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Seventy-seventh year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. De Rivière/Mrs. Jarraud-Darnault (France)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Gabon	Ms. Koumby Missambo
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mrs. Kamboj
Ireland	Mr. Mythen
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Najat Rochdi, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. Mazen Darwish, Director of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Rochdi.

Ms. Rochdi (*spoke in French*): It is truly an honour for me to address the Security Council today as Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

(spoke in English)

The Special Envoy briefed the Council two weeks ago (see S/PV.9117) on his most recent engagements to move the political process forward. Since then, he has engaged with Arab, European, Iranian, Russian, Turkish and United States representatives in Geneva, and he appreciates their support. He also engaged with the Syrian Negotiations Committee in Geneva and looks forward to visiting Damascus as soon as possible to engage with the Government of Syria. He remains focused on addressing the substantive challenges that have faced the Constitutional Committee and on seeing it reconvened at the earliest possible time in Geneva. In parallel, he continues his consultations to advance a wider confidence-building step-for-step process.

Let me take a step back today and touch on the immediate concerns that cause so much suffering for so many Syrians and tell Council members what we are doing to ensure that those issues are front and centre of any political process. Those concerns are, first, civilian safety and security and a consolidated ceasefire;

secondly, the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and its exacerbation by the country's economic collapse; thirdly, the tens of thousands of arbitrarily detained, abducted, forcibly disappeared and missing persons; and, fourthly, the specific ways in which the conflict impacts women and girls and our efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of Syrian women, equally and together with men, in its resolution.

Two weeks ago, the Special Envoy called for restraint in the face of a troubling escalation of violent incidents, but Syrian civilians are still being killed. Men are being detained and displaced and are unable to return home in safety. Their infrastructure and livelihoods are still being destroyed. Even in the past two weeks of relative calm, we have seen not only ongoing exchanges of rocket and artillery fire and other security incidents, but we have also heard continuous reports of sporadic air and drone strikes in various areas of northern Syria, as well as reports of Israeli air strikes, including some that temporarily took Aleppo airport out of service. Of course, there have also been violent incidents carried out by illicit terrorist groups, including fresh violence in Al-Hol.

It remains clear that the political process will not advance meaningfully or sustainably until the violence is curtailed and, ultimately, ends. Resolution 2254 (2015) itself recognizes the close link between a ceasefire and a parallel political process. Of course, we take note of the ongoing efforts by various international stakeholders to preserve different ceasefire arrangements, which have contributed to freezing front lines for more than two years. We are fully aware of the myriad challenges in further de-escalating violence and in dealing with the presence of illicit terrorist groups in a manner that complies with obligations to protect civilians. However, a nationwide ceasefire remains a fundamental goal of the political process, which we continue to underline to ceasefire task force participants in Geneva. We also strongly underline the obligation of all parties to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

I commend the work of humanitarian colleagues who continue to work to meet the needs of Syrian civilians, and those needs skyrocket as access remains constrained and threatened and resources dwindle. We support them practically through the humanitarian task force in Geneva. We need to use all the tools available to us to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2642 (2022) through all modalities, whether cross-border or

cross-line, with increased support for life-saving aid and early recovery. However, we must look not only at how to meet the humanitarian needs of Syrians, but how to stem the sources of those needs. De-escalating violence will take us a long way in that regard, as would addressing the factors driving displacement or fear of return, which must be safe, dignified and voluntary. Addressing all those factors is part of creating a safe, calm and neutral environment in which a political process can unfold.

Action is also needed to deal with Syria's economic collapse — a major source of needs. Stabilizing the conflict and advancing a sustainable political solution are the best ways to stop the economic collapse. Meanwhile, Syrians are struggling with the essentials — food on the table, fuel for warmth, basic services and livelihoods. The economic crisis is complex, which goes without saying, and a decade of conflict, compounded by the impact of mismanagement, sanctions and, more recently, the de facto division of the country, the Lebanese financial crisis, the coronavirus disease pandemic and the reverberations of the war in Ukraine, have all contributed to leaving the Syrian economy in dire straits. To end the economic collapse, we need step-for-step confidence-building measures within the political process, across a range of issues, as we continue our humanitarian work.

Every month, we stress the priority of addressing issues concerning detainees and abducted and missing persons. The relatives of those whose fates and whereabouts are unknown — mothers, wives and daughters in particular — bear the brunt of supporting families financially, physically and emotionally, while also leading an unfathomable search for their loved ones. That search puts them at higher risk of exploitation, harassment, violence and stigma, on top of exhaustion to secure ransom or bribes in times of incredible economic hardship. They are often in the impossible situation of having to declare a loved one missing, as that is the only way to support their families in terms of, for instance, the right to inheritance, custody or property.

We are greatly concerned about reports that the practices of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, abduction and kidnapping for ransom, including of women and children, continue. However, the families of the missing recently achieved a milestone. In the past few years they have been working alongside civil-society organizations, as well as the Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights, our Office and other organizations, and their voices are now reflected in the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/76/890), in which the Secretary-General called for Member States' support for a new international body to address those issues in a humanitarian and holistic manner that is victim-, survivor- and family-centric and grounded in the right to know, which is the only way to start the healing process for those families.

Syrian women are suffering as a result of the detentions, torture and abductions, as are their family members, and yet those are definitely not the only ones who need our help. Syrian women in general have carried a special burden throughout the conflict. Many are managing and sustaining households and holding communities together in the absence of men. Yet just when they need livelihoods, many women find themselves unable to secure jobs or advancement due to the conflict and its impact on the economy.

Like my predecessor, the Special Envoy and I attach great importance to hearing the voices of Syrian women in the political process. Syrian women can and must play an active role in shaping a political solution and ensuring that it translates into reality on the ground. Two weeks ago, I consulted extensively with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board in Geneva, as did the Special Envoy. We held a series of discussions that brought home the realities of the conflict, which they framed as increasingly compounded by factors beyond the control of Syrians. They underscored the effects of the economic crisis and the dangers of a youth exodus hollowing out society, the economy and State institutions. They also highlighted the dangers faced by Syrian adults and children alike, including in the refugee and internally displaced communities, such as sexual abuse and forced labour at the expense of an education as humanitarian needs grow and humanitarian budgets are stretched to their limits. They reminded me that Syrian children are growing up without their health, education or living standards assured and with gaping uncertainties in their futures. They are developing an ambitious work plan and we will continue to facilitate their meetings and amplify their diverse voices.

Meanwhile, the two new Thematic Working Groups of the Civil Society Support Room will convene in Geneva very soon to support the political process. Those dialogues are part of the facilitation and engagement of our Office with a broad range of Syrians, allowing us to keep in close contact with those

who see the situation on the ground, allowing insights into Syrians' evolving views and providing us with advice on creative openings for the political process. Above all, the women who meet within the framework of the Women's Advisory Board, and the participants in the wider civil-society dialogues, demonstrate to all of us that despite the many differences between them, common ground can be found. That is the most important insight I have gathered so far in this job — that progress is possible and that Syrians can come together to rescue their country and focus on its future. They are committed and willing to engage and their fight is one for a peaceful future for Syria.

We must advance a sustainable, inclusive political solution to keep up the hopes of those who are fighting every day and correct Syria's trajectory on all fronts.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: Since Ms. Joyce Msuya, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefed the Council two weeks ago (see S/PV.9117), the hostilities in Syria have continued. During this period, air strikes and shelling along front lines have caused civilian death and injury and interrupted livelihoods. One particularly devastating incident that I want to draw the Council's attention to took place on 12 September, when three children were reportedly killed and four people injured by an improvised explosive device attached to a motorcycle that detonated close to a medical facility in a camp near Al-Hasakah city. It is one more tragic story in a 10-year war.

I am also particularly concerned about the news of a cholera outbreak in northern Syria. The United Nations and partners are supporting the relevant authorities in responding to cases. The outbreak is a stark reminder of how critical our continued support remains to the people of Syria, given that the health system has been devastated by those 10 years of conflict. The outbreak is also an indicator of severe water shortages throughout Syria, which are the result of low water levels in the Euphrates, which we have frequently discussed in the Council, as well as drought-like conditions and the destruction of water infrastructure. In the north-east, amid the cholera outbreak, critical water shortages have been reported in Al-Hasakah governorate, as water remains inaccessible for the population through the Allouk water station, which, as we have also discussed, has been shut down since 11 August. In that context,

access to safe water is more important than ever. Of course, I call on all the relevant parties to facilitate reliable access to safe water, or we will see more cholera cases, more damage to the health system and more problems arising from the absence of reliable electricity. Today I will cover three important issues — early-recovery efforts, funding and humanitarian access.

As members know, I regularly brief the Council on our work strengthening the resilience of affected communities. The focus on that issue responds to the realities of a changing context and allows us to concentrate our collective efforts on driving down the need for humanitarian assistance in Syria. Ms. Rochdi also referred to the economic basis, which is the cause of many of our humanitarian problems. Resilience and early recovery are a major priority, as I believe I have often pointed out.

With the support of donors and in line with the global humanitarian approach to early recovery, more than 4 million Syrians have benefited from projects that contribute to early recovery and resilience already this year. We also continue to contribute to the provision of electricity, which as I said is essential for running basic services. The bimonthly report (S/2022/635) of the Secretary-General provides many examples in that regard. For our programme to succeed in improving people's access to livelihood opportunities and basic services, we need the continued commitment, support and generosity of donors, as well as their focus on early-recovery opportunities.

That brings me to my second point, which is on funding. The annual humanitarian response plan for Syria is among the largest appeals in the world. For 2022, \$4.4 billion is needed. That is a lot of money. In addition, the regional refugee and resilience plan, which caters to refugee needs in the region outside Syria, amounts to \$6.1 billion for this year, bringing the total needed up to \$10.5 billion, an eye-watering amount of money. However, the amount reflects the severity of humanitarian needs in Syria and in the region following a decade of crisis. At the sixth Brussels conference, in May, which many of us — including the Permanent Representative of the United States — attended, donors pledged \$4.3 billion for Syria and the region. To date, only approximately a quarter of the humanitarian response plan is funded. That is very low even in a difficult year globally, compared to other major crises, and the regional plan to which I referred, which requires \$6.1 billion, is only 20 per cent funded.

Engagement with donors in the region indicates that we may not even reach half of the funding requirements for the humanitarian response plan by the end of this year, which obviously has a direct impact on the plight of many Syrians. Some 14.6 million people in Syria, more than half of them children, need humanitarian assistance. That is the highest level of need since the crisis began. And as I have said on previous occasions, we seem to fail the people of Syrian more each year. As each year passes, the needs grow and the gap increases, further worsening the Syrian people's stress and suffering from the crisis. I want to thank the donors that have come through quickly on their pledges and urge those that are perhaps slightly slower to please put the money in the bank. I also hope that funding for early-recovery and resilience and livelihood programming will be increased. If we do not get funding, rations will be drastically reduced, as we are seeing in Yemen and elsewhere. As I just said, there are straightforward consequences.

Regarding humanitarian access, since I last briefed the Council air strikes have disrupted the operations of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) at Aleppo airport. UNHAS is a critical service for the humanitarian operation. It is the basis through which staff are deployed and move and it also occasionally moves supplies. Our ability to provide humanitarian assistance in Al-Hol camp was limited during the reporting period, particularly by the search operation carried out from 25 August. Only life-saving assistance such as bread and water distributions were and are currently allowed. Ensuring continuity in the provision of aid and basic protection services during those kinds of operations is of critical importance — but it is not being done. We would like to see all humanitarian activities resumed as soon as possible.

The United Nations continues to do its utmost to expand cross-line operations in all parts of Syria. In the north-west, we have finalized a revised cross-line plan to incrementally ensure further access to people in need of assistance. In order for that to happen, we need to carry out many unimpeded cross-line convoys, with an increased number of trucks in each convoy. That is common sense. The next cross-line convoy to the north-west is scheduled to take place in the coming days to deliver 16 truckloads. We expect, want and need more to follow.

I want to assure you, Mr. President, that the United Nations and its partners will make every effort to ensure

that the cross-line operations in the north-west and the north-east are pursued with vigour. They are necessary and, if successful, will complement the cross-border operation, which is of course of a different order of scale. In the north-east, we and our partners continue to assist on average 900,000 people every month through cross-line operations. We will continue to pursue that elusive cross-line mission to Ras Al-Ayn as soon as security conditions allow.

I want to conclude with an anecdote that has been brought to my attention. It also echoes a point made by Ms. Najat Rochdi. It is the story of Rasha, a mother of four and a community leader in Idlib. She lives in a displacement camp with 1,200 other families, many of whom have special needs, disabilities and war injuries. Rasha herself had her spine badly damaged in 2019 when she, her husband and her children were nearly buried alive under rubble during a bombing until local responders — the White Helmets and others — pulled them out. She is now permanently in a wheelchair. Despite that, however, and with financial support from donors and sponsors, Rasha was instrumental in setting up a kindergarten and a physical therapy centre in the camp where she lives.

The centre provides services to about 20 surrounding camps. Imagine the will, energy and determination of that mother, crippled by the war, still providing a daily service to 20 camps near the one where she continues to live with her family. She sees about 50 patients every day. That, we need to remember, is the kind of light that the people of Syria pursue. The centre now needs additional support, and we will all see what we can do to make that happen. In that context, we asked her whether she remained optimistic — and let me now echo Ms. Rochdi's point — and she said that nothing is impossible when there is will and action — which, I would add, she shows on a daily basis — the kind of will and action that, naturally, we also need to see from the members of the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Darwish.

Mr. Darwish (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Security Council on behalf of ordinary Syrians.

As members of the Council know, the local forces sharing Syrian territory are nothing but de-facto

forces that do not have any political, national or moral legitimacy. However, to be fair, they are trying their best to represent the interests of the regional and international Powers that created them. Despite that, I would ask the States active in Syria to withdraw their Ambassadors from my country and to stop using it as an arena for settling scores, and instead start a real strategic partnership with the Syrian people, especially given that Members of the United Nations, at the beginning of every resolution on Syria, stress the importance of respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Even the Russian Federation is consistently associating the delivery of humanitarian aid with respect for sovereignty — the same sovereignty that is violated on a daily basis.

Let me remind Council members that the term “sovereignty” is part and parcel of all of their Constitutions. Even the Charter of the United Nations begins with the words “We the peoples.” Is Syria's therefore an exception? Why are the Syrian people deprived of their sovereignty? Sovereignty should be given to the Syrian people and not to any usurper of authority, whether a Member of the United Nations, a leader of a fighting group, a head of a coalition or an interim or democratic or rescue Government. Only then will Syria be able to stop exporting drugs, mercenaries, extremism and crises and live in peace alongside its neighbours as an economic, political and cultural link in the region and the world.

I do not know how useful it would be to repeat the number of civilian victims to the Council, because we have heard enough. There is no doubt that everyone regularly takes note of all the updates and reports of United Nations agencies and that they have accessed the Caesar file, the newly leaked photos from Aleppo Central Prison or perhaps video documentation of the Tadamon massacre.

I believe that everyone is fully aware of the extent of the severity of the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. Unfortunately, the catastrophe is still haunting those who we thought had escaped by fleeing Syria. While we highly appreciate the efforts of the countries hosting refugees, especially Syria's neighbours, we can no longer remain silent or pay compliments for violations, racism, persecution and discrimination faced by Syrian refugees in some of those countries.

Every day, the politicians of the host countries are in competition with each other as they announce their

plans and intentions to return the refugees to Syria, absurdly proclaiming the notion of their voluntary, dignified and safe return — a return that we are convinced is arbitrary, forced and very dangerous.

I am one of those refugees who sincerely want to return to Syria. But without legal guarantees and the implementation of international resolutions, my request to return is nothing but asking for another opportunity to get killed after I survived the first time. In that regard, I hope that, after having failed to protect Syrians in Syria, they will be afforded protection under international law as refugees fleeing the scourge of grave human rights violations.

Notwithstanding the bleak picture in Syria, this is the first time that I am addressing the Security Council, and I can offer some hope, as the ongoing efforts of victims and their families have enabled the issue of the disappeared and missing to be highlighted as a priority on United Nations organs' agendas. That is why I greatly appreciate the recent report of the Secretary-General on missing people in Syria (A/76/890), which calls for the creation of an international independent mechanism to clarify the fate of disappeared persons in Syria. For the first time that could provide a real road map for beginning to look into one of the most pressing humanitarian issues in Syria. I therefore call on all countries to follow the Secretary-General's recommendation and implement it without delay. I feel there is nothing more to discuss in that regard, and any delay is unacceptable.

The majority of Syrians are dreaming of a peaceful settlement on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015), the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and other relevant decisions. However, only a settlement based on national transitional justice can be sustainable and brings justice and fairness to the victims. In that regard, I would like to point to the Franco-Mexican initiative and the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, submitted by Switzerland, which call on Council members to renounce their right to veto resolutions that are aimed at preventing mass atrocities and violations.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore and recall the situation that resulted in the Dayton peace process in the former Yugoslavia and the fate of Slobodan Milošević, who was a killer and was ultimately tried before the International Criminal Court. I call on the Council members to bear in mind in every action that

they take to advance peace in Syria that the only virtue in war is the war's end, and any political agreement that does not include justice will, even in the best-case scenario, lead to nothing but a temporary ceasefire.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Darwish for his briefing.

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): I deliver this statement on behalf of Ireland and Norway, the co-penholders on the Syria humanitarian file. Let me first thank the briefers for their presentations.

As we have heard so many times, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains alarming. Conflict, food insecurity, drought, the coronavirus disease and a collapsing economy have all contributed to a heavy toll on the Syrian people, one that they have been carrying for too long. Ninety per cent of people in Syria live in poverty. We are particularly concerned about the gendered impact of the conflict, including an increased risk of early marriage for girls and boys, and about the risk of recruitment to armed groups. That underlines the need for a holistic and broader humanitarian response, one that is sufficiently funded to deliver life-saving aid and that protects against violence and abuse such as sexual and gender-based violence. It also underlines the need for early recovery, including electricity, to support access to essential services.

With the school year now starting, it is particularly worrying that across Syria some 2.4 million children are not in school. As UNICEF has reported, one in three schools in Syria are no longer used for educational purposes. Some have been destroyed and damaged. Some function as shelters for displaced families, and others are being used for military purposes. We reiterate the Council's expression of deep concern about attacks and threats of attacks on schools. We urge all the parties to refrain from actions that impede safe access to education. That includes refraining from using schools and other educational institutions for military purposes. The right to education and the continuation of education, including for displaced children, must be safeguarded.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report in June estimating that 306,000 civilians have been killed since the conflict erupted in 2010. We deplore the recent

escalation of hostilities. Civilians must be protected. The high estimated numbers of those who have disappeared over the years of conflict, including humanitarian workers, are equally concerning. It will be important to make progress in identifying and recovering missing persons, and appropriate humanitarian actors must be given unhindered access to all places of detention.

The recent outbreak of cholera in Syria is also of serious concern and further underlines the importance of ensuring safe, rapid and unhindered access for delivery of medical items and other life-saving aid to the people in humanitarian need throughout Syria. As co-penholders, we have consistently been supportive of all modalities for the delivery of humanitarian aid, both cross-border and cross-line. That is not a question of either/or. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners must be allowed to use both modalities to deliver protection and assistance in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We want to see further progress on cross-line humanitarian deliveries, and we encourage all involved actors to facilitate that. But it is also crystal clear that the humanitarian cross-border mechanism is an essential lifeline for the many millions in need in the north-west. With winter coming, we, as a Council, must take responsibility to ensure that this lifeline continues.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings. I also deeply appreciate the briefing by Mr. Darwish, whose advocacy in promoting freedom of expression and dialogue in Syria is admirable and an important reminder for all of us. The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression holds the distinction of being the first Syrian non-governmental organization ever granted United Nations accreditation. We are all grateful for the work he continues to do.

As our briefers have outlined, the Syrian people remain in peril. The Al-Assad regime and others have made little progress in addressing the political situation as envisioned in resolution 2254 (2015). It is painful to hear about the continuing deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground. The new cholera outbreak just reported by Mr. Griffiths and recently also by United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Riza poses a grave threat to Syria's people. It is yet another crisis facing the Syrian people, who have had to endure more than 11 years of conflict — conflict that has killed

more than 350,000 people, displaced 13 million and pushed more than 2 million into severe food insecurity. The United States has been a committed supporter of the Syrian people. That is why we have pushed so hard, over the past year, for a one-year renewal and expansion of the Syrian cross-border mechanism to address this and other crises faced by the Syrian people, and that is why we must extend the mechanism in January for another 12 months.

At the Brussels Conference in May, I announced more than \$800 million in additional United States aid for the Syrian humanitarian response, and today I am proud to make a new additional funding announcement of more than \$756 million in humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people. This new assistance will bring immediate relief to millions of refugees and displaced persons. It will help humanitarian partners provide clean water, food, hygiene and relief supplies, shelter, protection services and critical health and nutrition assistance. It will also include support for early-recovery programmes across the entire country. In case it is not clear, let me say it directly: this funding shows just how urgent and dire we believe the situation is and how committed we are to the full implementation of resolution 2642 (2022).

The assistance will touch the lives of Syrians in all 14 governorates. It responds directly to the United Nations humanitarian response plan, in which early recovery accounts for over one quarter of its activities. We remain the world's largest donor to Syria because we are committed. As I said in San Francisco last week, we are committed to serving the people of the world. We have not, and will not forget, about the people of Syria. The United States commitment to the Syrian people and the full implementation of 2642 (2022) is beyond question, but we cannot do that work alone. The needs in Syria are simply too great. We therefore call on other countries to join us in doing more and giving more.

Even as we work to galvanize more international assistance, we know that only a durable political solution to the conflict will allow the Syrian people to rebuild and recover. A just, enduring peace is the only answer. The Council clearly outlined a pathway to such a peace in resolution 2254 (2015). Unfortunately, the Al-Assad regime, aided by Russia, has consistently stalled and subverted these processes, sowing more instability and violence. The unfounded and unnecessary delays in the Constitutional Committee's work must end.

While Russia has repeatedly told the Council that the political process in Syria must be Syrian-owned and Syrian-led, it continues to obstruct the process of the Constitutional Committee for reasons entirely unrelated to Syria. Such delays have a human cost. Instability and violence have robbed Syrian refugees of the dream of returning home. We commend the Member States that continue to host large numbers of Syrian refugees. While many refugees hold out hope that they will return to Syria, no one should pressure them to risk their lives to do so. After all, more than 130,000 people are still arbitrarily detained and are missing inside Syria. The vast majority of the detentions are forced disappearances at the hands of the Al-Assad regime.

As the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/76/890) on this issue spells out, the Al-Assad regime has made little progress in addressing detentions and disappearances. That is not a welcoming environment. Until all those missing or arbitrarily detained are accounted for, we will not, and we cannot, be silent. Internally displaced persons and refugees will not return home as long as they fear for their own safety and that of their loved ones.

It is beyond frustrating to have the same meeting month after month and not see progress towards a long-term peace. It is past time for the Al-Assad regime and Russia to meet their commitments. It is past time for them to take responsibility for the violence and instability. It is past time to do right by the Syrian people. In the meantime, I commit that we will keep up the pressure, we will push for progress, and we will continue to do everything in our power, as we have done today with the new \$756 million funding announcement, to support meeting the dire needs of the Syrian people.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rochdi, Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Darwish for their updates on the situation in Syria.

(*spoke in English*)

The situation in Syria has not improved since our previous meeting (see S/PV.9117). It remains a dark festival of the horrible and the unacceptable. I will try not to repeat things that we have said at our many past meetings, and I will limit my remarks to a few key points.

First, with regard to the situation on the ground, ongoing hostilities, including air strikes and shelling

across the country, continue with their usual lot of casualties, displacement of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Conflict remains intense in front-line areas and other pockets across the country, with an enduring acute risk of major escalation. It goes without saying that hostilities and, in general, the continued multidimensional crisis, are exacerbating an already-terrible humanitarian situation.

Secondly, as we heard once again from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, humanitarian aid needs to reach everyone, everywhere, and, as we just heard from the United States delegation, it should bring relief to those in need in Syria. We support the implementation of all aspects of cross-border resolution 2642 (2022) over the coming months, as well as early-recovery initiatives and humanitarian access through all modalities, including cross-line deliveries, and remain convinced of the crucial need for the mechanism as the only lifeline for millions in the north-east. We also call for its renewal for at least 12 months in January 2023.

Thirdly, with regard to the political track, we wish that we were hearing more news about the Syrian-led Constitutional Committee under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva rather than the records of its successive meetings when they happen or are allowed to happen by the regime sponsors. We strongly support the efforts of the Special Envoy and his step-for-step approach, but he cannot walk alone. The lack of trust undermines his and others' genuine efforts. Without the will and true efforts, the current deadlock will continue, prolonging the agony of a country in dire need of hope. We welcome the involvement of civil society in that process.

Fourthly, the past 11 long years of war, marred by the worst atrocities and grave and widely spread human rights violations, have inflicted untold pain on Syria's civilian population. Among countries, Syria today has one of the highest number of detainees and missing persons. We have repeatedly called in this Chamber for the creation of an independent mechanism with a strong international mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people. We commend the Secretary-General's study on how to bolster efforts, including through existing measures and mechanisms, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria and provide support for their families. Delivering concrete results in order to bring relief to families and build trust and confidence among the Syrians should be a key priority, as we heard Mr. Darwish rightfully say.

Fifthly, the overall security situation in the Al-Hol camp remains dire, with reports of an increased number of sexual violence. In addition, the situation of women and children in the "widow camps" in north-west Syria remains largely under the radar. Women and children are living under the threat of violence, with no means to earn a living and with no access to basic services. Children are particularly at risk, and many are involved in child labour in the camps. We wonder what kind of adults children raised in such horrible conditions will become.

Lastly, I wish to highlight the issue of impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is crucial to achieving sustainable peace in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). No just and sustainable future can be built sitting on top of the mountain of crimes committed in Syria. Syrians need a future that they can build themselves, but it must be in freedom and with justice.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya.

We thank the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Ms. Najat Rochdi, and Under-Secretary-General of the Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings and updates on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. We also take note of the remarks made by Mr. Darwish and welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Türkiye to this meeting.

It is regrettable that there has been no meaningful positive change on the situation in Syria, notwithstanding the Council's monthly meetings. It is still marked by political instability and violence, which have created an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis of an unprecedented proportion. Our intervention this morning will focus on the political, security and humanitarian aspects of the matter.

There is no military solution to the inordinately protracted crisis in Syria. We reiterate that the most viable avenue for sustainable peace and stability is a Syrian-led and-owned political process that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and is undertaken with the support of the international community, particularly the facilitative role of the United Nations. Today we

implore the parties and stakeholders to inject a new lease of life into the fragile political process, including through the following three elements.

First, there must be a return to the meetings of the ninth session of the Syrian-led and -owned, United Nations-facilitated small body of the Constitutional Committee. The parties need to agree on the modalities for the resumption of the talks as soon as possible in order to help lay a foundation for the resumption of the much-awaited political process. They must demonstrate political will and commitment through constructive engagements that will lead to tangible outcomes.

Secondly, they must engage in confidence-building measures. That means addressing the situation of detainees, including facilitating the release of detained vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, women and children. In addition, clarifying the status of missing persons would also be a significant confidence-building measure. The proposals outlined by the Secretary-General in his recent report on that issue (A/76/890) would be a good starting point. Progress in that area will also contribute to the Special Envoy's step-for-step approach in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, regional stakeholders and the international community must enhance their role in support of the political process. That should be in line with resolution 2254 (2015), which remains the best road map to achieve the desired political solution in a manner that takes into account the interests of the widest spectrum of the Syrian population's, including women and civil society. In that regard, the recent statements of commitments by the like-minded envoys on Syria on 31 August, as well as the Special Envoy's recent international engagements as part of his quest to find a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict, are encouraging.

On the security situation, the A3 is alarmed by the continued indiscriminate air strikes, mutual shelling and rocket attacks, as well as use of explosive devices on the front lines. The victims of that unrelenting violence are largely civilians, including women, children and humanitarian workers. We condemn that unnecessary violence, which will only undermine peace efforts. The need for the nationwide ceasefire to be honoured and adhered to by all parties is critical. It is also imperative that the parties commit to the protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure, in accordance with international humanitarian law

and relevant United Nations resolutions. As the Special Envoy has repeatedly stated and has become increasingly clear, military options will not end the war.

In addition, the A3 underscores the need for decisive collective action in order to combat Security Council-listed groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in a manner that ensures that victims who have suffered from this menace get justice.

Moving to the dire humanitarian situation, the A3 notes with concern that it has been compounded significantly by the deteriorating state of the economy. Consequently, more than 4 million Syrians are food insecure, while as many as 5.5 million people require nutrition assistance and have no reliable access to water. The situation has become a driver of other social ills, including early marriage and recruitment into armed groups.

The cross-border aid mechanism, complemented by cross-line deliveries, is therefore a vital avenue for humanitarian assistance. It must be sustained even as efforts to expand the cross-line deliveries continue.

To ease the colossal humanitarian burden in camps, we call on States to repatriate their citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly, from camps in Syria, such as the Al-Hol camp, where they have been subjected to severe insecurity and inhumane conditions.

The A3 also encourages more support to the early-recovery and livelihood activities under the Organization's humanitarian response plan. That will greatly help to build resilience and assist Syrians in getting back to normalcy.

In conclusion, the A3 urges the Council to put aside the multiple competing interests, deal objectively with the Syrian file and demonstrate that the multilateral system can still be relied on to mediate global peace and security. The A3 countries stand in solidarity with the people of Syria in their quest for peace and reaffirm our respect for Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Najat Rochdi and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings, as well as Mr. Mazen Darwish for his insightful remarks. I would like in particular, through Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi, to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and his team for their ongoing efforts to facilitate a

sustainable resolution to the conflict in Syria through the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). That includes a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; the release of the arbitrarily detained; conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified refugee return; and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution. They have our full support, as does the call of Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for will and action. The United Kingdom remains a committed provider of humanitarian aid and early-recovery support for the Syrian people.

Against that background, it is disappointing that Russia continues to stall the Constitutional Committee process. Geneva is the agreed venue for what should be Syrian-led and -owned Constitutional Committee talks. It is time to move beyond talking about a location and into the substance.

But we agree with Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi that, despite obstructions, progress is possible. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's recently released report on the missing (A/76/890). Tens of thousands of Syrians have been forcibly disappeared or detained during the conflict, and thousands of families are waiting to hear about loved ones. They deserve answers.

We are also pleased to hear of the recent convening of the Women's Advisory Board — an important step in encouraging the meaningful participation and diverse representation of women in the political process. And we welcome the report released today by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/48/70), which highlights the conflict's disproportionate impact on women and girls. As the Commission's report makes clear, the Syrian regime and its allies bear the primary responsibility for the devastation in Syria.

The data shared by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has made clear the stark humanitarian challenge, aggravated by increased uncertainty for humanitarian providers. We should ensure that the 14.6 million Syrians who need assistance get it in the most efficient and effective way possible and in accordance with international humanitarian law. Despite the efforts on cross-line delivery set out by Mr. Griffiths, there is clearly no substitute for the scope and scale of the cross-border operation mandated by the Council. We look forward to seeing the Council united in its commitment to saving lives and avoiding any

disruption of that effort. Millions of civilians depend on it.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I, too, thank the briefers for their briefings.

The recurring clashes in Syria, including artillery fire, are worrisome. Mexico condemns the attacks on Aleppo airport at the beginning of this month. We are closely following the military presence and movements on the northern border. We call for respect for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. It is clear that we must urgently redouble our efforts to ensure a nationwide ceasefire.

We commend the work of the Special Envoy in coordinating the discussions of the Constitutional Committee and regular dialogue with regional stakeholders, the Women's Advisory Board and civil-society representatives. We regret that so far the ninth session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee has been unable to convene and especially that the need to change the location for the talks is being used as an argument for halting its work.

We must work on confidence-building measures, as well as on the issue of detainees, missing persons and accountability, as the whereabouts of at least 100,000 people are unknown. Mexico notes the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/76/890) and agrees on the importance of making progress in determining the facts, identifying remains and offering full support to victims and to the families of missing persons and those who have been arbitrarily detained. Accountability must also be strengthened. Given the fact that we cannot refer the case to the International Criminal Court, my country reiterates its call for cooperation with 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 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and ongoing investigations under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

We note the lack of progress in Syria on the political and chemical-weapon tracks. The progress, or lack of it, on the humanitarian front also leaves much to be desired against the current backdrop of food insecurity, which is exacerbated by the volatility of fuel and commodity price on the international market, as well as adverse climate-related conditions such as

water shortages. The situation compels us to make efficient use of all the mechanisms available for the distribution of humanitarian assistance. In the space of more than a year, six humanitarian convoys have crossed conflict lines towards the north-west. We hope that the Ras Al-Ayn mission in the north-east, which was suspended due to increased insecurity, will soon resume. Lastly, the cross-border mechanism benefits more than 2.4 million people every month, which attests to the fact that there is no substitute, either in scale or scope, for that mechanism, and that cross-line operations are complementary.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Rochdi for her first briefing to the Council since taking up her new post and Mr. Griffiths for his thorough briefing. We also listened carefully to the briefing by Mr. Darwish.

At the outset, we would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the Syrian crisis remains at the forefront of our discussions on urgent issues. Joint efforts must focus on supporting the political track in Syria, reconciling international positions on the issue and calling for a comprehensive ceasefire throughout Syria, thereby helping to restore calm and create an environment that encourages Syrians to find a political solution. We reaffirm our support for the Special Envoy's efforts to build confidence among the parties and hope that additional steps will be taken in that direction. We also hope that the Constitutional Committee, which remains an essential component of the political track, will resume its meetings.

In the light of the current alarming escalation, we reiterate our position against foreign interference in Syria with a view to protecting its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The increase in the number of attacks conducted by the terrorist organization Da'esh in various areas reflects the ongoing threat it poses to security and stability in Syria and the wider region. It also highlights the need for sustained efforts to combat Da'esh.

As the economic situation continues to deteriorate, the majority of Syrians lack basic daily necessities and essential services, such as electricity. The awful conditions in the Al-Hol camp require urgent attention from the international community, especially as Da'esh continues to exploit those conditions to spread its extremist ideology. We note in particular the plight of women and girls in the camp. According to United

Nations reports, 75 per cent of the murders that occurred in the camp this year were of women, with additional reports of sexual violence, which emphasizes how important it is to provide protection for women and girls and respond to their needs.

We also want to highlight the dangers that mines and other unexploded ordnance pose to the Syrian people. One in every two people in Syria is at risk of death or injury from explosive ordnance, which also obstructs humanitarian operations. We must therefore continue efforts to properly dispose of unexploded ordnance. We commend the efforts made by the relevant bodies, including the United Nations Mine Action Service, to educate local communities in Syria about the risks of mines.

Providing support for early-recovery projects remains essential to improving the living conditions of Syrians. Similarly, it is important to ensure access for the delivery of unobstructed and impartial humanitarian aid to all in need throughout Syria. We stress the importance of creating the right security conditions to enable the humanitarian convoy destined for Ras Al-Ayn to reach its destination. We welcome the fact that the Aleppo airport has resumed operations, as that is essential to facilitating United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flights.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitment to supporting efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis that restores desired security and stability in Syria.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings today. I would also like to thank our civil-society briefer, Mazen Darwish, for his valuable perspectives. I will focus on the political situation in my intervention, as my Norwegian colleague has spoken on behalf of Ireland on humanitarian issues.

Ireland supports the Special Envoy's efforts to de-escalate, both in the north and across Syria. Any military escalation would only add to the horrors endured by the Syrian people. However, the appalling loss of human life, including children's, continues. In 2021 alone, nearly 900 children died or were injured, bringing the total number of children killed or injured since 2011 to almost 13,000.

Ireland also supports the Special Envoy in restoring momentum to the political process. We renew our calls

for the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and urge Damascus to engage fully and meaningfully in the Constitutional Committee. Ireland endorses the ongoing engagement with the Women's Advisory Board and civil society. Any new Constitution and related political process must be fully inclusive and must benefit from the full, equal and meaningful engagement of women. Ireland is open to step-for-step confidence-building measures, provided that Damascus engages meaningfully.

We welcome the Secretary-General's study on missing people in Syria. We echo his message of appreciation to the victims and their families and to civil society for their valuable input. We believe that the proposed mechanism and support to the families of those missing can provide some answers on the fate of their loved ones. Ireland calls on Damascus to be much more transparent on the release of arbitrarily detained persons, in particular on the implementation of the amnesty decree announced in April.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings. I also listened very carefully to the statement delivered by Mr. Darwish.

A Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process is the only way to resolve the Syrian issue. China welcomes the sustained efforts of the Special Envoy and his team to promote the political process in Syria. We hope that the parties concerned will engage constructively with the United Nations to properly resolve the differences relating to the session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee with a view to holding a meeting at an early date and making substantial progress. Special Envoy Pedersen proposed the step-for-step approach, which is conducive to creating favourable conditions for the political process. China supports the Special Envoy's continued communication with the parties in that regard.

At present, Syria still faces a complex security situation. The international community should adopt a unified standard on the basis of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions to combat all terrorist forces in Syria with a zero-tolerance approach. Any actions that condone, harbour or politically exploit terrorist forces must cease.

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected. In the absence of the consent of the

Syrian Government, illegally stationing troops, or even setting up military bases, in Syria constitutes a serious violation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such acts are in no way in line with defending and acting strictly in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Resolution 2642 (2022) was adopted over two months ago. Since then, only one cross-line delivery has been completed in north-western Syria, with no improvement in terms of efficiency or scale. I would like to reiterate that the cross-border relief modality is only a temporary arrangement made under exceptional circumstances. The transition to cross-line relief operations needs to be accelerated, and clear timetable should be set out for the eventual termination of cross-border delivery.

The Permanent Representative of Syria twice sent letters to the President of the Council, on 2 and 7 September, condemning the attacks on Damascus and Aleppo airports. Those airports are important cross-line transfer hubs for humanitarian supplies. All attacks on humanitarian infrastructure must cease immediately.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I join others in thanking Ms. Rochdi for her briefing and wish her every success in her new assignment. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Mr. Darwish for their updates on the humanitarian situation.

It is our view that the stalemate in the political process has become unsustainable. The small body of the Constitutional Committee has not met since May and, as evident from today's briefing, uncertainty over the next round continues. While the Special Envoy's efforts to engage with all stakeholders are commendable, any positive impact on the political track is yet to be seen. The reasons are obvious: external factors are impeding the political process in Syria; the stakeholders have not shown any indication of flexibility or compromise. We hope that all sides will engage constructively and purposefully with the Special Envoy in his pursuit to facilitate the political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We continue to believe that his efforts, in particular the step-for-step approach, need to be supported by the Council.

We hope that regional players will continue to play an important role, supplementing the efforts of the Special Envoy. In that context, the continuing normalization of Syria's relations with its Arab neighbours is a reassuring development. At the same time, we are concerned

by the acts of external players compromising Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That cannot be conducive for the political process.

On the security front, we remain concerned by the overall situation in Syria. There is an urgent need for serious attempts towards a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire in Syria. We believe that the withdrawal of all foreign forces is essential towards realizing that objective.

India has been consistently cautioning against the looming threat posed by the resurgence of terrorist groups in Syria. United Nations-designated terrorist groups continue to gain in strength in the country. 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 terrorists and terrorist groups.

India continues to 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 operate in perpetuity. Concrete steps need to be taken to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of cross-line operations.

India believes that humanitarian assistance cannot be a matter of political expediency. Linking humanitarian and developmental assistance with progress in the political process will only exacerbate humanitarian suffering. Syria is undergoing an acute fuel and power shortage. The international community also needs to look constructively at promoting projects that will bring much-needed jobs and economic opportunities for the Syrian people.

In conclusion, let me underline India's sustained commitment to extending development assistance and human resource development support to Syria. Our continued support to the people of Syria in their endeavour to seek lasting peace and stability will remain steadfast and unwavering.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I thank the briefers for their presentations.

Special Envoy Pedersen told us last month (see S/PV.9117) that we needed to be honest about the mismatch between the scale of our collective political efforts and the scale of the challenge at hand — we agree.

Troubling signs of military escalation are appearing, with additional civilian casualties and the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure. We once again call on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law, including the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks and the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

In relation to the political process established by resolution 2254 (2015), we regret the lack of progress since the postponement of the ninth session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee. We thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Rochdi for their efforts to resolve the issues that are preventing the planned meetings from happening and hope that the Constitutional Committee will soon be able to reconvene, possibly with fresh ideas and renewed political will. On a positive note, we welcome the recent meeting of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board.

Brazil supports the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022) in all its aspects. Humanitarian assistance must continue to reach all those in need via all modalities — cross-border and cross-line — and with the indispensable support of early-recovery projects. It is worrisome that overall funding for Syria's humanitarian response plan currently stands at approximately only 25 per cent of the requested funds. The progress on early recovery must continue, and we recognize the commitment of the United Nations in that regard.

The fact that violence impedes the ability of the United Nations to operate is a serious concern. Brazil reminds all parties of their obligation to facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to civilians in need across Syria.

We also want to reiterate that the humanitarian effects of sanctions must not be overlooked. The World Food Programme's early-warning report on hunger hotspots not only portrays a very difficult scenario for Syria but also says that sanctions can be blamed. Brazil reiterates the importance of conducting a thorough assessment of the potential harmful consequences of unilateral sanctions for the civilian population.

The first round of the informal interactive dialogue foreseen in resolution 2642 (2022) will soon take place. We look forward to a frank and non-politicized discussion. Brazil deems very important the strengthening of principled and technically informed dialogue on humanitarian issues. In times of heightened geopolitical tensions and overlapping systemic crises,

the risk of humanitarian operations becoming part of the political give-and-take is very concrete and maybe even inevitable. We must give diplomacy and principles an opportunity to mitigate that trend. We know that while predictable cross-border operations are indispensable at the moment, they cannot continue in perpetuity. Concrete steps must be taken to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of cross-line operations. We see the interactive dialogue as an opportunity to obtain more detailed information about the concerns of all parties in relation to humanitarian operations in Syria.

In conclusion, Brazil once more thanks the Special Envoy for his attempts to engage with all sides, facilitate the political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and propose confidence-building measures. Brazil's position remains unchanged. Only a Syrian-owned and -led United Nations-facilitated political process, with due regard for the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty, can offer a lasting solution to the conflict.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Najat Rochdi and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

We see no alternative for making progress on the situation in Syria other than through a Syrian-owned and -led United Nations-facilitated political process, in strict compliance with resolution 2254 (2015). The meeting in Geneva on 7 September between Russia's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Vershinin, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Geir Pedersen, reinforced that understanding. In that context, we believe in the importance of resuming the work of the Constitutional Committee, which is the best format for direct inter-Syrian dialogue and not tied to a specific location. For our part, we will continue to facilitate the smooth operation of the Constitutional Committee in order to ensure that the Syrians themselves, without outside interference, can reach agreement on all outstanding issues concerning the future of their country. Together with Iran and Türkiye, our partners in the Astana format, we will continue to facilitate long-term normalization in Syria.

Against that background, the situation on the ground remains reliably tense. The continuing threat of

yet another military operation in northern Syria, as well as the growing number of arbitrary attacks by the Israeli air force and the continued illegal foreign military presence of the United States and its allies on the upper Euphrates and in Al-Tanf are exacerbating an already volatile situation. It is especially regrettable that the international community, including the United Nations leadership, has ignored the many appeals by Damascus concerning violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international humanitarian law, and in particular those related to the United States' occupation of parts of Syria and its plundering of the country's natural resources. According to Syria's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources, our energy-sector losses since 2011 as a result of the actions of the United States and the Kurdish administration amount to more than \$107 billion.

Considering current realities, the Western States, especially the United States, should rethink their approaches and abandon their flawed insistence on isolating Syria internationally. In particular, they need to stop obstructing the process of Syria's return to the Arab family. A speedy normalization of relations between Damascus and the region, as well as the establishment of dialogue and interaction with the Syrian leadership, is in the interests of a long-term settlement in Syria and the overall stabilization of the region. In practical terms, it would also enhance the effectiveness of our collective efforts to combat terrorism, thereby strengthening regional security, as well as help incentivize the process of returning Syrian refugees to their homeland.

We regret that instruments of a purely humanitarian nature are also being used to entrench the territorial divisions in the country and undermine the sovereignty of Damascus. A clear example of that is the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism, whose establishment as a special and temporary measure in 2014 circumvented the Government of Syria and violated the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance stipulated in General Assembly resolution 46/182. Under the guise of their supposed concern for the alleged 4 million people in need in Idlib, the Western countries are actually ignoring the needs of the remaining millions of Syrians, most of whom live in Government-controlled territories. They are not only depriving them of urgent assistance but also politicizing the early recovery of critical civilian infrastructure, which is on the verge of collapse. Meanwhile, the United States and its allies

are strangling Syrians with illegal unilateral sanctions while at the same time making clear concessions in the areas outside Damascus's control.

What is also clear is the desire of host countries to hold onto Syrian refugees at all costs, as well as the continued existence of the Al-Hol and Rukban camps, where the humanitarian situation is notoriously dismal. The security situation at Al-Hol, for example, is out of control. Premeditated murders have become commonplace there. We emphasize that all responsibility for what is happening north of the Euphrates, as well as in the artificial, Washington-created Al-Tanf zone, which is flooded with fighters of all kinds, lies entirely with the United States.

We consider the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) not only a difficult compromise, but also an urgent measure for depoliticizing and expanding international humanitarian assistance to Syria. That includes establishing sustained cross-line access to all parts of the country out of Damascus and the rapid restoration of water and electricity supplies, medical and education facilities and housing. We also attach great importance to the opportunity provided for the first time in this resolution for an open exchange of views in New York on specific modalities of humanitarian activity within the framework of an informal interactive dialogue. We look forward to participating constructively in the first round of discussions, planned for this month.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Norway has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I make this statement on the political situation in Syria in my national capacity as the representative of Norway. I once again thank the Deputy Special Envoy and Mr. Darwish for their remarks.

The issue of missing and arbitrarily detained persons in Syria is vitally important, and Norway welcomes the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on missing persons in Syria (A/76/890). Progress on the issue is essential to the wider political process and, eventually, reconciliation in Syria. That is why we welcomed the Syrian authorities' amnesty announced in April. However, we regret that there has been little progress in implementing it. We will continue to urge the Syrian authorities to step up their efforts to implement the amnesty and to share more information.

We are disappointed with the continued lack of progress on the political track, including the stalled process in the Constitutional Committee. Norway fully supports the work of the Special Envoy in implementing all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015). We will continue to urge the parties to contribute constructively and in good faith to the political process, including the Constitutional Committee. The escalation of violence, especially in northern Syria, is worrying. Attacks on civilians are unacceptable and only exacerbate an already dire situation. We reiterate our call on all the parties to abide by their obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. Those negative developments further highlight the overall need for a national ceasefire.

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

I thank Ms. Rochdi, Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Darwish for their briefings.

Clearly, there will be no lasting peace in Syria without a political resolution. The situation on the ground remains volatile because the war is still not over. The political process has stalled. The Constitutional Committee is no longer meeting. The regime has not agreed to share any information about the implementation of the most recent amnesty decree. After 11 years of conflict, Syrians have the right to enjoy peace according to the conditions established in resolution 2254 (2015), which I would like to remind the Council was adopted unanimously. One of its provisions acknowledges that the ceasefire and the implementation of a tangible political process go hand in hand. France supports the Special Envoy in pursuing that goal.

Although the number of missing persons in Syria is estimated at more than 100,000, the regime still refuses to publish lists of prisoners or issue death certificates. That attitude is one of many examples that clearly demonstrate the regime's lack of respect for human rights and, more cruelly, for its own people. Against that bleak landscape, I want to thank in particular Mr. Darwish for his courage and his work for the cause of missing persons and freedom of expression in Syria. We also welcome the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on missing persons in Syria (A/76/890). I repeat, the fight against impunity remains a priority for France, and those responsible for the crimes

committed in Syria must be held accountable for their actions. In the absence of any progress in the political process, the French and European positions on the lifting of sanctions, normalization and reconstruction remain unchanged.

A few weeks after the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian mechanism for six months only, we are seeing the operational difficulties that it is creating on the ground. Costs have increased owing both to inflation and the reduced length of the mechanism's renewal, as well as uncertainty among the humanitarian actors. As winter approaches, we need to ensure that the humanitarian community will be able to respond to people's needs. Progress on cross-line access must continue, but it is not enough. The cross-border operations represent an average of 800 truckloads of aid crossing the Turkish border each month. It is therefore imperative that the cross-border mechanism be renewed in January for at least one year. I also want to emphasize that all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, must protect civilians and guarantee full humanitarian access. We must all respect international humanitarian law.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At a time when the Syrian Government is sparing no effort to restore security and stability and eliminate all pockets of terrorism, Israel's aggression continues unabated against my country and its sovereignty and is systematically and deliberately targeting civilian facilities and infrastructure in Syria. In just one week the Israeli occupying forces targeted Aleppo's international airport twice with rockets, which disrupted operations at the airport by damaging the runway and navigational instruments. As Mr. Griffiths noted, that has adversely affected the humanitarian operations of the United Nations.

The crimes of aggression and war crimes perpetrated by Israel in Syria are worsening and have become dangerously systematic, and that demands condemnation and denunciation by the Security Council. Israel should be held accountable for those acts. My country therefore reiterates its appeal to the Security Council and the entire Secretariat to fulfil the mandates conferred on them under the Charter of the

United Nations and to condemn the Israeli hostilities, which are exacerbating the already heightened tensions in the region and threatening international peace and security. Conflicts and disputes among Israeli officials should not serve as pretexts for launching such hostilities. There will be no condemnation of Israel's aggression by the Security Council until the United States and its Western allies stop protecting Israel in the Council, put an end to the double standards in their practices and, most importantly, recognize that if the United Nations does not put an immediate stop to those aggressions, they will become uncontainable dangers in the future.

In addition to the Israeli attacks on Syria, the United States troops illegitimately present in Syria continue to violate Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity through their continuing support of separatist militias and terrorist groups and their looting of Syrian oil, natural resources and other agricultural products of the Syrian people, as well as their imposition of unilateral coercive measures, which are illegitimate, inhumane and exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people.

Over the past 10 years we have witnessed certain Western countries, including what is called the international coalition, misinterpreting and wrongly applying Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations as they use unfounded pretexts and misleading interpretations to justify attacks on the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other countries. In that regard, I would like to draw Council members' attention to my letter dated 6 September, addressed to the Council on behalf of my Government, responding to the statement of the Permanent Representative of the United States justifying her country's aggression against my country on a pretext of Article 51 of the Charter. In my letter I stress that the only *de facto* and *de jure* description of the actions and activities of the illegitimate United States troops present in Syria is the crime of aggression.

The efforts of the Syrian Government and its partners at the United Nations and United Nations humanitarian and development agencies to promote and advance the livelihoods of Syrians continue to face real challenges and difficulties owing to the politicization of humanitarian aid by Western donors, the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States and the European Union on the Syrian people, the ongoing illegitimate presence of foreign troops and the disruption

by terrorist groups of delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. The full implementation of resolution 2642 (2022), including the progress achieved on the early-recovery plans, shows that we are on the right track. However, the disruption in the delivery of aid to the Syrian people and the failure of donor countries to honour their pledges to fund the humanitarian response plan in Syria are not promising. My delegation therefore looks forward to the informal, interactive dialogue before the end of this month, which will enable us to assess the progress made in implementing the resolution's requirements and to identify the gaps and evaluate the ways in which we can overcome them.

Another aspect of the humanitarian suffering is the recurrent cuts and interruptions to the water supply in north-eastern Syria. For a second time, terrorist groups supported by Türkiye targeted the Tal Tamr power plant with rockets, hindering the operation of the Allouk water station, and that was after Türkiye had already reduced the level of water flowing to the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Water is the lifeline of citizens in Al-Hasakah governorate. However, we have heard no denunciation or condemnation of those who are responsible for the recurring interruptions of water supplies for the civilian population, and we deplore anyone turning a blind eye to their suffering.

With regard to the humanitarian suffering in Rukban camp, it is the occupying Power, the United States, that is responsible. Ending the suffering can be achieved only by closing the camp. The same applies to Al-Hol camp in the north-east, which is under the control of separatist militias backed by the occupying United States troops. That camp should also be closed after facilitating the repatriation of nationals from third countries detained there. Syria is sparing no effort to achieve that goal.

Certain Western countries have launched a systematic campaign to raise awareness on the issue of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic with a view to establish an international mechanism to clarify their fate. However, those countries' actual goal is certainly not to clarify the fate of persons who have gone missing through the actions of armed terrorist groups, including Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham during these years of crisis. They do not even want to clarify the fate of people who have gone missing, died or been killed as a result of the actions of the so-called global coalition and the documented barbaric shelling of Syrian regions such as Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor and

especially Al-Baghouz. The real goal of those Western countries is to launch a new mechanism no different from every other politicized and biased international mechanism used to put additional pressure on Syria and its people.

In conclusion, restoring security and stability in Syria will continue to hinge on Western States ending their hostile policies and interference in Syria's internal affairs, lifting the immoral economic embargo, ceasing their support of terrorist groups, irrevocably and unconditionally declaring the unconditional closure of foreign terrorists and their affiliates' file and ensuring the final exit of the illegitimate foreign troops occupying Syria.

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

Mr. Jalil Irvani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate France on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and thank the briefers for their briefings.

We reiterate our consistent position that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Syria. It must be resolved peacefully in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as with full respect for the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. Ending the occupation and ongoing violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria is essential to such a solution and the political process. The fight against 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 be ended. The recent air strikes in north-eastern Syria by illegal foreign forces cannot be justified under Article 51 of the Charter or through an arbitrary interpretation of self-defence. The attacks constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter. The free movement of terrorist organizations within Syrian territory where foreign forces are illegally present endangers regional and international peace and security. We strongly condemn the repeated aerial military aggression and violations of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Israeli regime. Israel's ongoing attacks, particularly its systematic and deliberate targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure in Syria,

including the recent attack on Aleppo's international airport on 31 August, are a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and constitute an act of aggression and a war crime. We call on the Security Council to hold the Israeli regime accountable for such violations and atrocities, which threaten regional and international peace and security.

With regard to the political process, we support the convening of the next Constitutional Committee meeting, as the Committee's ongoing work is critical to reaching a political solution. We are maintaining contact with the Syrian Government, the Special Envoy and our Astana format partners in order to ensure that the next meeting of the Committee is held, and we support the Special Envoy's efforts in that regard. We also emphasize once again that the Committee must work in strict accordance with its terms of reference and rules of procedure, free of outside influence or pressure and any imposition of artificial deadlines. This must be a truly Syrian-led and Syrian-owned effort, with the role of the United Nations limited to facilitation.

Given the dire situation in Syria, the provision of humanitarian aid is essential, and political circumstances should not prevent humanitarian aid from reaching people in need. The continuation of illegal unilateral sanctions on the Syrian people is having disastrous consequences for every aspect of their lives and runs counter to various provisions of resolution 2642 (2022), particularly those related to the implementation of early-recovery projects, which are critical to strengthening Syrian resilience and enabling displaced people to return home. Those unlawful measures have also had a negative impact on the international and national efforts of humanitarian organizations in Syria. We reiterate our call for ending such illegal and disruptive measures. It is self-contradictory to voice concern about the difficult humanitarian situation in Syria while supporting unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people. The Security Council must work diligently to ensure that resolution 2642 (2022) is properly implemented in a balanced and effective manner, particularly in terms of early-recovery projects and enhancing the cross-line delivery of humanitarian assistance.

We once again condemn the robbery in areas occupied by foreign forces of Syrians' natural resources, particularly oil products, which are critical to supporting the Syrian economy and saving lives. That criminal act clearly violates Syria's territorial

sovereignty, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Charter. We support Syria's standing in the region and its improved bilateral relations. The Syrian Arab Republic has always played a significant role in regional peace and security. A secure, stable and prosperous Syria benefits the Syrian people, the region and the international community.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Türkiye): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi for their briefings.

After more than a decade, the war in Syria continues to be a major threat to regional and international peace and security. It is also the fundamental breeding ground for one of the gravest humanitarian and displacement crises since the Second World War.

Humanitarian needs in Syria are today at their highest level since the beginning of the conflict, more than 11 years ago. We cannot afford the humanitarian situation in Syria to be sidelined on our global agenda. Even though 11 years have passed, we do not — and should not — have the luxury of becoming desensitized. We owe that much to the Syrian people, to future generations and to humankind.

In the face of an ongoing and extremely complex humanitarian crisis, the cross-border aid mechanism of the United Nations continues to be an irreplaceable lifeline for millions of Syrians. The mechanism is also a reflection of the international community's commitment to maintain accountability, as well as to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It is crucial that humanitarian considerations prevail in the coming months and that the cross-border mechanism be extended for 12 months in January. This is not business as usual. If the cross-border mechanism is not extended, the hope of the Syrian people who are impatiently waiting for help will be further dashed.

In the meantime, Türkiye will continue its constructive engagement for the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022), including by continuing to facilitate the cross-line missions to Idlib. However, we reject arbitrary interpretations or implementation of the resolution, which would undermine its integrity. Cross-line aid should continue, but it cannot be an end in itself. It is essential that humanitarian aid be delivered through the safest and most direct route and

that humanitarian planning be based on independent-needs assessments and not one-sided preferences.

We also find it inexplicable to unilaterally focus on north-western Syria while ignoring the problems of cross-line access to Rukban camp and other parts of Syria, such as Ras Al-Ayn and Tal Abyad. The fundamental issue and overall objective concerning north-western Syria is the protection of millions of vulnerable civilians, as well as civilian facilities and infrastructure. In Idlib, ceasefire violations by the regime and its backers continue unabated. Those non-stop violations also constitute the most important obstacle to regularizing the cross-line activities in the region.

Similarly, despite the support extended by Türkiye and the relevant actors on the ground, the two cross-line deliveries planned to be carried out before the expiry of resolution 2585 (2021) — one to Idlib and another to Ras Al-Ayn — could not be realized due to the negative attitude of the regime and its backers. We expect the United Nations to accurately reflect those facts in its reporting to the Security Council.

We would also like to caution against unrealistic plans developed without consulting the Syrian opposition or local actors, which, in our assessment, cannot yield the desired results.

Regarding the water disruption from the Allouk water station, the reasons behind the problem are well known to United Nations agencies. Water is supplied from the Allouk station to the south through water pumps that operate on electrical power coming from the Al-Dirbasiyah substation. The electrical power from that substation is being deliberately cut on a regular basis by the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) terrorist organization.

While addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria, we should not forget that the actual cause of the crisis is the 11-year war waged against the people of Syria. Therefore, while humanitarian action can address these symptoms, it alone cannot solve the problem. As we reiterate every month in the Chamber, a sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict can be achieved only through political means, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

There is no way to end the conflict other than through United Nations-supervised elections. That is the political solution defined in resolution 2254

(2015), and it has to be agreed upon by all segments of the Syrian people, while meeting their legitimate aspirations. The Constitutional Committee is the only mechanism in place to advance that political track, but it can make progress only if the regime starts to reciprocate the positive approach of the opposition. We hope that the ninth round of the Constitutional Committee will be held as soon as possible under United Nations-facilitation and with a results-oriented approach. Türkiye will continue to support every effort, including those of the United Nations and the Special Envoy, towards a political solution that will ensure a united, free, safe and democratic Syria.

The fate of tens of thousands of missing persons and detainees remains an open wound in the hearts of the Syrian people. Hardly any Syrian family is left untouched by this scourge. There is an urgent need to ensure that they be informed of the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

Türkiye is doing its part in order to reach that objective. The Astana platform includes the Working Group on the Release of Detainees/Abductees, the Handover of Bodies and the Identification of Missing Persons. We are working hard to ensure that the Working Group is results-oriented. We also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (A/76/890) on missing persons in Syria and take note of his recommendations. We will continue to work together with the United Nations and the international community with a view to facilitating progress on this — first and foremost — humanitarian issue.

Protecting the territorial integrity and unity of neighbouring Syria, as well as the elimination of the threat posed by terrorist organizations operating in that country, are vital for us. The PKK/YPG is a terrorist organization that indiscriminately targets Syrian civilians, as well as our citizens within our borders, using similar tactics as Da'esh. The so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is in reality nothing but the PKK/YPG terrorist organization itself. It follows a separatist terrorist agenda contrary to resolution 2254 (2015). As has been well documented by now, this terrorist organization is responsible for gross human rights violations in the areas under its control in north-eastern Syria.

The approximately half a million Syrian Kurds hosted by Türkiye and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq have not been able to return to

their homes in north-eastern Syria because of PKK/YPG operations. The PKK/YPG/SDF uses force to recruit minors and seize people's property, imposes a controversial curriculum in schools and imprisons teachers who refuse to use that curriculum, attempts social and demographic engineering in line with its separatist terrorist agenda and impedes the freedom of movement of those who want to return to their homes.

The so-called SDF carries out, on average, 100 terrorist attacks every month in northern Syria. In the past two years, around 500 Syrians lost their lives in those attacks. No one should expect us to remain indifferent to growing separatist terrorism in Syria. We cannot stand by and watch the PKK/YPG/Democratic Union Party terrorist organizations attacks that target not only Syrian civilians, but also Turkish security forces and civilians inside our borders.

Türkiye will continue its resolute fight against all terrorist organizations threatening its national security in exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the fight against terrorism. Our determination in that sense is also a guarantee for Syria's territorial integrity and political unity. Those suggesting that we avoid escalation and instability in the region should review their own positions and demonstrate genuine solidarity in the fight against terrorism, which is, in itself, a major source of escalation, instability, human rights violations and humanitarian suffering.

In providing temporary protection to close to 4 million Syrians, we, as neighbours, have been proud to stand by our Syrian sisters and brothers in their most difficult time. Needless to say, our solidarity remains intact. At the same time, it is also crucial that Syrians be able to return to their homes in safety and peace, play a role in the future of their country and contribute to its reconstruction and the re-establishment of lasting peace in Syria. While addressing the needs of the Syrian refugees, we should also seek to create conditions conducive to their return in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner. That must be an integral part of the overall efforts for the settlement of the Syrian crisis. We will continue the efforts under way to increase collaboration with other neighbouring countries, as well as with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on this issue.

Syrians need our support. Turkey will continue to do its utmost to bring lasting peace to the brave people of Syria, and we urge the members of the Council to do what is right and to preserve the indispensable United Nations cross-border mechanism. The Council should not allow thousands of innocent people to freeze and starve to death in harsh winter conditions.

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

I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at noon.