



# Security Council

Eighty-first year

**10094**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 22 January 2026, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Osman .....	(Somalia)
<i>Members:</i>	Bahrain .....	Ms. Alalawat
	China .....	Mr. Sun Lei
	Colombia .....	Mrs. Zalabata Torres
	Democratic Republic of the Congo .....	Mr. Mukongo
	Denmark .....	Ms. Landi
	France .....	Mr. Dharmadhikari
	Greece.....	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia.....	Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes
	Liberia .....	Mr. Brown II
	Pakistan.....	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama .....	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation .....	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.....	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America.....	Ms. Bruce

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Iraq, Israel, Jordan, 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: Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director, Crisis Response Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

**Mr. Khiari:** Our first meeting on the Syrian Arab Republic in this new year takes place against the backdrop of significant developments in northern and north-eastern Syria. While these developments have advanced rapidly in recent days, and the situation remains fluid, let me briefly recap the key events of the past weeks.

A further round of talks between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to implement the 10 March 2025 agreement on 4 January did not yield progress. Shortly thereafter, clashes erupted in and around the SDF-controlled neighbourhoods of Aleppo city — Ashrafiyah and Shaykh Maqsud. Following several days of intense fighting and in the context of measures taken by the Syrian Government to alleviate the impact on civilians, such as humanitarian corridors, reports from various public sources indicate that tens of thousands fled, most of whom have started to return, dozens were killed, hundreds were wounded, and persons are still missing. On 11 January, the SDF withdrew east of the Euphrates to north-east Syria. On 17 January, Syrian Government forces moved across the Euphrates and took control of broader swathes of territory from the SDF, with local populations in these areas also taking over territory from the SDF in many instances.

With mediation from the United States of America and other international partners, on 18 January a ceasefire and full integration agreement between President Al-Sharaa and SDF leader General Mazloum Abdi was announced to halt the fighting and ensure the full integration of all three north-east governorates under central Government control. However, a subsequent meeting on 19 January between them failed to resolve implementation, and fighting resumed. On 20 January, the Syrian presidency announced a shared understanding between the Government and the SDF, providing the SDF a four-day period for consultation, and the SDF expressed its commitment to a ceasefire. We are now two days into this critical period. As I speak, the situation on the ground remains very tense, with exchanges of fire and clashes between Government forces and the SDF in parts of Hasakah Governorate and also on the outskirts of Ayn al-Arab, also known as Kobane — an SDF-controlled enclave — where access is challenging given ongoing clashes. Let me note that there is an alarming humanitarian and protection crisis, with an urgent need for all sides to ensure the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian access.

The Secretary-General expressed his concern about the continuing violence, strongly called for full respect for international law and the protection of civilians and urged the parties to continue dialogue and to move forward in good faith, while working

together to secure the implementation of all agreements. We strongly appeal for both sides to immediately adhere to a ceasefire in line with the 18 January agreement and engage in fleshing out and implementing the details of this latest understanding of 20 January swiftly and in a spirit of compromise in order to ensure the peaceful integration of north-east Syria in support of Syria's broader transition.

It is important also to note recent Decree No. 13, announced by President Al-Sharaa, concerning the linguistic, cultural and citizenship rights of Syrian Kurds within the Syrian State. This is a crucial issue for the future, and the unprecedented decree is an encouraging initiative on which to build further through a genuinely inclusive process. Last month, Mr. President, on your visiting mission to Syria, ahead of the first anniversary of the fall of the Al-Assad Government, you witnessed first-hand the achievements, opportunities and challenges facing the Syrian people in this new chapter for a Syria moving towards equal citizenship.

The United Nations fully supports and encourages Syrian efforts to advance an inclusive political transition, equitable political participation by all components of Syrian society and meaningful participation by women to strengthen national cohesion and unity. We look forward to the next milestones in Syria's transition — the full formation of the People's Assembly and the establishment of the Committee to draft the permanent constitution and the Constitutional Court— reflecting these principles.

We acknowledge the important steps the Syrian Government is taking to achieve justice for the victims of abuses and to combat impunity, both past and present. The Syrian people across the board are also asking for, and deserve, more in this area. The United Nations looks to further support these efforts. They are critical for restoring and sustaining peace, justice and accountability.

One year into this political transition, much has been achieved in post-Al-Assad Syria. The fact that almost 3 million refugees and internally displaced persons have returned attests to that. Nevertheless, the country remains extremely fragile after 14 years of devastating conflict.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is still a persistent threat. As the Syrian Government has joined forces with international partners in the international counter-Da'esh coalition to address this threat, we continue to encourage international cooperation in this area. It is vital that ISIL not be allowed to capitalize on the fluid situation in the north-east.

We share concerns about the presence of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria. During the fighting in north-east Syria, control of some of the detention centres for ISIL fighters switched from the SDF to Government forces, as did the Hawl camp in Hasakah. There are indications that some detainees escaped. We appeal for full attention to be paid to ensuring that the transfer to the Syrian Government of ISIL detention facilities still under SDF control is done in an orderly manner. Separately, the United States announced on 21 January its mission to transfer ISIL detainees from Syria to Iraq, with 150 ISIL members held in Hasakah already transported to a secure facility in Iraq.

Tensions persist along sectarian and ethnic lines, often fuelled by hate speech and disinformation. The wounds along Syria's coast, in the north and in the south, remain unhealed, with triggers all around that could upset the fragile stability.

On 26 December, a deadly attack occurred at the Ali Bin Abi Talib mosque in Homs, which the Secretary-General strongly condemned, emphasizing that attacks against civilians and religious sites are unacceptable. The Syrian Foreign Ministry condemned the attack and emphasized its commitment to counter-terrorism efforts and to ensuring security for all Syrians. Subsequently, the Syrian authorities prevented an attempted attack on a church in Aleppo.

We note with concern the unresolved differences and escalating rhetoric in Suwayda Governorate. Sporadic armed clashes between Syrian forces and local groups and militia are concerning, as are the reported intra-Druze tensions, including detentions and assassinations, in areas of Suwayda outside of Government control. The United Nations continues to urge the parties to engage with the Amman road map of 16 September 2025 and implement confidence-building measures to restore trust and bring stability to Suwayda.

Israeli incursions in southern Syria continue to undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We welcome the Council's extension of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force mandate for another six months. Let me reiterate the Secretary-General's call on Israel to refrain from violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Let me also appeal to the parties to respect the terms of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and to call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from areas it entered after 8 December 2024. In this regard, we are encouraged by resumed contacts between Syria and Israel to seek mutually acceptable security arrangements.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Syria in charting a path to peace, stability and prosperity in challenging domestic and regional environments. We look forward to deepening our engagement with the Syrian authorities to help to ensure that this transition is inclusive, sustainable and, ultimately, successful. We look forward to continuing to engage widely with Syrians, including civil society, women's groups and all Syrian communities. To that end, the Secretary-General has appointed a new Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Claudio Cordone, who will advance United Nations support for Syria's political transition, and a new Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Nathalie Fustier, to support Syria's recovery.

We stand ready to serve as a trusted partner to Syria in advancing this transition in conditions of trust and legitimacy, fostering recovery and promoting long-term stability. In this context, we are working to ensure the presence of the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria on the ground to engage in a structured and supportive way throughout this transition, in order to deliver these objectives more effectively and efficiently, ensuring closer engagement and better coordination of resources. We look forward to furthering the dialogue with the Syrian Government in this regard.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

**Ms. Wosornu:** As the Syrian Arab Republic enters the second year of its new chapter, the determination of its people to build a better future is both palpable and encouraging.

Recent weeks have underscored how acutely vulnerable the country is to the impacts of hostilities and natural hazards, such as winter storms, and why humanitarian needs remain substantial. Earlier this month, clashes in Aleppo City forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes, though most have been able to return since the 11 January ceasefire, as Council members just heard from our Assistant Secretary-General from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Fighting also spread into eastern Aleppo and parts of Raqqa, Dayr al-Zawr and Hasakah Governorates. As of 18 January, more than 13,000 people had fled from Raqqa Governorate. Many families sought refuge at collective shelters in Qamishli.

The fighting has cut people off from clean water, some hospitals have been forced to close, and many children cannot attend school. The closure of the main artery between Homs and Raqqa and damaged bridges, along with explosive ordnance, have affected

humanitarians' ability to deliver aid. Displaced families face bitter winter conditions and desperately need shelter, food and heating.

Despite fighting and access challenges, the United Nations and its partners continue to deliver aid. In Aleppo, we have been providing shelter, food, medicines, nutrition support and protection services, in close coordination with the Government of Syria. We are also supporting people returning to their homes in neighbourhoods affected by the upheaval. Reception centres have been set up in Hasakah and Qamishli, and the United Nations and our partners are providing food across Raqqa, Tabaqah and Hasakah. The Syria Humanitarian Fund has released \$2.5 million to rapidly assist displaced people and cushion the effects of severe winter conditions.

At the Hawl camp, as Council members heard, hosting thousands of women and children with suspected family ties to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Syrian Democratic Forces withdrew from their positions on 20 January, and the Syrian internal security forces established a security perimeter around the camp premises. Yesterday, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF teams reached the camp, and UNHCR, which has taken over camp management responsibilities, is actively coordinating with the Syrian Government to urgently resume the safe delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

In Suwayda, in southern Syria, though the situation remains calm, 155,000 people who have been uprooted since July 2025 cannot return home owing to the fragile security situation. Commercial supplies and basic services remain insufficient to meet people's needs, leaving many to rely on humanitarian assistance. The United Nations and our partners continue to deliver support to nearly 400,000 people every month in Suwayda' and neighbouring governorates. Meanwhile, clearing explosive remnants remains a critical priority across Syria, with more than 540 people killed and nearly 1,000 injured in 2025. Widespread contamination continues to impede people's return to their homes and the rebuilding of livelihoods, particularly for farmers.

Recent weeks have shown how vulnerable Syria is to extreme weather. Heavy snowstorms and extreme cold in northern areas have affected nearly 160,000 people living in camps, damaging shelters and contributing to the deaths of two infants. The United Nations is providing heating fuel and winter assistance, but only a quarter of the \$112 million needed to support people this season has been received, leaving our partners able to reach only a fraction of the 2 million people they hoped to support this winter. Syria is still reeling from the impact of drought-like conditions, which damaged 70 per cent of the latest winter wheat harvest. While increased rainfall has helped to restore water levels in some areas, it has also flooded and damaged land across several governorates.

In spite of these challenges, Syrians across the country continue to work to build a brighter future. More than 3 million Syrian refugees and internally displaced people have returned to their homes since December of 2024. And we have started to see some encouraging, if still limited, improvements in humanitarian indicators. Food security has improved slightly, but only one in five families are consistently meeting their nutritional needs. Syria can make further progress in reducing humanitarian needs, but this hinges on three requirements from international partners including the Security Council.

The first is increased investment in recovery and development. Years of conflict and underinvestment have left communities across Syria with significant shortfalls in services, infrastructure and financial access. Government-led efforts are under way to help address these gaps, but given the scale of the challenge, international partners must step up with swift and sizable support and provide targeted development finance so that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

The second is sufficient and sustained humanitarian funding in the near term. Large-scale development investments will take time to mobilize and bear fruit. In the meantime, immediate life-saving assistance must continue. In 2025, the United Nations and our partners received only one third of the \$3.2 billion we needed. With this, we were able to do a lot. We were able to reach 3.4 million people with critical aid every month, but this was out of the 10.3 million people we targeted. We could not do as much. We thank all those Member States and donors who have helped Syrians, both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, over the years. We welcome the recent announcement by the United States of America that Syria is among the humanitarian operations it will support through country-based pooled funds. We are also grateful to those donors who have already made early contributions for 2026.

And the third is active diplomacy to prevent further violence and protect civilians. The recent clashes in Aleppo and beyond show how instability continues to force families from their homes, strains already limited humanitarian resources and slows development and recovery efforts. We hope the recent ceasefire agreement will translate into the stability that the people of Syria need.

Reversing a humanitarian crisis of the scale and complexity of Syria's was never going to be easy, but we must do all we can to support the people of Syria in this effort. We owe it to people such as Hanan, who lost the restaurant she owns in Aleppo during recent clashes and who told us: we have endured so much, especially in this bitter winter, and we are exhausted — all we want is safety and security. Despite the hardship, she conveyed her belief in a Syria of hope, joy and solidarity.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Wosornu for her briefing.

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

**Ms. Landi (Denmark):** Let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria to today's meeting.

We have paid careful attention to the dramatic events unfolding in north-eastern Syria these past weeks, which arguably constitute the most substantial territorial change since the fall of the Al-Assad regime. Reports of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh fighters escaping from prisons and camps in Syria, albeit difficult to confirm, are worrisome. We urge the Syrian transitional Government to continue its efforts to address this threat comprehensively as a member of the Global Counter-ISIL Coalition. We welcome the ceasefire agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian transitional Government from 20 January. It is key that this now be implemented and that dialogue and de-escalation be prioritized. Even with a ceasefire in place, we urge the Syrian transitional Government and the SDF to prioritize the protection of civilians above all else. Civilians must never be targets, and accountability must always be judicial and never founded on retribution. In this regard, it is crucial to continue the challenging process towards inclusive and credible transitional justice for all Syrians.

As we just heard from Director Wosornu, the humanitarian situation remains dire, even without the recent military clashes in the north-east. A severe drought followed by a harsh winter, including heavy snowfall in the north-east, has had an impact on heating, housing and nutrition. In the short term, basic needs, including blankets, meal packages and shelter, are urgently needed. In the long term, resilience-building measures, such as recultivation, the clearance of farmland and protecting vital waterways from environmental degradation, are also key. The lack of funding remains a major concern, and we urge all donors to do more to meet the needs.

Last year was marked by progress on many fronts. However, as we look to the year ahead, it is also clear that many challenges still persist in securing a genuinely inclusive political transition in Syria. In this regard, we reiterate our call for an inclusive and transparent political process respectful of the rights of all segments of the Syrian population. This is the only viable path towards lasting peace and stability in Syria. Denmark remains strongly committed to this end.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Crisis Response Division, Edem Wosornu, for their detailed briefings on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We are closely following the rapidly unfolding military and political situation in Syria, which is a friendly country for Russia. Regrettably, the beginning of 2026 has been marked by another spike in violence between Government forces and Kurdish armed groups in the northern neighbourhoods of Aleppo — Ashrafiyah and Shaykh Maqsud. According to the information available, as a result of the clashes, dozens of Syrians were killed, many were wounded, and thousands were forced to flee their homes. On 10 January, the Syrian authorities announced that they had established control over the aforementioned neighbourhoods of Aleppo. Subsequently, between 16 and 18 January, they conducted a large-scale military campaign in the north-east of the country, extending Government control over a significant part of the country, including the Governorates of Raqqah, Dayr al-Zawr and Hasakah.

We note that a series of agreements on a ceasefire and the reintegration of the trans-Euphrates region into the legal framework of the Syrian State have recently been concluded between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which previously controlled those areas, and Damascus. Key elements of these understandings include transferring responsibility for security of the borders and the energy infrastructure to the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic and integrating SDF fighters into the components of the Arab Republic's Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior. We expect the parties to tackle with the utmost earnestness and responsibility the implementation of these understandings, which are intended to contribute to ending the protracted intra-Syrian conflict and the plight of the civilian population. Against this backdrop, we are alarmed by information from the Syrian Ministry of Defence about the violations of the truce in the Governorate of Hasakah that took place just yesterday, including through an SDF strike on one of the weapons arsenals near the Ya'rubiyah border crossing, which claimed the lives of seven members of the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic. We urge all parties involved to stop trying to sabotage the negotiations process and refrain from any further confrontation, which could exacerbate the violence and cause the situation to spiral out of control.

We are convinced that the path to long-term and sustainable stabilization in Syria lies in establishing a nationwide dialogue entailing the participation of a broad spectrum of ethnic and religious groups, including Alawites, Druze, Sunnis and Kurds. In this regard, we wish to underscore the significance of the decree issued by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic on 16 January on the protection of the linguistic and cultural rights of Syrian Kurds. We consider this document to be an important and necessary step towards restoring and strengthening trust, which is so essential for all Syrians during this difficult period in the history of the Syrian State.

In the context of the developments in the Syrian Arab Republic, we must not forget another very dangerous factor: the concentration of thousands of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant fighters, including foreign terrorist fighters, in prisons and refugee camps in the trans-Euphrates region. As Government forces advanced eastward, SDF units abandoned the facilities containing ISIL members, which they had been guarding, including in the densely populated Hawl and Shaddadah camps in Hasakah Governorate.

According to media reports, a large group of terrorists capitalized on the situation to escape. As far as we understand, some of the fighters were promptly arrested. At the same time, we believe that it is unacceptable to allow a security vacuum to arise in such dangerous hotbeds of international terrorism, as it poses a threat not only to Syria but also to the entire Middle East region. We hope that the Syrian authorities will be able to bring the situation under control and provide the requisite level of physical security for all camps in the trans-Euphrates region, where ISIL members and their families are being held. The issue of the repatriation of the fighters to their countries of origin remains outstanding.

Once again, we are compelled to note that resolving the many internal challenges in the Syrian Arab Republic is complicated by Israel's ongoing illegal interference. Despite unequivocal signals from Damascus that it stands ready to partake in mutually respectful dialogue, West Jerusalem is continuing its arbitrary military activity against the Syrian people in violation of the provisions of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and Syria and is obstructing the mission of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights. We call on the Israeli leadership to refrain from using force to address its security concerns, to respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of its Arab neighbour and to resume fulfilling its international legal obligations in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

On a separate note, we wish to touch upon the humanitarian consequences of the latest developments in Aleppo and north-eastern Syria, which have placed an additional burden on the entire Syrian Arab Republic. One predictable consequence of the fighting has been the new waves of forced displacement of the population, leading to an upsurge in humanitarian needs. It is difficult to remain indifferent to reports that women and children fleeing their homes barefoot and without warm clothing are seeking refuge in harsh winter weather. Reports that the possibility to provide assistance to these people is extremely limited owing to the closure of key transport routes are also a cause for concern. We are gravely concerned about reports of damage to critical infrastructure. In particular, a significant portion of the population of Raqqah has been left without access to drinking water. This is being compounded by the general state of the civilian infrastructure nationwide, much of which is worn out or was destroyed over years of conflict. On the whole, the footage coming out of the areas affected by the fighting is appalling. The humanitarian response needs to be scaled up so as to properly address the growing needs of the people. Humanitarian organizations must be able to deliver vital assistance safely and unimpeded. We hope that the Syrian authorities will maintain a constructive approach to cooperating with the United Nations and its partners on the ground.

Last year's escalation in the coastal areas of Ladhqiyyah and Tartus, in the south in Suwayda' and now also in Aleppo and the north-east of the country demonstrates clearly how fragile the situation in Syria remains. These events are exacerbating socioeconomic instability and affecting the lives of millions of civilians, who, for years, have endured one of the most extensive and protracted crises. We call on all parties, including international partners, neighbouring countries and friends of the Syrian Arab Republic to strive to resolve the conflict through dialogue, once and for all. It will then be possible to count on long-term investment in the country's recovery. Nonetheless, Syria needs genuine international cooperation, underpinned by respect and a rejection of any unilateral economic sanctions or other impediments that violate the legitimate right of Syrians to independent development.

**Ms. Bruce** (United States of America): I convey a special thanks to our briefers and a special welcome to the representatives from Syria to this meeting.

The United States extends its support to the Syrian Government as it works to stabilize the country, rebuild national institutions and fulfil the aspirations of all Syrians for peace, security and prosperity. The United States has long supported efforts to defeat Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and to promote stability in Syria, including through Operation Inherent Resolve and our partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), whose sacrifices have been instrumental in achieving enduring gains against terrorism.

Now the situation has fundamentally changed. The new Syrian Government joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in late 2025, pivoting to cooperation with the United States on counter-terrorism. Damascus is now both willing and positioned to take over security responsibilities, including control of ISIS detention facilities and camps. We are working with the Syrian Government and the SDF to reintegrate north-east Syria in a dignified manner that leads to a Syria at peace with itself and its neighbours.

We commend both sides on reaching a four-day ceasefire that will allow them each to work out the modalities of the 18 January agreement between Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa and SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi. President Al-Sharaa has affirmed that Kurds are an integral part of Syria and promotes the integration of Kurds into the new Syrian State. He offers full citizenship rights, including for those previously stateless, recognition as an integral part of Syria, constitutional protections for the Kurdish language and culture and participation in governance. While risks remain, this integration, supported by United States diplomacy, represents the strongest chance yet for Kurds to secure enduring rights and security within a recognized Syrian nation State.

The United States is also ready to continue supporting respectful and productive conversations between Syria and Israel to turn a new page in their relations for the benefit of future generations. Our objective remains a sovereign, unified Syria, at peace with itself and its neighbours, in which equality, justice and opportunity are extended to all of its people.

We also call on Syria's neighbours and international partners also to support this vision and provide the cooperation and assistance needed to make it a reality. To that end, we recognize the United Nations' ongoing work to support the Syrian Government and hope the Office of the Special Envoy will soon relocate from Geneva to Damascus, which will enable it to best assist the Syrian people.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria and other countries of the region in this meeting.

I will make three points today.

First, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned about events in north-east Syria. This is a critical moment for Syria's future, and we are watching developments closely. We call for adherence to the ceasefire agreement, continued dialogue and an end to violence. All parties must focus on protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and unimpeded humanitarian access, both within Syria and across borders.

Secondly, we are alarmed by reports that Da'esh fighters have escaped from detention facilities in north-east Syria. A robust transition plan for securing and managing the camps and detention facilities is critical. We encourage close international coordination to mitigate any shared national security risks.

Thirdly, the fighting seen throughout January has repercussions for an already difficult humanitarian situation, as we heard today. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been displaced and their access to essential infrastructure, including water, food supplies, Internet and electricity, has been severely disrupted. Access for humanitarian organizations must be facilitated, and aid allowed to reach those in need without

obstruction. The United Kingdom is providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to those affected by the violence and displacement in north-east Syria, where it is safe to do so and where access allows. United Kingdom aid is supporting hospitals, clinics and the deployment of medical teams alongside the provision of food, shelter, winter supplies and cash transfers.

The Syrian people deserve peace and stability. The United Kingdom strongly supports an inclusive political transition that guarantees rights and protections for all communities and delivers for all Syrians. We welcome the commitments of the Syrian Government in this regard. Respect for diverse identities and inclusive, representative governance are essential pillars for long-term stability and prosperity and for a safer, more secure future for Syria.

As we look towards the renewed United Nations-Syria relationship in the year ahead, I encourage the Council to offer its collective support to ensure that Syria remains on the path towards a more stable and peaceful future.

**Mr. Dharmadhikari** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, for their briefings. I welcome the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of Syria.

Recent events in Aleppo and in the north-east of Syria are a source of concern. This leads to three observations on the part of France.

First, France welcomes the four-day ceasefire agreement reached between President Al-Sharaa and General Mazloum on 20 January. All parties must respect it and seize this opportunity to implement a comprehensive agreement on the integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces into the Syrian army and State institutions, as well as on local governance, in line with the agreements of 10 March 2025 and 18 January 2026. The protection of civilian populations, particularly Kurds, must be guaranteed. We call on all parties to exercise restraint in the light of the risk of escalation. The ceasefire must lead to a lasting cessation of all hostilities throughout Syrian territory. International law and unimpeded humanitarian access must be fully respected. France reaffirms its solidarity with its allies with whom it has fought Da'esh and remains committed, as in the past, to supporting the successful transition to a united, stable Syria that is rich in its diversity.

Secondly, the fight against terrorism is essential to guarantee the security of Syria, the region and the entire international community. The uncertainty surrounding jihadist prisoners is extremely worrisome. The security of Da'esh camps is a matter of common concern. Any security breach will be exploited by Da'esh, which has long sought to free its supporters. This calls for increased cooperation between the international community and the Syrian transitional authorities. The international counter-Da'esh coalition, which Syria recently joined, remains an essential framework for achieving our objectives. France is playing its full part in this effort, as demonstrated by the strikes carried out jointly with the United Kingdom on 3 January.

Thirdly and finally, Syria must continue its efforts to strengthen its unity and inclusiveness by bringing together all segments of its population. In this regard, the presidential decree on the rights of Kurds, signed on 16 January, is a step in the right direction.

The transition process in Syria must cast aside the mindset of revenge, guarantee the participation of women and lay the foundations for the rule of law. The fight against impunity, in order to bring to justice those responsible for crimes committed under the former regime, but also during the massacres on the Syrian coast and in Suwayda last year, is an essential lever.

In parallel with internal pacification within Syria, the country must be able to live in peace with its neighbours. We encourage rapprochement with Lebanon, just as we hope that a security agreement will soon be reached with Israel. France has facilitated discussions between the two countries, with American mediation, which have resulted in a coordination mechanism.

It is the duty of the Council to stand alongside the Syrian people at this pivotal stage, in support of their transition to a stable, united, sovereign and pluralistic country.

**Mr. Sun Lei** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Wosornu for their briefings, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria to today's meeting.

The newly appointed Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Cordone, has assumed his duties. I wish to extend my congratulations to him and reiterate China's firm support for the work of his Office.

Recently, significant developments have taken place in Syria's Aleppo Governorate and the north-eastern region, drawing the widespread attention of the international community. China notes that a ceasefire agreement has been reached. We hope that the agreement will be fully respected, tensions will be eased as soon as possible, and Syria will achieve peace and stability at an early date. We urge all Syrian parties to uphold the principle of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process, advance political reconciliation through dialogue and negotiations and find a path for national reconstruction that serves the interests of the Syrian people.

Developments in north-eastern Syria have given rise to security risks, which are a matter of concern. According to reports, a group of Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham militants escaped from detention facilities in Hasakah Governorate amid the turmoil. China is also concerned about the management and security of facilities in which Islamic fighters are being held. China firmly opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stresses that any terrorist activity constitutes one of the gravest threats to international peace and security and must never be tolerated. We call on the Syrian transitional authorities to fulfil their international obligations and take all effective measures to resolutely combat all international terrorist organizations designated by the Security Council, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.

As winter sets in, more than 5.1 million Syrians are enduring cold and hunger as they wait for assistance. China commends the United Nations humanitarian agencies for continuing their humanitarian operations in Syria despite challenges such as funding shortages and security concerns. We call on the international community to scale up humanitarian assistance to Syria and to help its people to get through the winter in warmth. In the long run, all parties must help Syria to restore its domestic markets, integrate into international and regional cooperation and thoroughly eradicate the root causes of instability.

The international community's expectations for Syria are broadly aligned. We all hope that Syria will steadily advance an inclusive political transition, resolutely combat terrorism, effectively protect the rights of minority groups, swiftly revive its economy and embark on a path of sustainable development. China reaffirms its support for Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and opposes external interference. We stand ready to work with the international community to play a constructive role in helping Syria to achieve security, stability and development.

**Mr. Alfaro de Alba** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Director Edem Wosornu for their briefings. We also extend a warm welcome to the representative

of the Syrian Arab Republic and the delegations of the other countries honouring us with their participation today.

After 14 years of conflict, the Syrian people continue to show extraordinary resilience. In various regions of the country, families are returning to their homes to rebuild their lives with dignity and determination. While still fragile, these returns reflect a legitimate aspiration to live in peace and normality in their own land. However, recent events in the north of the country serve as a clear reminder that the transition remains vulnerable. Hostilities in Aleppo, particularly in eastern parts of the city, between legitimate State forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have resulted in dozens of civilian casualties, damage to public infrastructure and the forced displacement of tens of thousands of people. These events highlight a structural challenge: achieving the orderly, inclusive and negotiated integration of the SDF within the State's institutional framework, while respecting and strengthening State sovereignty throughout the national territory. In that regard, we recognize the progress made by the Syrian authorities towards the consolidation of its territory. This process must be based on representative political representation mechanisms that allow the Kurdish community to determine who their legitimate representatives are, so that they can participate alongside all Syrians in building the future of their country.

Panama believes that a lasting solution to close this chapter and prevent further tears in the Syrian social fabric can only be achieved through a political approach based on dialogue, mutual respect and guarantees of inclusion. It is therefore imperative that all parties respect the agreement reached on 19 January and international humanitarian law, protect the civilian population and refrain from actions that could exacerbate forced displacement or put those seeking refuge at risk. We are pleased to note the efforts of the interim authorities to ensure that military actions have been carried out with restraint and caution, reducing the impact of hostilities on civilians and facilitating dialogue to form a vision in which all Syrians, regardless of their origin, are equal citizens.

Panama reaffirms its support for a political transition process led and undertaken by the Syrians themselves and supported by the United Nations, with full respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 2254 (2015). At a time when opportunities for peace are scarce and fragile, Syria continues to offer an opportunity for all of us — interim authorities, local actors and the international community — to act with a sense of historical responsibility and offer humankind a chapter that restores hope for a better future.

**Mrs. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the presidency of the Security Council for organizing this meeting and Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khaled Khiari, and Director of the Crisis Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Edem Wosornu, for their briefings. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria to this meeting.

I wish to begin by underscoring that Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be respected and that any political solution must be led by Syria, under the principle of national ownership and for the benefit of its people and regional stability. The support of the international community, including that of the Council, is not a substitute for national will.

My delegation is closely following the situation on the ground and recognizes the efforts of the Syrian Government and its expressions of commitment to maintaining constructive dialogue in the economic, political and security spheres. Colombia therefore welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire and calls for it to be sustained and for all peaceful mechanisms to be prioritized in order to achieve lasting solutions.

A sustainable transition requires ensuring a fundamental principle from the outset: inclusion. Incorporating the voices of all Syrians in efforts to define the country's future, including women, is a prerequisite for legitimate change. All efforts to prevent all forms of discrimination are crucial as a basis for restoring trust, combating impunity and moving towards reconciliation and the recovery of the social fabric.

In the area of security, Colombia believes that the challenges facing the country cannot be understood solely in terms of its internal dynamics but also in the light of regional factors that affect stability. In this regard, my delegation also calls for full respect for existing agreements, the breach of which has generated tensions that affect the full exercise of Syria's territorial sovereignty and deepen a context already marked by the harmful effects of occupation.

Regarding the humanitarian component, Colombia emphasizes that the protection of civilians must remain at the centre of efforts, particularly given the internal challenges that persist on the ground. It is necessary to ensure the continuity of essential services, including the provision of health services. Colombia appreciates the efforts of the humanitarian actors who continue to provide assistance in a complex operating environment and encourages the international community to persist in providing sustained and predictable financial support. However, it is equally important to begin the transition to strategies that strengthen the capacity of national institutions and lay the foundations for development, aligning action with national priorities and promoting sustainable solutions.

In conclusion, Colombia wishes to note that it has first-hand experience of the challenges arising from conflicts but also of the benefits of persisting on the path of building peace, ensuring justice, providing reparations to victims and committing to reconciliation. Peace is on the horizon. It is a goal that is built every day, from within and from diversity. The Council must recognize those efforts and resolutely accompany Syria on its path to peace.

**Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes (Latvia):** Let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Director Wosornu for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria in today's meeting.

As we heard during the briefings, during the past year Syria has made remarkable progress. However, many hurdles and challenges remain ahead.

Against that backdrop, allow me to focus on three points.

First, Latvia is following the developments in Syria closely and with concern. We welcome the ceasefire and full integration agreement signed by the Syrian transitional Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). We call on both sides to continue to exercise restraint for the ceasefire to hold, as tensions and risks of further violence persist. The path towards a peaceful and prosperous future, to which all Syrian people have long aspired, cannot be achieved by military means, but only through dialogue and mutual commitment. Orderly and peaceful integration of the SDF military and security personnel into the State institutions would be an important advancement towards a united and inclusive Syria.

We call on the Syrian transitional Government to assume governance of the country's north-east with profound responsibility and commitment to serving all Syrians. In this regard, we welcome the historic decree acknowledging the civil and cultural rights of Syrian Kurds. Inclusive participation of all ethnic and religious groups of Syrian society is at the core of the political transition. We are awaiting the elections to be held in the remaining governorates in the north-east and the appointment by President Al-Sharaa of the selected members to the People's Assembly, including women.

Secondly, as we heard in the OCHA briefing, while the humanitarian situation across Syria remains dire, recent developments, particularly the military clashes in and around Aleppo, as well as in the north-east of Syria, have an impact on civilian suffering and new waves of displacement. In any outbreak of armed conflict, the protection of civilians is a prerequisite and a legally binding obligation for all sides. We note the safe and organized evacuation of civilians from the conflict zone in Aleppo, and we call on all parties to maintain their commitment to the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. Reliable humanitarian corridors remain essential to support those who are returning to their communities and to safeguard the functioning of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools.

Thirdly, a stable and restored Syria is vital for the entire Middle East. After decades of violence and grief, the new Syria has a historic opportunity to foster peace, security and prosperity for itself and its neighbours. We recognize the step taken by Syria to join the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. We welcome the reopening of relations between Syria and Lebanon, contributing to enhanced cooperation on shared security and economic interests. In the same vein, we acknowledge Syria's restraint and constructive efforts to stabilize its relationship with Israel. We hope the establishment of the United States-mediated joint fusion mechanism will contribute to this aim, and we encourage both sides to take the process forward in order to achieve a sustainable security arrangement. In that regard, we emphasize the important role played by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and welcome the extension of the mission's mandate.

International solidarity, focused on recovery and rebuilding, is essential on Syria's path towards stability, dignity and lasting peace. The United Nations has the necessary expertise and tools to support this goal, and we are convinced that increasing the United Nations presence is beneficial for the future of Syria.

The resilience and determination of the Syrian people give grounds to hope for a better future. Latvia remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria where an inclusive transition would enable the Government to address the country's security, humanitarian needs and socioeconomic recovery.

**Ms. Alalawat** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of the Crisis Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria and all other Permanent Representatives in today's meeting.

We would like to reiterate the unwavering position in support of the sovereignty, independence, stability, security and territorial integrity of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. Syria is currently going through a critical and difficult juncture that requires coordinated and effective international support to facilitate the return of refugees, support reconstruction efforts, promote economic recovery and achieve sustainable development for the benefit of the brotherly Syrian people. We reaffirm our full support for, and solidarity with, the Syrian Government, based on our conviction that Syria's stability and the restoration of its normal role in the Arab region and in the international arena is a fundamental pillar of security and stability in the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the positive steps taken by the Syrian Government to support the political reform process in the country, starting with the Syrian National Dialogue Conference and culminating in the legislative elections held in early October, considering this to be a political process led by the Syrian people themselves, who must fully participate in shaping the future of their country. In this regard, we note the latest constructive steps taken by the Syrian Government, including

the issuance of a national decree guaranteeing the rights of Kurdish citizens in Syria and prohibiting any discrimination or exclusion on the basis of ethnicity or language. The Kingdom of Bahrain affirms that establishing coexistence, preserving freedom of religion and belief, respecting social diversity and achieving justice and equality are essential elements of ensuring civil peace and building an inclusive State that can foster stability and sustainable development.

The Kingdom of Bahrain condemns all terrorist and hostile acts that undermine the security and stability of Syria. In this context, Bahrain supports the efforts made by the Syrian Government to fulfil its obligations in the fight against terrorism and extremism, combating drug trafficking and strengthening regional security, including the decision to join the international counter-Da'esh coalition. Bahrain highly appreciates the role of Saudi Arabia in lifting the sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the positive response of the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union with regard to easing the sanctions imposed on Syria, thereby contributing to supporting the recovery and reconstruction process. In this context, Bahrain considers resolution 2799 (2025) to be a golden opportunity to embark on a new phase that supports stability and sustainable economic development. It commends the visit of Council members to Damascus in December in support of the political transition in Syria.

Bahrain also welcomes President Al-Sharaa's announcement of a new agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) aimed at establishing a ceasefire, restoring security and stability in conflict areas, integrating members of the SDF into the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior, strengthening State authority in the eastern and northeastern regions of the country, and handing over oil fields and other assets that support the unity and sovereignty of the Syrian State. In this context, the Kingdom urges all parties and components of the Syrian people to put Syria's higher interests first and to achieve national interests in order to consolidate civil peace and protect civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law, and to reject anything that would perpetuate sectarianism and division. The Kingdom also appreciates the efforts of the United States of America to resume integration talks between the parties concerned. This includes providing care and support to displaced Syrians and working towards the voluntary and safe return of refugees to Syria in accordance with international standards.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to respect Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and opposes any practices that could undermine regional stability or contravene resolution 2782 (2025) of 30 June 2025. We call on the Council and the international community to shoulder their legal and moral responsibilities in this regard, while underscoring that Syria's security and stability are fundamental to the security and stability of the region.

Lastly, the Kingdom of Bahrain renews its call for the international community to support the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic at this pivotal stage and affirms that support for the path to recovery and stability in Syria represents a direct investment in the security and stability of the entire region.

**Mrs. Balta** (Greece): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Wosornu for their briefings, and I welcome the presence of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in today's meeting.

As the new year has dawned upon us, let us acknowledge the progress that Syria achieved in 2025 but also the challenges it still faces. It has made progress towards recovery, greater stability and improved coordination with the United Nations, while making tangible gains in humanitarian access. However, challenges remain, especially when it comes to inclusivity and safeguarding the security and rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnic or religious background. We recognize, welcome and support the

efforts of the Syrian transitional Government to stabilize and unite the country and its people under extremely difficult circumstances. At the same time, we should not forget that 2025 was marked by violence against Alawites, Druze and Christians. The violence in the coastal region and Suwayda' over the past year weighs heavily on our minds as we follow developments in the Kurd-majority north-eastern Syria.

This brings me to my first point. The clashes in north-eastern Syria underscore the continued fragility of the transition and have led to thousands fleeing and left dozens dead. The ceasefire agreement between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces should be fully and immediately implemented by all sides. We hope that the truce recently announced will indeed translate into a permanent ceasefire. In this context, the presidential decree formally recognizing Kurdish identity as part of Syria's national fabric is welcome. The recognition of the Kurdish language and the restoration of citizenship to all Kurdish Syrians constitute tangible progress. The protection of the Kurds must be ensured and their political rights safeguarded in a united Syria. The clashes, however, highlighted the risks still present, particularly when tensions are exacerbated by external actors pursuing national agendas and threatening the use of force. We call on all actors to exercise restraint and avoid escalation, which could disrupt and destabilize the country and exacerbate ethnic tensions. And we should always be mindful of the adverse consequences that these developments may have in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). The security of the camps holding Da'esh/ISIS detainees must be fully safeguarded and should not be used as a bargaining chip by any side. Should prisoners be released, a serious security threat would emerge. Overall, security sector reform and countering terrorism and extremism are prerequisites for stability.

Secondly, only a fully inclusive and Syrian-owned political transition can secure lasting peace and stability. Such a transition must ensure the meaningful participation of all Syrians, including women, youth and representatives of all communities, be they Muslim, Alawite, Kurdish, Christian or Druze. The protection of all Syrians regardless of ethnic origin, religion or belief is indispensable. All Syrians must feel safe. Besides, Syria's wealth lies in its diverse social fabric, which must be preserved. Safeguarding pluralism, equal citizenship and the rule of law is a prerequisite for national reconciliation and sustainable recovery.

Lastly, the humanitarian situation and the need for transitional justice need to be addressed. As highlighted by our briefers today, tens of thousands are still unable to return safely to Aleppo and the surrounding north-eastern region. It is necessary to protect civilians under all circumstances and ensure that displaced persons safely return to their homes. At the same time, accountability and transitional justice are essential to break cycles of violence, restore trust and lay the foundations for reconciliation and reconstruction. The recent visit of the European Union leadership to Syria, during which €620 million were pledged for its reconstruction, is demonstrative of our collective commitment to Syria's recovery.

In conclusion, Greece expresses its strong support for renewed and constructive engagement between the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations. We look forward to the prompt establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy in Damascus and the designation of its leadership. As demonstrated by the recent visit of the Council to Syria, the country's renewed relationship with the United Nations offers clear mutual benefits. Greece actively supports efforts that advance stability, inclusivity and a peaceful future for all Syrians.

**Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan):** We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Edem Wosornu for their comprehensive briefings.

Recent developments, in particular in north-eastern Syria, underscore that the stabilization phase is still unfolding and requires sagacity by all concerned to prevent renewed escalation and humanitarian suffering. We welcome the ceasefire and integration agreement announced last week between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces and express the hope that its faithful implementation will advance stability and security, while upholding Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such steps can contribute to durable peace in Syria and to regional stability. All State institutions and security structures must operate under a single central framework to ensure effective governance. In this context, we view the recent agreement and the Amman road map as constructive steps towards national cohesion and inclusive security arrangements for consolidating State authority and the Government's writ across the length and breadth of the country. We also welcome the presidential decree concerning the Kurdish community. Measures aimed at ensuring equal citizenship, cultural and linguistic recognition and inclusive participation are important to strengthen social cohesion and national reconciliation. Inclusivity and respect for diversity remain essential for sustainable peace.

After years of devastating conflict, Syria has witnessed positive movement on the political and institutional tracks and encouraging progress on recovery and reconciliation. We note with appreciation the steps undertaken over the past 13 months in that regard. At the same time, the persistence of terrorist incidents and the presence of foreign terrorist fighters remain a matter of serious concern. Da'esh and other terrorist and extremist groups, including foreign terrorist fighters, continue to exploit the situation. Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and underscores the need for sustained counter-terrorism efforts, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in line with international obligations.

As highlighted by the briefers, the humanitarian and economic situation in Syria continues to require the attention and support of the international community. Millions of people remain dependent on humanitarian assistance, while basic services and infrastructure are heavily damaged. Economic hardship persists, with high poverty levels and limited employment opportunities. Sustained humanitarian support, alongside efforts to restore livelihoods and rebuild critical infrastructure, is essential. In this regard, international support must be mobilized in a coordinated manner.

It is also important to ensure calm in the area of separation and full respect for the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and relevant Security Council resolutions to prevent escalation. The safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force personnel must be ensured at all times, and the mission must be enabled to implement its mandate without obstruction or politicization. Despite Syria's continued efforts to exercise restraint and pursue diplomatic avenues, repeated violations of Syria's sovereignty by Israel undermine stability and risk further escalation. Resolutions 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) must be strictly respected.

Pakistan reaffirms its full commitment to stand with Syria and its people, to support an inclusive Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process and to uphold Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We remain ready to work with Council members, regional partners, United Nations entities and the international community to enable the brotherly Syrian people to rebuild their country in dignity and stability in order to achieve lasting peace and prosperity.

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

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3), namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and my own country, Somalia.

At the outset, we thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Edem Wosornu for their comprehensive briefings. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria in today's meeting.

Today, Syria stands at yet another delicate juncture. Recent developments in the north-east, including heightened tensions between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Kurdish political actors and local communities, underscore both the fragility of the security landscape and the urgency of reinvigorating a genuinely Syrian-owned, Syrian-led political process. The spillover impact of these dynamics on civilian safety, governance arrangements, humanitarian access and regional stability cannot be overstated. In this regard, the A3 would like to highlight the following points.

First, the A3 reiterate their commitment to Syria's unity, sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity. Any unilateral actions, parallel administrative structures, or foreign-driven security arrangements that undermine the authority of the Syrian State risk deepening divisions and prolonging instability. Syria's future must not be shaped by armed actors, external patrons, or de facto authorities, but by Syrians, through an inclusive political process anchored in resolution 2254 (2015).

Secondly, we note recent friction between the SDF and Kurdish actors, including disputes over governance mandates, mobilization patterns and community representation; and highlight the urgent need for genuine dialogue among Syrian components. No group can claim exclusive authority over the north-east. Durable arrangements for security, resource management and public administration must reflect Syrian inclusivity. In this regard, the A3 welcome President Ahmad Al-Sharaa's historic decree as a transformative step towards national reconciliation, recognizing Syrian Kurds as an essential and authentic part of the country's fabric. The formal designation of Kurdish as a national language and the commitment to integrate it into the school curriculum represent a commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity in the new Syria. Furthermore, annulling the discriminatory measures of the 1962 census and granting full citizenship to the Kurdish community correct decades of injustice and restore the dignity of thousands of Syrians.

Thirdly, the A3 remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian implications of instability in the north-east. Restrictions on movement, disruptions to supply routes, localized clashes and new patterns of displacement add pressure to an already overstretched humanitarian response. We emphasize the need to maintain and expand safe, predictable and principled humanitarian access across all of Syria, with full respect for Syria's sovereignty.

Fourthly, we also note that terrorism remains a serious and evolving threat. The resurgence of Da'esh cells in the north-east, enabled by governance vacuums, fragmented command structures and porous lines of control, should serve as a warning to all. Counter-terrorism operations must fully respect international law and avoid exacerbating grievances among local communities whose support is essential for long-term stabilization.

Fifthly, we condemn the continued reports of Israeli military operations against targets inside Syrian territory, including recent reports of strikes that have resulted in civilian fatalities and threatened regional escalation. These actions violate international law and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. The occupied Syrian Golan remains an integral part of Syria, in accordance with resolution 497 (1981). We call on all parties to exercise restraint and commit to diplomacy and dialogue.

Sixthly, the A3 emphasize that reconciliation and transitional justice remain indispensable pillars for rebuilding a cohesive and peaceful Syria. The A3 encourage the Syrian Government to continue taking practical steps aimed at creating an environment conducive to national unity, dignified return and long-term stability.

Lastly, the A3 call for the international community to transition from short-term humanitarian responses to a comprehensive approach that supports Syria's economic recovery, the rehabilitation of essential services and the reconstruction of critical infrastructure. Without these foundations, neither stability nor the voluntary return of refugees can be realized.

To conclude, the A3 reaffirm their full commitment to standing with the Syrian people. We urge the Council to remain united in supporting a genuinely Syrian-owned political process, safeguarding Syria's territorial integrity and addressing the drivers of instability in all parts of the country, including the north-east. Only through sustained political will, respect for sovereignty and inclusive national dialogue can Syria move towards a future of peace, dignity and stability.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Olabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the briefers and to the members of the Council who recognized the significant efforts made by the Syrian Government to ensure that its actions are fully in line with international humanitarian law, as well as to those States that clearly distinguished between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as an armed militia operating outside the authority of the State, and the Kurds, who are an authentic component of the Syrian people. I also thank those countries that commended the Syrian Government's efforts to recognize their rights and integrate them into State institutions and that noted the swift response of the Syrian Government in dealing with sensitive issues, such as the prisons of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and their fugitives, most of whom have been arrested. I thank the States that called for the implementation of the agreement and affirmed their commitment to Syria's unity, strength and prosperity.

Approximately a year ago, for the first time in decades, General Mazloum Abdi arrived in Damascus and signed a historic agreement with His Excellency the President of the Republic. Now that a year has passed, let us review together how it unfolded, without the SDF, and then we will return to that topic.

This year, and perhaps members observed this during their visit to Damascus, the Syrian Government preserved State institutions and prevented chaos. It launched a comprehensive national political process, initiated a national dialogue and drafted the constitutional declaration. A Government was formed based on competence. Security reforms were carried out to establish the rule of law and restrict State monopoly over weapons. Bodies for transitional justice and missing persons were established. There was public accountability for those accused of violations. There was transparent cooperation with the United Nations and United Nations commissions and bodies for the first time in Syria's history, as well as with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We put an end to the manufacture and export of drugs and Captagon.

We fulfilled our international obligations to combat terrorism by joining the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. We arrested ISIS terrorists involved in the bombing of the Mar Elias Church and the Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mosque in Homs last month and several of the organization's leaders in cooperation with the Global Coalition. More than three million refugees and internally displaced persons were returned, and basic services were rehabilitated. We saw the beginning of economic recovery and the launch of

development and prosperity. Diplomatic presence expanded, with international visits to the east and west, investments and development partnerships. All components of the rich and diverse national social fabric were protected, including Arabs, Kurds, Syrians, Assyrians, Circassians, Turkmens, Muslims, Christians and Jews.

As members have all seen in recent months, Syrian Christians celebrated Christmas and New Year's Eve in their churches and public squares. As members know, one member of the Ministry of the Interior was martyred, and two others were injured while foiling a suicide attack targeting those celebrations in the city of Aleppo. In this context, I offer my deepest condolences to the family of the martyr Mohammad Masat, who sacrificed his life to protect civilians from the threat of terrorism and preserve Syria's civilization and cultural fabric, which illusions and ideologies have not and will not succeed in tearing apart. This year also witnessed, for the first time in centuries, the return of Syrian Jews to their homeland after long decades of forced absence. They celebrated their holidays in their synagogues and homes in complete freedom. This is the new Syria, which embraces all its children without discrimination.

Presidential Decree No. 13 of 2026, issued by His Excellency the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, affirms that Syrian Kurdish citizens are an integral part of the Syrian people and emphasizes that their cultural and linguistic identity is an integral part of national identity and the State's commitment to protecting this diversity. It also recognizes the Kurdish language as a national language and guarantees the cultural and civil rights of all Syrian men and women of Kurdish origin. It celebrates Nowruz as a national holiday that expresses spring and fraternity.

The approach of the Syrian State is to preserve pluralism and build equal citizenship as the basis for stability and national unity. We are aware of the suffering that our Syrian Kurdish people have endured for decades owing to marginalization and the absence of rights, and we are pleased today that they are part of the new Syrian State institutions, just like all other Syrian components. We have seen this in practice, as a group of internal security forces from the Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin graduated in recent days. This is a living example of the integration of Syrian Kurds into the institutions of their State, far from the transnational political and ideological agendas that unfortunately have exploited their suffering and do not represent them or reflect their interests or the interests of any component of the Syrian people.

I have described our year to members in various fields, so let me show them what our year with the Syrian Democratic Forces has been like. It was a full year of negotiation, dialogue and diplomacy, met with evasion, stalling, procrastination and a lack of responsibility. With every step we take towards the moment of truth and integration, there are attacks, mortars and drone strikes. The Syrian Government dealt with the SDF in good faith and reached an agreement on 10 March 2025, defining the mechanisms for integrating SDF elements into the military and civil institutions of the State. However, the SDF did not abide by the agreement and pursued a policy of deliberate procrastination, violating its commitments, including the April agreement on the Shaykh Maqsd and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods in the city of Aleppo. The SDF and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organization turned the Shaykh Maqsd and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods into two isolated islands within the city, which is considered Syria's economic capital and the engine of growth and prosperity. They turned the two neighbourhoods into a launching pad for repeated armed attacks on Aleppo, resulting in the deaths of dozens of civilians and the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure.

Faced with this situation, the Syrian Government did not have many options. The Syrian Government launched a targeted and precise operation to enforce the law. The goal of this operation was to protect civilians, stop armed attacks and end the illegal military presence. As members have seen and mentioned, protecting civilians was our

top priority. Humanitarian corridors were opened, advanced response points were established, and civilians voluntarily left for safe areas under State control, all in coordination with the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Yes, this operation was carried out in full compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law and principles, especially the principles of distinction, proportionality, military necessity and others. As members well know, as soon as the security operation ended, mine clearance and the removal of remnants of war began immediately in preparation for the safe return of civilian life, which I saw for myself in the Shaykh Maqsud and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods last week when I was in Syria.

The Government was forced to carry out a limited security operation, but at the same time, it did not close the door to dialogue and diplomatic solutions. However, the SDF and the PKK terrorist organization continued their intransigence and launched further attacks against the city of Aleppo, one of which involved targeting the Aleppo Governorate building with a drone during a press conference held by several ministers and officials, which prompted the Syrian Government to expand its precision operations to include the eastern countryside of Aleppo, particularly the areas of Dayr Hafir and Maskanah.

At the same time, the eastern Euphrates region witnessed escalating tensions and widespread protests by the people of the region against the SDF, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive and swift resolution for this issue within a unifying national framework that preserves the country's unity, safeguards civil peace and ensures civilian protection. Throughout that accelerated period, the Government kept the door open to dialogue and political solutions, driven by a commitment to avoid escalation and protect civilians.

A comprehensive agreement for a ceasefire and full integration between the Government and the SDF was first reached on 18 January 2026. However, its implementation faced immediate difficulties, as the SDF withdrew their commitment the following day. Despite that setback, the Government continued its diplomatic efforts, reopening the door to consensual solutions. A mutual understanding was subsequently reached on several issues related to the future of Hasakah Governorate. As Council members know, the Syrian Government agreed to grant the SDF a four-day deadline to conduct consultations on developing a detailed plan for the operational mechanism to integrate the areas in question. It was confirmed that, should a final agreement be reached, Syrian forces would not enter the city centres of Hasakah and Qamishli, remaining on their outskirts pending the completion of a detailed plan and the establishment of a time frame for full integration. It was also stipulated that local security forces in areas with Syrian Kurdish populations must be drawn from those communities. Furthermore, Mr. Abdi was to nominate individuals from the SDF for consideration as Deputy Minister of Defence, Governor of Hasakah, members of the People's Assembly and for employment in various State institutions.

That is the vision of a unifying Syria. Unfortunately, despite the wisdom and prudence Syria demonstrated in handling this matter, the SDF have continued to violate the ceasefire since the announcement of that understanding. Those violations led to the martyrdom of a number of soldiers of the Syrian army and the injury of others just yesterday.

Syria condemns in the strongest terms the attempts by the SDF to exploit the issue of prisons holding Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist elements as a tool for political pressure and blackmail and holds it fully responsible for any cases of escape or unlawful release of such elements and for the consequences of that irresponsible behaviour.

Protecting citizens and preventing the resurgence of terrorism remain a supreme national priority. The Government has acted swiftly and responsibly in addressing these dangerous developments, beginning with securing the prisons now under its custody in accordance with international standards and in coordination with the American side and the United Nations in order to prevent any security breaches. The Ministry of Interior has succeeded in arresting the majority of fugitives and continues to pursue the remainder. Extending State sovereignty and the rule of law is emphasized as the sole and permanent guarantee for security, stability and counter-terrorism.

In that context, the Syrian Government welcomes the American operation to transfer ISIL prisoners from Syrian territories and confirms its readiness to provide the necessary logistical and security support to ensure its success.

I returned a few days ago from Syria, where I visited the city of Qunaytirah in southern Syria, accompanied by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix. Meetings were held with residents, who served as direct witnesses to the enormous scale of Israel's grave violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and its complete disregard for the resolutions of the Council, namely 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). A detailed briefing on those violations and the residents' suffering will be provided during the Council meeting scheduled for 28 January.

Some remnants of the former regime, aligned with fugitive criminals wanted for justice, misperceive the new Syrian State's commitment to values, morals and restraint as weakness. From the very first day, it was stated clearly — and reiterated here in the Council — that Syria would be a refuge for every oppressed person with a rightful claim and a drawn sword against anyone seeking to meddle with the security of our country.

In conclusion, Syria is advancing steadily towards prosperity and development, keeping its doors open to partnerships and investments. It will remain a unified and strong State with its institutions and exercising legitimate authority over the entire Syrian territory while respecting local specificities and tolerating no armed anti-Government manifestations. The new Syria knows no victors or vanquished, only a victory that unites all Syrians — Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen and Circassians, Muslims, Christians and Jews. The new Syria will be built by the hands of all its sons and daughters on the basis of full equality, ensuring shared security, stability and prosperity in a single homeland that embraces all and preserves their dignity and rights.

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

**Mr. Obeidat** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

On behalf of the Arab Group, I extend our congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and wish you every success in guiding its work. We also congratulate the new members of the Council and wish them success in performing their duties. We express our appreciation to the outgoing members for their valuable efforts during their tenure. I also extend our thanks to the briefers, Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Ms. Wosornu, Director of the Crisis Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The Arab Group reaffirms its absolute support for sisterly Syria, its security, stability, sovereignty, independence, unity and the integrity of its territory and

citizens. It reiterates its categorical rejection of all forms of external interference in its internal affairs, in line with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Arab Group commends the national steps taken by the Syrian Government during the past year, in particular the launch of a comprehensive national dialogue, the issuance of the constitutional declaration, the holding of elections for the People's Assembly, the reinforcement of efforts to combat drug smuggling and terrorism, the targeted development efforts towards reconstruction and recovery and the efforts undertaken to protect all Syrians and respect their rights, without discrimination.

The unity, stability and security of Syria are a cornerstone for the security and stability of the region. Syria's stability and security require an end to all Israeli interventions and attacks on Syrian territories, specifically in southern Syria. These actions constitute a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, a blatant breach of international law and a dangerous escalation that increases tension in the region. The Arab Group calls on the Council to compel Israel to withdraw immediately and completely from all areas it entered after 8 December 2024 and from the entire occupied Syrian Golan, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular Resolution 497 (1981). It further calls on the Council to compel Israel to halt its attacks and comply fully with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, ending all continuing violations.

The Arab Group affirms its support for the efforts of the Syrian Government aimed at strengthening security and stability, ending the illegal armed presence and consolidating the authority of State institutions and the monopoly on weapons. The Group also welcomes the ceasefire and full integration agreement signed recently between the Syrian State and the Syrian Democratic Forces as an important step towards strengthening the unity, stability and security of Syria, and supports the full implementation of and commitment to the agreement. In this regard, the Arab Group appreciates the role of the United States of America in reaching that agreement.

The Arab Group appreciates the efforts of the Syrian Government aimed at implementing the road map to end the crisis in Suwayda' and ensuring the stability of southern Syria, which was announced by Syria, Jordan and the United States. The Group affirms the necessity of the full implementation of the road map, which numerous States and international and regional organizations have welcomed and adopted, and affirms its categorical rejection of any partitionist or separatist schemes targeting Syria.

The Group welcomes the constructive Syrian cooperation with the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which reflects the commitment of the Syrian Government to international standards and its keenness to facilitate the work of United Nations organizations. In this framework, the Group urges the United Nations and its agencies to provide all forms of support to the Syrian Government to enable it to recover, in addition to reconstruction and assisting the local communities affected by the conflict from which Syria has suffered over the course of the past years, as well as strengthening the capacity of Syria to enable the voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of refugees to their homeland and creating the appropriate conditions therefor. The Group appreciates the major role undertaken by the host countries of Syrian refugees and calls upon the international community to increase and expand the support allocated to those countries, which cannot bear this responsibility alone on behalf of the international community.

The Arab Group welcomes the lifting of sanctions imposed on Syria and the repeal by the United States Congress of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act as a pivotal step opening up new horizons for the Syrian people for a new phase of recovery, stability and prosperity. It also calls for the lifting of all forms of remaining

sanctions on Syria and encourages the international community, international financial institutions and the business sector to expand the scope of investments in Syria in support of the national economy and in strengthening reconstruction efforts, thereby serving the affected local communities and the Syrian people in achieving security, stability and prosperity.

The Arab Group affirms its firm commitment to standing by Syria and its brotherly people in their efforts to build a safe, stable and prosperous State based on justice, equality and the rule of law, in a manner that safeguards the rights of all Syrians.

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

**Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye):** We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Wosornu for their comprehensive briefings.

The past weeks have marked the most consequential shift on the ground in Syria since the revolution. The situation has changed significantly, following the recent clashes in Aleppo, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr. The Syrian people and Government have restored control over substantial parts of their territory. Those areas had been unlawfully seized by those who exploited years of prolonged instability and subjected civilians to grave abuses.

Despite provocations by terrorist elements in the north-east, the Syrian army acted within the chain of command. It demonstrated discipline and avoided actions that could have harmed civilians. By prioritizing negotiation, the Syrian Government resolved the situation with minimal damage. We consider those developments important gains for lasting peace, calm and stability in Syria.

In this context, I warmly congratulate the Syrian Government, the Syrian army and the brotherly Syrian people. I also convey our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives.

Recent developments have also demonstrated the support the Syrian Government enjoys among its people, as well as the capacities it has developed. Various segments of Syrian society have made it clear that they will no longer tolerate the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces. Centrifugal and divisive projects targeting Syria's unity have no future.

Reports of destruction of civilian infrastructure and mass killings of civilians by the remnants of these terrorist elements, including in Hasakah Governorate, are deeply alarming. At the same time, these events reflect the true nature of that terrorist organization, which has now become evident. The events of the past two weeks and the violations committed by that terrorist organization, confirmed the validity of Türkiye's long-standing position: the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces was neither Syrian, nor democratic, nor a force. It was an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) terrorists.

Türkiye fully supports the Syrian State's efforts to build a united, sovereign and independent Syria, in which all ethnic origins, beliefs and sects coexist side by side. Through a presidential decree to eliminate the problems faced by Syrian Kurds during the Al-Assad regime in various areas, including language and citizenship, the Syrian Government has once again confirmed that Kurds are equal and honourable citizens of Syria. Türkiye will continue to support the Government's efforts to build inclusive governance structures that reflect the country's diversity.

We hope that the ceasefire and full integration agreement announced by President Al-Sharaa will make an immediate and meaningful contribution to security and stability. This effort must rest on Syria's territorial integrity and unity. The

PKK/YPG should refrain from any attempt to undermine the implementation of that agreement. The handover of border crossings and detention centres and camps to the Syrian Government must proceed smoothly and without delay.

Current dynamics on the ground, together with a genuine commitment to the agreement, can pave the way for real integration. The more the Syrian people unite around a single representative authority, the easier it will be to overcome remaining challenges. From now on, Syria's resources will be used for the benefit of the Syrian people.

Images from the streets of Aleppo, Raqqah, Dayr al-Zawr and other cities reflect the Syrian people's deep longing for peace. After more than 13 years of suffering, immense loss and sacrifice, Syrians are embracing hope once again. No one has the right to ignore this reality or to sabotage this climate of hope.

We will spare no effort to ensure the complete elimination of the terrorist presence in Syria, in all its forms and manifestations, and support the resolve and actions of the Syrian Government.

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

**Mr. Danon (Israel):** First, I would like to welcome the new members of the Security Council and thank the briefers.

In our region, intentions do not create security; actions do. Israel and Syria have taken a cautious step, with United States support, to establish a communication mechanism. We welcome it and hope it can support real and ongoing coordination on security, de-escalation and diplomacy. But what matters is not intention; it is action on the ground.

The situation in southern Syria directly affects the safety of Israeli civilians. Armed groups, radical elements and instability near our border are not theoretical risks; they are real and present dangers.

Israel's position is straightforward: there can be no armed militias, no terrorist infrastructure and no weapons positioned along our border. We know this because we have lived it. Representatives can ask United Nations officials about what happened to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) when the Al-Assad regime collapsed. UNDOF personnel came under fire from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and other jihadist groups, and our soldiers stepped in to protect them. That showed us just how fast chaos can fill a vacuum.

Those risks have not disappeared. In recent weeks, the lack of control has been visible even in the heart of Syria's capital. In November 2025 and earlier this month, rockets struck central Damascus, including the Mazzah district, hitting civilian areas and sites near key infrastructure, with no clear accountability. That does not boost stability. That shows a lack of control.

We are also deeply concerned by reports that ISIS prisoners are being released from prisons in Dayr al-Zawr and elsewhere. These developments point to the danger of renewed jihadist and terrorist activity. Israel remains firmly opposed to terrorism in all its forms. We will not accept conditions that allow terrorists to regroup, rearm or expand.

Today many Council members have raised concerns about the safety of minorities. At the same time, we hear hopeful talk about a new Syria. History teaches us that governments are judged not by speeches or promises, but by actions and by how they treat their most vulnerable minorities.

In recent weeks, we have received disturbing reports from Kurdish areas in northern and eastern Syria, reports of forced displacement, brutal abuse and killings. The Kurdish people are not a footnote. They stood between us, between the world and ISIS. They fought, they suffered and they paid a heavy price so that others would not have to. They represent courage, pluralism and the belief that a different Middle East is possible. To remain silent as they are being persecuted now would be a moral failure. The same warning signs are visible elsewhere. We have seen pressure and violence directed at the Druze community in the south.

These are not isolated incidents. The so-called new Syria cannot be built on fear, repression or the targeting of minorities. Israel seeks peace and stability, but our security is not negotiable.

If there are clear and verified assurances of security in southern Syria, including the removal of radical elements and the protection of minorities, Israel is prepared to cooperate. Let me be clear: Israel is not the source of Syria's instability. Armed militias, terror proxies, jihadist groups and foreign actors pursuing their own agendas — they are the problem.

Let us be honest today. We speak with the Syrians. Syria's Foreign Minister Assad Al-Shaibani and its head of General Intelligence Service Hussein al-Salama have met with my colleagues, Israeli officials, in Paris to discuss coordination, stability and security. They did so willingly because they understand a simple fact: Israel is not the problem; Israel is a potential partner for stability.

Some in the Chamber may choose to believe in the promise of a new Syria. Others, watching what is happening on the ground, are a little bit more skeptical, and rightly so. There is a difference between intention and action. Israel knows the cost of instability. We do not speak about it. It is not only a theory. We confront it. If Syria is serious about a different future, it has to take action — not by blaming Israel, not with slogans and not through political theatre. They know exactly what they need to do. They have to remove radical and terrorist elements. They have to protect minorities. They have to restore control on the ground. Without action, intentions mean nothing.

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

**Mr. Marzooq (Iraq)** (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank you for convening this important meeting to discuss the rapidly evolving developments in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable contributions.

Iraq is monitoring with great concern the military and political developments in sisterly Syria, in particular in Hasakah Governorate and the north-eastern regions, as Syria's stability is a fundamental pillar for the security of Iraq and the entire region. In this context, the Republic of Iraq welcomes the announcement of a joint understanding reached between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) regarding the future of Hasakah Governorate and the full integration of forces and institutions.

What deeply concerns us, however, are the heavy losses among unarmed civilians, the situation of detention centres holding Da'esh terrorists and the future of camps and prisons such as the Hawl camp and Shaddadah Prison. We have received reports of instances where these facilities were used as bargaining chips and instruments of pressure, leading to the opening of gates and the escape of terrorist elements.

Iraq stresses that the security of these prisons and camps is not merely a local matter, but an international responsibility and a direct national security concern for Iraq. Any laxity in controlling these sites allows a terrorist organization such as Da'esh to reorganize and threaten the security of Iraq's borders. We therefore emphasize the need for joint action to ensure that these facilities remain under firm control. We welcome the Syrian Government's assurances that it has regained control over most of these facilities.

The discussion of the Hawl camp is no longer a pending issue or a legacy of an old war. It has become an imminent strategic threat looming on the horizon. The collapse of Shaddadah Prison, which held dangerous terrorist elements, extremist leaders and tactical planners, has exposed the fragility of the entire security system. This prison was not only a detention facility, but also a hub for planning and organization. The coordinated escape operations that occurred there confirm the presence of operational leadership capacity that could be redeployed within the Hawl camp.

The real danger lies not only in the escapees themselves, but in an entire generation that has grown up inside the Hawl camp for more than a decade. We are speaking of children born and raised in an environment governed by extremism and violence, deprived of normal education and civilian life. Given the proximity between Shaddadah Prison and the Hawl camp, which is not more than 100 kilometres, the interaction between escapees with combat experience and this new generation of youth could ignite a spark that engulfs the entire camp, transforming it from a detention site into a breeding ground for armed extremism.

In the light of these escalating security challenges on the ground in Syria, Iraq has taken a bold and strategic decision, in coordination with the international coalition, to receive terrorists of Iraqi nationality and other nationalities detained in prisons previously under SDF control. This decision is a pre-emptive step to prevent the dispersal of these elements, who are classified as senior leadership figures within terrorist networks, and to ensure their placement in Iraqi State correctional facilities rather than leaving them in fragile environments that could enable escape and regrouping. We announce before the Council that Iraq has indeed received the first batch, comprising 150 terrorist elements — Iraqis and foreigners — whose hands are stained with the blood of innocents.

However, from this international rostrum, we affirm that Iraq's acceptance of receiving foreign terrorists whose countries have refused to take them back is a measure aimed at protecting regional and international security from a grave danger. Nevertheless, we stress that this file should not be left as a strategic burden on Iraq's shoulders alone. The insistence of some States on considering their terrorist citizens a threat to their national security and refusing their repatriation is unacceptable. While our security and military forces exert strenuous efforts to secure the borders and prevent infiltration, we find ourselves compelled to receive thousands of terrorist elements to ensure the security situation in the region does not explode. Accordingly, we call on the international community to provide full support for Iraqi correctional and security institutions and to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities in dealing with the file of foreign terrorists.

We also affirm the importance of political steps that enhance national partnership and value the issuance of Decree No. 13 of 2026 concerning the linguistic, cultural and citizenship rights of Syrian Kurds, as a step towards building a unified and strong Syria based on equality. Iraq also wishes to draw the attention of the international community to the importance of sparing no effort in searching for the 2,600 abducted Iraqi Yazidi women and their children to secure their release and enable their return to their homeland and families.

In conclusion, we affirm the Republic of Iraq's support for Syria's sovereignty and reject any external interference or incursions that violate Syrian sovereignty. We condemn the persistent incursions by the Israeli entity that breach the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Iraq also underscores the paramount importance of defusing the threat posed by the camps and calls on the international community to assume its responsibilities towards Hawl camp and Sina'ah Prison and to work with the Syrian Government and international partners to ensure these sites do not turn into time bombs threatening the security of Syria's neighbours. We look forward to the realization of the aspirations of the Syrian people, in all their diversity, for security and prosperity.

**The President:** The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Olabi** (Syrian Arab Republic): Since the Israeli delegation started participating in these meetings, they have been talking about intentions, and apparently the notes are not being updated with what has been happening on the ground. Perhaps, given that they are having to deal with a lot of United Nations reports on human rights abuses by Israeli soldiers, I can update them on what has been going on regarding the issues they raised with us today.

Perhaps they missed that Syrian Jews have been coming back to Syria and celebrating. Syrian Jews, who issued reports and statements asking for the lifting of sanctions when sanctions were still imposed, are going back to their synagogues. He mentioned Syrian Druze. Today, some Syrian Druze leadership is in Washington, D.C., engaging with senior White House leadership on dealing and engaging with the State and becoming part of the State as they should be, raising the Syrian flag. He mentioned Syrian Druze and forgot to mention the Syrian Druze who came to pay condolences for the actions that the Israeli forces committed in Bayt Jinn, in a show of unity and solidarity among Syrians. And I am not sure how, but he clearly also missed the wild Christmas celebrations that took place in Damascus for the first time in decades.

The Ambassador mentioned borders. The last time I held up a map in the Council, Syria shares no border with Israel. Syria shares an area of separation where the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has been for many, many years, followed by the occupied Golan Heights. This fantasy of borders and walls and protection is unfortunately not something that works in geography, let alone politics.

I wanted to save some of this for the next meeting to be held on 28 January, but as I mentioned, I was there with the Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix speaking to UNDOF members. The only violations that UNDOF is reporting are those of Israel. The Under-Secretary-General met with families, victims, people who have had family members kidnapped by Israel in an area where they do not have jurisdiction, people who lost land, their means of survival, their livelihood and their ability to provide. All these things I will be sharing in detail in that meeting. What I wanted to say here is that our constructive engagement with Israel, through the helpful support of the United States, does not mean that we will not shed light on the plight of those Syrians and does not mean that we will accept political fallacies or factual inaccuracies.

**The President:** The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): Ambassador Olabi spoke about the new Syria. I hope and pray that it will happen, but the reality on the ground in the new Syria is not what he described here, unfortunately. We want to see a new Syria, a stable one, one that treats minorities the way they should be treated and everything he mentioned here. There are good signs, but also bad signs. If a choice must be made by Syria, it should be to confront the radicals and to not release the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham terrorists. That is the way to achieve a stable Syria.

But I have to tell him something: I feel that when he came here to the Security Council, it became a battleground. But he knows that these are ongoing negotiations, and we mean it. We signed peace treaties with Arab countries, and we will continue to speak with Syrian colleagues in Damascus. But Syria has to take action, and he can get an update from his colleagues in Damascus about what is required for us to feel secure and safe so that we can move on with regard to those issues.

**The President:** The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

I will now give him the floor for the last time.

**Mr. Olabi** (Syrian Arab Republic): It is Israel, for some reason, that decided to come to the meetings on Syria. It is not Syria that is attending the meetings on Israel. So, it is not for us to be here in the Council to have it as a battleground, and the best way to ensure that is, for Israel, if it wants to come, to come with clear facts and things that we can deal with.

The representative of Israel mentioned the new Syria frequently. The new Syria is a Syria for all its components and one that respects its neighbours, engages in diplomacy — things that all representatives have said. But it is not a Syria that relinquishes its land. It is not a Syria that does not talk about the rights of its citizens, or that, once it hears from families of victims of the Israeli occupation, would stand idle. If that is the new Syria that some countries think we are, we are not.

**The President:** The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

I now give the floor, for the last time, to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): We appear here too many times. We have no desire to come here for discussions about Syria. Believe me, Ambassador Olabi, we are going to be here next week, and we have been here 50 times in the year 2025. That is more than the number of discussions the Council held about the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the conflict in the Sudan and the conflict in Yemen. Even if one combines all of them together, there were more discussions about Israel. We have no desire to be here. However, since he decided to bring up Israel in his statements, we decided to come here. Our desire is to see Syria going on the right path, the path of stability, and to see it confronting radicals and moving forward.

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*