |
| | Ireland | Ms. Byrne Nason |
| | Kenya | Mr. Kimani |
| | Mexico | Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu |
| | Norway | Ms. Juul |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Polyanskiy |
| | United Arab Emirates | Mrs. Nusseibeh |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| | United States of America | Mr. Mills |

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2022/546, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Ireland and Norway.

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

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I deliver this statement on behalf of Norway and Ireland.

Today we are meeting to vote on draft resolution S/2022/546, put forward by Ireland and Norway, which would authorize the cross-border humanitarian aid operation in Syria. It is no secret that this was a difficult negotiation. As co-penholders, Ireland and Norway engaged diligently and constructively with all Security Council members. After draft resolution S/2022/538, which we put on the table last week, was vetoed, we redoubled our efforts to find a path through so that the Council could adopt a resolution that would allow humanitarians to continue to reach those in dire need in Syria. The result of our efforts is now before the Council in the form of a new draft resolution.

Throughout this process, like so many around this table, Ireland and Norway have been guided solely by the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. The authorization for the cross-border operation expired at midnight on Sunday night. For the Syrian people and for all those humanitarians who work diligently to assist them, this has been a long and uncertain couple of days. The fear that vital supplies of aid would be cut generated significant uncertainty and fear.

The draft resolution before us now will renew the border crossing at Bab Al-Hawa for six months. It anticipates the further extension of an additional six months, which will require a separate resolution. Importantly, a special report from the Secretary-

General on the humanitarian needs in Syria will inform that decision.

We recognize that a six-month renewal is shorter than we, as co-penholders, aimed for when we started this negotiation. We also recognize that the vast majority of the members of the Council shared that view and that of humanitarian actors on the ground that a 12-month mandate was needed.

What is most important today is that, with this draft resolution, the Council keeps the cross-border mechanism open and operating and that humanitarian assistance continues to reach those in need. This draft resolution will facilitate further early-recovery efforts and encourage regular follow-up meetings on implementation.

This draft resolution represents a delicate balance between the different positions of Council members at this time. We are grateful to all Council members for their engagement to that end. Now it is time for the Council to assume its responsibilities. We command this draft resolution to the Council, and we ask all members to support it.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I make this explanation of vote before the voting on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E-10), in Kenya's capacity as coordinator for the month of July.

The E-10 appreciates the manner in which delegations rallied to put foremost the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. It is in that regard that the E-10 commends the extensive efforts by the co-penholders to achieve a compromise draft text that ensures the continuity of the critical humanitarian assistance provided through the cross-border mechanism, which is key to addressing the dire and urgent needs of the Syrian people.

Last week, the E-10 supported a 12-month renewal, as that would have given humanitarian organizations more certainty in their operations. Ultimately, however, the E-10's fundamental interest is for the Security Council to meet the grave needs of the Syrian people. The E-10 therefore stands behind the co-penholders' draft text, as it allows for critical humanitarian assistance to be delivered.

We look forward to the continuing effective implementation of the cross-border mechanism, as agreed, so that the conditions are in place for its continuation after the coming six months. To that end,

the E-10 will continue to play a constructive role that aims to bridge divides and identify useful compromises that advance the humanitarian well-being of the Syrian people. I reiterate that the E-10's pressing interest remains the uniting of the Security Council on that issue and on behalf of the Syrian people.

The President: I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Gabon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates

Against:

None

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The President: The draft resolution received 12 votes in favour, none against and 3 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2642 (2022).

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Ireland and Norway.

As co-penholders, Norway and Ireland welcome the Council's adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), renewing the authorization for the cross-border humanitarian aid operation into Syria. Throughout this negotiation, Norway and Ireland engaged carefully and constructively with all Council members. Our objective has always been clear — humanitarian aid must reach all people in need in Syria. We have listened carefully to the United Nations and to humanitarian agencies on the ground. They were clear that given the level of humanitarian need in north-west Syria, the cross-border mechanism must be renewed.

They were also clear that, for effective implementation of the humanitarian response serving the long-suffering people in north-western Syria, a minimum extension of 12 months was needed. As co-penholders, we worked for that outcome, and we regret the use of the veto by one member of the Council, which prevented the extension.

Resolution 2642 (2022), which we adopted today, keeps the critical cross-border mechanism open. It allows this life-saving humanitarian operation to continue. For those in humanitarian need in north-western Syria who have been in an uncertain situation, with the negotiations running into overtime, we can now reassure them. That is what matters. The cross-border operation is their lifeline, and today the cross-border operation remains.

The Council has a responsibility to put the needs of Syrians first and to ensure that humanitarian relief can reach those who rely on it. As we move forward, it is incumbent upon every one of us to come together for the sake of the people of Syria, to support humanitarian deliveries by any modality and to support continued and enhanced early-recovery efforts. It is our sincere hope that the Council can build on this adoption to engage in further constructive dialogue on Syria and, above all, to put the needs of the people of Syria at the heart of all that we do.

Now over 11 years into this terrible conflict, the people of Syria have suffered too much and for too long. Ireland and Norway call for redoubled efforts to work towards a political solution in Syria. We urge all parties to engage urgently and constructively with the Special Envoy.

Finally, Ireland and Norway wish to thank all Council members for their engagement on this important file. We would like to warmly acknowledge the critical role played by the 10 elected members of the Council throughout this process. With this resolution, the Council is ensuring that life-saving humanitarian assistance will continue to be delivered to the many millions in need in north-western Syria.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): India welcomes the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), extending the authorization of humanitarian assistance to Syria through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing. Today's adoption will reassure nearly 4 million people in the north-west of Syria — 2.7 million of whom are internally displaced persons, many of them women and children. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that more than 14.5 million people across Syria need humanitarian assistance in one form or another, with essential food items and fuel in short supply. Food insecurity has reached historic highs, and an estimated 60 per cent of the population is food insecure, according to the United Nations.

It is therefore clear that decisive forward movement on the political track in Syria remains an urgent imperative if we are to alleviate the suffering of its people. To realize that, all parties, particularly the external players, need to display their commitment, in tangible terms, to a Syrian-led and -owned United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

We reiterate our call for enhanced and effective humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country, without discrimination, politicization or preconditions. While cross-border operations are predictable and important, they cannot continue to exist in perpetuity. Concrete steps need to be taken in order to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of cross-line operations.

Humanitarian assistance cannot be a matter of political expediency. Linking humanitarian and development assistance with progress in the political process will only exacerbate humanitarian suffering and should be avoided. The international community also needs to constructively look at promoting projects that will bring much-needed jobs and economic opportunities for the Syrian people. Similarly, early recovery projects that help Syrian people to become self-sustaining, need a realistic basis to move forward.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that India is committed to supporting the people of Syria in their endeavour to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): The renewal of the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism is a relief because this remains a vital tool for millions of Syrians.

I commend the efforts of Ireland and Norway to reach a compromise. But France is not satisfied with this precarious renewal for just six months, which will expire in the depths of winter at the very moment when aid is the most indispensable, without any firm guarantee of renewal. The call by the Secretary-General and the whole of the humanitarian community to renew this mechanism for 12 months was clear, but nevertheless ignored.

The Council is therefore not up to its responsibilities, which is why France abstained in the voting.

Our mobilization, however, remains intact. France will continue to fully assume its humanitarian responsibilities in the spirit of the principles and

parameters of the Secretary-General on United Nations assistance in Syria. We shall be extremely vigilant in six months at the time of the renewal of the cross-border mechanism so as to ensure that the Security Council gives the humanitarian community the possibility to meet the immense needs of the people.

France remains mobilized to bring an end to the war. However, our position and that of our European partners remains unchanged — we will not finance reconstruction or lift sanctions until a credible and inclusive political process is firmly under way, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015), adopted unanimously by the Council.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Norway and Ireland for their work as co-penholders.

The United Kingdom approached this renewal as it has every year since the mandate was first agreed in 2014 (resolution 2165 (2022)): on the basis of humanitarian need and humanitarian need alone. Humanitarian need in Syria is the highest it has ever been: 4.1 million people in need of aid across the north-west, of which 2.4 million are reliant solely on the United Nations cross-border mechanism for life-saving assistance every single month.

We have heard repeatedly from the United Nations and from non-governmental organizations that a renewal for 12 months was necessary to provide operational certainty so they could prepare to meet that humanitarian need, especially during the harsh months of winter. Last Friday, Russia stopped this from happening (see S/PV.9087).

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief. The suffering and the uncertainty go on. Without the confidence of at least 12 months, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations risk being caught in a perpetual cycle of pre-positioning and contingency planning. It is therefore important that we are clear: while this renewal is only for an initial six months, the intent of the Security Council is to renew it for a further six months subject to another resolution.

The Secretary-General's report requested by resolution 2642 (2022) will be able to set out the implications, were this mandate to come to an end in January, as winter is setting in. The humanitarian case for a further renewal will be self-evident, and to oppose it would be to ignore the suffering of 4.1 million people.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the United Nations efforts to deliver its humanitarian response plan. But we will not consider providing any reconstruction assistance without a credible, substantive and genuine political process firmly under way. A genuine political process is the only sustainable means of ending the suffering in Syria.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) renewing the authorization for humanitarian assistance in Syria. We thank Ireland and Norway, as well as Russia and other Council members, for their active efforts over the past few days to promote the final outcome through intensive communication. The facts have shown that it is normal for members of the Council to have differences on relevant issues. It is only natural that while sometimes divergences may be sharp, as long as we have full political will, persevere in patient consultations and accommodate each other's concerns, we can still find effective solutions to these problems. Ramming a vote through when major differences still exist will only intensify contradictions and differences and will do a disservice to maintaining the unity of the Council and its effective discharge of its responsibilities.

China's position on the humanitarian issue in Syria is as consistent as it is clear. We always maintain that humanitarian assistance to Syria should respect Syria's sovereignty and the ownership by the Syrian Government. Crossline delivery should become the main channel for humanitarian assistance to Syria. Cross-border delivery is a temporary arrangement made under specific circumstances. It is necessary to speed up the transition to crossline relief and establish a clear timetable for the eventual termination of cross-border relief.

The resolution just adopted provides for the necessary flexibility to allow the Council to assess and adjust its mandate in a timely manner. The resolution sets out clear demands for early-recovery programmes and greater transparency in relief efforts. The bimonthly informal interactive dialogues of the Security Council are also conducive to concrete follow-ups on the resolution. We expect all parties to strictly abide by the basic principles governing international humanitarian assistance, strictly comply with the requirements of Security Council resolutions, ensure the neutrality and transparency of assistance and make it more targeted and effective.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that unilateral sanctions severely restrict the operations of international humanitarian agencies in Syria and run counter to the efforts of the Security Council and the international community aimed at improving humanitarian access and increasing humanitarian resources in Syria. China urges the relevant countries to immediately and comprehensively lift unilateral sanctions against Syria.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I would like first to express my delegation's appreciation for the outstanding work done by the co-penholders, Ireland and Norway, as well as the active engagement of Kenya as the coordinator of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E-10), in order to streamline this process.

Albania voted in favour of resolution 2642 (2022) today. We did so with a sense of deep responsibility, but also with a heavy heart. Last Friday was one of those regrettable and dark moments when the Security Council was not able to live up to its responsibilities, when what it produced was contrary to its *raison d'être*.

Our position for a better result has been outlined clearly and strongly many times in this Chamber, including during the explanation of vote delivered on behalf of the E-10 by the representative of Kenya just a few minutes ago. We wanted the 4 million Syrians to rely with confidence on this exceptional lifeline and allow humanitarian actors to plan more adequately and mobilize resources in time. We wanted children, girls, mothers, entire families, as well as the brave humanitarian workers, to believe and see that the Security Council is on their side.

Last week we failed, while, ironically, being right. We were stopped by a power we do not possess and by a privilege that was misused: the veto by Russia (see S/PV.9087).

We agreed today on this imperfect and difficult compromise because saving human lives is above diplomatic pride or geopolitical scores. The needs of those millions of Syrians in desperate need come — and should come — first. We have said it many times, and we maintain it: those who need help must get help by all possible means.

By voting in favour of resolution 2642 (2022), we are doing our part with an open heart, not with cynicism — with solidarity, not with calculations. We continue to believe that continuing effective implementation of the cross-border mechanism

remains crucial and that, upon the recommendations of the Secretary-General, we will be able to extend it for another six months next January.

Until the new Syria emerges out of the ruins of a war that has entered its twelfth year, cross-border assistance will continue to be vital to meeting the immense humanitarian needs in north-western Syria. We must inspire hope and trust in the Syrian people and help them find the path to their future in a dignified way, through free choice, with their rights respected through a democratic process with effective justice and accountability as fundamental parts of it.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council.

My country welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) to extend the cross-border aid mechanism in Syria, and we are pleased that a compromise has been reached that reflects the Council's commitment to responding to the massive humanitarian needs. It also represents a critical step in ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need across Syria, by all means.

Accordingly, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to Norway and Ireland, the co-penholders on the Syrian humanitarian dossier, for their tireless efforts in facilitating the negotiations that led to the adoption of the resolution. We also appreciate the cooperation of all Council members in that regard.

We stress that the international community must continue its efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and to ensure them access to all basic services. That includes stepping up early-recovery projects to respond to the urgent needs on the ground, especially considering the exacerbation of the global food and health crises. We also welcome the inclusion of important language in the resolution about providing Syrians with electricity. Electricity is a fundamental humanitarian necessity, without which essential services such as in hospitals and schools cannot function and millions of Syrians are unable to receive water.

In conclusion, we hope to build on that momentum, especially in January of next year. It is critical to continue prioritizing the Syrian dossier in all its aspects in the long term to achieve stability, prosperity and

peace for the brotherly people of Syria in particular and the Arab world in general.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation supported the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), which was put forward by the informal penholders of the Syrian humanitarian dossier in the Security Council, namely, the delegations of Norway and Ireland. It allows the Syrian cross-border mechanism to continue working until January 2023.

We note that some dissatisfaction has been expressed by some of our colleagues concerning the fact that their vision of the extension of the mechanism did not pass. Well, the world is not limited by the Western countries or the so-called first Golden Billion, as was imagined in Washington, London and Paris. It is time for them to get used to respecting the interests of other States, first and foremost States that are impacted directly by Security Council decisions.

By finding the optimal way of extending the cross-border mechanism, we gave a second chance to the good-faith implementation of all aspects of the resolution for the upcoming six months.

Through the opportunities offered by the informal interactive dialogues within the Security Council, we will continue to monitor progress in implementing the resolution that we adopted today so as to decide on the ultimate fate of the cross-border mechanism.

We are convinced that only through candid and substantive dialogue on the issues in the Syrian humanitarian track while involving all interested parties will we be able, in six months' time, to come up with a well-considered decision. The special reports of the Secretary-General, unfortunately, as shown by experience, are not sufficient for that purpose. We all now need to work on many important areas, including increasing cross-line deliveries in all regions of Syria.

We call also upon the Secretary-General to pay special attention to the need to lift unilateral sanctions in the context of the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has not yet been overcome. We must work actively to ensure that that issue is resolved in Syria, which will increase opportunities for donors to fund early-recovery projects in that Arab country. We will closely monitor the achievement of all those goals as well and expect that by January 2023 the Secretary-General will have provided the Council with exhaustive information on the work done.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I, too, want to thank the penholders for leading a process with integrity and an unquestionable commitment to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable Syrian people.

The vote we took this morning is what happens when one Council member takes the entire Security Council hostage, with the lives of Syrian men, women and children hanging in the balance.

Right now the humanitarian needs in Syria are greater than they have ever been. As other colleagues have noted, the Secretary-General asked for more. United Nations agencies asked for more. Non-governmental organizations asked for more. Syrians asked for more. All those voices told us that a straightforward, 12-month mandate for cross-border was the bare minimum and that now was the moment to step up.

But one country, one member, has chosen not to put humanitarian needs first. Rather than scaling up, we have been, sadly, pushed to cut down. That is such a heartless play. It will serve only to hurt the Syrian people.

Last year the Council showed that there was a different way. The entire Council came together to adopt resolution 2585 (2021) unanimously that ensured that the bare minimum was met. This year, 14 members of the Council were prepared to go that route again, but one member stood against it. And now, the last remaining United Nations-authorized border crossing has been whittled back. This mandate will make the work of humanitarian organizations more costly and more challenging for procurement, staffing and planning.

Let us remember that this mandate exists because the Al-Assad regime has a well-documented history of corruption and of stealing aid and denying it to communities in need. With its brutal behaviour and continued attacks on civilians, the cross-border mechanism remains essential to ensuring that aid is able to reach those in need.

Russia continues to defend that brutal regime and treat the Syrian people as disposable. They were already hanging on by a thread, and now that thread could snap. The rest of us will do whatever it takes to get the most vulnerable Syrian people the humanitarian aid that they need, and Russia knows that.

Some of the recent dire needs in Syria are a direct result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the shocks that that brutal invasion has caused to food systems in Syria and around the world. The simple truth is, Russia does not care. Russia is so brazen in its disregard for Syrian lives that it has not even bothered trying to justify its stance on a humanitarian basis. That is an immoral and cynical approach to humanitarian needs.

Let us be clear: the first of the two six-month extensions that the Security Council decided on today will bring us only to January, which will be the very moment when humanitarian needs peak.

The weakness of resolution 2642 (2022) is that it requires further action from the Council to confirm what should be automatic. But to fail to do so would be unconscionable. It would leave Syrians without blankets or fuel for heat in the dead of winter. It would deprive children of their education, since their schools will not have funding to plan for the second half of the year. We cannot lose sight of the gravity of this decision and what will be at stake.

When we talked to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations over the weekend, they told us that a temporary extension was better than nothing. And since our approach to humanitarian aid has always been driven by needs, we are listening to the experts on the ground. That is why we did not stand in the way of the resolution.

In the coming months we will work with our humanitarian partners to stave off the worst-case scenarios that we have all been warned about, and we will take a hard look at our aid posture in Syria and do everything in our power to help those in need.

As I conclude, I would urge that we not forget that the Russian Federation was the only Council member to oppose a straightforward 12-month resolution. Despite my Russian colleague's comments, the entire Council voted last Friday. Russia stood alone, in complete isolation, and used its veto to punish the Syrian people. It bullied Council members and continued its merciless approach towards the most vulnerable.

We now move forward knowing that the Council voted in solidarity today with the Syrian people and with the principles of humanitarian assistance. The commitment of the United States to the Syrian people will not end with this resolution. We will not turn our backs on those who have been suffering for more than

a decade, and we hope that the other members of the Council will not do so either.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has stressed time and again that it has primary responsibility for all matters concerning the Syrian people. In the past few years we have repeatedly expressed our commitment to ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches all Syrians all over the country without discrimination or exclusion. In extremely challenging times, my Government has succeeded in facilitating many of the convoys from the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the humanitarian work of partners in various parts of Syria. That refutes all the allegations spread by certain hostile countries and their proxies in order to justify the extension of the so-called cross-border mechanism, despite the fact that it was intended to be a temporary exceptional measure to address circumstances that are no longer relevant.

In a statement before the Security Council two days ago (see S/PV.9087), the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic laid out in detail all of Syria's concerns about the implementation of humanitarian operations in Syria and expressed our readiness to undertake serious work in collaboration with all parties to ensure that every concern is addressed. What was achieved today could have been achieved days ago. However, the political selfishness of the three Western permanent members of the Security Council compelled them to exploit the Council yet again, using it to garner the support of public opinion through a media disinformation campaign designed to offend the Governments of Syria and Russia.

They are trying to create a false impression that they are concerned about humanitarian issues while at the same time they have been responsible for an unethical, inhumane and illegitimate siege imposed on the Syrian people that has made them suffer and obstructed the implementation of humanitarian operations.

What my delegation requested, in coordination with friendly delegations in the Security Council, was the introduction of improvements in the text of the draft resolution that would ensure an adequate response to humanitarian needs in a balanced, transparent and quantifiable way in order to improve the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people and their livelihoods and alleviate their suffering, including through promoting early-recovery projects, especially in the critical electricity sector, which has now been included in resolution 2642 (2022), just adopted by the Security Council. My delegation urges the Secretariat to include in the report of the Secretary-General that the resolution requests a meticulous quantitative, qualitative and geographically based assessment of the humanitarian needs in Syria and the impact of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America and the European Union on responding to such needs.

In conclusion, my delegation appreciates the flexibility of the delegation of the Russian Federation in facilitating the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022). We also call for the strict implementation of its provisions without selectivity, discrimination or politicization. We look forward to the convening of the informal interactive dialogue meetings referred to in the resolution, which would represent a platform for reviewing and following up on its implementation.

The meeting rose at 9.45 a.m.