



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9237**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 9 January 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Ishikane . . . . . (Japan)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Bongo
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Issahaku
Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/18, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Brazil and Switzerland.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

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

**Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil): I deliver this statement on behalf of Switzerland and Brazil. We thank Japan for convening this meeting and for providing us with an opportunity to say a few words before the voting as the new co-penholders on the Syrian humanitarian file in the Security Council.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to our predecessors — Ireland and Norway — for their exemplary efforts at the head of this important task over the past two years. In that regard, we must also convey our sincere gratitude to all members of the Council, past and present, for their constructive engagement and full cooperation towards the fulfilment of our shared responsibilities. That that end, and building upon such fundamental groundwork, we proceeded last week to put draft resolution S/2023/18 into blue.

As we know, the text we are about to consider is instrumental in maintaining the flow of life-saving aid to the Syrian people. It ensures the continuation of crucial work to address urgent needs, under the auspices of the United Nations and in full accordance with all relevant provisions. The draft resolution before us confirms the extension of the border crossing at Bab Al-Hawa for an additional six months, until 10 July 2023, in accordance with paragraph 2 of resolution 2642 (2022), and requests the Secretary-General to provide a special report on the humanitarian needs in Syria no later than 10 June 2023.

The current mandate expires tomorrow. By confirming its extension today, the Council can send a strong signal of support for the Syrian people and for all humanitarian actors, in particular the United Nations and its agencies and partners, who work tirelessly to assist them.

Brazil and Switzerland look forward to working together as we set out in this new year to contribute, to the best of our abilities, to the advancement of the Syrian humanitarian file, in a spirit of transparency and inclusiveness. We hope to be able to continue to count on members' steadfast support going forward. We commend the draft resolution to the Council, and we ask all members to support it.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I make this statement before the voting, on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E-10), in Ecuador's capacity as coordinator for the month of January.

We remain concerned by the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, and we believe that rapid, unimpeded and sustainable humanitarian access is needed. The needs of the affected population have to be at the centre of our work.

The E-10 reiterates its appreciation for the manner in which, in July 2022, delegations rallied to adopt resolution 2642 (2022) and worked together to achieve a compromise text. We are here today to confirm an additional six-month extension, as required in paragraph 2 of the same resolution.

It allows for the much-needed delivery of humanitarian assistance to be continued under the close coordination and monitoring of the United Nations and in line with the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, neutrality and humanity. We appreciate the role played by the previous co-penholders, Ireland and Norway, over the past two years and have full confidence in Brazil and Switzerland as the new co-penholders on the Syria humanitarian file. The E-10 looks forward to the full and effective implementation of resolution 2672 (2023), including the cross-border mechanism, in order to address the dire and urgent needs of the Syrian people, and reiterates the need for the Council to also take into account the necessity of providing more certainty and predictability for the humanitarian organizations. I reiterate that the E-10 remains committed to addressing the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

**The President:** I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

**The President:** The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2672 (2023).

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

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Brazil and Switzerland, as the co-penholders of the Syrian humanitarian file.

We welcome today's unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2672 (2023), confirming the continuation of the mandate for the humanitarian cross-border mechanism in north-west Syria. It comes at a time when the 4.1 million people in need of assistance in north-west Syria are facing harsh winter conditions. I therefore want to warmly thank all Council members for their support. The resolution enables humanitarian actors, particularly the United Nations and its agencies, to continue to reach those in need in a coordinated and carefully monitored manner. It extends a crucial lifeline to the civilian population in north-west Syria, whose needs are greater than ever, and allows humanitarian actors to continue providing both life-saving and early-recovery assistance at scale. Rapid, unimpeded and sustainable access is needed. We call on all parties to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

We once again express our particular gratitude to the previous co-penholders, Ireland and Norway, for their tireless work on this file over the past two years and for their diligent engagement paving the way for today's adoption. We also note with satisfaction the continued and united support by the elected members of the Council as we pass the baton from 2022 to 2023.

Lastly, it remains clear that a political solution to the conflict in line with resolution 2254 (2015) must be found to improve overall living conditions in Syria. In our role as co-penholders with Brazil, we are guided by the humanitarian needs of the Syrian population and the

universal principles represented by the United Nations and its agencies and partners. Today's adoption is an important step to ensure that crucial life-saving aid continues to reach those in need. We will work in a spirit of shared responsibility with all Council members and engage with partners on the ground towards achieving that objective in the future.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council. We welcome the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2672 (2023), extending the cross-border aid delivery mechanism to Syria for an additional six months, and thank the co-penholders of the Syrian humanitarian dossier for their tireless efforts in preparing the draft resolution for adoption without delay. We value the consensus reached among Council members on this matter and the priority given to the needs of the Syrian people over political considerations.

The United Arab Emirates voted in favour of resolution 2672 (2023), given the importance of the mechanism in alleviating the suffering of our brother people of Syria, who are facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation. The mechanism has seen many changes over the past years, and work remains to be done to improve it to better respond to the current conditions on the ground. It is imperative to find solutions that respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. That includes increasing the volume and pace of cross-line aid operations and early-recovery projects in accordance with resolution 2642 (2022) and the resolution adopted today, and in particular the provision of electricity to Syrians as an indispensable basic humanitarian need.

My country also believes in the importance of supporting demining efforts in Syrian territories, owing to their catastrophic humanitarian consequences for civilians, especially children and humanitarian workers. We will focus on that issue during the upcoming discussions on extending the mechanism in July and will coordinate closely with Syria's humanitarian co-penholders and Member States.

In conclusion, we hope that the unity shown by the Council today will prevail on all tracks related to the Syrian crisis with a view to meeting the hopes and aspirations of the Syrian people.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the confirmation of the United Nations cross-border mandate, which will continue to provide life-saving assistance to those in need in north-western Syria. We also strongly welcome the unity of Security Council members in their clear support for this humanitarian lifeline, and we thank Switzerland, Brazil, Ireland and Norway for their leadership.

There are 4.1 million Syrians who rely on the food, medical supplies and other humanitarian products that the mechanism provides. For now, they can breathe a sigh of relief in the knowledge that such support will continue. But we must ensure that we provide more certainty to them and the United Nations and non-governmental organization workers who serve them. The humanitarian community consistently warns that shorter mandates result in a perpetual cycle of contingency planning, which limits the capacity to help those in need. The Secretary-General has made it clear that the humanitarian imperative demands a 12-month mandate. Let that humanitarian call be the guiding principle in our future discussions.

We are pleased that today the Council has played its role in supporting the Syrian people. But the people of Syria deserve more. A genuine political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015) is the only sustainable way to end the suffering for the people of Syria.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): As this is my first meeting of the Security Council this year, I would like to welcome Japan as President, as well as all of the other new members of the Council.

The United States welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2672 (2023), on the cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery mechanism. We applaud Brazil and Switzerland, as well as Ireland and Norway, for their persistent efforts to make this possible. I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to United Nations officials and aid workers for all they do, day in and day out, to fully implement the mechanism and address the dire needs on the ground.

Today, in extending the cross-border mechanism, we have ensured that food, water, shelter and other critical humanitarian assistance will continue to reach the Syrian people. We have ensured that shipments of medical equipment and treatments will not be cut off from a country facing a horrific cholera outbreak. And

we have ensured that the humanitarian workers I met with during my two trips to the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing will continue to do their heroic work. Today's vote allows the Syrian people to breathe a sigh of relief. But while this lifeline will continue to operate, so much more could have been done — and so much more still needs to be done.

In July of last year, the Council was unable to extend this mandate for a straightforward 12 months. As a result, it has been harder and costlier for aid workers to procure, hire and plan, and it has hindered the selection and implementation of early-recovery projects, which some critics of the mechanism claim to want. A 12-month extension is needed for the United Nations, and it is needed for our humanitarian partners and for recipients. While it is important that the Council came together today, let us be honest with ourselves: this resolution represents the bare minimum. In fact, renewing the resolution never should have been a subject of debate. The debate we need to have is how to strengthen the mechanism to reach more people with more assistance.

In the coming months, we must show the Syrian people that we will continue to put their humanity first, that we will do everything in our power to increase predictable access to those in need, because right now needs across all of Syria, from the north-west to the north-east and all 14 governorates of Syria, are greater than they have ever been. The United Nations has stated that 15.3 million people will need assistance in 2023. That is a 5 per cent increase from last year. The vast majority of those in need are women and children.

If we are going to meet this moment, we must back up our words with action and, more specifically, with adequate funding. And that is why we have long called on the international community to provide generous support to the Syrian humanitarian appeal for the Syrian people. Yet the United Nations response plans for vulnerable people inside Syria and Syrian refugees in their host communities are badly underfunded. We encourage those countries that criticize this lack of funding to step up and help ease the suffering of the Syrian people.

For our part, the United States is proud to be the leading donor to both response plans. Even as humanitarian needs around the world have spiked, our commitment to the Syrian people is unwavering. Still, we know that the Syrian people will not be able to enjoy

the full peace, security and dignity that they deserve until the conflict is over. And to that end, we call for an immediate nationwide ceasefire and meaningful engagement in an inclusive political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

The United States will not support Al-Assad regime-led reconstruction until there is lasting progress on a political solution to the conflict. We once again urge the Al-Assad regime to do what is necessary, after so many years and after so much violence, to end this brutal war and work towards a just and sustainable peace.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): The renewal of the cross-border humanitarian mechanism is essential, as it remains a vital mechanism for millions of Syrians. I welcome the efforts of Ireland and Norway, as well as of Brazil and Switzerland, to reach agreement on the renewal of resolution 2642 (2022), which enables the mechanism to continue until July. France voted in favour of resolution 2672 (2023) to join in the consensus. However, humanitarian actors would need a mandate of at least 12 months and the opening of a second cross-border crossing in order to ensure more sufficient delivery of humanitarian aid for the benefit of the population. Guaranteeing sustainable and unhindered humanitarian access is the prerequisite for ensuring effective assistance to the population.

The needs in Syria remain immense, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The Security Council must live up to its responsibilities, and France remains fully engaged in that regard. Our position and that of our European partners is clear: we will continue to provide support to respond to the needs of the population. Moreover, we recall that any change in France's or the European Union's position regarding normalization, reconstruction and the lifting of sanctions is subject to the regime committing to a credible and inclusive political process, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), adopted unanimously by the Council.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of resolution 2672 (2023) to extend the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism to Syria. We commend Brazil and Switzerland for their efforts as co-penholders, as well as Norway and Ireland their previous efforts to that end. At the same time, we hope that the Security Council and the relevant United Nations agencies take this extension as an opportunity to comprehensively sum up the

experience and shortcomings in the implementation of the resolution over the past six months so as to ensure its full and effective implementation in the future and make greater contributions to continuously improving the humanitarian situation of all Syrians.

First, the sovereignty of Syria and the ownership of the Government of Syria must be fully respected. Cross-border assistance is a temporary arrangement made under special circumstances, and the transition to cross-line assistance must eventually be made in an orderly manner so that the latter becomes the main channel for humanitarian assistance to Syria. To that end, the frequency and size of convoys of cross-line assistance to north-west Syria must be significantly increased, and cross-line assistance to the Rukban refugee camp should resume as early as possible. All the parties should ensure adequate supplies and funding for cross-line assistance, step up coordination with all the relevant parties, in particular the parties in de facto control of north-west Syria, in order to effectively improve the access environment for cross-line assistance.

Secondly, vigorous efforts must be made for quality and efficiency gains in early-recovery projects. At present, the overall funding for early-recovery projects needs to be improved. Early-recovery projects in different sectors are seeing mixed progress, and there are major differences in project implementation among different regions. China urges all donors to put the well-being of all Syrians first and promptly and properly resolve those problems. The removal of explosive remnants of war is important for restoring the normal work and life of the Syrian people and should be included in the scope of early recovery as early as possible.

Thirdly, unilateral sanctions impede humanitarian access in Syria, restrict its access to humanitarian resources and run counter to the efforts by the Council and the international community to improve humanitarian access in, and increase humanitarian resources for, Syria. The recent report of Secretary-General (S/2022/933) also points out that unilateral sanctions inhibit humanitarian agencies from procuring supplies and dispersing funds. China once again urges the relevant countries to immediately and fully lift the unilateral sanctions on Syria.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation has made the difficult



decision to support the adoption of resolution 2672 (2023), which extends until 10 July this year the United Nations mandate for the use of the Bab Al-Hawa crossing, through which humanitarian aid is delivered from Türkiye to the terrorist-infested Syrian enclave. This, however, should not be interpreted as a change in our principled position on the cross-border mechanism.

Needless to say, the resolution in its current form does not reflect the aspirations of the Syrian people, who, in addition to effective humanitarian efforts, expect the Security Council to respect Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty — not in words, but in deeds. The preservation of the cross-border mechanism, which encroaches upon the universally recognized norms of humanitarian assistance, in no way helps to advance that objective.

Our vote today is our way to express our appreciation to the previous co-penholders, Norway and Ireland, for the way in which they approached the negotiations on this resolution this time, as well as an advance gesture of trust in the new co-penholders on the Syrian humanitarian dossier in the Council — the delegations of Brazil and Switzerland. We trust that they will live up to this gesture and demonstrate a truly non-politicized and objective approach to addressing the growing problems in Syria. The resolution provides six months and useful mechanisms in that regard, including three rounds of the informal interactive dialogue and the issuance of the report of the United Nations country team in Syria on the adverse impact of the illegitimate unilateral sanctions, which must be submitted to the Security Council in full.

It is important that everyone clearly understands that there can be no talk of an automatic extension of the cross-border mechanism. Expectations for a new six-month extension in July will be borne out only if the approach of the members of the Security Council towards the provision of humanitarian assistance to Syria changes fundamentally by then.

For the moment, we see that the Western delegations continue to treat this topic opportunistically and have no intention of conscientiously implementing the provisions of resolutions 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022). They never cared, and continue not to care, about the needs of ordinary Syrians. All that our Western colleagues are interested in is maintaining the cross-border mechanism as a tool to exert political pressure over Damascus, as well as supporting the Hayat

Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists, who continue to benefit from deliveries through this mechanism. Instead of providing an honest assessment of the current situation and working to improve it, our Western colleagues in the Security Council are focusing efforts on inflating the myth that deliveries through the cross-border mechanism allegedly cannot be supplanted by cross-line deliveries, which do not violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

To that end, the Western delegations — unfortunately, alongside the United Nations agency representatives who do their bidding — are doing all they can to create a smokescreen around the real statistics related to humanitarian assistance. Council members were able to observe these diversionary manoeuvres during three rounds of informal interactive dialogue. But not even those efforts helped to conceal the fact that there are grave geographical imbalances in the implementation of early-recovery projects in Syria. The facts speak for themselves — half of the funds go to Idlib, and only 35 per cent of the funds reach the territories in which the majority of the Syrian population resides. This is a stark example of the politicized approach of Western States to the issue of humanitarian assistance.

To this day, Western delegations continue to extol their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Syria and are carefully sidestepping another extremely uncomfortable issue: their criminal unilateral sanctions that have an adverse impact on ordinary Syrians. It is those sanctions that are the main factor behind the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. Essentially, Western countries are deliberately worsening the situation, trying to delay the process of normalizing the situation in the country as much as possible in order to discredit the efforts of its legitimate Government.

In the same vein, they create artificial obstacles to the return of refugees from neighbouring countries to Syria owing to fears that in the event of a mass return of fellow citizens, the Syrian Government will reap political dividends. We believe that such unscrupulous political games concerning Syria must end. That is not only our position, but also the will of the Syrian people.

In other words, we are in favour of the provision of humanitarian assistance to all Syrians, without double standards or discrimination, and for that to be done in good faith, without politicization and without parallel, unilateral and asphyxiating measures that invalidate

any humanitarian assistance. I truly hope that we will be able to reach this seemingly simple and clear objective by July. We urge our colleagues not to waste time and to cast aside the mantra about the alleged lack of alternatives to the cross-border mechanism, which hinges solely on their unwillingness to abandon this mechanism.

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

Japan welcomes the adoption of the resolution 2672 (2023), which renews the cross-border aid mechanism for another six months.

We especially appreciate the tireless efforts of Norway and Ireland, as former co-penholders, and Brazil and Switzerland, as current co-penholders, to pave the way for this important decision. The unity of the 10 elected members of the Security Council on this issue remains crucial, and we stand behind this resolution.

As a result of prolonged conflict surrounded by a complex political landscape in Syria and beyond, humanitarian needs in Syria have reached record levels. According to the special report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/933), an estimated 15.3 million people across Syria this year will desperately rely on life-saving assistance, such as food, water, shelter, education and vital medical supplies.

We acknowledge the divergent views among the Council members on the effectiveness of each aid modality in Syria. At this moment, however, the existing cross-border operation through Bab Al-Hawa crossing remains the most effective option, provides a satisfactory level of transparency and meets the basic needs of the Syrian people, including women and children in the north-west, at both scale and scope, as indicated by the Secretary-General's assessment. While Japan welcomes the renewal of the cross-border mechanism for another six months, we strongly believe that the mandate should be at least one year, as six months is not sufficient to provide the necessary assistance.

Given the dire humanitarian situation in Syria, it is critical to appropriately evaluate and address the need for early-recovery activities, including basic infrastructure-related projects, such as electricity and water. Japan is willing to further support such early-recovery programmes.

Additionally, cross-line assistance could complement cross-border assistance through the meaningful cooperation of the Syrian Government and other relevant actors on the basis of this resolution. However, the cross-border mechanism remains a vital lifeline for millions of Syrians.

Finally, the Council must prioritize the needs of the Syrian people and expand its assistance through all available modalities. Japan will continuously support the Syrian people, under the concept of human security, because it is our duty to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, placing people at the centre and leaving no one behind, while continuing to seek a political solution to the Syrian conflict in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*):** The Syrian Arab Republic has been making every effort to provide basic services to the Syrian people. It has been working relentlessly to improve their living conditions and is cooperating with the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies to provide assistance to all Syrians without discrimination.

Syria has engaged positively with the important aspect included in resolution 2585 (2021) for the first time, namely, support for early-recovery activities, since those projects are fundamentals for improving the humanitarian situation in Syria and in reducing dependence on life-saving humanitarian assistance. The efforts that were made before the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) led to adding the electricity sector to the list of the sectors most in need for early-recovery activities and projects.

The significant efforts by Syria to improve the humanitarian situation of Syrians have been met with real challenges and countless difficulties that until today have hindered the achievement of tangible progress in the humanitarian situation. Some Western States continue to politicize humanitarian work and to demonstrate lack of any true will to achieve progress in the humanitarian situation, as reflected in their failure to deliver on their pledges to fund the humanitarian response plan, and their unflagging imposition of illegitimate, unilateral and coercive measures on the Syrian people. All of that has aggravated the suffering

of Syrians and made it impossible to achieve the goals that we had hoped to achieve pursuant to the resolutions I mentioned.

While the Security Council was considering the extension of resolution 2642 (2022), the Syrian Arab Republic was keen to brief the Council on our assessment of what has been achieved during the past year and a half and on important aspects to be included in any new resolution according to the following.

First, we reaffirm that electricity and energy for basic services be provided and that renewable-energy projects be implemented to support the electricity sector. There is a need also to include vital sectors within early-recovery projects to particularly support field work in the area of mine clearance and the removal of unexploded remnants for the great importance of saving the lives of civilians.

Secondly, it is crucial to expand early-recovery projects in the context of the humanitarian response plan, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Thirdly, efforts are essential for providing basic services to guarantee the dignified, safe and voluntary return of refugees and support for returning internally displaced persons in Syria.

Fourthly, the negative repercussions of the unilateral coercive measures on humanitarian work in Syria and on the efforts of the United Nations and its agencies in that regard must be acknowledged, as described in the report of the Secretary General (S/2022/933) pursuant to resolution 2642 (2022).

Fifthly, as also mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, donors must be called upon to live up to their commitments and fund the humanitarian response plan in Syria, particularly as the plan's funding did not reach 50 per cent until the end of last year.

Sixthly, focus on enhancing the delivery of assistance from inside Syria is essential for achieving real progress in that area, taking into account that assistance delivered from within Syria is in line with the fundamental principles of humanitarian work, in particular respect for Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, my delegation underscores that making progress in the humanitarian situation in Syria requires ongoing development and improvement process. The technical extension of resolution 2642 (2022) is therefore not adequate for supporting that process. Accordingly, Syria emphasizes that it will continue assessing the implementation of that resolution through meetings of the informal interactive dialogue to be held by the Security Council to take stock of the progress achieved between now and the end of the resolution's mandate on 10 July.

My country remains ready to work with Council members, especially the two co-penholders, to guarantee that any relevant resolution adopted by the Council in the future will respond to the aspirations of the Syrian people and their humanitarian needs while fully respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

*The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.*