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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Amaya Piñeros/Mrs. Zalabata Torres	(Colombia)
<i>Members:</i>	Bahrain	Mr. Alrowaiei
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Mupepe Matomene
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia	Mr. Zaķis
	Liberia	Mr. Sillah
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Ms. Bruce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates 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. Indrika Ratwatte, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Cordone.

Mr. Cordone: Syria's political transition is at a critical phase, with opportunity and fragility existing side by side. The United Nations is focused on supporting the Syrian authorities and people in addressing ongoing challenges in the political transition and advancing a sovereign, stable, peaceful and inclusive future.

In this spirit, last month I paid my third visit to Damascus, where I met Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani to advance discussions on specific areas of cooperation between the Syrian Government and our Office. I also met the Minister of Justice, members of the National Commission for Transitional Justice, representatives of the Syrian Bar Association, survivors and families of victims of past atrocities and a wide range of civil society and women actors. I am returning next week for an extended visit and look forward to advancing this dialogue.

Indirect elections took place last month in Hasakah and Ayn al-Arab/Kobane. They took place peacefully and in conditions of security, as witnessed by my Office, which visited the area on the invitation of the Government. However, more than eight months since the main elections, the People's Assembly has still not been constituted, awaiting the presidential appointment of a third of its members. The delay is generating anxiety. Syria needs the People's Assembly to begin its work. And it needs all Syrians, in particular Syria's women and its various components, to feel meaningfully represented in it.

The scale of the challenges facing this transitional parliament cannot be overstated. New laws need to be debated and adopted, executive actions need to be reviewed, diverse voices must be heard, and progress must be made on the transition. As requested by the Government, my Office is already working to ensure that targeted and coordinated United Nations support is provided to the parliamentary members in delivering on their mandate.

Let us recall that the constitutional declaration envisages Syrians adopting a permanent constitution and conducting full national elections at the conclusion of the transitional period, which is now less than four years away. These must be sovereign, inclusive and unifying processes supported by careful preparation and coordinated international assistance.

Last week, demonstrations in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, Dayr al-Zawr and Damascus saw participants calling for accountability for crimes committed during the conflict and demanding legal action against individuals associated with abuses under the former

regime. In some locations, these demonstrations were accompanied by violence, prompting Government calls for restraint and the deployment of additional security forces. The mufti of Syria issued a fatwa criminalizing revenge, stressing that justice needs to be done by the State. The Government announced that 5,989 persons linked to the former regime are in detention and awaiting prosecution for crimes allegedly committed after 2011.

These developments highlight transitional justice challenges facing Syria, with frustration from a perceived lack of sufficient progress. While the Government swiftly calmed the situation, there needs to be a sense of the past being addressed swiftly, but fairly, if we are to avoid repetition of such incidents.

Last month I attended the third hearing in the trial of Atef Najib and other defendants charged in connection with the repression of demonstrations in Dar'a in 2011. These proceedings are a key opportunity to demonstrate Syria's commitment to accountability and due process.

Critical in this regard is the draft law on transitional justice that is currently being prepared by the National Commission for Transitional Justice, together with the Ministry of Justice. It is essential for the credibility of the transition and the building of a new Syria that the law cover all perpetrators of atrocity crimes, not just those associated with the Al-Assad regime. The law should also ensure that the experiences of women and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are fully recognized and addressed. I note that on 15 June a court in the Netherlands sentenced a paramilitary member linked to the former regime to 26 years for crimes against humanity involving torture, rape and other sexual violence against detainees.

Recent findings confirming the killing of the children of Rania Al-Abbasi are a painful reminder of the suffering endured by countless Syrian families searching for answers regarding missing relatives. I express my solidarity with all affected families and encourage continued efforts to establish truth and accountability and achieve closure.

In this regard, the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence in 2025 (S/2026/321) highlights patterns of rape and sexual violence committed during the conflict by the former regime, as well as cases of sexual violence perpetrated by Da'esh and the so-called opposition Syrian National Army. It noted more recent conflict-related sexual violence against Alawite women during the coastal violence last March and against men and boys from Murshid communities, perpetrated by armed elements and some members of Government security forces. It also noted allegations of sexual violence against Bedouin and Druze women by armed elements. I urge the Government to ensure that these crimes are addressed through transitional justice and appropriate measures for accountability, protection and survivor assistance, as well as prevention.

Let me also address here the phenomenon of hate speech. Hate speech of any kind endangers social cohesion and does a disservice to the noble efforts of so many to build a new Syria, as the Syrian authorities recognize, and it must be addressed in a collective effort. We are working with the Government, civil society and other United Nations colleagues to address this. Syrian women interlocutors have noted the impact of hate speech and exclusionary narratives against women political activists.

I welcome that women are being trained to join the Ministry of the Interior's law enforcement units. It is equally important that women have a meaningful role in drafting the laws that they are meant to enforce. Syrian women interlocutors continue to emphasize the importance of women's meaningful participation in public life, legislative processes and recovery efforts.

Protecting an independent and pluralistic civic space remains essential to a successful transition. Syrian civil society actors continue to offer their positive contributions to the political transition on the ground and seek to engage with the authorities with support, advice and critical perspectives. Hate speech, disinformation, restrictions on civic freedoms and selective justice are among their concerns.

In north-eastern Syria, the implementation of the 29 January agreement between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continues to move forward. We understand that four integrated SDF brigades are now receiving salaries through national structures. The release of detainees has continued, with approximately 1,300 SDF-affiliated detainees released to date. Progress has also been reported regarding the return of displaced Kurdish families to areas such as Afrin and other parts of northern Syria. The long-standing issue of recognition of high school certificates previously issued by the de facto authorities in the north-east was resolved. At the same time, important issues still need to be addressed, including the integration of Asayish personnel into the Ministry of the Interior, the future status of the Women's Protection Units, the integration of the civilian administration and the education curriculum. We encourage continued constructive engagement to advance the implementation of the agreement in a manner that promotes inclusion and national unity.

By contrast, there has been no progress on the implementation of the September 2025 road map for confidence-building and reintegration in Suwayda'. The underlying issues that contributed to the violence of July 2025 remain unresolved, including the issue of accountability measures. Distrust between Damascus and actors within Suwayda' persists, as do strong feelings of distrust at the societal level. Calls for secession within Suwayda' threaten to undermine the country's unity and territorial integrity. Kidnappings, counter-kidnappings and internal rivalries among Druze factions continue to affect the Governorate. The recent escape of detainees from a National Guard facility and the subsequent arrests and protests underscore the fragility of the security environment.

Building on the findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, whose work was facilitated and supported by the Government, dialogue, accountability, rehabilitation and confidence-building measures remain essential if trust is to be restored while fully respecting Syria's unity and territorial integrity. Difficulties surrounding national examinations this month in Suwayda' highlighted the depth of the divisions and the need for dialogue. With the Government's endorsement, we engaged in a mediation effort to seek arrangements to enable more than 13,500 students from Suwayda' to sit examinations in conditions acceptable to all parties concerned. Regrettably, no solution has been found so far. The overwhelming majority of students in Suwayda' have now missed out on their exams for two years in a row. A practical solution that secures the right to education of these students still needs to be found, and the United Nations continues to offer its good offices and support for implementation modalities on the ground.

Israeli military activity in southern Syria has continued, including in violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Israeli forces have maintained a presence in the area of separation and have conducted near-daily incursions across part of southern Syria, establishing temporary checkpoints and carrying out searches and detentions of civilians. Some were released following interrogation by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and others reportedly remain in Israeli custody. Protests demanding their release have taken place. Restrictions on access for Syrian civilians and damage to agricultural lands were also reported. There was another incident of Israeli settlers crossing and being returned by the IDF. The Syrian Government has exercised restraint while signalling its openness to a security arrangement with Israel, but no tangible progress has been achieved to date. The United

Nations in Syria is enhancing its efforts to address the needs of the affected population amid continued Israeli military activity. We strongly reiterate our call on Israel to adhere to the 1974 Agreement, release those who have been illegally detained and respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

To address threats from extremist networks, the Syrian authorities report having conducted extensive counter-terrorism operations, resulting in over 230 arrests in the past three months, including arrests of foreign nationals; the dismantling of seven cells linked to Da'esh; and the seizure of weapons and equipment across several governorates. We welcome these efforts, as well as Syria's continued cooperation with regional partners. At the same time, Da'esh activity outside traditional operating areas and Da'esh attempts to exploit governance gaps and local grievances are concerning, as evidenced by an attack, on 14 June, on a security headquarters in Raqqah that killed security personnel and injured others. In addition, continued concern about foreign fighter networks highlights the importance of ensuring effective integration.

I note positively the continued efforts of the Syrian authorities to insulate Syria from wider regional conflicts. Syrian security forces reportedly blocked attempts to transfer rockets from Syria into Lebanon and have launched further operations targeting cross-border smuggling networks. Syria has also affirmed its position of non-interference in Lebanon and its support for stability in the country, as reiterated by President Al-Sharaa last night. We hope that the recent memorandum of understanding between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be implemented and that greater regional stability can re-enable focus on Syria's stability and its economy.

Economic conditions remain a key challenge for the transition. Inflation, the depreciation of the Syrian pound, rising electricity and fuel costs and declining purchasing power continue to fuel frustration and social unrest. At the same time, Syrian authorities continue efforts to attract investment, strengthen private sector activity and promote economic reform. We welcome these efforts and stress the importance of building the rule of law and improving conditions for recovery.

Let me also note that I visited Ankara on 3 June, where I met with Deputy Foreign Minister Musa Kulaklıkaya and other Turkish officials, who expressed strong support for a Syrian-led transition and the work of the United Nations. I will continue to engage closely with regional and international stakeholders in support of Syria's stability and recovery.

In conclusion, Syria's political transition needs to move forward with respect to establishing the legislature, consolidating State institutions and building the rule of law. Engagement between the Syrian authorities and the United Nations on the political transition is, I believe, moving forward concretely and constructively, but there is plainly more to do, and the relocation of the Mission's Geneva-based staff to Damascus would facilitate that. I look forward to being back in Damascus next week and to continuing to engage with the Government, civil society and international partners.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Ratwatte.

Mr. Ratwatte: A better future for Syria remains within reach. After more than a decade of crisis, there is now a genuine opportunity to help Syrians to move from survival towards recovery. There are clear signs of progress towards recovery, reconstruction and development. Yet humanitarian needs remain acute, displacement persists, and conditions for sustainable returns are still uneven across the country.

This moment requires ambition anchored in realism. Sustained humanitarian action, political will and investment are essential to help Syrians to move beyond emergency assistance and rebuild their lives. Millions of Syrians remain displaced, both

within Syria and abroad. Since December 2024, some 1.6 million refugees and nearly 2 million internally displaced people have returned. As people go back to their communities, access to basic services, protection and livelihoods remain critical. Returns and reintegration must remain safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable.

Meetings between the Government and United Nations partners in May mapped out the path forward under the “no camps, no tents” vision, which is focused on protection, service provision and sustainable livelihoods. Alongside the Government’s “Statement of national recovery priorities”, this way forward provides a clear national direction for recovery and reintegration.

At the same time, humanitarian operations are delivering, but resources remain insufficient. With more support, much more can be achieved. In the first quarter of this year, nearly 3,000 communities across the country received humanitarian assistance, including food, nutrition and emergency agriculture support for nearly 2 million people, clean water and sanitation assistance for more than 3 million people, nearly 3 million treatment courses and 2.3 million medical procedures.

Natural disasters remain a risk to communities across Syria. The recent flooding underscored the vulnerability of communities along the Euphrates. More than 17,600 people were affected, farmland was damaged, and critical infrastructure was disrupted. In coordination with authorities, humanitarian partners responded rapidly, deploying ambulances and boats, reinforcing embankments, protecting farmlands and delivering critical supplies to families in need. This was an important test for the evolving humanitarian coordination architecture in Syria. The response demonstrated the value of stronger subnational coordination, more effective local partnerships and streamlined processes that enable the United Nations, humanitarian partners and relevant authorities to act quickly and coherently, acting as one to save lives.

As the floodwaters receded, the focus shifted to early recovery and preparedness: repairing infrastructure, supporting farmers and strengthening disease surveillance. This is the model upon which we need to build: responding to immediate needs while helping communities to become more resilient to the next shock.

Notwithstanding this progress, some communities remain fragile, particularly in southern Syria. In Qunaytirah Governorate, the effects of conflict, including displacement and damaged infrastructure, are being compounded by repeated military incursions and restrictions on movements, as well as by the presence of unexploded ordnance. The situation is highly volatile, and nearly 80 per cent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance.

In Suwayda’ Governorate, recent violence has restricted movement, limited access to essential services and perpetuated cycles of displacement for families who are unable to return safely. Communities are on the edge, strained and stressed by years of conflict, displacement, degraded services and poor humanitarian access. Communities must be protected, and humanitarian access must be unimpeded. In this environment, more than 13,000 students were unable to sit their final exams this month due to access and administrative constraints. Behind that number are young people whose education has already been repeatedly disrupted by years of crisis. Syria’s recovery depends on ensuring that they are not left behind.

This highlights the complexity of the operating environment and the issues facing families, as well as the need for continued engagement with the Government of Syria and support from the international community.

As we approach the midpoint of the year, only 20 per cent of the humanitarian appeal for \$2.92 billion is funded. My first ask of this Council is, therefore, clear: help

us to maintain a humanitarian response that is proving that it can deliver. Predictable and flexible funding are essential.

Secondly, we must support Syria's transition beyond emergency aid by helping to address the barriers that are preventing people from rebuilding their lives. The "no tents, no camps" vision is a powerful national goal. Achieving it means investing in the conditions that make solutions possible: protection, social inclusion, demining, basic services, livelihoods and environmental recovery.

Thirdly, we require sustained investment in recovery and reconstruction, aligned with the Government's "Statement of national recovery priorities" and guided by the needs of the affected communities. Syria does not need narrow thinking that separates the humanitarian response from recovery, or recovery from long-term stability. We must meet urgent needs today while laying the foundations for lasting stability and prosperity. Development financing, economic recovery and stronger services will be essential to ensuring that Syria's transition is sustainable.

Humanitarians are ready to do their part. We, too, are adapting, by reducing bureaucracy, strengthening partnerships and putting support closer to the communities that we serve. Committed and fit-for-purpose, the humanitarian community stands ready to meet the moment and the challenges ahead.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ratwatte for his briefing.

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

Ms. Bruce (United States of America): I would like to thank today's briefers.

In the past 18 months, Syria has played a leading role in a new regional alignment of diplomacy, integration and hope. As Syria continues on this path, with the support of the United States and the United Nations, there are opportunities for even more advances that will make Syria and the region more peaceful, stable and prosperous.

Supporting the Syrian Government's ability to fight terrorism is key to this progress, and we are already seeing results from the Syrian Government's increased integration into the international system, its cooperation with partners and its efforts to dismantle international terrorist, human trafficking and drug smuggling networks.

Attacks perpetrated by Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in Syria have reportedly decreased significantly since January, and Syrian authorities recently announced that they had dismantled seven ISIS cells and arrested 235 individuals between March and May of this year, in addition to confiscating weapons and explosive devices. We know, however, that ISIS remains a significant threat, as evidenced by recent improvised explosive device attacks in Raqqa, Aleppo, the Damascus countryside and elsewhere. We express our condolences to the families of those who were killed and our sympathies to those who were wounded in those cowardly attacks. The United States will continue working with Syria to disrupt and dismantle ISIS networks, keeping Syria stable and Americans safe.

We note the upcoming United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States and the General Assembly's review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, starting later this week. Those will be important opportunities to advance effective responses to the terrorist challenges facing Syria and the region.

We look forward to Syria playing a greater role regionally and internationally in countering terrorism. Whether by deepening counter-terrorism cooperation with its neighbours or sharing its expertise and experience through the Global Coalition to

Defeat ISIS, Syria has much to offer to advance the shared goal of peace, security and prosperity in the Middle East.

To advance that goal of regional security, we call on members of the Council and all nations to support the Syrian Government and, in particular, to contribute to strengthening Syria's counter-terrorism capabilities.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for their comprehensive briefings on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Russia, along with the majority of responsible members of the international community, is interested in the earliest possible stabilization of the situation in friendly Syria across all dimensions, from the military and political sphere to the humanitarian sphere. Over the past year and a half, the Syrian Arab Republic has experienced positive developments, including the gradual restoration of its territorial integrity and the consolidation of State institutions. However, a whole host of problems persist, consisting of both internal matters and other matters related to external interference in Syria's internal affairs.

Israel's aggressive actions against the Syrian Arab Republic remain the main destabilizing factor. We strongly condemn West Jerusalem's plans to cement its illegal presence in the occupied territories, as well as its unceasing incursions deep into Syrian territory, whether through ground or air operations. Any use of force by the Israel Defense Forces, as well as attempts to establish arbitrary buffer zones, constitutes a gross violation of Syria's sovereignty and international law, fuels tensions and undermines efforts to achieve lasting stabilization in the country's southern region.

We firmly believe that the normalization of the situation in Syria would be facilitated by a return to the implementation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We strongly urge the Israeli leadership to return to its bilateral obligations and strictly comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We hope that Israel will abandon its confrontational course as soon as possible and heed the signals from the Syrians regarding their readiness to sit down at the negotiating table to resolve existing disagreements. As we have repeatedly heard in the Chamber from our Syrian colleague, Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Ibrahim Olabi, Damascus is open to such dialogue.

Equally acute is the problem of terrorism in Syria, including the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters who are active in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have carefully reviewed the statement issued by Syria's Ministry of Interior on 15 June regarding the successful implementation of a broad counter-terrorism campaign over the past three months, during which several Da'esh cells were eliminated and over 230 terrorists were arrested, including nearly 40 foreign terrorist fighters. We look forward to further decisive steps by Damascus to eradicate Da'esh strongholds, the remnants of which continue to terrorize the population and undermine the leadership's efforts to stabilize the domestic political situation. That is clearly evidenced by the series of terrorist attacks in June in the Raqqa and Damascus Governorates. These attacks claimed the lives of several Syrian security personnel. We extend our condolences to the families of the deceased and hope that the perpetrators and organizers of those bloody attacks will face due punishment.

We are also concerned by reports of ongoing outbreaks of ethno-religious violence in Suwayda' Governorate, as well as extrajudicial killings during the mass unrest on 14 and 15 June in several cities in Idlib, Aleppo and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates. We hope

that Damascus will remain committed to safeguarding the rights of all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, religious affiliation or political views.

We are convinced that there is no alternative to establishing a truly inclusive political process based on the core provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). A lasting and genuine peace within Syria can be achieved only through an equal intra-Syrian dialogue that takes into account the interests of all segments of the population. In that context, we view the holding of elections to the People's Assembly in the north-eastern region on 24 May as a significant step in the Syrian authorities' efforts to enhance internal stability. It is important that the new composition of the legislative body be genuinely representative.

Over the past month, the humanitarian situation in Syria has once again demonstrated how fragile the gains achieved are. Amid ongoing economic difficulties and the chronic underfunding of the humanitarian response, the country faces a new serious challenge: flooding in the Euphrates River basin, which hit Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah the hardest. The disaster coincided with the harvest season.

According to OCHA estimates, the flooding has affected tens of thousands of people, inundated approximately 2,000 hectares of agricultural land and damaged irrigation systems, bridges, water treatment facilities and other critical infrastructure. Even in areas where water levels are gradually receding, the consequences continue to affect the population's access to basic services — drinking water, medical care and education — and hamper the delivery of humanitarian aid. Of particular concern are the risks of the spread of disease and the displacement of explosive ordnance into residential and agricultural areas.

The flooding has aggravated an already dire food security situation. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), today only 18 per cent of Syria's population has regular access to adequate food. At the same time, owing to funding shortages, the WFP was compelled to halve the number of recipients of emergency food assistance and to reduce the geographic coverage of its aid to seven out of 14 governorates. This is an extremely alarming signal, especially given rising prices and declining purchasing power.

World Refugee Day was commemorated on 20 June. This is an appropriate occasion to recall that, for Syria, this issue has a direct and practical dimension. In the past year and a half, the number of refugees who have returned to the country has exceeded 1.6 million, including more than 950,000 children. The scale of returns confirms the desire of Syrians to return to normal life, but it must not create the illusion that humanitarian problems have already been resolved. More than 70 per cent of Syria's population needs assistance. Many families are returning to destroyed homes in areas with limited access to water and electricity. Under these circumstances, the task of the international community is not to accelerate returns, but to help create the conditions for them, above all through the restoration of basic infrastructure and social services.

In this regard, we again emphasize that humanitarian assistance is necessary, but it must be complemented by investment in development, the strengthening of national systems and capacity-building. We note the steps taken by the Syrian authorities in this direction, including the decision taken in May to increase the pay of healthcare workers and school and higher-education staff, which will make it possible to retain and attract the personnel needed for the country's reconstruction. Our country is also contributing to this task. Under the quota established by the Government of the Russian Federation, Syrian graduates who are now deciding their future will, as has traditionally been the case, have the opportunity to study free of charge at Russian universities in the fields most relevant to the development of their homeland.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ratwatte for their briefings.

Although much has been achieved since the fall of the Al-Assad regime, the situation in Syria continues to warrant the attention of the Council. Such attention is needed in order to support the societal transitions from war to peace.

I will make three points.

First, on recent developments in north-east Syria, we take note of the conclusion of the elections in the region, an important step towards the initiation of the work of the People's Assembly. Out of the 11 seats, four Kurdish representatives, including one woman, were elected, but more needs to be done to secure adequate representation. It is essential that women, minorities and members of all religious and ethnic communities be fully included in political life and that the parliament reflect the rich diversity of Syrian society. We encourage continued efforts to ensure representation and reiterate our hope that the final outstanding appointments by President Al-Sharaa will help achieve this goal. Denmark welcomes the progress made in relation to the military and political integration of the Kurds. A number of issues remain outstanding, such as the inclusion of female protection units. We encourage Syria to continue to prioritize meaningful integration as part of an inclusive political transition and to ensure respect for the rights of all segments of Syrian society, including the Kurdish people, thereby helping to build a future of peaceful coexistence.

Secondly, on the humanitarian situation, with more than 5.5 million people still internally displaced in Syria and more than 1.7 million having returned since the fall of the regime, the humanitarian situation is under tremendous pressure. As the third biggest donor to the country-based pooled fund, Denmark appreciates the fast-track reserve allocation of more than \$145 million to emergency activities for 3.4 million people. The need for this allocation is a timely reminder that the humanitarian situation in Syria remains fragile. Denmark calls for additional donor contributions to the humanitarian response plan, which continues to be severely underfunded. Denmark also supports the Syrian Government's "No Tents, No Camps" approach and welcomes a road map on how best to support and achieve this vision. Refugees and internally displaced persons continue to seek to return to their areas of origin to build a new future for their families and their country. To support these hopes, protection efforts must be sustained, and early recovery interventions must be prioritized.

It is crucial to re-establish critical infrastructure, rebuild the healthcare sector and secure consistent water supplies for the entire population. Denmark is proud to provide more than \$9 million in support for the Too Big to Fail project of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which provides drinking water to more than 12 million people.

Thirdly, on respect for Syria's territorial integrity, the continued Israeli presence in southern Syria risks undermining and destabilizing the authority of the Syrian Government. We are similarly concerned about reports of Israeli actions in Suwayda', Qunaytirah and Dar'a, notably the detention of civilians, the destruction of agricultural land and armed confrontations that place communities at risk.

All parties must respect Syria's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, ensure the safety and livelihoods of Syria's civilians and refrain from any attack on Syrian territory. Israel must withdraw from Syrian territory and comply with its obligations under the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

In closing, Denmark remains firmly committed to supporting a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned transition. Words of support from the Council must be matched by concrete action and sustained engagement. We reiterate our call for the prompt

establishment of the Special Envoy's permanent office in Damascus. A strong and present United Nations is indispensable to supporting Syria through this critical moment.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Indrika Ratwatte, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings, which provided us with valuable information drawn from their experience on the ground. We also extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates, and are honoured by their participation.

As we approach the anniversary of the incidents of sectarian violence in Suwayda', which left deep wounds in the affected communities and whose harmful effects, particularly on children's education, persist, we recall the need to remain mindful of the impact of these events on Syria's social fabric. These tragic events highlight the importance of strengthening trust between the local Druze authorities and the Syrian Government. The aim is to continue bringing the country's diverse groups together and to build channels of communication with the Syrian Government, with the support of the United Nations.

We are closely following efforts to consolidate the political process in Syria, including the forthcoming stage in which the presidency will appoint the remaining members of the People's Assembly. We refer to this process in our statements every month, given the importance that Panama attaches to consolidating strong and representative governance in Syria. In this regard, we reiterate the importance of ensuring that these appointments genuinely reflect the country's diversity, including through the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in the country's governance structures.

The presence of women in positions of responsibility, such as Hind Kabawat, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, demonstrates the benefits that more inclusive representation brings to public life. We stress that any progress must be accompanied by credible mechanisms for transitional justice and the search for missing persons, in full accordance with the international commitments undertaken. Such action would alleviate the suffering of the families of victims, who will carry the scars left by the war for generations.

In transitional processes, peacebuilding depends on the capacity to comprehensively address the most serious human rights violations, including those that remain unseen or poorly documented. In this context, sexual violence related to Syria's past civil conflict, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2026/321), is a factor that perpetuates intergenerational trauma and undermines reconciliation efforts. We therefore call on the Syrian authorities to maintain their cooperation with the relevant international mechanisms and to strengthen prevention, protection and comprehensive assistance measures for victims.

In the security sphere, it is essential that the Syrian Government effectively exercise a monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout the national territory, in order to prevent paramilitary structures, terrorist remnants and foreign fighters from affecting the civilian population or generating destabilizing dynamics. We express our concern about the situation in the Syrian Golan and in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, given the risk posed by the increasing interaction of armed forces with local communities.

We once again reiterate the need to fully respect Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as the importance of respecting the agreements and resolutions in force that contribute to peace in the region. We value the positive role of the United Nations system and the ongoing efforts to strengthen its presence and support

capacity in Syria, including steps aimed at achieving greater coordination on the ground and strengthening its institutional presence in Damascus. We likewise recognize the indispensable work of humanitarian agencies, especially the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, whose work remains crucial to alleviating the suffering of the civilian population throughout Syrian territory.

The complexity of the situation in Syria requires the time, effort and determination demanded by consolidation and reconstruction processes, which are neither immediate nor linear but are indispensable for lasting peace. Panama recognizes in Syria a country that, like our own, has historically been a meeting point where different peoples coexist and are interwoven. That diversity must not be a source of division but a pillar of strength for building a future of peace, prosperity and dignity for all.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ratwatte for their briefings. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates to today's meeting.

China welcomes the launch by Iran and the United States of follow-up consultations on the memorandum of understanding, with the assistance of Pakistan and Qatar, and the consensus reached on the mechanism for the next stage of negotiations. Maintaining and fully implementing the memorandum of understanding will help consolidate the hard-won ceasefire and bring peace back to the Middle East. Syria is an important country in the Middle East. Helping it fully restore peace and stability is the earnest expectation of the international community and should be a goal jointly pursued by all parties.

I wish to make three points.

First, ensuring inclusiveness is a fundamental principle of political transition. China notes the positive progress made by the Syrian transitional Government in implementing the agreement on comprehensive integration in the north-east and welcomes the return of calm and stability to that region. In the south-west, however, intercommunal tensions remain acute and the social atmosphere remains tense. We support all Syrian parties in upholding the principle of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process, continuing to conduct political dialogue, steadily advancing an inclusive political process and ensuring that the voices of all communities are heard with due seriousness and that the rights of all communities are protected equally.

Secondly, maintaining security is an important prerequisite for national reconstruction. The current security situation in Syria remains fragile. Terrorist forces remain rampant and continue to carry out attacks, posing a serious threat to regional security and stability. The Syrian transitional Government should take a firmer stance and more effective measures to combat resolutely all Security Council-listed international terrorist organizations, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, and respond to the major concerns of the international community regarding counter-terrorism issues related to Syria. On counter-terrorism, all parties must firmly reject double standards and avoid selective approaches.

Thirdly, improving people's livelihoods is the most urgent priority. For some time, the Syrian transitional Government has been working to restore the economy and has achieved some results. Having endured many years of war and turmoil, the Syrian people continue to face a grave humanitarian situation, with food security, refugee resettlement, economic development and other issues still beset by many difficulties. We note that floods have recently occurred in Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates, severely affecting people's livelihoods. We call on the international community to increase humanitarian and development assistance to Syria and make greater efforts to help address the difficulties faced by the Syrian people.

Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity should be respected. The Golan Heights is internationally recognized as occupied Syrian territory. Israel's military presence in the Syria-Israel area of separation has no basis in international law. It should immediately cease all military operations inside Syria and withdraw from Syrian territory as soon as possible. The 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces should be observed and the safety of United Nations peacekeepers should be guaranteed.

China stands ready to work with the international community to play a constructive role in promoting lasting peace and stability in Syria and restoring peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. I express my appreciation to them for their two valuable briefings on recent developments in Syria. I also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Türkiye.

In the light of the developments taking place in the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic, I would like to address the following points.

First, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the positive developments witnessed by the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic in recent months, which reflect tangible progress towards strengthening stability and economic and political openness. That reflects growing regional and international confidence in Syria's ability to move forward on the path of recovery and to restore its natural role in its Arab and regional environment. The steps taken to reintegrate Syria into its regional and international environment, expand areas of cooperation with international partners, lift sanctions and ease some economic restrictions are encouraging signs of support for recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Secondly, the Kingdom of Bahrain commends the efforts made by the Syrian Government to strengthen Syrian State institutions, thereby helping to create the environment necessary for comprehensive national recovery. The Kingdom is also following with interest the steps related to completing the building of national institutions, including the electoral procedures witnessed in some areas to fill seats in the People's Assembly. We look forward to the continuation of those efforts in a manner that supports the completion of the legislative track and strengthens the role of national institutions in serving the aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people. The Kingdom also underscores the importance of supporting national reconciliation efforts among all components of Syrian society, including through the implementation of the road map in Suwayda', thereby strengthening national unity and consolidating security and stability.

Thirdly, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the importance of respecting the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. It stresses the need for Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian territories, including the Golan Heights, and to fully comply with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and the relevant international resolutions. In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain commends the pivotal role played by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in strengthening confidence-building measures between the parties and creating a more stable and less tense environment in the interests of civilians in the region.

Fourthly, we commend the role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in supporting the Syrian people during this important phase. We welcome the return of increasing numbers of Syrian refugees and displaced persons to their country, as noted in recent United Nations reports. This is a positive development that reflects

improved conditions on the ground and strengthens hopes for a more stable and secure period. We also welcome efforts aimed at gradually transitioning from emergency humanitarian response to support for early recovery and reconstruction in Syria. We believe that advancing this approach requires a constructive international partnership and sustained support for the programmes implemented by the United Nations and relevant international institutions.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain stresses that supporting recovery and reconstruction efforts, strengthening Syrian State institutions and creating conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons are all essential pillars for achieving sustainable security and stability in the Syrian Arab Republic and thereby enhancing the security and prosperity of the region.

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, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and my own country, Somalia.

We thank Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Claudio Cordone and Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Indrika Ratwatte for their briefings. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in today's meeting.

The A3 recognizes that Syria continues to undergo a critical transition, marked by political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges. Although recent developments have generated renewed hope among the Syrian people and the wider international community, sustained international engagement and support are essential to preserve hard-earned gains. In this regard, the A3 would like to highlight the following points.

First, the A3 underscores the importance of advancing an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process that reflects the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians. In this regard, we welcome the legislative elections held on 24 May to fill vacant parliamentary seats in the north-east, as well as the judicial and administrative understandings reached between the Government and local authorities. We encourage continued engagement by all Syrian stakeholders in a spirit of inclusivity and mutual respect. In this context, we reiterate that resolution 2254 (2015) remains an important framework for supporting a comprehensive political settlement.

Secondly, the A3 remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Syria. Millions of Syrians continue to depend on humanitarian assistance, while displacement, damaged infrastructure and limited access to basic services continue to affect communities across the country. We commend the efforts of humanitarian actors operating under difficult circumstances and call on donors to increase support to address the significant funding shortfalls facing humanitarian operations, which are currently funded at 18 per cent. We further emphasize that full recovery requires investment in essential services to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Thirdly, the A3 notes the continuing economic challenges facing Syria and underscores the importance of measures that can contribute to economic recovery and improve the living conditions of ordinary Syrians. While we welcome structural progress towards global economic reintegration, we note that ordinary citizens continue to suffer from severe, immediate inflationary pressures. We stress that economic stabilization remains an essential component of Syria's path to sustainable development.

Fourthly, the A3 remains concerned by reports of ongoing violations of Syria's sovereignty, in particular military strikes conducted within Syrian territory. We are particularly concerned by the security situation in the south-west, including the ongoing

military presence and unilateral enforcement of a security buffer zone operation. Such actions risk undermining stability and jeopardizing efforts toward recovery and reconciliation. We reiterate that the occupied Syrian Golan remains an integral part of Syrian territory, in accordance with resolution 497 (1981). We call for full respect for Syria's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence, and urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid wider escalation.

Fifthly, the A3 also notes that terrorism continues to be a serious threat. The recent attacks attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) in Syria, including the assault on an internal security facility in Raqqa and the targeting of a judicial official in rural Damascus, are deplorable. We express our condolences and sympathy to the families of the deceased and injured and wish a speedy recovery to all those injured. At a time when the Syrian Government is intensifying efforts to dismantle terrorist networks, as evidenced by extensive counter-terrorism operations and the arrest of hundreds of operatives, the international community has a responsibility to stand in solidarity against this shared threat. Greater cooperation, support and coordination are essential to curb the spread of extremist violence and promote long-term security and stability in Syria and the wider region.

In conclusion, the A3 reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Syria and its commitment to supporting efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace and prosperity. We call upon the Security Council and the international community to remain united in supporting Syria's path towards peace and stability.

Mr. Zakis (Latvia): We thank the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Claudio Cordone, and the Acting Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, for their valuable briefings. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in today's briefing.

Latvia welcomes the positive momentum in cooperation between the United Nations and Syria, as highlighted in today's briefing. The United Nations is well placed to support Syria's efforts towards stability, recovery and development, and we look forward to the relocation of the Special Envoy's Office to Damascus in the near term.

Over the past year and a half, Syria's new Government has demonstrated substantial progress, but full socioeconomic recovery will require continued efforts and time. To succeed in its transition, Syria needs both internal stability and peace at its borders. Sustained international solidarity is essential to support Syria's path towards reconstruction and international reintegration.

In this context, I would like to make three points.

First, Syria's political unity has a crucial role in the ongoing transition process. We welcome the continued comprehensive integration of administrative and security structures in north-east Syria, upholding the agreement reached in January between Syria's Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces. At the same time, the Government's commitment to creating an inclusive political environment must be maintained, respecting the civil and cultural rights of all groups in society. We welcome the recent recognition of language and citizenship rights of Kurds and call for further mutual agreements on strengthening their integration, including on Kurdish participation in political and decision-making structures at all levels.

Secondly, we take note of the legislative elections recently held in the north-eastern governorates, which mark an important step closer to convening the People's Assembly. After years of political repression under the Al-Assad regime, the people of Syria look forward to forming an inclusive legislative body, representing Syria in all its ethnic and religious diversity. We underscore that women's meaningful participation in public life is an integral part of an inclusive political process. Therefore,

it is anticipated that the upcoming presidential announcement on the appointment of 70 members of Parliament will duly consider the issue of inclusivity. We encourage Syria's Government to continue its efforts for transitional justice, ensuring comprehensive accountability for all committed crimes and fostering national reconciliation.

Thirdly, we acknowledge the progress of the Syrian Government in stabilizing the security situation in the country and countering Da'esh, including dismantling terrorist cells, disrupting attacks and seizing weapons and explosives. Considerably reduced, Da'esh attacks continue to threaten Syria and the wider region. We welcome the commitment of Syria's Government to tackle the threats posed by terrorism and to take responsibility for the country. To reinforce institutional capacity, we encourage the Syrian authorities to enhance their engagement with the relevant United Nations counter-terrorism actors, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

In conclusion, after years of devastation, the people of Syria are eager to build a peaceful and prosperous future. We welcome the political restraint and efforts of the Syrian Government aimed at reducing tensions and promoting peaceful relations in the region and with its neighbours. Continued and reinforced support from the international community, including the United Nations, is essential to facilitate Syrian-led, Syrian-owned efforts towards inclusive governance, transitional justice, stability and economic recovery. Latvia remains committed to supporting these shared goals.

Mrs. Balta (Greece): I would like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ratwatte for their valuable briefings.

Amid heightened regional volatility, the Syrian leadership has thus far shown restraint. A stable and sovereign Syria is a key factor of stability for the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider region. Achieving Syria's stability requires an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. To that end, the meaningful political participation of all Syrians, including women and irrespective of ethnicity or religion, must be guaranteed. Pending the assignments of the remaining seats of the People's Assembly, we expect all segments of Syrian society to be meaningfully represented in the country's institutions.

We welcome all positive steps towards building a more inclusive transitional framework and encourage further concrete measures aimed at fostering national reconciliation, strengthening State institutions and ensuring that all Syrians have a say in shaping their country's future. Steadfastly and unequivocally rejecting any use of chemical weapons, we welcome the constructive cooperation between Syria's transitional Government and the leadership of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Continued engagement with the Organisation remains essential to addressing all outstanding issues and ensuring full compliance with Syria's international obligations.

Transitional justice and accountability must be delivered in the same spirit — one of cooperation with the United Nations. The recent progress made with the apprehension and trying of those accused of orchestrating the suffering of the Syrian people is crucial for healing the wounds of the past and rebuilding trust. We stress that judicial processes must adhere to the relevant international legal standards. Institutions such as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic or 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 can offer valuable expertise and technical know-how. We encourage additional and closer cooperation between these international institutions and the Syrian authorities.

The security situation in Suwayda' and the north-east remains a matter of concern and demands our continued vigilance. The Commission of Inquiry verified more than 1,030 killings committed in the context of the Suwayda' violence last year. This is a reminder that progress is fragile, demanding sustained effort on behalf of the Syrian authorities to deliver justice, accountability and protection to all Syrians. Preventing renewed sectarian violence and ensuring accountability for abuses are indispensable prerequisites for sustainable peace. The Syrian authorities bear the primary responsibility for protecting all communities without discrimination and ensuring equal citizenship for all Syrians. Similarly, the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Damascus should be fully implemented, as it stands to contribute significantly to national cohesion and long-term stability.

Turning to the situation in the south, we reiterate our full support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Communities in the affected areas are entitled to live in safety and dignity, to return to and freely access their property without hindrance and to pursue their livelihoods freely. Civilians, civilian infrastructure and private property must be safeguarded at all times, in accordance with international law. We therefore call for full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As our briefers highlighted, the humanitarian situation remains grave. Compounding the destruction of the civil war, the ongoing conflict in Iran has driven a spike in energy and food prices, with nearly 16 million Syrians in dire need of humanitarian assistance. This reality underscores the vital importance of the newly launched 2026 humanitarian peace and response plan. Sustained, safe and unhindered humanitarian access throughout Syria remains essential. Particular attention must be paid to the needs of children and young people, who endure substandard conditions and the threat of radicalization. Educational deprivation also remains severe due to infrastructure attacks and the hazard of unexploded ordnance.

In conclusion, Greece remains steadfast in the vision of a peaceful, prosperous and inclusive Syria, worthy of the aspirations of the Syrian people, where the rule of law and respect for humanitarian rights rest at the forefront of priorities. The United Nations remains an indispensable partner for Syria along its path towards recovery and prosperity, which is why we continue to advocate for the timely relocation of the Special Envoy's Office in Damascus.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Indrika Ratwatte for their briefings. Let me also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria in this meeting.

Of late, these monthly reports have a pattern of progress and positivity that characterizes Syria's promising transformation towards a better future. We welcome this trend. The wisdom demonstrated by the Syrian leadership in navigating a complex regional environment, while remaining focused on national priorities and recovery deserve recognition and admiration. And in a broader context, the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and the constructive follow-up engagements in Lucerne over the weekend have the potential to advance lasting peace, prosperity and cooperation in the wider region.

Syria's cooperation with the United Nations, which is growing, is also very encouraging. Equally important is the advancement in the political transition. The anticipated convening of the Parliament will be an important step towards strengthening national institutions. Similarly, progress in north-east Syria and the gradual integration of local structures into national institutions are important developments that will contribute to stability, national cohesion and the restoration of State authority throughout the country. A political transition that is Syrian-owned and Syrian-led and

that fully respects Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity is the best guarantee of continued success.

Allow me to highlight a few points.

First, from a holistic perspective, sustained and constructive engagement among all stakeholders across the political, economic and security domains will be essential to consolidate gains and maintain the positive momentum.

Secondly, as Syria moves forward, transitional justice and accountability will be crucial pillars of sustainable peace. In this regard, the measured and responsible approach by the Syrian authorities merits acknowledgement and our continued support.

Thirdly, Israel's ongoing violations of Syria's sovereignty — military incursions, arbitrary arrests and destruction of property and livelihoods — are highly destabilizing and condemnable. The new five-year settlement expansion plan in the occupied Syrian Golan is illegal under international law and must be stopped immediately. All such actions must cease, and Israel must comply fully with resolutions 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

Fourthly, as the threat posed by Da'esh, foreign terrorist fighters and other terrorist groups persists, continued counter-terrorism efforts are essential for Syria's long-term stability and security.

Fifthly, given the humanitarian situation, which remains very challenging, much greater support is required to fill the funding gaps and to advance economic rehabilitation and development. We welcome the constructive engagement and support of regional countries and international partners in advancing Syria's stabilization and recovery.

Pakistan stands resolutely with Syria and will continue to support all efforts for its reintegration into the international community and for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous future for the Syrian people.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Indrika Ratwatte for their briefings, illustrating the complexity of the situation — one of undeniable progress on the path to national reconciliation, which, is, however, fraught with countless obstacles.

We all have in mind the framework agreement recently signed between the United States and Iran and the crucial talks that have just begun. In this context, we commend the restraint shown by the Syrian authorities on all external fronts. We encourage the rapprochement between Lebanon and Syria and call for discussions between Israel and Syria on security to continue. At the same time, we urge Israel to cease its incursions into Syrian territory, which are undermining the Syrian authorities' efforts. We also point out that any attempt to exploit internal divisions risks further jeopardizing regional stability. On the domestic front, Syria has done much in recent months to make its transition a success.

First, when it comes to national reconciliation, which is entering a new phase with the commencement of trials against figures from the former regime, the developments adverted to by the Deputy Special Envoy confirm that justice represents a central issue to Syria's transition and a legitimate demand of the Syrian people after more than a decade of conflict, during which the Bashar Al-Assad regime committed the most heinous crimes against its people. There are a number of international tools to support the Syrian authorities in this vital quest for justice; we call upon them to cooperate with these mechanisms.

Secondly, the building of new political and military bodies is afoot in support of a stable, united and sovereign country. The imminent establishment of the People's Assembly will mark the first step towards a democratic and pluralistic system that reflects the richness of Syria's diversity. These new institutions must harmoniously incorporate all segments of Syrian society. We encourage all efforts to afford women their rights and to include them. We remain concerned about the crisis in Suwayda', which is hindering the country's full reunification. We support the implementation of the agreement reached on 29 January between Damascus and the Syrian Democratic Forces and the process of integrating the north-eastern provinces into the rest of the country, spanning the security, military, economic, political and administrative domains. Integrating security and military forces is necessary to ensure the stability of the country, combat all forms of trafficking and defeat the scourge of terrorism, which continues to be a daily threat in the country and the region. The endeavours of the Syrian authorities have also made headway in dismantling the former chemical weapons programme, including the recent discovery of chemical weapons thanks to cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for the international community to pool private and public funding to address the immense needs in rebuilding the Syrian economy. Humanitarian action remains vital, particularly in mine clearance — a sine qua non to recovery and reconstruction. France is continuing humanitarian support and stabilization efforts, especially in the health sector. We all have a role to play in reassuring investors, lifting the remaining sanctions and fostering the country's socioeconomic development. The Syrian authorities are seeking to create a business-friendly environment, particularly in a regulatory sense. They must be supported.

Lastly, France supports relocating the Special Envoy's Office to Damascus and involving the Envoy in the next stages of the transition, while fully respecting Syria's sovereignty.

With every Council meeting, we see that Syria is charting a promising course, consolidating its unity, stability and regional integration with every passing day. Yet, the challenges remain colossal. The Syrian authorities need dogged determination. Support from the international community is required to build on these gains and to allow Syria to recover, beginning with the support of the Council.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Ratwatte for their briefings today.

I will make three points.

First, the United Kingdom welcomes the announcement of the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran and congratulates all involved in this diplomatic breakthrough. It is vital that negotiations are concluded rapidly. Regional de-escalation is a chance to build stability and peace for the benefit of all those in the neighbourhood, including Syria, but we are concerned that increasing Israeli military activity in Syria and violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement risk further destabilization. We urge Israel to resume negotiations with the Syrian Government and to pursue a diplomatic solution. The United Kingdom maintains its long-standing position that we recognize the Golan Heights as Israeli-occupied Syrian territory, and we strongly support the further extension of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force's mandate.

Secondly, the United Kingdom welcomes continued progress made by the Syrian Government towards an inclusive political transition following the conclusion of elections in north-east Syria. Political and cultural inclusivity are key pillars for stability, and we encourage continued efforts to unify Syria in a genuinely representative way.

This includes ensuring that Syria's diverse communities have their language and cultural rights fully respected.

Thirdly, the Syrian education system remains under severe strain. Almost 40 per cent of schools are damaged or destroyed. Some continue to be used to house displaced people, and there is a significant shortfall of trained teachers. We fully support the ambition of the Syrian Ministry of Education to ensure that all children in Syria can access safe, inclusive and quality education. Education is both a fundamental right and central to Syria's long-term stability. The United Kingdom continues to support this ambition, and our programme has helped nearly 1 million children in Idlib and Aleppo since 2018, with a strong focus on gender equity, disability inclusion and psychosocial support.

The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting the Syrian Government in building stability. We encourage the international community to continue efforts to support wider recovery and to help deliver a prosperous and peaceful Syria for all Syrians.

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

I thank the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Claudio Cordone, and Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings. I also welcome to this meeting the Permanent Representative of Syria and the other representatives who are with us today.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), a sustainable political solution in Syria must be pursued with a focus on strengthening the representation of all its communities and consolidating institutions that make it possible to overcome years of social fragmentation and that embody the ideal of a Syria for all Syrians. To that end, it is also imperative to uncover the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, safeguard the rights of their families and acknowledge the families' roles in truth, justice and reconciliation processes. Women and girls must be an integral part of that reconstruction process. Colombia takes note of the Syrian transitional Government's willingness to pursue a process that embodies the fundamental principles of participation, prevention and community reintegration and urgently calls for those actions to be expedited, including through the prompt completion of the electoral process. However, there is still room for improvement. It is vital for institutional progress to translate into effective, safe and representative spaces in which all women, young women, female adolescents and girls are able to participate.

Secondly, the humanitarian dimension remains alarming, with persistently high levels of internal displacement and an increase in the return of displaced persons and refugees. Consequently, the protection of women and girls must be central to the humanitarian and recovery response. Colombia expresses concern about reports that gender-based violence remains underreported, in a context characterized by significant barriers to gaining access to services and by other factors that deter people from reporting such violence. Recovery must therefore incorporate protection measures, accessible pathways to care and services that meet the specific needs of women and girls.

Thirdly, humanitarian funding must not be treated as secondary during this new phase. Colombia notes with concern the severe cutbacks that have led to the shutdown of key services, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and care for victims of sexual violence. In this context, it is essential to support women-led organizations and to guarantee predictable funding through funds pooled for protection, education, health and the response to such kinds of violence.

To conclude, Colombia reiterates the call for full respect of the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. My country condemns any occupation of Syrian territory and urgently calls for the full implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, while also calling for occupation of any kind not to be normalized.

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*): I thank the briefers and the members of the Security Council for their continuous support for the new Syria.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to address one of the approximately 200,000 wounds endured by the Syrian people, namely, the case of Dr. Rania Al-Abbasi and her family. The National Commission for Missing Persons announced that its findings indicated that she and her children were killed. The mystery is over, but the responsibility to uncover the truth and deliver justice remains. I extend my deepest condolences to her family, and I renew the commitment of the Syrian Government to continue working to uncover the fate of the missing and the forcibly disappeared, and to forge ahead uncompromisingly on transitional justice issues.

Colleagues today commended Syria's efforts to consolidate regional stability. Today we stand with Lebanon and with its choices, and we support Lebanon's official institutions. Syria has become an effective partner in fighting terrorism and transnational crime. Syria joined the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, and its name was removed from the American list of States that do not cooperate with counter-terrorism efforts.

I am very proud to join the Global initiative to galvanize political commitment to international humanitarian law. I am also pleased to declare from this rostrum that today, Syria will be joining a campaign that has been proven to be important — namely, the campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict — once again reaffirming the new Syria's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Here, in New York, as Her Excellency Ambassador Bruce noted, Syria is preparing to participate in Counter-Terrorism Week, with a high-level delegation.

In line with our commitment to the region and the world at large, we welcomed the memorandum of understanding to end the war and bring about peace. However, we draw the Council's attention to the statement by the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupation, on the very same day that President Trump announced the memorandum of understanding, in which Netanyahu declared that his army would not withdraw from the areas it had invaded in Syria, following liberation. This statement confirms that Israel is the primary obstacle to stability in Syria, despite the commendable United States mediation, as a result of its assault on the rights of Syrian men and women and its violation of international law and Security Council resolutions. Netanyahu is escalating tensions and defying the world, while Syria is choosing wisdom and diplomacy and working with its partners. What will the Council choose?

The new Syria is forging its own path with the progress being made, having borne the heavy burden of pain, destruction and displacement. I shall therefore today present five aspects of this progress, accompanied by five corresponding challenges. The success story that Council members all commend requires their continued support if it is to take root and be sustained.

First, Syria is continuing on the path of transitional justice. The number of detainees from the former regime has reached some 6,000, including dozens of senior officers. The challenge, however, is for the international community and United Nations

organizations to support this national process without attempting to replace it in a way that could jeopardize civil peace, as nearly happened a few days ago.

Secondly, here in the Council, a few months ago, members commended Decree No. 13. Today, Syria is continuing to translate its words into deeds and reaffirming its commitment to equal citizenship in practice by completing the collection of naturalization applications from the Syrian Kurds, both men and women, covered by this decree. The challenge lies in protecting this inclusive national process from internal and external attempts at destabilization that seek to sow discord among the various segments of Syrian society.

Thirdly, economic efforts are progressing, including the first National Conference for Private Sector Dialogue, organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and Japan. We are witnessing a revival in tourism activity, with the opening of major tourism projects and the signing of investment partnerships with international, regional and Gulf companies, including in the energy sector, the most recent of which were with ConocoPhillips and Novoterra. The challenge now is to overcome the legacy of sanctions and accelerate the integration of the Syrian financial sector into the global international system.

Fourthly, the Syrian Government is working to create the conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons. More than 3.5 million people, including refugees and displaced persons, have already returned. The challenge is to ensure continued international support for the Government's priorities, thereby facilitating a safe, dignified and sustainable return, particularly through support for the clearance of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

Fifthly and finally, Syria continues to fight on behalf of the world. It is combating the cross-border activities of the Islamic State, cross-border arms smuggling, cross-border crime in all its forms, the Captagon trade that destabilized the region and the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme that troubled the world, all of which pose regional and global threats. The challenge, however, lies in strengthening international partnerships to support the Syrian Government's capabilities in these and other areas. These battles are battles for us all, even if we in Syria are fighting them on the ground on the behalf of other countries.

In conclusion, we know full well that the path ahead is not an easy one. Behind every stone lies a memory of pain and in every house being rebuilt there is a story of loss. But the new Syria has chosen to move forward. This is our pledge to Syrian women and men, and we look forward to the Council being a partner in safeguarding this path and driving it forward. Syrian women and men have paid a price that no people should have to bear, and today they are building their future with their own hands and await the support of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the humanitarian and political situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I would also like to thank the briefers.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Arab Group reaffirms its support for Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the Syrian State's efforts to extend its sovereignty over all its territory. We therefore call upon the international community to support the Syrian Government's efforts aimed at preserving Syria's stability, which in turn will safeguard the security and stability of the region.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight economic and development aspects. It is worth noting that, since the President of the United States of America, Mr. Donald Trump, lifted most of the economic sanctions imposed on Syria — for which we are grateful — the Syrian Arab Republic has undergone a major economic transformation across various vital sectors and has quickly attracted a number of investments from around the world, demonstrating the international community's confidence in the reforms being undertaken by the Syrian Government.

We consequently call on the United States of America to remove Syria from the list of State sponsors of terrorism, on which it was placed decades ago because of the former regime. This will contribute to achieving full economic recovery by facilitating the inflow of foreign investment into Syria. In this regard, we call on all States to boost their investments in Syria and contribute to building a new, secure and prosperous Syria.

In the context of development, we wish to emphasize the importance of the United Nations' role in this area and call for the strengthening of its efforts and for it to play a greater role in Syria's development, in line with the Syrian Government's vision for national priorities.

The Syrian Arab Republic has witnessed a number of heinous terrorist acts in recent years. The Syrian Government is fully committed to combating terrorism, thereby contributing to the achievement of peace, security and stability in the region. We call on the international community to support the Syrian Government's efforts to combat the terrorist organization Da'esh and terrorism in all its forms.

The Arab Group emphasizes the importance of concerted international efforts to provide genuine and tangible support to the Syrian Government during this delicate transitional phase and reaffirms the pivotal role of the United Nations in this regard. The Arab Group calls on the international community, the United Nations and its specialized agencies to provide all forms of support to the Syrian Government and to cooperate with it in all matters that will help to ensure the transition proceeds as hoped, thereby contributing to supporting efforts to achieve early recovery and reconstruction.

This support is a fundamental pillar in enabling Syrian State institutions to create a secure environment and conditions conducive to the voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of Syrian refugees. In this regard, we express our deep appreciation for the pivotal role played by refugee-hosting countries, and we call on the international community to increase and expand the scope of support provided to those countries, as they should not and must not be left to bear this heavy humanitarian and economic burden alone.

Syria has endured a long war that, over the past 13 years, has left far-reaching consequences in its wake. Accordingly, the Arab Group calls upon the international community and the United Nations to join forces in supporting the Syrian Government's efforts to clear mines and remnants of war, which will help improve the lives of the Syrian people.

The Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms Israel's repeated incursions into and attacks against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, and consider them a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, a breach of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and rules of international law and a threat to Syria's security and stability and to peace and security throughout the region.

The Arab Group stresses the need to compel Israel to fully adhere to the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We call for an end to Israel's repeated violations and for its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian territories into which it has recently advanced, as well as from the occupied Syrian Golan.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms its steadfast commitment to standing with the brotherly Syrian people in their journey to build a safe, stable and prosperous State founded on justice, equality and the rule of law, thereby safeguarding the rights of all Syrians.

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

Mr. Kılıç (Türkiye): At the outset, we would like to thank Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ratwatte and Deputy Special Envoy Cordone for their comprehensive briefings.

Syria continues to move steadily along the path of stabilization. We are witnessing tangible progress across the political, security and economic tracks. As security conditions improve, the Syrian Government is adopting the right strategies to revitalize the economy and create a more conducive environment for investment. Initial signs of economic recovery are emerging, while efforts aimed at strengthening social cohesion through an inclusive approach continue.

We also attach importance to ongoing efforts to ensure accountability for past violations. Bringing to justice those responsible for serious human rights abuses committed during the former regime is essential both for addressing social grievances and for laying the foundations of lasting reconciliation.

In the political sphere, the convening of the People's Assembly will constitute an important milestone. It can contribute to advancing the political process and to supporting reconstruction efforts through the establishment of the necessary legislative framework.

The swift and uninterrupted integration of the north-east remains critical. At the same time, developments in the south of the country continue to be a source of concern. Israeli aggression, which continues to affect civilians and undermine stability, must cease. Efforts should instead focus on ensuring social cohesion in Suwayda'. In this regard, we reiterate our call on Israel to fully comply with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, refrain from further escalatory actions and reverse its encroachments. Preserving Syria's stability and shielding the country from the spillover effects of regional conflicts must remain a shared priority.

Meanwhile, the threat posed by Da'esh remains a serious concern. Strengthening Syria's counter-terrorism capacity therefore remains essential and requires our continued support. In this context, over the past month, with the support of the Syrian authorities, several Da'esh members involved in terrorist attacks in previous years against Türkiye were apprehended in Syria. We reiterate our appreciation to the Syrian authorities for their cooperation and commitment in this regard.

The time has come to accelerate Syria's reconstruction and recovery efforts. The rehabilitation of critical infrastructure remains among the most urgent priorities. Türkiye continues to contribute actively in sectors in which targeted investment can generate significant multiplier effects. We believe that a stable, unified and prosperous Syria can emerge as a vital connector between the Middle East, Türkiye and Europe through trade, transportation, energy and infrastructure networks. Realizing this vision will not only benefit the Syrian people but also contribute to broader regional stability and economic integration.

At the same time, the challenge posed by unexploded ordnance and other remnants of war must be addressed without delay. Progress in this area is indispensable to reconstruction, economic recovery and the safe return of displaced people.

In conclusion, Türkiye remains firmly committed to supporting Syria's unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity, stability and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings.

The United Arab Emirates also aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At a time when the region is witnessing growing political and security challenges and uncertainty, Syria is sending a message of hope after long years of conflict. It is entering the phase of investing in recovery and reconstruction opportunities, establishing the frameworks that will support its revival in a manner that fulfils the aspirations of the Syrian people for security and prosperity, while ensuring the country's stability and preventing a relapse into conflict.

My country welcomes the steps taken by the Syrian Government to strengthen stability and improve living conditions of the Syrian people. These efforts warrant the support of the international community to enable the Government to address the existing challenges.

In the context of today's meeting, I would like to highlight three points.

First, economic development is a fundamental pillar of Syria's recovery and sustainable stability. My country has sought to strengthen bilateral trade, investment and economic partnership through high-level visits to explore opportunities for cooperation and investment in critical sectors, including tourism, agriculture, healthcare, renewable energy, real estate development and digital transformation.

Direct and more frequent flights between the United Arab Emirates and Syria have enhanced opportunities for economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, most recently through the launch of direct flights between Abu Dhabi and Damascus. The inaugural Syrian-Emirati Investment Forum, held in Damascus last month, provided an important opportunity to explore new avenues for cooperation and the exchange of expertise between our two peoples. These growing partnerships reflect confidence in the steps being taken by the Syrian Government, its priorities and its vision for Syria's future, as well as in the capabilities, talent and potential of the Syrian people to contribute to recovery and reconstruction efforts.

The United Arab Emirates also welcomes the lifting of economic sanctions on Syria. This has paved the way for the resumption of commercial investment, contributing to economic revitalization and early recovery while creating conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons.

We emphasize that continued efforts to create favourable conditions for economic growth, stability and recovery remain a priority that requires the support of the international community.

Secondly, consolidating stability in Syria requires international support that responds to the priorities of this new phase. It is also essential to align the programmes and resources of the United Nations and donor partners with the priorities of the Syrian Government. For example, infrastructure rehabilitation and mine clearance are among the foremost challenges hindering the return of residents to their communities and impeding recovery efforts. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of supporting

the “Syria Without Camps” initiative to provide durable solutions for displaced persons and improve their living conditions.

Recovery efforts must also include safeguarding Syria’s national identity and restoring its cultural and civilizational heritage, which together constitute a cornerstone of the country’s stability. Guided by this vision, the United Arab Emirates recently announced a project to restore the Grand Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, one of the Arab and Islamic world’s foremost cultural landmarks, thereby supporting recovery efforts and restoring hope to the Syrian people.

The current phase in Syria also presents an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations work through greater integration and coordination among its various agencies and programmes, maximizing the impact of available resources and ensuring a more effective response to Syria’s needs and national priorities, in close coordination with the Syrian Government.

Thirdly, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms the importance of preserving Syria’s territorial integrity, unity, independence and sovereignty, recognizing that these are fundamental to Syria’s stability and future and to the security of the region as a whole.

We also emphasize the importance of continuing efforts to build and empower national institutions that ensure the effective representation of all components and spectrums of society and promote the participation and empowerment of women within State institutions.

In this regard, we welcome the steps to integrate the Syrian Democratic Forces into Syrian State institutions, with a view to helping bolster national unity. At the same time, it is essential to support and develop Syria’s security institutions so as to enhance their capacity to maintain security, uphold the rule of law and extend State authority throughout the country. We also stress the importance of continuing efforts to combat terrorism and prevent terrorist and extremist groups from returning or exploiting any security vacuum.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its continued support for the Government of Syria and the brotherly people of Syria, thus contributing to the country’s security and stability.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.