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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Barrack.....	(United States of America)
<i>Members:</i>	Bahrain	Mr. Alrowaiei
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Colombia	Mrs. Zalabata Torres
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Banza
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece.....	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia.....	Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes
	Liberia	Mr. Shilue
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Somalia.....	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 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 Algeria, 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. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Yusra Mardini, youth advocate and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Goodwill Ambassador.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Cordone.

Mr. Cordone: I thank you, Mr. President, for your active role on the Syrian Arab Republic as Special Envoy.

Since I last briefed the Council (see S/PV.10106), I visited Syria for consultations with Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani, senior officials and a wide range of Syrians, United Nations colleagues and members of the diplomatic community. I saw first-hand the widespread destruction and legacy of abuses, including those epitomized by Sednaya prison. As Syrians mark this month the fifteenth anniversary of the revolution, we reflect on the immense human cost of the conflict, the aspirations that animated the early demonstrations, the long struggle that ensued and our efforts, including in the Council, to support a future in which Syrians can live in dignity, peace and stability.

Let me first address the alarming regional escalation and its impact on Syria. Incidents inside Syrian territory have mainly involved impacts of debris, following the interception of Iranian missiles and drones in Syrian airspace, causing civilian casualties, and one incident of shelling from Lebanon, attributed to Hizbullah. In addition, Israeli helicopter and drone operations in Syrian airspace have increased, and Israeli forces continued to carry out incursions into Syrian territory. Israeli air strikes on Lebanon have claimed both Lebanese and Syrian lives and resulted in approximately 140,000 persons, mostly Syrians, crossing into Syria seeking safety.

I reiterate our call, in this context, on Israel to fully respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, adhere to the terms of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and refrain from any actions that could undermine Syria's stability and political transition.

I commend the Syrian Government for its engagement with regional and international stakeholders to insulate Syria from further escalation and ensure Syrian territory is not used in ways that could widen the conflict. As the Secretary-General has stressed, respect for international law, de-escalation and dialogue remain essential to prevent further regional fallout from this devastating war.

A year ago, the constitutional declaration set out a five-year political transition, culminating in a permanent Constitution and new elections by 2030. Syrians rightly look to its full implementation.

Yesterday, indirect elections for four vacant seats in Raqqa Governorate took place. The Supreme Committee for Elections has indicated that voting for a further 11 seats in Hasakah Governorate and in the district of Ayn-al-Arab, also known as Kobane, will take place in the coming weeks. This is expected to be followed by the announcement of 70 presidential appointees and of the date of the opening session of parliament. We look forward to Syria's regions and diverse population, especially women, to be meaningfully represented in the People's Assembly, given its role in shaping legislation and, potentially, Syria's permanent Constitution, which must be a cornerstone of an inclusive nation, with checks and balances and respect for human rights.

By creating the National Commission for Transitional Justice, the Syrian Government has recognized the critical importance of restoring the rule of law, ensuring accountability and fostering reconciliation. I was pleased to meet the Commission in Damascus, to note how active they have been in the first six months and to offer our concrete support. Its members continue to engage with national and international partners as they chart the course ahead. Further progress will require close coordination with the Ministries of Justice and the Interior and legislative reforms to strengthen the justice system and to equip it to deal with atrocity crimes. Meaningful engagement with civil society and victims and compliance with human rights standards will remain central.

With regards to the overall human rights situation in Syria, the latest report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic highlighted last week both persistent concerns and positive steps taken by the Syrian authorities. I echo the Commission's call for an inclusive vision for Syria, alongside urgent measures to strengthen rule-of-law institutions, including through a comprehensive security sector reform. I welcome the Syrian Government's constructive response to the report, noting reform initiatives, cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms and commitments to accountability.

On Suwayda', I welcome the agreement reached on 26 February on a prisoner exchange, in which 61 persons were released by the Syrian Government and 25 persons were released by local forces loyal to Sheikh Hikmat Al-Hijri. Yet I remain concerned at the continuing unresolved issues in Suwayda'. Further confidence-building steps are essential for advancing the implementation of the political and military arrangements envisaged in the September 2025 Suwayda' road map. I also note that yesterday the Syrian national investigative committee released its report on the July 2025 violence in Suwayda'. I look forward to studying its findings and recommendations. Ensuring accountability and redress for victims will be extremely important.

Meanwhile, I was pleased to hear directly from both sides that the integration process between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is moving forward on the basis of the 29 January agreement. There have been positive developments, including the appointment of an SDF-nominated Assistant Minister of Defence, the release of detainees from both sides and the beginning of returns to the city of Ayn al-Arab/Kobane and other areas. At the same time, key questions remain under discussion, including the modalities of the integration of SDF forces into the Syrian army and police; the future role of the Women's Protection Units, the incorporation of civil employees into State institutions and Kurdish-language education.

We have seen renewed calls by Da'esh/ISIL for violence and an increase in attacks against Syrian government forces in Raqqa, Dayr al-Zawr and other areas. While small-scale and geographically dispersed, these attacks underscore Da'esh's

intent to rebuild, and I welcome renewed vigilance and counter measures by Syrian forces and the rest of the United States-led Global Coalition against Da'esh.

Separately, Hawl camp is now closed. Most inhabitants, mainly women and children, including Syrians and third country nationals, fled and have reportedly dispersed throughout Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and Idlib. Some may have even left Syria. As Council members know, a number of those who had been in the camp were suspected of being associated with or had family ties to Da'esh. Those who remained were transferred to Akburhan camp in Aleppo, at which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered 731 families. The Rawj camp, at which more than 2,000 third country nationals and some Syrians are held, remains under SDF control.

In addition to security concerns, the developments related to Hawl give rise to significant protection and integration challenges. Meeting them is also important if the risk for radicalization is to be stemmed. The United Nations supports efforts for the reintegration of Syrians within Syria conducted in a manner that promotes social cohesion and the security of all. We also urge the speedy repatriation of third-country nationals, in a manner consistent with human rights standards.

Let me now turn the Council's attention to economic recovery, which is key to Syria's political stabilization. After more than a decade of conflict and isolation and a year of transition, Syria's economy remains extremely fragile. Regrettably, the regional conflict has forced the Syrian authorities to reduce electricity supply. Cross-border trade has also been negatively affected. This of course comes at the wrong time for Syria, which is trying to turn the corner and move into recovery.

An International Monetary Fund delegation that visited Damascus in February reported early indications that economic activity may be improving, supported by increasing electricity provision, the return of refugees, increasing investments and Syria's gradual reintegration into regional economic networks. It is also notable that the Syrian Central Bank recently reactivated its account at the Federal Reserve in New York.

However, as the Central Bank Governor told me in Damascus, the slow pace of Syria's reintegration in the international financial system is a threat to Syria's recovery and stability. Despite the lifting of most sectoral sanctions, Syrians have yet to feel the benefits. There is a need for continued easing of remaining restrictions and export controls, alongside efforts to address the legacy of sanctions, particularly financial overcompliance. Support from public and private partners is also essential.

Our Office continues, in coordination with international partners, to support an inclusive Syrian-led political transition and the institutional processes required to sustain it. I appreciate my discussion with Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani on this matter. We are now actively discussing areas of cooperation between the Office and the Syrian Government. I hope to report to the Council soon that we have reached an understanding and that the mission can relocate to Damascus.

Meanwhile, our Office continues to engage regularly with Syrian officials and Syrian civil society, whose meaningful participation and ability to operate freely are vital to an inclusive political transition. In my discussions in Damascus, Syrian women in particular stressed that women's participation in emerging institutions remains below legitimate expectations. I welcome the recent recruitment of women into the Ministry of the Interior, including those who defected from Al-Assad-era security institutions. I very much look forward to listening to Yusra Mardini shortly, with her vision for a Syria in which everyone feels safe and at home.

Let me conclude by recalling my starting point: Syria's steady but fragile recovery — political, institutional and economic — could be undermined by the impact of a prolonged regional conflict. Let us redouble efforts to support Syria in shielding itself from this conflict, and let us refocus on helping Syria to continue and even accelerate its path towards recovery, reconstruction and stability. The success of Syria's transition will depend on the ability of Syrians themselves to shape a future grounded in sovereignty, accountability and inclusion.

The President: I thank Mr. Cordone for that insightful and thorough presentation and the great job that he and his team do every day. We are all greatly appreciative and fortunate to have among us the poster person for the new adventure in great womanhood in Syria and the world, Yusra Mardini. I thank Yusra for everything that she has done and her courage in being here today.

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: The repercussions of the war in the Middle East are reverberating across the region. For the Syrian Arab Republic, this escalation adds new strain at a fragile moment — one that still offers a genuine opportunity for progress. As Deputy Special Envoy Cordone has just set out, Syria is already experiencing the effects of the military escalation in the region. Falling debris from aerial projectiles have killed or injured several people and damaged property. More than 140,000 people have fled from Lebanon to Syria, most of them Syrian nationals. The escalation precipitated some of the planned returns for approximately 30 per cent of those now arriving in Syria. They are joining the 1.5 million refugees who have returned from neighbouring countries since December 2024. Some have indicated plans to return to Lebanon when the situation stabilizes.

Despite airspace restrictions, the closure of the Damascus airport and heightened security risks, our operations continue. In northern and eastern Syria, the situation has stabilized in recent weeks, but significant needs remain. Many of those displaced during January have returned home, but more than 100,000 people remain displaced in the Governorates of Aleppo and Hasakah. Services are gradually coming back online, but the irregular electricity supply continues to disrupt water stations, hospitals and water systems, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. People's mobility is improving. Key roads connecting Hasakah with Raqqah, Dayr al-Zawr and Damascus have reopened, and a stretch of the M4 highway has reopened for the first time since 2019. Our humanitarian partners are assisting more than 200,000 people a month in areas of return, with food, healthcare, water and household items. But humanitarian aid is no substitute for State-led services. The situation in Ayn al-Arab, also known as Kobani, has gradually improved since our most recent briefing (see S/PV.10106), but humanitarian needs remain significant. Electricity has been partially restored, but gaps persist. Markets are functioning, but there are shortages of, and high prices for, fuel, food, medical supplies and other goods.

Following the closure of Hawl camp in late February and the departure of its residents, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners are supporting approximately 3,000 women and children, who were relocated to the transit camp of Aq Burhan in Aleppo Governorate. The United Nations and our partners are also following up with people who have arrived from Hawl in other areas, including Dayr al-Zawr, Homs and Idlib, to facilitate their access to services. And we are assisting families who have returned to Afrin, in Aleppo Governorate, from Hasakah, with government support.

Meanwhile, the presence of land mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war continue to take a devastating toll across Syria. Since the last briefing of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Council

on 13 February, 50 people were reportedly killed and 97 injured in Syria owing to explosive-ordnance-related incidents. Mine action organizations stand ready to expand operations, working closely with Syrian authorities. But they also need sufficient resources and continued security.

As we have consistently told the Council, Syria has an important opportunity to move towards economic recovery, to gradually reduce humanitarian needs and to lessen reliance on large-scale humanitarian assistance. But this opportunity remains fragile and will require sustained international support, particularly in the face of regional volatility. I have three asks of the Council today.

First, we need sustained diplomatic engagement to resolve remaining flashpoints and ensure the stability required for people to return home and recovery to take hold. This includes consolidating security improvements in areas such as north-east Syria, where recent violence has added to existing needs. But it also includes addressing the current regional escalation. The longer hostilities persist in the region, the greater the risks for Syria and its people. Beyond the danger of direct military spillover, the prolonged disruption to shipping routes, coupled with the rising prices of fuel, fertilizer and other essential goods, could deal a serious blow to Syria's already fragile economy, just as it begins to recover and reconnect with the world after years of conflict and isolation. As always, the most vulnerable people would be the first and hardest hit, threatening the tentative but real improvements we have seen across some humanitarian indicators. The risk of disruptions to humanitarian operations would also grow, bringing delays and higher costs for humanitarian operations at a time when efficiency is key to overcoming underfunding.

Secondly, we need to sustain critical humanitarian aid in the near term, as development and recovery efforts take hold. We continue to deliver aid as efficiently as we can with the resources available. We assisted 40 per cent more people in 2025 than we did the year before, as our access has improved and our operations have been streamlined. But our appeal for Syria received only about one third of the \$3.2 billion required, meaning that many more people went without vital support. The humanitarian response also remains constrained by liquidity challenges and a lack of banking and other services in many parts of the country.

We continue to prioritize the emergency response to those affected by recent insecurity in the north-east, as I described earlier, and in southern Syria. At the same time, we are undertaking activities that can also help advance recovery. The United Nations Children's Fund and other partners are helping repair water infrastructure, such as a treatment facility in Dayr al-Zawr that will provide clean water for 400,000 people. The World Health Organization is working with the Ministry of Health to strengthen primary healthcare services and medical supplies for hospitals. United Nations agencies and partners are also rehabilitating schools and bakeries and supporting the clearance of explosive ordnance.

I want to thank the Member States that have already contributed to this year's humanitarian response. But without more funding, we could see further reductions in critical assistance, such as water and sanitation in displacement sites, support to health facilities, and emergency food support and bread subsidies. Humanitarian support remains critical to ensuring that returns are sustainable, that more people are able to make informed and voluntary decisions about their future and that those who remain displaced get adequate support.

Thirdly, we also need to see substantial and sustained investment in Syria's recovery and development. As the Deputy Special Envoy said, we continue to see steady progress in this regard, including the reopening this month of the Syrian Central Bank's account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. But events in

the wider region are diverting international attention and could put new constraints on the ability to mobilize resources. We need to do all we can to ensure continued momentum for economic investments, targeted development finance and support for services that can reach the most vulnerable people in Syria.

Syria continues to present a rare and genuine opportunity to begin reversing a humanitarian emergency of historic magnitude. But that opportunity remains fragile, and sustaining it will require continued international attention and support. The ongoing crisis in the region is introducing another set of challenges for Syria to navigate. It would be a tragic mistake if our support to the people of Syria lost momentum now.

The President: I thank Ms. Msuya for the thorough briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mardini.

Ms. Mardini: I have addressed many world leaders before, but I have never spoken with more urgency than I do today. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Security Council.

My name is Yusra Mardini. I am a refugee, Olympic swimmer, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Goodwill Ambassador and advocate. But most of all, I am a proud Syrian who loves my country and wants to see it reach its full potential.

I stand before the Council as a child of war, carrying not only my own memories but also the weight of countless untold stories. These memories do not fade. They remain quietly stored in the deepest parts of the mind and soul. I was 17 when I fled. Half of the children in Syria today have never known a single day of peace.

Belonging is something many spend a lifetime searching for. Now imagine what it means for those who are forced to leave everything behind — their homes, their families and their sense of self. I have lived that reality. I spent half of my life in Syria and the other half in Germany. Yet the question of where I belong has never had a simple answer.

In March, I returned to Syria for the first time in 10 years through my role as a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. The feeling of going back was overwhelming — familiar, emotional and, at moments, deeply disorienting — because alongside that sense of return came something else: a quiet, persistent feeling of being an outsider in a place that is still my home.

I looked around and saw people returning not to rebuilt houses but to rubble, to fragments of what once was. Despite the efforts of humanitarian organizations, such as UNHCR, which are providing assistance and helping people repair homes, the needs in Syria are overwhelming, and there are not enough resources. I spoke to Syrians still living there and asked a simple question: “Are you happy?” More often than not, the response was silence — not because they had no answer, but because survival, rising costs of living and the enduring weight of trauma consume every waking hour. Happiness is a luxury question that belongs to another life.

Silence is not an answer. It is a verdict on what the world has allowed. And this is the reality that must not be overlooked: beyond the headlines and political calculations are millions of lives shaped by displacement, loss and resilience, a generation that has grown up knowing war more intimately than peace, a people who continue to endure even when the world’s attention becomes strained by multiple crises.

Resilience is not just a word I use. It is the lived story of every Syrian I have met. Syria is facing an unprecedented moment in its history. It has finally emerged

after 14 years of brutal dictatorship, but it is deeply broken. Ninety per cent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance, while hundreds of thousands of refugees returning from neighbouring countries face enormous challenges. Yet what defines us as Syrians is our resilience. Even in the face of many challenges, we never give up. We cannot rebuild Syria alone. It requires a collective effort from the international community, the Syrian Government and the Syrian people themselves.

Today, I want to speak plainly about what Syria needs from the Council.

First, I want to emphasize that Syria requires years of recovery. When I speak of recovery, I mean a process that is inclusive, unified and just. I am not only talking about physical recovery. Syria also requires reconciliation and societal recovery — a future where no religious sect divides us and where no one group is favoured over another. We must break down the walls of division, not only build new ones. The atrocities committed throughout various parts of Syria in recent months and years must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. It is only through justice and accountability that people can move forward and that people in Syria can be treated equally under the law. The Syrian Government also bears the responsibility of ensuring transparent and fair investigations into the fate of detainees and prisoners. The concerns of their families, who have waited for answers for years, must be acknowledged and addressed with urgency and dignity.

Secondly, I would like to speak about the challenges facing young people in Syria. The responsibility of the Syrian Government is immense. It is not only to restore peace but also to actively reshape the future of its people, especially its children. I have spoken to young Syrians who were forced to leave school and now work on the streets to support their families. Their futures cannot be an afterthought; they must be at the centre of any national recovery effort. A child who cannot read today will not be able to rebuild tomorrow.

The international community must provide financial support, investment and capacity-building so that Syria can once again build a world-class education system — one in which each child has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Young people are eager to learn and to rebuild their country, but they need the Council's help. At the same time, young people in Syria have grown up knowing only trauma and war. We cannot underestimate the psychological impact of these experiences. The international community should commit to supporting mental health programmes, as well as activities such as sports and other community-based programmes that help address the significant trauma experienced by young people.

My third point relates to the humanitarian situation in Syria. The current situation is unsustainable and unacceptable. Every Syrian deserves to live with dignity. But for millions, this is not the case. Shelter, food and healthcare are unattainable for many. This is particularly the case for returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since 2024, approximately 1.5 million refugees and 1.7 million IDPs have returned, but they are often returning to nothing more than rubble. The ongoing conflict in Lebanon, which has already displaced 1 million Lebanese and seen more than 140,000 refugees return to Syria, has further strained the humanitarian sector.

It is heartbreaking and shameful to see such a massive humanitarian crisis unfold right before our eyes, and yet, the political will to act remains absent. Syria, the Syrian Government and private individuals like myself need to do more to ensure that innocent civilians caught in the violence receive adequate aid and that families returning to Syria receive shelter, food and healthcare.

Several months ago, I participated in a medical mission with the Syrian American Medical Society. I met with cancer patients who had been desperately

awaiting treatment, children who required reconstructive surgeries after injuries sustained during the war and elderly people who had suffered from chronic illnesses for years and were now finally receiving the care they needed. And I watched a newborn baby take its first breath after doctors brought it back to life — a true miracle, right in front of my eyes. I spoke with doctors who had never stopped working throughout the entire conflict, even though the hospitals were being targeted and bombed by the former regime.

This kind of courage and resilience should be an inspiration to us all. As heartbreaking as it was to hear about all the suffering of so many people, I witnessed first-hand the good that can be done if we give healthcare workers the support that they need. The international community should prioritize providing support for and investment in the healthcare system. We should support the Syrian Government's efforts to establish a world-class health system.

I would like to end my remarks today with a message of hope. As enormous as the challenges facing Syria may be, I know first-hand how resilient and strong the Syrian people are. If given the right support, there is no reason that Syria cannot become a nation of peace and prosperity. Imagine a future in which Syrians from all religious and ethnic backgrounds once again live together in harmony and mutual respect, new hospitals and schools are being built, electricity and clean water are available to all, and no child is forced to work on the streets to support their family. However, to achieve this, we need to set aside our own political priorities and differences and instead focus on the needs of the Syrian people. In particular, we must listen to and support young people. They are the future. Yet, how often do we hear from young people? How often are they given a seat at the table or consulted by Member State capitals? How many young people hold positions of power in the Syrian Government? I challenge Council members to consider and include young people when discussing the future of Syria and the region. Together, we can build the new Syria that its people deserve.

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

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

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank you, Mr. President, for your presence here today. We are honoured to have you with us. Let me also thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. Last but not least, I thank Ms. Yusra Mardini for her powerful words here today, but most of all, I thank her for her inspiration for other young people who endure war and trauma and who end up being forced to flee their country.

This past month, the international community's attention and action have been focused on the Gulf and the broader Middle East, as conflict and instability have swept across the region. Regional instability is rarely confined within national borders. Syria has not been directly involved in this conflict. However, as we have heard today, Syria has not been spared the consequences thereof. Therefore, let me state clearly that Denmark reaffirms its firm commitment to Syria's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We strongly condemn last week's attacks by Hizbullah on Syrian territory. Furthermore, we urge Israel to cease its incursions into southern Syria and to respect the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

As we heard from Assistant Secretary-General Msuya, over the past two weeks more than 100,000 Syrian refugees, along with Lebanese nationals, have fled into Syria from Lebanon. This has placed immense strain on an already stretched and fragile Syria. It also adds to the risk of further destabilization of the situation in Suwayda', thereby leading to new cycles of violence. We commend the constructive

dialogue and coordination between Syria and Lebanon and the efforts of the Syrian Government to accommodate those fleeing Lebanon. Both parties should continue to pursue a diplomatic path towards stability along their shared border.

In the north-east, another fragile transition is ongoing. We welcome the initial progress and stress the need to continue implementing the comprehensive agreement between the Syrian transitional Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces. We urge both parties to continue to prioritize the peaceful integration of the north-east into the political transition and to ensure the rights and protection of all civilians, including the Kurds.

We remain concerned about the reports of 15,000 to 20,000 detainees with ties to Da'esh having escaped from camps and prisons. We call on Syria to keep the pressure on Da'esh high and for international partners to assist with countering any Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh resurgence.

This past week, the United Nations marked the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Across this building, we have heard strong calls for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all political and peace processes. Today, we echo these calls, calling for Syrian women to be included at all stages and levels of the political transition.

Fourteen years of conflict have caused so much devastation across the country. As people begin to return home, property disputes are increasing. Women, in particular, face significant barriers to claiming ownership, including discriminatory laws and entrenched social norms. Addressing such injustices must be a priority for the transitional Government. To assist the Syrian transitional Government in the best way possible, the relocation of the Office of the Special Envoy to Damascus will be an important step, and we note that areas of specific cooperation are being discussed.

Humanitarian needs in Syria remain immense. The Syrian transitional Government's efforts to receive returnees and provide shelter and other forms of support for the internally displaced is commendable. However, owing to ongoing insecurity, thousands of people remain displaced, and many are likely to continue to require humanitarian assistance as they rebuild their lives. Focusing on healthcare — as mentioned by Ms. Mardini — but also on water, sanitation and education is essential to strengthen resilience and dignity in the affected communities. This response, however, is threatened by a lack of funding. It is of critical importance that humanitarian needs in Syria continue to be addressed by all involved.

In closing, these are indeed historic times. Today, we commemorate the 15-year anniversary of the Syrian uprising, when the first protests broke out in Dar'a. As the final Ambassador of Denmark to reside in Damascus, I am happy that Denmark has decided to reopen its embassy in Damascus later this year and to appoint an ambassador to Syria. This is a clear message of Danish engagement.

Denmark remains committed to supporting efforts towards a stable, secure, inclusive and peaceful Syria and to working with the United Nations and partners to support the Syrian people in rebuilding their country and their future.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Claudio Cordone, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, for their detailed information on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have taken note of the statement delivered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Yusra Mardini.

The confrontation of Israel and the United States with Iran is drawing in an increasing number of countries in the region, including Syria. Syria has barely

recovered from the consequences of a 14-year-long bloody civil war, and it is again at risk of being pulled into a military confrontation. This scenario could undo the hard-won gains of national reconciliation and the recovery of State unity. Of particular concern is the tense situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border, where, against the backdrop of the confrontation between Hizbullah and Israel, the Syrian Government has deployed additional units to guard the border. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to prevent any provocations that could fan the flames of war. We note with satisfaction the willingness of Damascus and Beirut to continue close coordination on border security issues.

The situation is exacerbated by Israel's continued occupation of the Golan Heights and other territories in southern Syria, which could be used as additional launching pads for Israeli attacks on Hizbullah positions, thereby provoking retaliatory fire on Syrian territory. Attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic under the pretext of protecting ethnic and religious minorities, primarily Druze, continue unabated. We appeal to Jerusalem to urgently abandon its plans to undermine Syrian statehood, withdraw its troops from Syrian territory and return to good-faith negotiations with Damascus.

On a positive note, we note progress in the implementation of agreements between the central authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces on a ceasefire, as well as the phased integration of Kurds into State institutions, including administrative and security structures. We hope that this will have a positive impact on the restoration of inter-ethnic trust within Syria and will contribute to the reunification of all regions of the country.

We would like to pay special attention to the issue of transferring control to Damascus of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant prisons and refugee camps in the north-east of the country. We expect that the new Syrian authorities will continue to strictly fulfil their obligations to combat terrorism, including foreign terrorist fighters, and will provide the necessary security at these facilities.

The escalation in the region is having a serious negative impact on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Israeli military operations in Lebanon have already had palpable consequences: more than 100,000 people have arrived in Syria, and it is clear that this is not a voluntary movement but a forced search for security. Such a rapid influx of people has posed a serious challenge for the Syrian authorities and humanitarian agencies, which have had to urgently mobilize resources to respond to the needs of the new arrivals.

Continued military tensions in the Middle East will inevitably lead to further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Syrians, much like the people of neighboring countries, will feel the effects of this primarily through the rise in food prices. This is particularly alarming because food security in Syria is already extremely dire — more than 7 million people are acutely food insecure. We call on all parties involved to take the necessary steps for de-escalation. The consequences will be devastating, first and foremost for civilians and the most vulnerable segments of the population.

An additional factor exacerbating humanitarian needs in the friendly country of Syria are the internal pockets of instability. In the Aleppo Governorate and the north-east of the country, according to estimates by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 117,000 people are still unable to return to their homes following the recent fighting. We hope that the Syrian authorities and humanitarian organizations will ultimately succeed in restoring normal life in these regions, as well as in Tartus, Ladhkiyah and the south, where there were also notable outbreaks of violence last year.

We understand that work in Syria is significantly complicated by an acute shortage of humanitarian funding. A silver bullet solution to all these problems seems unlikely. At the same time, we expect that the issuance of the new OCHA humanitarian plan in the near future will provide additional momentum for resource mobilization and garner the necessary support from donors.

Lastly, we consider a gradual transition from providing humanitarian assistance to the sustainable recovery and development of the country to be essential. This is particularly relevant given the ongoing challenges with healthcare, the supply of water and electricity, and other vital sectors. Syria needs genuine cooperation based on respect for the country, long-term reconstruction programmes and investment in its economy. As noted during the meeting between the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the Syrian leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa on 28 January, Russian companies, including construction firms, stand ready to participate in the process of rebuilding the Syrian State.

Against the backdrop of the myriad security and economic challenges Syria is facing, it is vital that there be comprehensive cooperation between Damascus and the United Nations on the basis of Syria's national priorities and unconditional respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We express our support for the work of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. We reaffirm the relevance of resolution 2254 (2015) and the importance of conducting an inclusive political process, in accordance with the resolution's key principles and due regard for the interests of all ethnic and religious groups in Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to wish the people and the authorities of Syria further success in restoring the country's territorial integrity and to reaffirm Russia's support for efforts in this regard.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the presidency for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Yusra Mardini for their briefings. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria and the other delegations to this meeting.

In the light of recent events in the region, I would like to begin by reiterating two points: first, the importance of respecting Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and secondly, the importance of the efforts made by the transitional Government towards a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution for the benefit of the country and of regional stability.

It is therefore essential that all parties currently involved in the adjacent conflict return to peaceful means. The risk of a spillover into Syria is high, and the Council must support the political efforts at the domestic level so that the country may continue with its stabilization and reintegrate into the regional and global arena, including multilateral mechanisms. Internal peaceful dialogue and constant diplomatic efforts are essential in the current situation.

With regard to the political dimension, my delegation looks forward to a prompt resumption of the electoral process, including in the southern and north-eastern regions of the country where elections have not yet been held. At the same time, we acknowledge the concrete measures taken to strengthen national institutions, including the judiciary.

In this regard, we stress that to effectively guarantee access to justice for victims and survivors and to consolidate a transitional justice approach, it is vital to step up efforts address the issues of missing persons and gender-based violence. Furthermore,

we stress the importance of accelerating efforts to ensure the effective participation of civil society organizations as part of an inclusive process. This would be another step towards rebuilding the social fabric.

With regard to the humanitarian dimension, although there are signs of improvement, the situation remains worrisome. We therefore express our appreciation for the work of the agencies and entities of the United Nations system and humanitarian partners on the ground who, in coordination with the Syrian authorities, ensure the provision of services and humanitarian aid. We also acknowledge the technical support provided by the United Nations system and its partners towards reconstruction and institutional strengthening efforts.

We recognize that the situation in Syria continues to present significant challenges in terms of political stability and the protection of the human rights of its population, but it is encouraging to see signs of willingness on the part of the Syrian transitional Government to seek structural and sustainable solutions.

In this regard, we urge the authorities to continue creating, consolidating and expanding support mechanisms aimed not only at providing assistance but also at reintegrating returnees. We emphasize that it is crucial to support these efforts through sustained, sufficient and predictable funding, with a view to transitioning from assistance to the country's recovery and development.

Syria is moving towards peace in a regional environment clearly affected by violence. The Security Council must recognize this courageous step. Colombia urges Syria to continue along this path through an inclusive process that will strengthen its national reconstruction and the sustainability of peace.

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

We thank Mr. Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Assistant-Secretary-General Msuya for their comprehensive briefing. And we have listened carefully to Ms. Mardini's remarks. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria in today's meeting.

Today, Syria stands at a critical crossroads as it transitions through a complex period of national restructuring amid a volatile regional security landscape. The primary responsibility for protecting civilians and restoring lasting order remains with the Syrian authorities, and we underscore that a genuinely Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), is the only viable path towards sustainable peace.

In this regard, the A3 would like to highlight the following points.

First, the A3 reiterates its unwavering commitment to Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on all international actors to respect these core principles and to refrain from unilateral actions or foreign-driven security arrangements that risk deepening regional divisions or undermining Syria's path to recovery. We remain concerned by the shock to the Syrian economy caused by the recent regional escalation, where surging global energy prices and the disruption of supply chains have led to a doubling of food prices in major urban centres over the last 30 days.

Secondly, we acknowledge the ongoing efforts towards national reconciliation and the integration of security frameworks. While we welcome the continued implementation of ceasefire agreements, we emphasize that the transition of security responsibilities in the north-east must be managed with the utmost care to ensure the

protection of all communities. We remain encouraged by the steps taken to recognize all Syrians as essential and authentic parts of the national fabric, restoring the dignity and rights of those long marginalized.

Thirdly, the A3 is deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of the renewed influx of people fleeing regional violence. With more than 118,000 individuals entering Syria from Lebanon in the past month alone, the already overstretched humanitarian response is facing unprecedented pressure. We emphasize the urgent need to maintain and expand safe, predictable and principled humanitarian access across all of Syria, supported by adequate international funding that matches the scale of this growing crisis.

Fourthly, the A3 condemns continued reports of Israeli military operations inside Syrian territories, which clearly not only violate international law but also 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 therefore call for a complete withdrawal from all Syrian territories. Furthermore, we remain vigilant regarding the threat of terrorism; while we note the efforts to manage detention facilities, the risk of a Da'esh resurgence remains a serious concern that requires coordinated international cooperation and the safe repatriation of third-country nationals.

Fifthly and finally, we underscore that economic recovery and the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure are indispensable foundations for long-term stability. The international community must transition from emergency aid towards a comprehensive approach that supports Syria's reconstruction and the dignified, voluntary return of refugees. We encourage the Syrian Government to continue fostering an environment conducive to national unity and transitional justice.

In conclusion, the A3 reaffirms its full commitment to standing with the Syrian people. We urge the Council to remain united in supporting a political process that addresses the drivers of instability and leads Syria towards a future of peace, dignity and economic sovereignty.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Ambassador Barrack here today to preside over today's meeting. I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. I have also listened attentively to Ms. Mardini's statement.

I welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Algeria.

Deputy Special Envoy Cordone recently visited Syria and engaged with the Syrian transitional Government. China appreciates his efforts and supports the work of the Office of the Special Envoy in fulfilling its mandate.

I would like to make three points in that regard.

First, it is important to promote a broad and inclusive process of political transition. The past month witnessed positive developments in Syria. The situation has seen some de-escalation in the country's north-east. China has taken note of the various measures adopted by the Syrian transitional Government to implement the comprehensive agreement on the integration process. China also takes note of the fact that the Syrian national investigative committee has submitted its report on the violence in Suwayda' to the Ministry of Justice. The Syria question must ultimately be resolved through political means. China supports the principle of a Syrian-led and -owned process and encourages all Syrian parties to engage in inclusive dialogue and to promote political reconciliation in order to end the conflict and restore peace and stability at an early date. The Office of the Special Envoy can play a special role in

Syria's political transition process and, therefore, should relocate its operations to Damascus as soon as possible.

Secondly, it is imperative to combat terrorism with zero tolerance and effectively maintain security. Terrorism poses a grave threat to regional peace and security. Recently, Syria was rocked by a spate of terrorist attacks. There remain real risks of terrorists escaping detention centres amid the chaos, and foreign terrorist fighters are still active in the country. The major shifts in the regional landscape could potentially be exploited for expansion by terrorist elements based in Syria. China firmly opposes terrorism in all its forms and rejects any double standards in counter-terrorism efforts. We call upon the Syrian transitional Government to fulfil its 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.

Thirdly, we must uphold a people-centred approach and alleviate the humanitarian situation. The humanitarian situation in Syria is dire, with 16.5 million people in urgent need of humanitarian aid and 7.1 million facing a food shortage. The gap between humanitarian supply and demand is stark. China calls on traditional donors to increase their humanitarian assistance to Syria and to make greater efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Economic activity in Syria continues to face difficulties. Therefore, relevant countries should take further measures to eliminate the negative impact of unilateral sanctions at the earliest opportunity and fundamentally remove the obstacles to economic recovery.

When discussing the situation in Syria we cannot ignore the broader regional context. The entire Middle East is being pushed towards a dangerous precipice, and China is deeply concerned about this. The continuation of hostilities will only bring further suffering to the local people and have a massive negative impact on the regional and global economies. China calls for an immediate ceasefire to halt the fighting and prevent the conflict from spreading further. We must return to dialogue and negotiations as soon as possible. China stands ready to continue playing a constructive role in the pursuit of peace.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Your Excellency Mr. Tom Barrack, the United States Special Envoy for Syria, for presiding over today's meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Yusra Mardini for their valuable briefings and important statements. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives in today's meeting.

The Middle East is currently going through a dark period of trying times, characterized by Iran's brutal and unjustified aggression against my country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the other countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Jordan, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of good neighbourliness. The Kingdom of Bahrain calls on Iran to immediately cease these hostile acts and to desist from deploying its forces and affiliated armed militias in the region. Bahrain warns that the continuation of these practices will lead to an escalation of the situation and an intensification of existing tensions, which could lead to serious repercussions for regional security and stability.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its support for the sovereignty of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic and its independence and territorial integrity and rejects foreign interference in its internal affairs, with a view to ensuring the return of refugees, the

reconstruction and rebuilding of the State, its economic empowerment and the achievement of development, prosperity and sustainability for the benefit of the sisterly Syrian people. The Kingdom of Bahrain affirms that the security and stability of Syria are a fundamental pillar of the security and stability of the region as a whole. In this context, today I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the removal of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham from the United Nations sanctions list and affirms that this is an important and necessary step, as it represents a significant opportunity to support the country's political reform process and the start of a new era based on economic development, investment and Syria's restoration of its vital role in the Arab and international spheres.

Secondly, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the prisoner exchange between the Syrian Government and the group known as the National Guard, which took place in the Suwayda' Governorate under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and also appreciates the role played by the United States of America in facilitating this process. The Kingdom considers this course of action as in line with the Suwayda' road map and represents a golden opportunity to strengthen the spirit of national responsibility among all Syrian parties by prioritizing the country's higher interests and engaging seriously in national reconciliation, thereby supporting the consolidation of civil peace in the Syrian Arab Republic and rejecting anything that might fuel sectarianism and division.

Thirdly, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the steps taken by the sisterly Syrian and Lebanese Governments in order to secure the borders and calls on them to continue these efforts to counter armed groups and combat the smuggling of arms and drugs, and to avoid any breakdown in security in the light of the dangerous security escalations the region is witnessing.

Fourthly, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the outcome of the visit by the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Damascus last February and emphasizes the importance of United Nations cooperation in supporting the new Syrian Government. It also commends the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the humanitarian efforts of United Nations agencies in supporting those affected and displaced, and in facilitating the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

Fifthly, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the importance of the Golan Heights, affirming that the Golan Heights are Syrian Arab territory. It values the important role played by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in supporting security and stability, thereby contributing to safeguarding the security and safety of the civilian population in the region.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain commends the efforts of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic in the areas of reconstruction, recovery and development, and in supporting the country's future in a manner that brings about progress, prosperity and well-being for the noble Syrian people.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I welcome you, Mr. President, to the Security Council. I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings, and I thank Ms. Mardini in particular for her powerful testimony. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and Algeria in our meeting today.

I will make three points.

First, the current conflict in the region is having a profound impact on neighbouring countries. Iran's reckless attacks threaten to escalate the conflict and

further disrupt supply chains and economic security. As we have heard, the conflict between Hizbullah and Israel is also exacerbating humanitarian vulnerability and displacing tens of thousands of people into Syria, many of them women and children. This adds to an already difficult humanitarian situation and places further strain on fragile services. My Foreign Secretary has underlined the United Kingdom's grave concern at the developing conflict and called for de-escalation. The United Kingdom has announced \$20 million in emergency humanitarian support across the region, half of which will support organizations in Lebanon. In Syria we have released an additional \$650,000 to support those affected by the crisis, including vulnerable women and girls.

Secondly, the United Kingdom welcomes continued progress on implementing the agreement between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). I want to pay tribute to the work of the United States and to you personally, Mr. President, in brokering this agreement. Ongoing security cooperation, initial appointments of SDF officials to government posts and the return of Kurdish families to areas of Afrin are vital steps that build confidence and pave the way towards a stable and unified Syria. Elections in Raqqa Governorate are a further positive sign and an important step towards developing a representative and inclusive Syrian political system. We hope to see further momentum maintained and the resolution of outstanding issues, including prisoner exchanges and military integration.

And thirdly, I welcome the efforts of Deputy Special Envoy Cordone to renew and strengthen the United Nations relationship with the Government of Syria. The Envoy's Office plays an important role in coordinating United Nations support for Syria's recovery. We hope to see its relocation to Damascus in the near future to better enable United Nations support on the ground. We encourage the United Nations and the Syrian Government to work constructively towards this goal.

Fifteen years since the initial uprising against Al-Assad and 15 months since his ousting, we continue to see genuine and historic progress in Syria. We must do all we can to maintain momentum towards a more stable and secure future for the Syrian people.

Mrs. Balta (Greece): Let me welcome your participation, Ambassador Barrack. I wish to thank our briefers, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Deputy Special Envoy Cordone, for their always thorough remarks and to reiterate our support for the prompt establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy in Damascus. I would particularly like to acknowledge the presence of Ms. Yusra Mardini, a proud Syrian woman, and thank her for sharing her compelling vision for her country with us.

Let me start by saluting the restraint demonstrated by the Syrian leadership in navigating the current regional context. Following Hizbullah's triggering of another round of escalation between Israel and Lebanon, Syria is experiencing the shock waves from the increased volatility in its immediate neighbourhood. Syria's stability and prosperity are key for the stability of the broader region. Greece will stand by Syria and spare no effort to help it to navigate this challenging period and pursue the path of institutional and economic reform and economic recovery. On this note, I wish to stress the following points today.

Syria must pursue a fully inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition, while ensuring the protection and meaningful participation of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion. The international community expects that all Syrians — be they Muslim, Alawite, Kurd, Christian or Druze — will meaningfully participate in their country's political affairs, governance and administration and feel protected and fully part of this country. This is important for Syria's long-term stability and prosperity.

While progress has been made, this past year also saw major incidents of violence against civilians, as highlighted in the recently published report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. We mourn the victims of this indiscriminate violence, not forgetting those who died in the terrorist attack on the Greek Orthodox Mar Elias Church. These incidents are demonstrative of the work that lies ahead in terms of transitional justice and reconciliation — work that can be undertaken only in cooperation with international institutions such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We welcome, in this context, the release of the final report on the July 2025 violence in Suwayda' and the referral of all suspects to the judiciary. We expect justice to be delivered according to international standards, as a prerequisite for reconciliation. Work on transitional justice and other fields needs to be undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations, as the Deputy Special Envoy's recent visit highlighted.

As this is the week of the Commission on the Status of Women session, and as Ms. Mardini has demonstrated today, the meaningful and equal participation of women in the Syrian political transition and security apparatus is critical and vital. There is still work that lies ahead in terms of drafting the Constitution and ensuring the appropriate checks and balances, in filling the remaining parliamentary seats in a way that, hopefully, will compensate for the underrepresentation of components of Syrian society and in fully implementing the agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces, among others. Kurds should be fully integrated into Syrian society in a manner that provides them with a sense of protection and security and safeguards their political and cultural rights. In this regard, we welcome, once again, the presidential decree formally recognizing Kurdish identity and incentivizing inclusivity as a very positive step, and we look forward to its full implementation. Similarly, a structured, institutional way of incorporating the input of Syrian civil society is required.

Syria is part of a volatile region, the instability of which must not push it over the brink. In a tragic twist of events, for many fleeing Lebanon, Syria now seems to be a safe haven — a fact that nonetheless is also indicative of the progress made, which remains fragile. As Assistant Secretary-General Msuya has described, humanitarian needs are stark for millions of Syrians. International support is therefore sorely needed, especially in the north-east, where some 120,000 people remain displaced. Greece vows to do its utmost to support the Syrian people and stand by their side. In addition, the danger of extremism and terrorism, nourished by instability and despair, looms large. The security of the remaining Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham detention centres and camps must be fully ensured, and counter-terrorism efforts must be carried out in conjunction with the reforms to the security sector. It is important to have more information on the situation on the ground, following reports of escapes or releases of detainees. On this occasion, we would like to once again acknowledge Iraq's decision to receive detainees on its territory.

In conclusion, there is a way of turning the page. We must collectively support this by openly calling for a course correction when necessary, while taking stock of the positive developments thus far. The United Nations is a uniquely placed advocate and partner in this journey, which has our full support.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We welcome you, Sir, to the President's chair. We thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msyuya for their briefings and Ms. Yusra Mardini for her remarks.

The situation in the Middle East remains deeply concerning, with a growing risk of a wider regional conflagration. In such a complex and volatile environment, it is imperative that Syria be insulated and protected from these destabilizing

developments, as the country gradually moves towards recovery and stabilization. It is important for the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process to continue to advance in a credible, inclusive and timely manner. The completion of institutional arrangements, including legislative structures, is essential for long-term stability and legitimacy. We look forward to the conclusion of the parliamentary process in the north-east and the appointment of the remaining members of the legislature. Pakistan also supports the continued engagement and constructive role of the United Nations.

Pakistan welcomes the 30 January agreement between the Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces as a constructive step towards national integration. The effective implementation of this agreement will require sustained dialogue, mutual trust and a commitment to avoiding actions that could undermine confidence. In this regard, recent steps taken by the Syrian Government, including institutional appointments, are encouraging and should be built upon. The security transition remains central to Syria's stabilization. The integration of armed groups into unified national structures, effective border management and intensified efforts to combat terrorism, including against Da'esh, must remain key priorities. The presence of foreign terrorist fighters continues to pose a serious threat and requires coordinated international attention.

On the economic front, there has been improvement, but as the Deputy Special Envoy said, the situation is fragile. The lifting of sanctions provides legal space for State activity, banking, transport, energy and reconstruction. However, the recent regional developments could undermine these efforts. We also welcome the activation of the sovereign account of the Central Bank of Syria with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The opening created by sanctions relief must be effectively utilized through strengthened institutions.

On the humanitarian front, the situation remains dire for millions of Syrians. We stress the importance of scaling up early recovery efforts through adequate funding and support for basic services, infrastructure and livelihoods.

Israel must vacate its illegal occupation of the Syrian Golan. Any actions that alter the status of the area of separation are unacceptable. The 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement must be respected fully, in line with the relevant resolutions, including resolutions 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). Respect for Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity is imperative.

After years of devastating conflict, Syria stands at a critical juncture. While challenges persist, there are opportunities for stabilization and recovery. This moment requires sustained international engagement, constructive regional cooperation and a firm commitment to Syria's unity and sovereignty. The international community must support Syria in rebuilding its institutions, advancing an inclusive political process and fostering conditions for durable peace and stability.

The Council must remain mindful of the broader regional context. The evolving situation in the Middle East remains a matter of deep concern, given its far-reaching implications for both regional stability and global peace. In this context, Pakistan remains actively engaged and is committed to playing a role in resolving the prevailing grave security crisis faced by the region and to supporting all efforts aimed at immediate cessation of all hostilities, de-escalation and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, is also undertaking a visit to Riyadh starting today to attend a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries of the region in an effort to call for a swift end to the ongoing conflict and stress the need for a return to dialogue and diplomacy. We believe that the Council should rally behind such efforts.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome you to the Council, Mr. President, and I thank you for your involvement in both your personal and national capacities. I thank the Deputy Special Envoy, Mr. Cordone, whom we assure of our support for his work; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Msuya, whom we thank for her humanitarian engagement in support of Syria. We also thank the Goodwill Ambassador of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Mardini, for a very powerful testimony. The briefings illustrate the mixture of hope and worry that drives us today on this monthly agenda item.

Our primary goal here today is straightforward, namely to protect Syria from the conflagration that is once again raging throughout the region and that threatens to engulf the country as well. As it calls for a return to negotiations on all fronts, France is actively working to that end. It expects the Council to call upon Hizbullah to stop its attacks, some of which have struck Syria, as was the case on 10 March in Sirghaya.

France expects the Council to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that all parties respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It would be irresponsible to take advantage of the country's difficulties and to support divisive forces inside it. France supports Syria's decision not to get involved in the fighting just beyond its borders, in a spirit of restraint, de-escalation and building good-neighbourly relations based on peace.

France hears and conveys the humanitarian calls of the tens of thousands of people displaced by the conflict, who should be able to seek refuge in suitable conditions.

We support Syria in its national reconciliation efforts, with the support of international mechanisms. France welcomes the progress made towards implementing the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the authorities in Damascus. This is an important step that is helping to set in motion positive momentum towards reconciliation at the national level. We also welcome the publication of the report of the national investigative committee concerning the crimes committed in Suwayda' in July 2025. This report contributes to the fight against impunity. However, the situation remains tense, and I repeat that any attempt by external actors to use communities in Syria as pawns with the aim of fragmenting its unity is deplorable and counterproductive.

We encourage the Syrian justice system to cooperate with international mechanisms. Reconciliation can only be achieved through transitional justice, setting aside vengeful mindsets. We support the patient political reconstruction process that is under way in the country, involving a Constitution, local democracy, Parliament, free elections, the equal participation of women and respect for every citizen, each one fully Syrian and a part of the mosaic of the country's identities and communities.

The Council can welcome Syria's decision to join the Global Coalition against Da'esh, a framework that is crucial for combating the terrorism that continues to afflict the country, the region and the world. Let us not delude ourselves: a long-term effort will be required to rid the country of that deadly scourge. As the Council knows, France is determined to continue the fight against terrorism relentlessly, alongside its Syrian and Iraqi partners and all Coalition members. The transfer of prisoners and the closure of camps in north-eastern Syria call for the utmost vigilance on the part of the international community.

Finally, we support the dialogue between Syria and the United Nations to define the framework of the latter's contribution to the inclusive reconciliation policy in Syria, in a manner that fully respects Syrian sovereignty. We must now move forward on the basis of a carefully defined mandate. A presence as close to the ground as

possible seems appropriate, given the scale of the challenges. United Nations expertise will benefit the humanitarian response, the country's economic recovery — with newly mobilized private and public funding — and the voluntary return of Syrians in dignified conditions. The effective lifting of most sanctions must now translate into economic benefits by mobilizing the necessary investment.

Two countries coming out of protracted conflicts, Lebanon and Syria, are now under threat and are even being directly affected and shaken by the current escalation. Our Council must not avert its gaze from this reality. France reiterates its support for the territorial integrity of both countries and for seeking a diplomatic solution to the ongoing conflicts and a cessation of hostilities. At the same time, while working towards regional de-escalation, the Council and the entire international community must continue to support Syria's stability, unity and reconciliation.

Ms. Pavluta-Deslandes (Latvia): Let me begin by warmly thanking you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting on this symbolic and meaningful date for the people of Syria, marking 15 years since the beginning of the revolution. I also thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings. And I would like to warmly thank Ms. Yusra Mardini for sharing her insights and the inspiring example she has set through her personal experience. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria at this meeting.

The current crisis in the Middle East raises serious concerns about the challenges Syria may face in the period ahead. Syria is affected by falling military debris and the pressure of the migratory influx caused by the escalation in Lebanon which, especially if this increases and continues, could pose risks to Syria's internal stability. We acknowledge Syria's constructive engagement with its neighbouring countries and encourage continued border security coordination to mitigate the negative spillover effects on Syria's security arising from the ongoing regional escalation. And let me reiterate Latvia's firm commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Despite improvements, Syria continues to face severe humanitarian needs, with millions of people requiring food assistance, medical care, shelter, clean water and other essential services. Prolonged regional tensions risk undermining these fragile gains and exacerbating vulnerabilities across the country.

Against this backdrop, the international community's efforts to strengthen Syria's security and stability must continue and be reinforced. Measures that facilitate investment, trade and development, including the gradual lifting of sanctions, have an important role in supporting the transitional Government's political, economic and humanitarian priorities. They also contribute to sustainable recovery and resilience.

Through participation in the international counter-Da'esh coalition and by combating terrorism within its territory, the Syrian transitional Government has demonstrated a clear commitment to tackling the threats posed by terrorism and taking responsibility for the country's security. We urge the international community to further support Syria's counter-terrorism efforts, acknowledging that a resurgence of Da'esh would threaten Syria and the wider region alike. In this regard, we also acknowledge Iraq's important strategic role in countering terrorism and preventing the re-emergence of Da'esh in the Middle East.

We welcome the steps taken by the Syrian transitional Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces to consolidate the ceasefire agreed in January. The peaceful implementation of comprehensive administrative and security integration in north-east Syria paves the way for stability and reconstruction, for the benefit of the local population. The progress achieved so far should be further consolidated and

advanced, including through the parliamentary elections taking place in the governorates of Hasakah and Raqqah.

We are awaiting the appointment of the remaining members of the People's Assembly. This would demonstrate a continued commitment to an inclusive political transition with the meaningful participation of women and representatives of all ethnic and religious communities in Syria.

Progress towards peacebuilding and transitional justice remains essential across the country. The report of Syria's national investigation committee on the violence perpetrated against civilians in Suwayda' in July 2025 and the recent prisoner exchange between the Syrian Government and representatives of the Druze community, facilitated by the Syrian Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross, are welcome steps. We encourage the Syrian transitional Government and the relevant national bodies to continue their constructive engagement with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Such cooperation is essential for enabling genuine national reconciliation through accountability for grave violations and for making progress in clarifying the fate of missing persons.

In conclusion, we welcome the ongoing constructive engagement between the Syrian Government and the representatives of the United Nations. We hope that the recent visits to Damascus by Deputy Special Envoy Cordone, as noted also in today's briefing, and by Under-Secretary-General Frazier will lead to tangible progress. And we look forward to further arrangements in the near future, as this would allow the United Nations to meaningfully contribute, through its tools and expertise, to Syria's stabilization and development.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to extend a warm welcome the United States Special Envoy for Syria, His Excellency Mr. Thomas Barrack, as well as the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and Algeria, who honour us with their participation.

Recent events highlight once again how the dynamics of regional instability continue to affect the situation within Syria and undermine the conditions necessary to foster an environment that is more conducive to advancing a sustainable political, social and economic solution.

In this regard, we reiterate that unilateral actions exacerbate instability in a region already affected by multiple crises. Any military action within the territory or airspace of another State must be avoided, in strict compliance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

We welcome the commitments made by the Syrian authorities, in particular their expressed support for Lebanon's sovereignty, security and stability and their willingness to open a new chapter of mutual cooperation.

The current escalation is already having tangible humanitarian repercussions in Syria. Falling debris from military ordnance has been reported, and approximately 100,000 people have been displaced to Syria from Lebanon. If the offensive continues, there is a risk of further disruptions to supply chains and rising prices, which would further exacerbate the pressures faced by the most vulnerable communities which continue to face significant shortages of essential services. In this context, it is fundamental to maintain humanitarian funding, maintain de-escalation

efforts and strengthen investments in recovery and development during this delicate transition period.

It is encouraging to see improvements in humanitarian access, including the reopening of key routes connecting Hasakah and the dispatch of convoys to areas such as Ayn al-Arab. Panama reiterates its firm support for the efforts of the United Nations, in particular the intention to relocate to Damascus the Office of the Special Envoy, whose work is essential for the Council's support to contribute to the joint reconstruction effort.

We are closely following the process to establish the People's Assembly, and we reiterate that the interim President has, in the appointment of the remaining parliamentarians, the opportunity to unequivocally demonstrate a commitment to the inclusion of women and minority communities.

Similarly, we take note of the reports of the national investigation committee on the events in Suwayda' and the recent efforts to clarify the whereabouts of missing persons in Syria, including investigations into alleged mass grave sites in Aleppo and Idlib. We believe that these mechanisms constitute an important step towards ensuring accountability and alleviating the suffering of families who are still searching for their loved ones.

The path Syria has traveled and the positive efforts of its Government to reach its current reality deserve our recognition and the support of the entire international community. The Syrian people look forward with hope to this new phase, in which they aspire to build their future themselves, based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in which their diversity is valued and the country can fully reintegrate into the international community, contributing positively to peace and stability.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Special Envoy for Syria of the United States.

It is an honour to be here at the Security Council as President Trump's Special Envoy for Syria. I thank all of the briefers and representatives today, and it is a great pleasure to welcome our civil society briefer for today, Ms. Yusra Mardini.

Over the past 15 months, we have witnessed the most significant transformations in Syria in decades: the collapse of the Al-Assad regime, the emergence of a new Government and unprecedented diplomatic breakthroughs.

The United States and the global community, including the Council, have supported the Syrian Government as it restores its place in the region and its internal system. Since the start of his Administration, President Trump's approach has been to facilitate Syrian-led processes and support a unified Syria at peace with itself and its neighbours, with meaningful protections for all communities. That clear focus, with the support of partners and the determination of Syrians themselves, has led to historic achievements unimaginable two years ago.

The Syrian Government and the Syria Democratic Forces reached a permanent ceasefire and a comprehensive integration agreement in January, which provides real protections for the Syrian Kurds and brings the north-east's civilian and military structures under national control. Syria joined the Global Coalition to Defeat Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) and has conducted joint operations to disrupt the terror networks of ISIS, Al-Qaida, and Hizbullah, along with the Iranian-aligned groups.

Syria, with the support of the United States and Jordan, has also consolidated the ceasefire in Suwayda' and committed to holding those responsible for atrocities accountable — an important step on the path towards transitional justice.

Syria has also rejected Tehran's malign influence and expelled remnants of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Remarkably, a country that only two years ago was a cornerstone of Iran's so-called "axis of resistance" has now condemned Iran's dangerous and cowardly assault on other Arab countries. Indeed, Syria is now the target of attacks by Iran's terrorist proxy, Hizbullah. The United States condemns those attacks and welcomes the cooperation between Syria and Lebanon to secure their shared border, as many today have mentioned.

Syria and Israel are also taking steps to stabilize their relations and move towards peace — an effort the United States is supporting through a joint fusion mechanism involving our three countries.

Far more than 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons have now returned home, where they can contribute to the rebuilding of their country. As the holy month of Ramadan comes to a close and families prepare to celebrate Eid, for the first time in years, they will be celebrating with loved ones inside Syria.

Our contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and other humanitarian organizations in Syria are helping families meet their basic needs and are also supporting the dignified reintegration of families to their communities of origin.

But thanks to President Trump's actions, Syria now has a chance to end its dependence on foreign aid. United States and international sanctions relief, including the Council's adoption of resolution 2799 (2025) in November and the de-listing of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham last month, have unlocked opportunities for Syrians not only to survive, but to actually thrive.

We call on the members of the Council and all nations to support the Syrian Government during its transition. This includes enhancing Syria's counter-terrorism capabilities, contributing to its reconstruction and repatriating third-country nationals from displaced persons camps and detention facilities. Fully addressing the humanitarian and security challenges in Syria requires that countries of origin repatriate, rehabilitate and, eventually, reintegrate their nationals currently in Syria — and when appropriate, ensure they face justice for their actions.

The United States is proud of what the Syrian people and their Government have achieved since 8 December 2024. Under President Donald Trump's leadership, we will continue to deepen our partnership and help Syria reclaim its rightful place — both as a beacon of stability abroad and as an exemplar of peace, unity and tolerance at home.

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, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to you, Ambassador Tom Barrack, for the great efforts you are making in support of Syria, which clearly reflect President Donald Trump's vision towards peace in the region. I am also pleased that the first Security Council meeting you are presiding over today is discussing Syria's achievements despite the challenges, given that the Council has previously been a place of obstruction and pessimism over the former regime's behaviour for many long years. I therefore congratulate us, you and the Syrians who are celebrating the anniversary of their revolution today with this achievement.

I am also pleased to extend my appreciation to Mr. Claudio Cordone, who has just returned from Damascus and with whom we look forward to working, and to Ms. Joyce Msuya for reminding the Council of the urgent humanitarian situation. I also thank Ms. Yusra Mardini for the spirit of hope she conveyed in the Council today, and we look forward to what she, along with all Syrian men and women abroad, will offer to their motherland.

I am also pleased to thank everyone in attendance, as their statements today have once again demonstrated the unity of the Council in its support for Syria, which has become an oasis of stability and calm, away from policies of polarization and bloc politics.

In these very days, 15 years ago, Syrian men and women rose up. They raised their voices without fear or hesitation, demanding freedom, dignity and justice. That moment marked the beginning of a long path, during which the Syrian people paid a heavy price in blood, suffering, displacement, arrests and suffocation by chemical weapons. We have lost many. The Syrian people have suffered greatly. But, ultimately, we created a miracle.

This is a new Syria — a Syria that takes pride in its diverse fabric and its rich pluralism, a Syria that we decided to build on the basis of the sacrifices and the values of our revolution, a Syria that the Council decided to stand by and support. It is a choice that the facts prove, day after day, was the right choice, and I will tell the Council why.

First, at the national level, because putting our internal house in order is the foundation of stability, we have begun several Syrian-led political steps. We have established national bodies for transitional justice and missing persons. The building of national institutions continues today in a responsible manner, and this has been embodied in several milestones, not least of which were yesterday's People's Assembly elections in Tabaqah and Raqqah.

The world witnesses today how the new Syria is honouring its commitments and agreements, far from evasions and manoeuvring. It continues to implement the terms of the agreement concluded with the Syrian Democratic Forces, with the aim of strengthening security, consolidating stability and completing the process of national integration.

Prior to that, and in a separate context, presidential decree No. 13 of 2026 was issued, affirming that Syrian Kurdish citizens are an integral part of the Syrian people, emphasizing that their cultural and linguistic identity are an integral part of the Syrian national identity and affirming the State's commitment to protecting this diversity. It also recognizes the Kurdish language as a national language and guarantees full cultural and civil rights to Syrian Kurds, both men and women. For example, preparations have begun to celebrate Nowruz in the coming days for the first time as a national holiday, reflecting the values of spring and brotherhood among Syrians.

In addition to the above, and in support of economic stability and the establishment of conditions conducive to development, the new Syria is striving to reintegrate into the international financial system and looks forward today to the support of Council members for the process of reconstruction through investment rather than aid.

With regard to the status of women, the new Syria continues to develop its institutions for its girls and women. Just a few days ago, we witnessed the opening of the Women's Police Institute, following the introduction by national bodies of effective representation of Syrian women. In addition, continued support has been provided for relevant community initiatives, in line with Syria's commitments, first,

at the domestic level, regarding the women and peace and security agenda, and secondly, at the regional and international levels. We look forward to greater activation of the role of Syrian women, who have sacrificed so much through the years of our revolution in various domains.

Secondly, let me relate both what the new Syria has achieved and what it has put an end to at the regional and international level. This year, the new Syria ended the production of Captagon, which has troubled the region. Syria has now become a leader, as we all witnessed in Vienna a few days ago, in the fight against drugs.

It ended obstructions to addressing the chemical weapons issue that has preoccupied the entire world. I am delighted that the person sitting behind me today is a witness and survivor of this regime's chemical attacks, yet he sits behind me in his capacity as the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), at a moment that embodies the new Syria. In this context, I also welcome Her Excellency Ambassador Nicole Champaine, the United States representative to the OPCW, and thank her for her efforts within that Organisation.

Syria has also put an end to the lack of national leadership in the fight against Da'esh by joining the international coalition. The new Syria has also ended the obstruction of United Nations human rights mechanisms, a matter reflected in the recent report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which noted positive steps and what amounted to unprecedented Syrian cooperation at the level of the relevant national committees in different contexts.

At the same time, Syria has ended the policy of denial that has prevailed since the days of the former regime and demonstrated complete seriousness in addressing the violations and abuses cited in the report. This was seen again yesterday with the release of the final report of the National Commission of Inquiry into the tragic events in Suwayda' witnessed in the governorate last year. The report concluded with recommendations focusing on accountability, strengthening stability and preventing the recurrence of violations.

Syria has achieved much and has also put an end to much. This is a duty we owe to our people at home and for Syria to uphold its reputation internationally.

Despite the strenuous efforts made by the Syrian Government to establish security and stability, free from polarization and bloc politics, Israel continues its grave violations in southern Syria through repeated incursions into Qunaytirah and Dara'a, the erection of checkpoints, the shelling of certain areas and attacks on citizens through raids and abductions that have even affected even children while they were tending their sheep. I would like to thank Your Excellency Ambassador Tom Barrack for the great efforts you are making, Mr. President, in the context of United States mediation to consolidate stability, and I reiterate my country's call upon the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities and put an end to these attacks.

In conclusion, some of my fellow representatives sometimes bring to the Council items that express challenges and difficulties. Today, I brought something that expresses Damascus. This is a brocade for which we have long been renowned, and for which Damascus has been renowned throughout its history: a unique Damascene fabric, the many threads of which are woven with the utmost care to form a single, cohesive and beautiful piece. Syria, at its core, resembles this time-honoured fabric: a country whose threads are woven from diverse cultures, religions, civilizations and communities, forming a single fabric called Syria. Its threads also express the hopes of the Syrian people. Through these threads — which likewise convey their hopes, their sorrows, their achievements and their challenges — today,

with the return of refugees, displaced persons and expatriates, and the reunion of people from different regions of Syria, national cohesion is being renewed, affirming that, however much Syria's threads may have been scattered over time, they remain capable of bringing its sons and daughters together once more under one banner and one future. Just as Damascus brocade has dazzled the world for centuries, so too will the new Syria, with its rich history and its will to live for the future, with its Muslims, Christians and Jews, and those returning after enduring the former regime's forced displacement. It will rise to regain its vitality and stature, presenting a national model befitting its civilization and deserved by its people, to dazzle the world once more.

The President: I congratulate the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic; what a beautiful and powerful analogy and metaphor.

I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): It is a pleasure to welcome you, Mr. President, to the Council today. We highly appreciate your contributions to a more stable and secure Syria and region. I would also like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Ms. Msuya and Ms. Mardini for their comprehensive briefings and testaments.

Since the start of the year, the situation on the ground in Syria has evolved swiftly and in a meaningful manner. Progress across the security, political and economic spheres indicates a shift towards a more hopeful and constructive path. The integration process in Syria should continue uninterrupted, regardless of regional developments.

At the same time, unrealistic expectations should be avoided. In this regard, bringing all segments of Syrian society together around the Government through an inclusive approach and accelerating reconstruction efforts remain critical priorities.

Türkiye encourages the Syrian Government to further enhance inclusiveness in the political process so as to fully reflect Syria's diversity. We note with appreciation the comprehensive approach adopted by the Syrian Government to engage different segments of society and to develop mechanisms of accountability with a view to ensuring respect for human rights, including the work of Syria's national investigation committee.

There is a clear window of opportunity to achieve lasting stability in Syria. This opportunity must be seized through sustained and constructive engagement with the Syrian Government. The delisting of the Nusra Front and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham from the United Nations sanctions regime constitutes an important step towards supporting the international legitimacy of the Syrian Government.

Recent developments in our region risk generating further instability, both regionally and beyond. It is therefore essential to keep Syria insulated from these tensions as the country needs to consolidate its efforts towards stability, security and economic recovery. We commend the Syrian Government for its efforts to keep the country out of the regional escalation. These efforts deserve the full support of the international community, especially the Council. Following recent Israeli attacks on Lebanon, more than 1 million people have been internally displaced and more than 100,000 — predominantly Syrians — have crossed the border and sought refuge in Syria, similar to what had happened in 2006. In the face of this large-scale population movement, it is of the utmost importance that the United Nations entities, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, continue to provide the necessary support to the Syrian Government. This, in turn, requires adequate and sustained funding for the humanitarian response plan.

At the same time, the threat posed by Da'esh must be closely monitored in this period of heightened instability. We must not allow the current environment to provide an opportunity for its re-emergence. In this regard, the Syrian Government, as a member of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, should be supported in strengthening its counter-terrorism capacity. Türkiye has also contributed to these efforts, including through recent actions to dismantle dangerous Da'esh cells. Stability in southern Syria must be ensured in full compliance with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In this context, we reiterate our call for Israel's withdrawal from the buffer zone and from the areas it has occupied since 8 December 2024. Respect for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity remain indispensable. Türkiye will continue to act as a constructive partner for all those committed to supporting stability, security, reconciliation and sustainable economic recovery in Syria.

Beyond these written talking points, let me add something upon the anniversary of the start of the revolution and in response to the representative of Syria's remarks. As a Turkish diplomat who served in Syria twice during Bashar Al-Assad's time, I am aware of the factors that led to this revolution, including a loss of hope in the unfulfilled promises of the regime. Certainly, the conflict affected, first and foremost, Syria and the Syrian people; they suffered more than anybody else. But secondly, my country and people were very much affected. Last week, on the occasion of President Erdoğan awarding the Atatürk International Peace Prize to the Secretary-General in Ankara, I accompanied the Secretary-General in his visit to the migration agency in Ankara, where we talked to Syrian migrants, who, as Yusra Mardini once was, are waiting to be processed, and we met the civil society organizations that have helped UNHCR during all these years of conflict. We saw first-hand, of course, their appreciation for my country, but more than that, we saw hope for the future of their country and the future of their families and children. The Syrian revolution is there, and Syria now deserves our full support for the future.

The President: I think the threads of Türkiye are well established in the brocade of Syria.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like to express our deep appreciation for the presidency's able stewardship of the Council's meetings this month.

At the outset, the Arab Group wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, integrity and territorial unity of Syria, which is currently undergoing a critical chapter in its history due to a series of crises ensuing from war, economic collapse and the current regional circumstances. Now, as the Syrian Government seeks to emerge from these successive crises, it requires sincere and concerted efforts to shield Syria from any disputes, conflicts or attempts to impose external agendas that would return it to the cycles of violence of the past and plunge it into a crisis with dire consequences.

The Group values the steps taken by the Syrian Government to advance an inclusive political process and underscores that the role of the international community is to support these efforts. That endeavour forms part of a necessary political and moral obligation towards the brotherly Syrian people. We also commend the measures taken to implement the agreement signed between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces, which will enable the Syrian State to extend its authority throughout north-eastern Syria. We also urge all communities in

Syria to engage constructively and sincerely in efforts to rebuild national institutions and counter schemes to destabilize Syria and undermine its territorial unity.

Despite the progress achieved on the ground, the security situation in Syria remains volatile amid the tensions in the region and the continued activities of, and challenges posed by, terrorist groups, in particular Da'esh. The Arab Group emphasizes that the fight against terrorism is a collective effort that cannot succeed without addressing its root causes. A security-centric response will not suffice unless the living conditions of Syrians improve. In this connection, we commend the steps taken to promote investment opportunities in Syria, and we call on economic actors and States to contribute to economic recovery and early recovery projects, with a view to rebuilding Syria and fostering ideal conditions for displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes in dignity so as to rekindle hope in the hearts of Syrians for a better future. In this regard, the Group values the pivotal role being played by the countries that are hosting Syrian refugees and calls on the international community to strengthen and scale-up the support being provided to those countries, which should not be left to shoulder this responsibility alone.

Israel, the occupying Power, persists in its aggression against, and incursions into, Syrian territory in clear and blatant contravention of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). The Arab Group holds the Israeli occupier responsible for any escalation. The Group calls on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities fully, contain these violations and compel the Israeli occupier to put an end to its attacks, respect Syria's sovereignty and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms the legal and historic responsibility of the Council towards Syria, whether in terms of accompanying the political track or in guaranteeing the unity and integrity of its territory and working to implement its resolutions fully. The Council cannot avoid its responsibilities. Rather, it is incumbent upon the Council to shoulder those responsibilities fully, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, in order to ensure that the principles of justice and peace prevail.

The President: That concludes the list of speakers.

I would like to conclude with my personal thanks — first, to Ambassador Waltz for allowing me to do a hostile takeover of this chair to be with Council members for these two hours. I leave Council members with one thought. I thought that the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic presented such a beautiful metaphor on brocade. The thought in my mind was that what allows him to present it is the frame — the four corners of that frame, for the vertical and horizontal weaving. And Member States together, really, are that frame. On behalf of President Trump, Ambassador Waltz and myself, I thank Council members for allowing us to be here.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.