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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Fu Cong.....	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Bahrain	Mr. Alrowaiei
	Colombia	Mrs. Ríos Serna
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Banza
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece.....	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia.....	Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes
	Liberia	Mr. Brown II
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Moscoso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Somalia.....	Mr. Ibrahim
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Ms. Bruce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Libya, 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; and Mr. Tom Fletcher Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Cordone.

Mr. Cordone: Since I briefed the Council from Damascus three weeks ago (see S/PV.10143), we have seen progress towards accountability and sustained international and regional engagement, while unresolved tensions, economic hardship and repeated violations of the Syrian Arab Republic's sovereignty persist.

Let me start by highlighting developments of critical importance in the fight against impunity. On 10 May, Atef Najib appeared in court on trial for crimes committed at the outset of the revolution in Dar'a in 2011. Bashar Al-Assad, Maher Al-Assad and others are being tried in absentia in the same case. The charges include the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations, arbitrary detention, torture, including of children, and killings in custody. The indictment invokes both Syrian and international law, as incorporated into the Syrian legal system by the constitutional declaration. It is a commendable effort to situate accountability within a broader legal framework which reflects Syria's international human rights commitments.

In other highly symbolic developments, on 24 April, Amjad Youssef, a principal suspect in the 2013 Tadamun massacre, was arrested. And on 29 April, former Major General Adnan Abboud Hilweh was arrested in connection with the 2013 eastern Ghouta chemical attack.

Let me pause here and express my deep solidarity with all the victims and survivors of the atrocities committed during the conflict in Syria. I pay tribute to their suffering, patience and dignified pursuit of justice. It may not have seemed possible that perpetrators would one day appear before a court of law. Yet we are now seeing that justice, however delayed, can begin to be realized.

How Syria addresses these crimes will serve as a key test of the country's commitment to justice and the rule of law. Ensuring due process will be essential to building public trust, holding individual perpetrators to account and not their community. Suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and any confessions should be delivered in court. We support efforts to ensure that all judicial proceedings are conducted in line with fair trial standards, including the fundamental right to legal representation. We also trust that these proceedings can disclose the full truth surrounding the crimes — one of the central demands of survivors.

More broadly, these developments underline the importance of an overall strategy on transitional justice. I welcome the work of the National Commission on Transitional Justice to prepare a draft law for a comprehensive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process, including truth-seeking, reparations and institutional reform, as well as accountability.

I commend the report entitled “Pathways to criminal accountability in Syria”, released this week by 27 Syrian civil society organizations. It offers practical options and solutions, situating criminal justice within a broader transitional justice framework, drawing on comparative experiences, and highlighting support that the international community can provide.

The Supreme Committee for Elections announced on 6 May the appointment of electoral sub-committees for the three districts in Hasakah governorate and for Ayn al-Arab, also known as Kobane, where indirect elections for 11 seats have yet to take place. We are awaiting the announcement of the voting date. We understand that the announcement of the 70 presidential appointees and the convening of the first session of the People’s Assembly will follow thereafter. The political transition clearly needs a legislature that begins functioning without delay, with the meaningful participation of Syria’s women and diverse communities.

Meanwhile, President Al-Sharaa recently announced ministerial changes in the information and agriculture portfolios, a new Secretary-General of the presidency and changes of several governors. Responsive governance remains a work in progress, and wider inclusion is essential to ensuring legitimacy and stability.

In the north-east, implementation of the 29 January agreement gained momentum, with repeated visits of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) representatives to Damascus for discussions with the Government on advancing military and institutional integration. It is our understanding that four brigades will be integrated into the national army structure, while discussions continue on the integration of additional SDF forces, including the female military unit, as well as on broader civilian integration and the education curriculum. In Hasakah, a preliminary road map has been agreed to implement the 29 January agreement at the local level. We look forward to accelerated progress, including on the release of prisoners.

I welcome the continuation of organized returns to Afrin, including the return this month from Hasakah and Qamishli of 1,200 displaced persons. This is a positive step towards addressing protracted displacement and unresolved property issues.

Suwayda’ faces persistent political and security instability, with weekly demonstrations over demands for the release of detainees, the return of displaced persons and greater local autonomy. Rivalries among Druze factions inside Suwayda’ continue. While approximately 20,000 displaced persons have returned, more than 150,000 remain displaced, and efforts are ongoing to address key rehabilitation and educational challenges.

The future of nearly 13,000 students remains uncertain due to disagreements between local and central authorities over the logistical and security arrangements for administering their exams. Resolving this issue in line with students’ interests would contribute to restoring trust and stability, together with inclusive dialogue and concrete steps on accountability, rehabilitation, the provision of services and security, in full respect of Syria’s unity and territorial integrity.

We remain deeply concerned by the ongoing presence and military activities of the Israel Defense Forces east of the ceasefire line, in violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Israeli incursions, shelling and other military operations were reported in Qunaytirah and Dar’a, as were restrictions on movement, including temporary checkpoints and the questioning and detention of civilians. These actions violate Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, threaten Syria’s stability and harm civilians. I reiterate our call on Israel to cease violations and adhere to the 1974 Agreement. I also call on Israel to clarify the fate of detained Syrians and release all those held in breach of international law.

In the face of this and other challenges, Syria continued its efforts to insulate itself from regional conflicts. The Syrian authorities have reiterated that Syrian territory should not be used to widen conflict and have continued to take effective security measures accordingly.

The authorities also announced the dismantling of an international drug-smuggling network, seizing around 1 million Captagon pills and manufacturing facilities. We welcome cooperation with Jordan, including on training Syrian police personnel. Meanwhile, the Jordanian military carried out strikes on 2 and 3 May against sites near the border and in Suwayda', which it said were used for cross-border drug and weapons trafficking.

There was a worrying incident in Idlib involving Uzbek militants, who reportedly surrounded a security facility after one of their members was arrested on 2 May. The initial standoff ended after negotiations involving officials from Damascus, but tensions then escalated into sporadic clashes and security raids targeting Uzbek fighters across rural Idlib. The incident highlights challenges posed by the presence of foreign fighters and the potential for local incidents to escalate.

In addition, terrorism has struck again. On 1 May, Da'esh claimed responsibility for an attack that killed a Shiite cleric in the Sayyidah Zainab district of Damascus. The fight against terrorism continues, and I note the ongoing counter-terrorism efforts of the Syrian forces, including as part of the international counter-Da'esh coalition.

I also wish to report here that the challenge of hate speech continues and that we have begun engaging with the Government and others on possible approaches to this issue.

I was pleased to meet recently with a group of Syrian women from Idlib working on development. They emphasized that women's meaningful participation in public life is necessary for strengthening social cohesion and supporting Syria's recovery. They expressed support for special measures aimed at enhancing women's representation, welcomed the Government's efforts to strengthen women's leadership capacity and expressed hope for a national framework to support women's empowerment.

I also valued the opportunity to brief, on 30 April, the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, in which members emphasized the importance of women's economic empowerment and meaningful participation in legislative and transitional justice frameworks. Members also called for action to support measures by the Government to prosecute perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

Economic hardship has fuelled protests and criticism in many parts of the country. Syrians continue to face high prices, reduced purchasing power, significant increases in the cost of electricity and uneven access to basic services, while ongoing regional tensions further disrupt trade flows and energy supplies. Humanitarian needs remain severe and the response is underfunded, as Under-Secretary-General Fletcher will brief the Council. Food insecurity persists, explosive ordnance continues to kill and injure people, and degraded services make returns fragile.

As I told ministers during my last visit, we support the efforts of the Government to attract investment and nurture opportunities for business. Confidence in Syria's prospects for recovery and reconstruction is constrained by remaining sanctions and the long-term economic and institutional legacy of former sanctions. It is important to overcome such hindrances to investment and financial flows urgently. Earlier this week, together with the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and other United Nations colleagues, I attended the Syria Partnership Coordination Forum

in Brussels, hosted by the European Commission and the Syrian Government. Participants expressed a shared desire to contribute actively to sustained and coordinated engagement in support of Syria's priorities for economic recovery. The United Nations is ready to play its part in these efforts.

To conclude, I return to Damascus next week to advance discussions on the transition and my Office's role in supporting it. I hope to soon reach an understanding with the Government on broad areas for cooperation, building on proposals made in March and valuable discussions since, as well as on the relocation of our Geneva-based staff to Damascus. We are keen to move forward expeditiously and constructively in support of Syria, in line with the Council's expectations and Syria's national priorities.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Cordone for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: I thank the Deputy Special Envoy for his briefing.

As I briefed the Council last month, the Syrian Arab Republic is at a critical yet promising moment. We must consolidate humanitarian gains and invest in recovery. I will cover three points today.

First, progress is real but fragile. Violence has decreased. Sanctions have eased. Humanitarian access has improved. Returns of refugees and internally displaced people are increasing. But funding is falling faster than needs, and if recovery is delayed, it will end up costing more lives and more money. Humanitarian needs remain significant. About two thirds of the population — more than 15 million people, most of them women, girls and children — require help this year. We prioritize women, girls and children in all our humanitarian action, because they are so often on the front lines of these crises. But current funding levels mean that we will reach only about half of those in need. Large-scale returns to Syria are a very positive sign of change, but they are also increasing pressure on already limited services, housing, livelihoods and infrastructure. Pressure on the humanitarian response continues to rise. More than 390,000 people have crossed the border from Lebanon since early March — that is 90,000 since we briefed the Council a month ago. More than 80 per cent of those arrivals are Syrian, and more than 86,000 have indicated an intention to stay permanently. Many need some level of support.

At the same time, the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz means that the cost of food and fuel is rising, with immediate consequences for communities already on the edge. Diesel is up by 17 per cent, electricity by several hundred per cent in some areas, and, while subsidized bread prices remain unchanged, loaves are 12 per cent smaller. In addition, flooding continues, notably in the north, where 13,000 people have been affected since late April, along with damage to roads, bridges, farmland and livestock. Therefore, predictable and flexible humanitarian funding is essential to reach more people and make full use of the improved access that we now have to many areas.

I thank the donors who are stepping up to support the hyper-prioritized Syrian appeal, led by the United States of America with \$160 million, the European Union with \$63 million and Japan with \$42 million. However, almost halfway through the year, the humanitarian appeal still sits at barely more than 16 per cent funded, with only \$480 million received against the \$2.9 billion needed. Almost 90 per cent of the money received comes from the United States, the Europeans, Japan and Canada. We are ready to receive funding from the rest of the world.

Just this week, the impact of the funding shortages was stark. The World Food Programme has been forced to reduce its emergency food assistance by 50 per cent,

from reaching 1.3 million people to reaching 650,000, and it has also had to halt its nationwide bread subsidy programme, which had supported millions each day. In the health system, we see the tension between progress and fragility. Over the past month, nearly 800,000 children under 5 received essential vaccinations, including for polio. But at the same time, serious public health risks persist. Leishmaniasis cases have risen sharply this year in Aleppo. Nearly 150 measles cases were reported in the first four months of the year. Hepatitis A cases have also increased. These trends reflect limited health services in many areas and the ongoing risks from unsafe water and sanitation.

Here, as elsewhere, when we are supported, we deliver. The United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, in cooperation with the Syrian Government, have reached communities across the country, including improving access to clean water for more than 3 million people, many in camps and displacement centres, and more than 2.2 million health interventions. For the people of Syria, the second tranche allocation announced yesterday by the United States means further funding and support, allowing more partners to save more lives. This will be on top of current work of the Syria Humanitarian Fund, which has allocated \$145 million to life-saving interventions this year for the communities most in need.

A second point is that investing in recovery is essential for stabilization. Over 3.4 million people in Syria returned in 2025, and that trend continues. More than 315,000 refugees returned in the first four months of the year, and I expect returns to rise over the summer, once the school year has ended. Higher returns, greater institutional stability and improved humanitarian access create a real opportunity to move beyond the long-standing emergency humanitarian response. As President Al-Sharaa stressed in Damascus last month, demining and protection remain paramount. Unexploded ordnance remains a major threat and a key barrier to safe returns and economic recovery. It continues to kill and maim people across Syria. Since just 22 April, explosive ordnance has killed 15 people, including 5 children, and injured 37, including 14 children. Farming and raising cattle are especially dangerous. This is why the Government of Syria has identified a “no mines” policy as a pillar of its forward agenda, and we support this goal.

Nearly 80 per cent of respondents to a nationwide survey said they were aware of gender-based violence incidents in their communities, most commonly domestic violence. Psychological abuse and early marriage also remain common, and delays or gaps in services can have fatal consequences. Child protection risks also remain acute. One in five respondents to our recent survey across nearly half of assessed communities reported risks including violence, neglect, child labour and early and forced marriage. Many people in Syria report needing civil documentation and support to resolve housing, land and property issues — major obstacles to sustainable returns and drivers of social tension and exclusion.

My third and final point is that the Government of Syria’s priorities are clear. The “no tents and no camps” vision provides a framework for collective action, helping Syria move from prolonged humanitarian response to sustainable, nationally owned solutions. The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Ms. Nathalie Fustier, visited Aleppo and Idlib last week with representatives of the Government of Syria and United Nations agencies to meet communities and partners engaged in progressing the important “no camps” and “no mines” initiative. The United Nations stands ready to support that vision through the humanitarian needs and response plan, which I launched with the Government of Syria and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme in Damascus just a few weeks ago.

Globally, the humanitarian community faces an increasingly daunting set of challenges. But we have a prioritized, collective and efficient plan to reach 87 million people with life-saving support this year, and it is working. We have reached 14.4

million already, and our courageous colleagues are out there right now reaching more, one life at a time. We are making all the tracking of that funding and the outcomes available to the public — radical transparency to ensure that we hold our teams, ourselves, our donors and our partners to account for the results. We are determined that, alongside the Government of Syria, Syria becomes an example of the best measure of humanitarian effort working, which is that we are no longer needed and that we no longer need to have Security Council briefings on Syria. I believe Syria can and will continue to defy the odds, the history, the challenges and many people's expectations. If the international community makes the right choices, the Syrian people can hope for enduring security, justice and opportunity. But if we fail to fund the completion of the humanitarian mission and an effective transition to Syrian-led recovery and stability, today's gaps risk becoming tomorrow's irreversible crises.

My three asks are: first, back the mission and fund the prioritized plan to remove the remaining humanitarian needs; secondly, back the transition by rebuilding infrastructure, economic opportunity and hope; and thirdly, stay the course.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Fletcher for his briefing.

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

Ms. Landi (Denmark): Let me thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their briefings.

Last month, the Council stood united in recognizing Syria's efforts to avoid direct involvement in the broader regional conflict. It is crucial to remain focused on this. It also requires that regional actors respect Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We must allow Syria to focus on the immense challenges ahead for the political and societal transition to a peaceful and just new Syria.

Today, I will make three points in this regard.

First, we acknowledge the recent historical steps taken on transitional justice. The transitional Government's commitment to an independent, credible and transparent Syrian-led process is of vital importance. Syria has an opportunity to break with decades of impunity for atrocity crimes to bring perpetrators to justice, not only to ensure justice for victims but also to prevent and deter future violations and to pave the way for reconciliation and lasting peace. We stress that the fight for justice must be rooted in human rights. This includes addressing grave violations committed by all perpetrators, regardless of political affiliation, and giving all victims access to justice. We urge Syria's authorities to embrace a genuinely victim-centred process. Denmark remains concerned that a comprehensive legal framework for transparent and inclusive transitional justice has yet to be adopted. As a result, the current efforts risk violating due process guarantees and may fall short of international standards. We therefore call for the swift adoption and effective implementation of the relevant legislation in consultation with civil society and international partners.

Secondly, the full appointment of the People's Assembly must be concluded without delay. We welcome the recent steps taken towards facilitating elections in north-east Syria, including the establishment of judicial panels in several constituencies. We hope to see similar progress on the election of candidates from Suwayda' when possible and the appointments of the last one third of members of the Assembly by the president Al-Sharaa in the near future. Denmark underscores once again that the rich diversity of Syria must be thoroughly represented in the final composition of the People's Assembly. We reiterate the call for an inclusive political process and for the full, equal and meaningful participation and representation of women.

Thirdly, humanitarian assistance must be sustained in parallel to initiating recovery and reconstruction efforts, where possible. While the recent closure of the cross-border operation from Türkiye is a testimony to how far Syria has come since the fall of the Al-Assad regime, it does not mean that we can decrease our focus on responding to the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. As highlighted by the Under-Secretary-General, millions of people are caught in poverty and remain dependent on humanitarian aid. Therefore, funding must be sustained, and access must continuously be secured. Simultaneously, the lifting of most sanctions and the re-establishment of trade relations open the door to renewed investments — a crucial step towards rebuilding Syria's economy. This will enable the sustainable return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced people and end dependence on humanitarian aid. The full restoration of the European Union-Syria cooperation agreement, announced this week, is a part of this important progress.

In conclusion, for the first time in far too long, many Syrian citizens are allowing themselves to hope for a safer and more stable future. The international community must help to transform that hope into a lasting reality through continued support, cooperation and commitment to peace.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Claudio Cordone and Tom Fletcher for their briefings on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The humanitarian needs of the Syrian population continue to be colossal. The rises in the price of wheat flour, vegetable oil and fuel seen in recent months are hitting the most vulnerable groups particularly hard. The normalization of the food security situation is being hampered by drought and the ensuing crop losses, the contamination of agricultural land with explosive ordnance and ongoing instability throughout the region and in Syria itself. The state of healthcare, the water supply and sanitation is a particular cause for concern. The World Health Organization estimates that almost 16 million people need urgent medical care, while the system faces shortages of medicines, equipment and staff. At the same time, more than half of the water supply infrastructure and approximately 70 per cent of wastewater treatment facilities have sustained serious damage. The recent outbreaks of hepatitis A in Dar'a, Hama and Ladhīqiyah can be seen as the natural consequence of this. In this connection, the World Bank's allocation of \$225 million in grants in April through the International Development Association for the restoration of water supplies and healthcare in Syria is extremely timely. These projects are expected to benefit approximately 4.5 million people. This is precisely the kind of practical investment that the country now needs.

We view the gradual restoration of Syria's logistics network as a positive sign. Ports are operating, and the airports in Damascus and Aleppo are open, although their cargo capacity remains limited for the time being. Discussions about restoring the railway infrastructure are under way. The Syrian authorities have announced the establishment and expansion of a number of border crossings with Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. In this context, we note that United Nations cross-border humanitarian operations from Türkiye to Syria came to an end on 31 December 2025 and that regular, including commercial, supply channels are now being used. We regard this as a correct and long-overdue step. Assistance throughout the country should be provided in coordination with the Syrian authorities, without the use of parallel mechanisms and alternative entities and in accordance with the guiding principles enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

We also consider the current visit to Damascus by the Donor Support Group of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to be beneficial. We trust that this will enable international partners to see the real picture and to better link the

humanitarian response to early recovery and development in line with the priorities set by the Syrian authorities, which include healthcare, education, water supply and energy. Syria needs to transition from operating on an emergency footing to restoring basic services, kick-starting the economy and establishing a basis for normal life and to do so without politicization or conditions imposed from outside. Such an approach alone will enable us not merely to manage the crisis, but to gradually steer the country out of it.

As to the political aspects of the Syrian question, the war against Iran unleashed by the United States and Israel has had devastating consequences throughout the Middle East, affecting all countries in the region to one degree or another. Syria is no exception. In the course of active hostilities, shells flew over its skies, and Israel used the Syrian territories it occupies to launch attacks on the sovereign territory of Lebanon under the pretext of fighting Hizbullah. We greatly appreciate the political foresight of the Syrian leadership, who has avoided being drawn into the conflicts provoked by United States-Israeli aggression. In this context, we would like to highlight the strengthening of ties between Lebanon and Syria, which is playing an important role in stabilizing the situation in this part of the region. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the conduct of West Jerusalem, which continues to pursue a policy of debilitating its neighbours through direct military intervention and the creation of buffer zones. Such a policy is short-sighted, for instead of strengthening its own security, Israel is creating a hostile environment and a zone of perpetual chaos. Long-term security can be achieved only through political and diplomatic means. We condemn Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights and demand the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Syria. We reaffirm our strong support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic.

We note Damascus's success in bringing north-eastern Syria back under a single legal regime and the steps taken by the Syrian authorities to reintegrate, and uphold the rights of, the population in that region. Syria's cultural and religious diversity demands that a State be built in which the rights of all ethnic and religious groups are respected in practice. We look forward to the continuation of an inclusive political process — one that is led and owned by all Syrians without exception, with the assistance of the United Nations and in accordance with the key provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). We express our support for the activities of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and underscore the importance of fostering cooperation between the United Nations and Damascus on the basis of the host State's national priorities. Furthermore, we welcome the efforts of the Syrian authorities to combat terrorism and underline our uncompromising stance on foreign terrorist fighters, whose ideology is incompatible with the ideals proclaimed by the new Syrian authorities.

Russia is committed to further developing multifaceted cooperation with Syria on the basis of traditions of long-standing friendship and mutual respect. We believe that the Syrian people, who have endured their fair share of suffering, will emerge even stronger and more resilient. For our part, we stand ready to provide every possible assistance to the Syrian authorities and the Syrian people.

Ms. Bruce (United States of America): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their briefings.

President Trump and the United States stand with the Syrian people in supporting real transitional justice and the rule of law in Syria. Syria's recent arrests of Al-Assad regime members who are alleged to have committed atrocities against Syrian civilians represent a powerful step away from impunity and towards accountability. The United States stands in solidarity with the millions of survivors

of Al-Assad's brutality. We therefore urge the Syrian Government to take advantage of the resources and expertise offered by international partners, which stand ready to assist Syria with its justice and accountability efforts, including the United Nations International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. We also know that hundreds of thousands of Syrian families, along with several American ones, are still waiting for answers about their missing loved ones. To move on and truly begin Syria's recovery, Syrians need closure. Institutions such as the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic have valuable expertise, and we encourage close partnership between the Syrian Government and international partners to get answers for the families of the missing. We urge United Nations Member States to continue to support both these international institutions and the Syrian Government as they pursue accountability and transitional justice.

The United States also salutes Syria's ongoing campaign to disrupt terrorist networks and criminal gangs. The Al-Assad regime enabled or turned a blind eye to Hezbollah and Captagon cartels, allowing them to sow destruction across Syria and the wider region. By contrast, the new Government has disrupted Hezbollah plots, seized drug shipments and worked with Jordan and Lebanon to stop cross-border crime.

We are pleased to work with Syria as a full member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The Syrian Government is working with the United Nations and others to rehabilitate, return and reintegrate ISIS-affiliated populations from north-east Syria to communities of origin. Countries whose nationals remain should contact the Syrian authorities regarding these individuals. Much remains to be done, as evidenced by the troubling 1 May assassination of a Shia cleric near Damascus. We thus encourage Member States to support and cooperate with Syrian law enforcement, whether through information-sharing or capacity-building.

We also look forward to the side event at the upcoming United Nations Counter-Terrorism High-Level Week, organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the European Union and Syria, on Syria's approach to countering ISIS. Finally, the United States welcomes Deputy Special Envoy Cordone's recent visit to Syria and appreciates the constructive engagement between his team and Syrian officials. We also support the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy relocating as soon as possible to Damascus, where it can best support the Syrian Government and people.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their briefings today. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya at our meeting.

I will make three points.

First, we welcome the progress on Syria's political transition, including the start of legal proceedings against former Al-Assad regime figures. These individuals committed heinous crimes. Their trials are a powerful step towards accountability and justice, and we will continue to support the Syrian Government in its efforts to uphold the rule of law for all Syria. Of course, there is more work to be done to fully deliver an inclusive political transition. We encourage continued efforts to integrate north-east Syria into unified State structures. We also note that women remain underrepresented across Syria's political and security institutions. We encourage the Council's continued focus on the women and peace and security agenda to support Syria in addressing this vital aspect of the transition.

Secondly, the United Kingdom offers its appreciation to the United Nations and all partners involved in the cross-border aid operations from Türkiye into Syria over the past 11 years. In that time, more than 65,000 operations provided vital

humanitarian support to communities across northern Syria. We welcome the operation's successful conclusion and a shift to a more sustainable commercial method. However, as we have heard today, the humanitarian situation remains challenging, with 15.6 million people still in need. It is therefore vital that humanitarian partners continue to enjoy unfettered access and a permissive operating environment.

Thirdly, we welcome Syria's firm commitment to peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. Still, the situation in the region remains volatile, with risks to Syria's stability and economic recovery. De-escalation and dialogue are more important than ever, and we urge a return to direct talks between Syria and Israel with the objective of supporting long-term peace.

The United Nations can play a vital role in supporting Syria's reconstruction and stability. We look forward to the timely move of the Special Envoy's Office to Damascus. The United Kingdom will continue to work with the United Nations, the Council and the wider international community, alongside the Syrian Government, to deliver a more peaceful and prosperous future for the Syrian people.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the presence among us of the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya. I thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher for their briefings, which convey a clear message: the situation is improving; our support nevertheless remains indispensable given the magnitude of the challenges.

Several positive developments since our most recent debate (see S/PV.10143) demonstrate that the transition strategy undertaken by the Syrian authorities is producing results.

France welcomes the opening of trials against figures of the former regime. Transitional justice and the fight against impunity for all crimes committed on Syrian soil, whether old or recent, are prerequisites for lasting peace, given the deep wounds inflicted on the Syrian people.

On the economic front, following the lifting of sanctions, for which we assumed our responsibilities, France welcomes the restoration of the cooperation agreement between the European Union and Syria, aimed at the country's full reintegration into the international economic system. The European Union-Syria dialogue also made possible the announcement of a three-year funding package of €620 million to support Syria's recovery. At the same time, the unveiling of the World Bank's re-engagement programme in Syria is a pivotal step in the transition from a humanitarian-assistance model to sustainable economic development that is attractive to private investment.

On the strategic front, the continued dismantling of the chemical programme inherited from the former regime is an encouraging sign, as is the dismantling of the drug production and distribution programme.

Lastly, the return of nearly 2 million refugees is further proof that the new Syria offers prospects for the future and hope for its citizens.

Nevertheless, the Security Council and the international community must remain vigilant to ensure that the path towards Syria's reconciliation and recovery is indeed the path on which the country has embarked.

In the spirit of the agreement of 29 January between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Government in Damascus, the full implementation of which France welcomes, we call for the consolidation of Syria's unity throughout its territory, with

respect for the civil and cultural rights of all components of society and for the safe return of displaced persons.

More generally, we support all efforts to build a democratic and pluralistic political system, as well as decisions aimed at healing the wounds of the past and achieving reconciliation among communities. We support the full representation and full participation of women in public life.

We will tirelessly continue the fight against Da'esh terrorism within the framework of increased cooperation with the international counter-Da'esh coalition.

Strengthening the security of Syria's borders remains a priority in order to combat trafficking, contribute to strengthening the sovereignty of the States of the region, and consolidate the new partnership between Lebanon and Syria, which we welcome and encourage.

We also call on Israel to cease its incursions onto Syrian soil, which are liable to weaken Syria's stabilization.

Finally, we invite the Syrian authorities to confirm the areas of cooperation that could form the basis of a renewed partnership with the United Nations. A presence of the Office of the Special Envoy in Damascus, as close as possible to the needs on the ground, is timely.

Despite the regional instability and military escalation along its borders, Syria is continuing to advance its political transition. This is grounds for hope for the entire region, and we wish to encourage Syria as it moves towards a future of peace, stability and prosperity.

Mrs. Ríos Serna (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the presidency for organizing this meeting, as well as Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, and Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings. I also welcome to this meeting the Permanent Representative of Syria and the other representatives joining us today.

Colombia would like to address four points today.

First, the political process in Syria must move forward in an inclusive and representative manner aimed at rebuilding public trust. In line with resolution 2254 (2015), a sustainable political solution requires legitimate institutions, broad participation and conditions conducive to overcoming years of social fragmentation. This process must be led by Syrians on behalf of Syrians, with the constructive support of the international community and with full respect for the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

With this in mind, my delegation welcomes the recent progress aimed at strengthening the capacities of the Syrian State, consolidating its institutions and promoting its gradual reintegration into spaces for economic and diplomatic cooperation. In particular, we take note of efforts to create conditions for economic recovery, resource mobilization, the provision of basic services and demining activities. Similarly, Colombia recognizes efforts in the area of justice, understanding that investigating crimes committed during the conflict is essential to addressing the legitimate claims of victims, establishing the facts and laying firmer foundations for national reconciliation, truth and reparations, which are essential elements of transitional justice.

In the same vein, it is essential that the United Nations continue its support for the Syrian political process. Colombia supports the role of the Special Envoy and the

Organization's relevant mechanisms, particularly in their efforts to promote broad dialogue and support the implementation of outstanding commitments.

Secondly, the humanitarian dimension remains inseparable from the viability of the political process. In Syria, 15.6 million people require humanitarian assistance, while high levels of internal displacement persist and the returns of displaced persons and refugees continue. This reality underscores that sustainable institutional recovery and stabilization cannot be achieved unless urgent humanitarian needs are addressed at the same time. Against this backdrop, returns must be safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable. Since late February, more than 300,000 people have crossed from Lebanon into Syria. These movements are taking place in an environment marked by deepening poverty, food insecurity and the need for effective access to basic services. Therefore, the international community must provide the necessary support to facilitate orderly returns, avoid accelerated processes that place additional pressure on host communities and ensure that returnees can rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Thirdly, my delegation condemns the acts perpetrated by the group calling itself "Islamic State", which continue to constitute a threat to the peace, security and stability of Syria and the region.

Finally, Colombia reiterates that Syria's stability must be built on inclusivity, as well as on full respect for and protection of its sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity. We once again reject any occupation of Syrian territory and call for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Only on this basis can a sustainable peace be achieved, one capable of meeting the immediate needs of the population and supporting an inclusive, legitimate and lasting a national recovery.

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

We thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their comprehensive briefings. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria and other representatives in today's meeting.

The A3 recognizes that Syria remains at a delicate juncture as it continues to navigate complex political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges amid evolving regional dynamics. Recent regional developments have once again demonstrated the extent to which Syria remains vulnerable to broader regional instability and external tensions. We reaffirm that a credible, inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), remains the only viable pathway towards achieving sustainable peace and long-term stability.

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

First, the A3 reiterates its unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. We reaffirm that all actions and engagements concerning Syria must fully respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions. In this regard, the A3 commends Syria's efforts to avoid being drawn into the regional conflicts, and we underscore the importance of preserving Syria's stability. We encourage continued engagement aimed at de-escalation, dialogue and the promotion of regional stability.

Secondly, we underscore the importance of advancing an inclusive political process that reflects the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We note ongoing diplomatic engagement and efforts by regional and international actors aimed at

supporting stabilization and fostering dialogue. In this regard, confidence-building measures, national reconciliation efforts and inclusive governance structures remain essential to rebuilding trust and advancing a durable political settlement. We commend the Syrian Government's efforts and encourage continued constructive engagement by all stakeholders in support of a peaceful and stable future for Syria.

Thirdly, the A3 expresses deep concern regarding the humanitarian situation, which remains dire, as we have heard from the Under-Secretary-General. Millions of Syrians continue to require humanitarian assistance, while economic deterioration, displacement, food insecurity, damaged infrastructure and limited access to essential services continue to place immense pressure on civilians. In this context, we call upon the international community and donors to scale up their contributions to the humanitarian fund for Syria to match the increasing scale of these crises. We further emphasize the need to strengthen early recovery initiatives and rehabilitation efforts aimed at restoring basic services, supporting livelihoods and creating conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

As communities begin to return, the risks that they face do not diminish. Although large-scale hostilities have subsided, as we have heard, explosive remnants of war continue to endanger civilians, in particular the lives of children, and that is every day. We therefore call for scaled-up risk education, accelerated clearance of affected areas and sustained support for survivors. Sustainable peace cannot take hold in communities that remain unsafe.

Fourthly, the A3 is deeply concerned about the continued reports of military operations against targets inside Syrian territories, including repeated military attacks. Such actions risk further destabilizing an already fragile environment and threaten regional peace and security. We reiterate that the occupied Syrian Golan remains an integral part of Syria, in accordance with resolution 497 (1981), and we call for a complete withdrawal from all Syrian territories. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid actions that could lead to further escalation.

In conclusion, the Syrian people have endured more than a decade of conflict, displacement and hardship. The A3 reaffirms its full solidarity with the Syrian people and reiterates its commitment to supporting efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in Syria. We call on the Council and the wider international community to remain united and actively engaged in supporting Syria's path towards peace and stability through dialogue, cooperation and respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Our thanks go to Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya in today's meeting.

The continued engagement of the United Nations with Syria is important for building confidence and trust and for supporting a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process. We appreciate the responsible approach of the Syrian Government in seeking to insulate Syria from the destabilizing effects of the wider regional developments at this particularly critical stage of the country's transition and recovery. We are impressed by the great strides that the brotherly people of Syria have made on this journey. A growing number of Syrians are returning to their homes. According to United Nations estimates, more than 3 million Syrians, including internally displaced persons and refugees from abroad, have returned since late 2024. This reflects renewed trust and is an inspiring sign of hope for the future. There are also positive developments on the accountability and transitional justice front,

including the development by the National Commission for Transitional Justice of a draft transitional justice law. These important steps towards national reconciliation and healing, firmly grounded in due process, are essential for durable peace.

The political transition process continues to register gradual yet significant progress. We welcome the efforts aimed at advancing institutional arrangements. We hope that the recent developments in north-east Syria will advance in an inclusive manner, including through the completion of the People's Assembly as part of the broader transitional framework. A credible, inclusive and Syrian-owned political transition remains essential for long-term peace, stability and unity.

We also note that terrorist activities in parts of Syria remain a serious threat to the country's stability and to regional security. Sustained and coordinated counter-terrorism efforts are required to curb the threats posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh and other terrorist groups operating in Syria and by the presence of foreign terrorist fighters.

The continued Israeli incursions and violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the occupation of positions in the area of separation, are condemnable and unacceptable. These actions violate international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions and risk further destabilizing an already fragile regional environment. The Council must ensure that its resolutions 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) and the 1974 Disengagement Agreement are fully respected.

The sequential lifting of sanctions presents an important opportunity for Syria's economic recovery, reconstruction and reintegration into the regional and global economy. These openings must translate into tangible and sustained benefit for the Syrian people. The growing economic engagement and investment initiatives by a number of countries in the region and the European Council's restoration of fuller trade ties with Syria are important developments.

Sustained international support and coordination are also critical for addressing the continuing humanitarian situation in Syria, at scale and commensurate with the staggering needs that were also outlined by Under-Secretary-General Fletcher in his briefing. The international community must step up to fill the funding gap.

To conclude, Pakistan reaffirms its full support for the Government and the people of Syria on their remarkable and commendable journey towards ushering in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

Mr. Alrowaieci (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the honour to welcome Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I express my appreciation to them for the important information about and assessments of developments in Syria contained in their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the fraternal Syrian Arab Republic and that of the Permanent Representatives of Libya and the Republic of Türkiye in today's meeting.

In view of the important political, security and humanitarian developments in the Syrian Arab Republic during the current period, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its unwavering position of support for all efforts aimed at bolstering security and stability in Syria and preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity, thereby contributing to regional and international security and stability as a whole.

Today, I would like to focus on the following points.

First, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its support for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and rejects all

forms of interference in its internal affairs, in a manner that preserves Syria's security and stability, safeguards State institutions and fulfils the aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people.

Secondly, the Kingdom commends the Syrian Government's efforts to maintain Syria's security and stability and shield the country from the repercussions of regional escalation, as well as its continued efforts to combat terrorism and the trafficking of drugs and weapons and to counter attempts to destabilize the country, thereby enhancing national security and peace and promoting the unity of the Syrian State.

Thirdly, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the efforts made by the Syrian Government during the transitional phase, including strengthening Syria's positive engagement regionally and internationally and supporting national reconciliation efforts among all Syrian components, including through the implementation of the road map in Suwayda' and the continued implementation of the national integration agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces, thereby reinforcing the unity and stability of the State and the preservation of its achievements.

Fourthly, the Kingdom of Bahrain emphasizes the importance of supporting and assisting the Syrian Government in its efforts toward recovery and reconstruction. In this context, we welcome the economic and development investments and initiatives by brotherly and friendly nations aimed at supporting the Syrian economy and fostering development and prosperity for the brotherly Syrian people. We commend the European Council's decision issued on 11 May, regarding ending the partial suspension of the cooperation agreement between the European Union and Syria and resumption of the full implementation of this agreement, considering it an important international development that reflects support for the re-engagement with Syria and its economic recovery. We also call on Member States and the international community to continue strengthening economic cooperation and investment with Syria, thereby accelerating the economic recovery process.

Fifth, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its rejection of any practices that infringe upon the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria or threaten its security and stability. In this context, the Kingdom emphasizes the need for Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian territories, including the Golan Heights, in full compliance with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

Sixthly, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the progress made regarding the return of Syrian refugees and displaced persons to their homes. We commend the efforts made to create conditions conducive to a safe, voluntary and dignified return. In this regard, we refer to statements by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicating that an estimated 1.6 million Syrians have returned to Syria since 8 December 2024. The Kingdom also reaffirms its support for the efforts of the United Nations, including the Office of the High Commissioner, and international partners in this context. This facilitates the return of refugees and ensures the continued provision of necessary humanitarian and development assistance to the brotherly Syrian people.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its steadfast and supportive position towards all measures that serve to strengthen the security and stability of the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic and fulfil the aspirations of its people for security, development and prosperity.

Mr. Moscoso (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefings by Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief

Coordinator. We also extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and Libya, who honour us with their presence here today.

Syria has made significant progress in the political transition since December 2024. However, reconstruction, reconciliation and stabilization remain challenges that require regional and international support so that peace can prevail throughout its territory so that hundreds of thousands of displaced persons can continue their journey back to their homes.

In this context, as we have reiterated on various occasions, we underscore the efforts made by the authorities to keep Syria out of the regional dynamics of the conflicts. At a time when divisive rhetoric and the proliferation of misinformation and hate speech on social media and other platforms could cause further rifts in Syria's already fragile social fabric, decisive political will is essential for Syria to continue consolidating its progress. In this regard, we reiterate our concern over the increase in incidents reported in the separation zone established by the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We also believe that resolution 2254 (2015) must continue to serve as a guide so that social cohesion remains the guiding principle for all relevant sectors in Syria. Panama wishes to reaffirm its commitment to respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Regarding political participation, we consider it essential that the protection and full, effective and meaningful participation of women be incorporated into all efforts related to the transition, as well as into governance structures and when the remaining appointments to the People's Assembly are made. In addition, we are closely following efforts aimed at integrating Syrian Democratic Forces and the administrative structures in the north-east into national institutions.

Regarding the rule of law, Panama considers it particularly important to move forward gradually but firmly in the areas of transitional justice and accountability. We have witnessed that transitional justice in various cases before the Council — such as in Colombia — has, despite differing contexts and regions, been successful in steering a society towards reconciliation by bringing justice to victims and assisting them in facing harsh post-conflict realities. Consequently, we believe that the strengthening of legitimate and credible institutions requires independent investigative mechanisms, as well as processes that guarantee justice, combat impunity and contribute to preventing new violations.

We take note of the recent reports from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and of national efforts aimed at clarifying acts of violence that occurred in Suwayda', which must be a priority to prevent further acts of sectarian violence. We also recognize the importance of continuing to strengthen national capacities to address the persistent threat to stability posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and other foreign terrorist fighters.

In conclusion, Panama wishes to highlight the progress observed in the humanitarian and recovery sectors, as we have heard in the briefings today. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations system and international partners to make progress towards better integration between immediate humanitarian assistance and recovery and resilience strategies. We also hail efforts made by the Government and the United Nations to facilitate the prompt establishment of the Special Envoy's Office and team in Damascus. We view with particular optimism the coordinated work carried out by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme on the ground, because where humanitarian work ends, space must be created for comprehensive sustainable development.

This work helps lay the foundation so that the Government's efforts have the necessary support to make progress. That is why we highlight the efforts made by the Government to drive economic recovery and promote investment in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, tourism and transportation, with broad cooperation from partners such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye and Egypt. The magnitude of the tragedy experienced in the past by the Syrian people demands constructive commitment by the international community so that, with the support of the United Nations, Syria can transform decades of tragedy into a story of recovery and hope.

Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes (Latvia): Let me first thank the Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and of the representatives from Türkiye and Libya in today's meeting. The ongoing engagement between the United Nations and the Syrian transitional Government is encouraging, and we are hopeful that Mr. Cordone's upcoming visit to Damascus next week will be productive, including with regard to the relocation of the Special Envoy's Office in the nearest future.

One year after its formation, the Syrian transitional Government is resolutely restoring the country's place on the global stage and making every effort to revive its economy. The consolidation of Syria's internal stability, alongside efforts to shield the country from the looming threats arising from regional tensions, will remain essential to sustain future progress. Continued and increased international support is needed to assist Syria on its path towards recovery and development.

Against this backdrop, I would like to underline the following points.

First, regional peace and security are essential for the reconstruction process in Syria to take place. In this regard, we welcome the deepening relations between Syria and Lebanon, which are evolving beyond cooperation in the field of border security to include economic cooperation, energy and transport. The recent visit of Lebanon's Prime Minister to Damascus is an encouraging sign of the normalization of neighbourly relations. In a broader geographical context, we support strengthening the relations between the European Union and Syria, which were relaunched this week through the first high-level political dialogue, and earlier in April with President Al-Sharaa's participation in the informal meeting of the European Council. The full resumption of the Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Syrian Arab Republic and further lifting of sectoral sanctions will create new avenues for engagement and will contribute to an inclusive Syrian-led transition. The situation in the Syrian Golan remains concerning. We insist on the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We welcome United States mediation efforts aimed at reaching mutually acceptable security arrangements and call on both Israel and Syria to engage in them.

Secondly, further steps are necessary to advance Syria's political transition, promote inclusive governance and ensure the effective work of judicial mechanisms. We look forward to the People's Assembly beginning its work once members from the north-eastern governorates have been elected and the remaining members appointed by the President. We expect the Syrian transitional authorities to prioritize the meaningful participation of women and the representation of all ethnic and religious communities in the legislative body. We recognize the progress in advancing transitional justice. The ongoing arrests and trials of the former Al-Assad regime officials involved in the violent oppression of Syrians during the revolution and the decade after mark the beginning of an important chapter in national reconciliation. Comprehensive and transparent due process must be provided to assure the Syrian population that accountability and the rule of law are at the core of the new Syria.

Thirdly, it is essential that the transitional Government take concrete steps to embed the women and peace and security agenda into national legislation and transitional justice efforts. The inclusion of provisions guaranteeing women's rights in the 2025 constitutional declaration provides an important foundation that should guide the development of future constitutional documents. Legislative reforms are needed to eliminate legal discrimination against women. During the years of revolution, more than 11,500 incidents of sexual violence against women were documented, with reports indicating that the Al-Assad regime was responsible for the majority of these violations. Justice delayed does not have to mean justice denied. It is vital that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence finally gain access to credible investigations, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition. Taking these steps would demonstrate a genuine commitment to accountability and to building a future in which women's rights and safety are fully protected. In this regard, we also encourage the Syrian authorities to advance the adoption of a national action plan for women and peace and security, which would provide a clear framework for the implementation of the agenda and ensure that commitments translate into measurable progress for women and girls.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the many positive steps taken in restoring Syria's international ties and improving the functioning of State institutions and internal security. It will take time and further efforts to heal Syria's social fabric, deeply wounded by years of conflict and repressive rule. Continued international solidarity, with a strong focus on recovery and reconstruction, remains crucial in helping Syria move towards stability, dignity and enduring peace. Latvia remains committed to this.

Mrs. Balta (Greece): I wish to thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for briefing the Council on the pressing matters at hand. In the midst of increased regional volatility, Syria's leadership has demonstrated restraint, insulating the country from instability. We commend it for doing so.

Against this backdrop, let me stress the following points.

First, the protection and meaningful political participation of all Syrians — including women, and regardless of ethnicity and religion — must be ensured. This applies to political affairs, governance, administration and the security sector. The Syrian Government has repeatedly stated its willingness to live up to these expectations. We would welcome more tangible steps in this direction to make sure that all ethnic and religious communities feel fully represented. Likewise, the delivery of credible transitional justice and accountability is a necessary complement in order for serious reconciliation and recovery to proceed on a solid foundation. Progress along this track, with the recent trials and the apprehension of those accused of orchestrating the suffering of the Syrian people, is crucial for healing the wounds of the past. We hope that justice delivered according to international standards and norms will bring much needed closure and comfort to the Syrian people. As we pay tribute to the victims of the Syrian civil war, we hope for catharsis. Although progress has been made, substantial work still lies ahead, as evidenced by the latest tensions in a predominantly Greek Orthodox city. Steps aimed at fostering cohesion, including the recognition of Kurdish identity, are welcome. Full implementation of the agreement between Damascus and the Syrian Democratic Forces must ensue, while all communities, including the Kurds, should see their rights protected in the country's legal system.

Secondly, Syria will find that it has the good-faith support of the international community as long as it progresses along a genuinely inclusive political transition. Earlier this week, the first European Union (EU)-Syria high-level political dialogue

took place in Brussels. Before this, Cyprus had hosted an informal summit between the EU and regional leaders, attended by President Al-Sharaa. Both occasions indicate the mutual good faith invested by the international community and the Syrian leadership in a Syrian-led transitional process and the country's recovery — albeit with clear expectations that Syria needs to live up to, be it on the protection of all Syrians, regardless of background, or the pursuing of good neighbourly relations in full accordance with international law. In this vein, the recent visit of the Lebanese Prime Minister to Damascus and signs of a willingness to chart a new path in the Syrian-Lebanese relationship are extremely encouraging. We fully support the compelling vision of a Syria that is at peace with itself and its neighbours, and stress anew our full support for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

Thirdly, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher's briefing demonstrated once more the serious humanitarian needs in Syria, following the devastation of the Syrian civil war, now in the midst of rising energy and food prices because of the war in Iran.

With nearly 16 million people in need, the recent launch of the 2026 humanitarian needs and response plan underscores the urgency required. The protection of children must remain at the vanguard of our efforts. The situation in Hawl and Rawj camps remains deeply concerning, as children face poor living conditions and serious risks of radicalization.

Similarly, Syrian schoolchildren have lost far too many school days, hindered by attacks on education facilities and threatened by unexploded ordnance, which render demining efforts crucial. Greece is examining ways to provide Syria with assistance on this front.

In conclusion, Greece remains steadfast in its support for a prosperous Syria worthy of the aspirations of its great people — a country in which all Syrians feel genuinely represented and protected. The United Nations is a critical partner in this journey, which is why we continue to advocate for the timely relocation of the Special Envoy's Office to Damascus.

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

I wish to thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for their briefings. I also welcome the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya to today's meeting.

The current situation in the Middle East remains tense, and its negative impacts are spreading and spilling over, seriously undermining regional peace and stability.

Syria is an important country in the region, and it faces the daunting task of national reconstruction after years of devastation. For the people of Syrian, who have suffered greatly from the ravages of war, lasting peace cannot come soon enough. Given the current context, it is incumbent on the international community to help Syria maintain the largely stable situation in the country and prevent the escalation or spread of regional conflict, which could lead to greater turmoil.

I would like to make three points in this regard.

First, maintaining stability in Syria hinges on advancing an inclusive political transition. The international community generally expects Syria to resolve armed conflict and restore order throughout its territory, establish an inclusive governance framework and respect and guarantee the equal rights of all groups through a political transition process. The Syrian political transition must be led by the Syrian people, and Syria's future can only be decided by them. We call on all parties in Syria to focus on the greater good of the people, show mutual tolerance and resolve tensions and

differences through extensive dialogue and consultation. The Syrian transitional Government should continue to advance political dialogue in order to create conditions for the eventual realization of national reconciliation.

Secondly, the key to maintaining stability in Syria is to eradicate the scourge of terrorism. While the overall level of violence in Syria has declined, the security situation remains fragile. The terrorist groups entrenched in the country frequently create instability, seriously undermining peace and stability in Syria and the region. There is a high degree of consensus in the Council on counter-terrorism efforts in Syria, namely that Syria must not become a safe haven for terrorists. The Syrian transitional Government has made a solemn commitment that the country will not pose a threat to any other country. We call on the Syrian transitional Government to fulfil its international obligations, translate its political commitments into concrete policies and actions and take all effective measures to resolutely combat all international terrorist groups on the Council's list, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.

Thirdly, a crucial prerequisite for maintaining stability in Syria is ensuring the adequate allocation of resources. Given its weak economic fundamentals, Syria faces immense humanitarian needs and daunting challenges to its sustainable development. The World Food Programme has decided to reduce its emergency food aid to Syria, citing funding constraints rather than a decrease in need. The international community must increase its humanitarian and development assistance to Syria, so as to ensure the proper resettlement of refugees and the timely delivery of aid to those in need, while gradually restoring economic activity, so that every Syrian can lead a life of dignity.

The restoration of peace and development in Syria cannot be achieved without a stable external environment. The international community must uphold the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations. We must support the preservation of Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. The Golan Heights is internationally recognized as Syrian territory under occupation. Israel must cease all military operations in Syrian territory and withdraw from the territory as soon as possible. China remains committed to working constructively with the international community to help Syria achieve security and development and restore peace and stability in the region as soon as possible.

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 congratulate you, Mr. President, and your team on your excellent stewardship of the Council's proceedings throughout this month. I also wish to thank Mr. Cordone and Mr. Fletcher for their valuable briefings and for their sincere and demonstrated commitment in support of Syria and the Syrian people.

Furthermore, I extend my thanks to the member States of the Security Council for their stances, which reaffirm their continued support in this juncture for a new Syria. Syrians have heard names, once whispered in the corridors of fear, which today belong to defendants being called out in a courtroom.

The path of transitional justice is moving forward as one of the pillars of the new Syria. Public trials have commenced for a number of perpetrators of grave violations against Syrian men and women, even as people continue to discover the remains of their loved ones even as they attempt to rebuild their lives, as occurred just days ago during the reconstruction of a school in Duma, in rural Damascus.

Today I will present to the Council five indicators of progress achieved during this month alone in other sectors in Syria.

First, Syria has advanced 36 places in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders — a global ascent that ranks among the most significant in the history of the Index.

Secondly, in the same vein, efforts continue to complete the building of national institutions. The Supreme Committee for Elections to the People's Assembly elections has issued the final list of subcommittees for Hasakah Governorate, representing an additional step on the path to building the country's political and institutional life.

Thirdly, more than 3.5 million refugees and displaced persons have returned to Syria, amid ongoing efforts to resolve the issue of internal displacement.

Fourthly, the value of the opportunities and investments to which the new Syria has begun to open its doors amounts to billions of dollars, marking a clear transition from the recovery phase to the phase of strategic partnerships. The country recently hosted the inaugural Syrian-Emirati Investment Forum. The offshore exploration project, undertaken in collaboration with Chevron Corporation and UCC Holding, has moved to the implementation phase. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding was signed with TotalEnergies SE, QatarEnergy and ConocoPhillips Company for the exploration of offshore Block 3, situated off the Syrian coast. This coincides with the launch of the pilot programme for electronic payments via Visa and Mastercard, which further reinforces Syria's integration into the global economy.

Fifthly, regarding ongoing United Nations and international partnerships, recently, we have witnessed the resumption of the full implementation of the Syrian-European cooperation agreement, and Syria continues to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and donor partners. We recently received a delegation of representatives from 23 donor countries at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Damascus.

In Arabic, we say that things are known for their opposites. Unfortunately, this is the case with Israel. Whenever we talk about recovery, Israel launches a new attack. Whenever we talk about the protection of civilians, it has attacked Syrians and their livelihoods. Whenever we talk about stability, Israel has confirmed with its aggressive policies against Syria that it is the biggest obstacle to achieving it. Whenever Syria affirms its commitment to diplomacy with the laudable mediation of the United States, which we thank for its efforts, Israel has continued its aggressions. Whenever we commit to international law and the Disengagement Agreement, Israel violates it. After all this contradiction and all this clarity, the Syrians ask us: what is the world doing?

In the context of destabilization, Syria continues to face terrorist challenges, with two soldiers killed and others wounded in a Da'esh attack in rural Hasakah. The Government also foiled a major plot and dismantled a Hizbullah-linked cell that was planning operations and assassinations.

In conclusion, in light of the achievements secured, it has become incumbent on all of us to read things from their proper perspective, not to deny the difficulties here and there, which have a share of truth, but to prevent these difficulties from overshadowing the overall picture and from obscuring the achievements, which are in fact miracles. We draw strength from our achievements to address challenges whenever things become confusing to us and make us blind to our achievements. Today, as I stand before the Council and as Syria has moved from a place of tragedy to a place of opportunity, the new Syria is writing its story through its sons and daughters, and we call on the world not to write our story for us but to be a supportive partner in a justice

that is achieved, a stability that is consolidated, a dignity that is safeguarded and a prosperity that is built.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Deputy Special Envoy Mr. Cordone for their detailed and informative briefings.

It is really encouraging to note that Syria has remained among the countries least affected by the current turmoil in our region. This demonstrates that since December 2024, Syria has been moving slowly but surely towards sustainable stability. In this context, despite Israel's destabilizing activities in Syria and in the region over the past year and a half, we commend the Syrian authorities for maintaining their commitment to the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We reiterate our call on Israel to fully comply with the Agreement without delay, to refrain from further escalatory actions and to reverse its encroachment. Preserving stability in southern Syria remains essential not only for Syria's security but also for broader regional stability.

On the internal front, the recently initiated judicial process to hold accountable those responsible for serious human rights violations during the era of the fallen former regime constitutes an important step towards accountability and addressing long-standing societal grievances. The convening of the People's Assembly will mark an important milestone in Syria's political process. It can also boost reconstruction efforts through initiating the process of adopting the necessary legislative framework. At the same time, bringing the integration process in the north-east to a swift and uninterrupted conclusion, advancing reconstruction efforts and ensuring an inclusive political transition should remain high on the national agenda. There is no room for dual structures within the military, judiciary or Administration of a united Syria.

We are beginning to see the initial positive outcomes of efforts aimed at supporting Syria's economic recovery. However, restoring critical infrastructure remains among the most urgent requirements for Syria's stabilization and recovery efforts. Türkiye continues to exert intensive efforts in sectors that can generate a multiplier effect in improving conditions on the ground. Recent disruptions in trade routes due to the situation in the Strait of Hormuz have once again highlighted the strategic importance of regional interconnectivity. In this regard, a stable and unified Syria can serve as a vital nexus connecting the Middle East, Türkiye and Europe through trade, transportation, energy and infrastructure networks. With this vision, Türkiye, Syria and Jordan recently signed an agreement between their Ministries of Transport to advance road and railway connectivity.

Economic recovery and a return to normalcy in Syria cannot be achieved without ensuring security in daily life. In this regard, war remnants remain a pressing concern requiring our sustained attention. The current absence of large-scale violence creates an opportunity to work more coherently to address the challenges posed by mines, unexploded ordnance and chemical weapons remnants. At the same time, the Da'esh threat must continue to be monitored closely, particularly given the risk that the group may seek to exploit regional instability to regroup and to re-emerge. The Syrian Government continues to strengthen its counter-terrorism capacity and deserves sustained international support in this regard also.

For more than a decade, Türkiye facilitated the cross-border mechanism, which served as a critical lifeline for millions of Syrians, in close cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other United Nations entities. While this mechanism has now come to an end, Türkiye will continue to support

humanitarian and other Syria-related activities of the United Nations agencies, particularly those of OCHA, in close coordination with the Syrian authorities and the relevant stakeholders.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Türkiye will continue to stand by the Syrian people and support the Syrian Government in overcoming the challenges they face.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. El-Sonni (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting and Mr. Claudio Cordone and Mr. Tom Fletcher for their briefings.

Allow me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We meet today at a time when Syria is witnessing a state of calm and stability, despite the accelerated regional developments and the escalation that is having an impact on the States of the region. The Arab Group expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the Syrian Government, aimed at maintaining the stability and keeping Syria away from regional escalation. The Group calls for these efforts to be supported in order to preserve the security and stability of Syria and the region, overcome the legacy of the past and pave the way for a new phase of security and recovery.

In this context, the Arab Group wishes to underscore the following points.

First, the Arab Group reaffirms its principled and unequivocal stance of full commitment to upholding the sovereignty, stability, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, while reiterating its categorical rejection of all forms of foreign interference in Syria's internal affairs and any practices that could undermine its stability or threaten its security. The Group also affirms its unreserved support for the Syrian State's efforts to extend its authority throughout its territory and to eliminate hotbeds of terrorism so as to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people to live in peace and security.

Secondly, the Arab Group underscores the importance of concerted international efforts to provide genuine and tangible support to the Syrian Government during this critical transitional phase. It highlights the pivotal role of the United Nations in this regard. The Arab Group calls upon the international community, the United Nations and its specialized agencies to provide every form of support to the Syrian Government and to cooperate with it in every matter so as to contribute to the successful culmination of the transition process and support efforts for the country's swift recovery and reconstruction. Such support is crucial to enabling Syrian State institutions to foster a safe environment and conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of Syrian refugees. In this connection, we express our deep appreciation for the pivotal role played by refugee-hosting countries and call on the international community to scale up and expand the scope of support provided to them, as they should not and must not be left to bear this heavy humanitarian and economic responsibility on their own.

Thirdly, the Group reaffirms its full support for the efforts of the Syrian Government in combating Da'esh and terrorist organizations of all kinds. It calls for international cooperation to be stepped up to eradicate this scourge and cut off its sources of funding, while emphasizing the importance of upholding the commitment to ensuring that Syria will not be a launch pad for any threat to the security and stability of the countries of the region.

Fourthly, the Arab Group stresses that the security, stability and unity of Syria constitute a fundamental pillar of the security of the entire region. In this context, we condemn in the strongest terms the ongoing aggressive policies of the Israeli occupation and its repeated incursions into Syrian territory, which constitute a blatant violation of Syria's sovereignty and a flagrant breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. These practices are a malicious attempt to exploit the ongoing crucial juncture in the country, undermine the recovery process and stoke internal strife and divisions. Likewise, the Arab Group firmly condemns the Israeli occupation's incursions into the area of separation with Syria and surrounding areas, regarding them as an occupation and a violation of international law and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. It categorically rejects plans for settlement expansion in the occupied Syrian Golan and calls on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities to bring these ongoing attacks and violations to an immediate end and to compel the occupying Power to abide by international law, withdraw immediately and fully from all occupied Syrian territories, including the entire occupied Syrian Golan, and implement all the relevant resolutions, foremost among them resolution 497 (1981).

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms its unwavering support for Syria and its brotherly people at this critical juncture and supports their national efforts to consolidate security and stability and make progress in building a prosperous State in which the rule of law is upheld, justice and equality prevail and the rights of all its citizens without exception are protected.

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

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.