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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Yahiaoui
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Barba Bustos
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Mikanagi
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Buanahagi
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Scotland
	Slovenia	Mr. Ponikvar
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Ms. Najat Rochdi, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Ms. Sawsan Abou Zainedin, Chief Executive Officer of Madaniya.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Rochdi.

Ms. Rochdi: It is an honour to brief the Security Council on behalf of Special Envoy Pedersen, who is in Syria at present and will meet the Syrian Government in the coming days. He was in Astana last week for meetings with the interlocutors, who meet in the Astana format. He has since been in the region for a wide range of high-level contacts.

An increasing number of Syrians find themselves trapped in an unrelenting cycle of violence and suffering, forced to flee from places of refuge now under attack, both within their homeland and beyond its borders. As humanitarian aid diminishes and hostile rhetoric and actions intensify, Syrians are being driven into increasingly precarious and unsustainable conditions. Clearly, the immediate priority for Syria is de-escalation. The country is being battered by the relentless storms of regional conflict and the rising waves of conflict within its own borders. This year is well on track to be the most violent since 2020 and the potential for even greater devastation looms on the horizon. Decisive action by all who have influence is needed to prevent Syria from being swept further into a broader conflagration.

Once again, Israeli air strikes on Syria have increased significantly, both in frequency and scope.

Just yesterday, we saw dozens killed in a strike near Palmyra — likely the deadliest Israeli strike in Syria to date. Israel says that its strikes address targets linked to Iran, Hizbullah or Palestinian Islamic Jihad. But once again, we have seen civilian casualties, including from significant strikes conducted on residential areas in the heart of Damascus. Civilian infrastructure was also hit, including bridges, roads and formal and informal border crossings, in some instances for the third time. That has further hindered the passage of civilians fleeing violence in Lebanon and also caused serious disruptions to essential imports and exports, which are now down by 40 to 50 per cent. The prices of gasoline and basic goods have risen precipitously, leaving the most vulnerable in a precarious state.

On the Golan as well, we are concerned about the volatile situation owing to continued violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Under-Secretary-General Lacroix will brief the Council in further detail next month. But let me echo the Secretary-General's call on the parties to respect the terms of the Agreement and prevent any further escalation across the ceasefire line. We have also seen reports of a rocket attack and some drone attacks from Syrian territory on the occupied Syrian Golan. Syrian State media reports that Syrian air defences have also intercepted Israeli missiles in some instances. In parallel, the United States carried out strikes against what it said are Iran-backed militias, in response to armed drone attacks on its bases in north-east Syria.

Meanwhile, since the previous briefing (see S/PV.9759), north-east Syria has seen its most serious escalation during 2024. After a terrorist attack near Ankara on 23 October resulted in civilian casualties, Türkiye carried out strikes inside Syria for several days, against what it stated were Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units targets. Those strikes resulted in civilian casualties and severely affected or damaged critical civilian infrastructure. The Syrian Democratic Forces claimed to have killed Turkish soldiers in attacks on Turkish positions in Syria, with further reports of civilian areas hit by Syrian Democratic Forces rocket strikes.

Violence remains at troubling levels in many other theatres too. North-west Syria faces a worrisome uptick in pro-Government drone and artillery attacks, alongside many attacks involving the Security Council-listed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. That new

round of violence has also resulted in civilian casualties, new waves of displacement and damage to civilian infrastructure. In the south, Dara'a has also continued to experience significant instability. Moreover, attacks by the Security Council-listed terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have been increasing in the central desert region.

There is evidently an urgent need for ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon and respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria — and indeed of all States in the region. Alongside the need for regional de-escalation, there is an urgent need to work towards a nationwide ceasefire in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and a cooperative approach to combating Security Council-listed terrorist groups. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all parties to respect their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, as applicable. Let me also forcefully condemn all the attacks we have seen, which pose harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that more than half a million people have fled Israeli air strikes in Lebanon and crossed into Syria since late September, and there remains a steady flow of movement. Approximately 63 per cent are Syrian, most of them are women and children. We repeat our hope that all stakeholders understand that this is a critical moment to act responsibly and constructively on protection and livelihood concerns.

On protection, all Syrians must be protected wherever they are — those who remain outside, those who arrived recently mostly under adverse conditions and those who remained in the country throughout the conflict. We echo once again High Commissioner Grandi's appreciation for the Syrian Government keeping the borders open for all, simplifying procedures and allowing a UNHCR monitoring presence on the borders. The safety and security of all of those arriving from Lebanon must be ensured, both at the crossing and thereafter as they move throughout Syria — by all authorities and de facto authorities. We hope to see progress on the full range of protection concerns. The more the United Nations and other actors are able to be present and active on the ground, the more confidence it will instil.

On livelihoods, let us remember that, even before the latest influx of half a million people, 16.7 million Syrians

were already in need of humanitarian assistance — the highest number recorded since the conflict began. I thank all donors who have provided support and stress that donors must give more, both for the emergency humanitarian appeal and for early recovery activities, in all areas of Syria. Both approaches are essential and mutually supportive: one is not a replacement for the other. Let me also note that the United Nations and its partners just launched an early-recovery strategy for 2024 to 2028 to support building long-term resilience and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. And let me also flag the critical importance of the active engagement of sanctioning States to mitigate any adverse effects of sanctions, particularly in the form of overcompliance. Let me also welcome the decision by the Government of Syria to extend for a further three months the permission for the United Nations to use the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai border crossings; that permission remains critical to reach those in need in north-west Syria.

Syria remains in a profound and active state of war and division. Many millions of Syrians are still outside their country or struggling to survive in a complex landscape of de facto authorities, foreign armies, armed non-State actors and listed terrorist groups. More than 100,000 remain arbitrarily detained or missing. The economy is in tatters, and infrastructure is destroyed and degraded. Organized crime and illicit activities are on the rise, with negative social repercussions and generating even further instability. After almost 14 years of war and conflict, there are no quick-fix technocratic solutions to those challenges, which are deeply political. Those challenges also speak to the direct involvement and security concerns of regional and international players. Tackling those issues requires a meaningful political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

This is a pivotal moment in which to move the political process forward, with genuine commitment and action. Geopolitical winds may soon start shifting once again, in directions that are hard to predict. If all sides signal readiness to act constructively, responsibly and practically, then we have the best chance of harnessing existing and new dynamics into opportunities for progress. What does that mean in practice? One signal would be the resumption of Constitutional Committee meetings. The Special Envoy had in-depth discussions on that during the Astana talks and in the region and looks forward to consultations with the Syrian Government in the coming days, and also with the opposition Syrian Negotiations Commission. That

would send a clear message that the framework for the political process remains alive and operational and that there is a Syrian Government and opposition whose nominees are able to sit together and address the critical issues at the heart of the intra-Syrian conflict.

Another signal could be to further develop step-for-step confidence-building measures, in the light of the ideas on the table and bearing in mind the developments on the ground and diplomatically. But at this moment, all Syrian and international players can and should really be thinking bigger, sending a signal that they are willing to put all the critical issues and concerns on the table: the Syrian-Syrian political issues at the heart of the conflict but also the issues pertaining to protection, sovereignty, security, economy and sanctions, detainees and missing, refugees and so on — issues that can be fully addressed only with external players. The Special Envoy has been sharing ideas on how to develop a comprehensive path out of this conflict. Engagement on those ideas would send a strong signal, at a time of potential change, that a negotiated political solution on Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), is not beyond our collective ingenuity and political will.

We of course will continue our engagement with Syrian civil society. As members heard from a Civil Society Support Room participant last month, on behalf of many Syrian civil society actors, and as we keep hearing from the Women's Advisory Board as well, there is a strong desire within Syrian communities for a political process that brings about genuine reconciliation. Civil society must have a voice in that process. Let me once again encourage all Syrian parties to ensure that Syrian women have a seat at the table. That remains a key element in building a resilient peace and a sustainable future for Syria, as we heard in the recent Security Council open debate on women building peace in a changing environment (see S/PV.9760).

In conclusion, let me reiterate the Special Envoy's appeal to all parties to de-escalate the military situation, both in the region and within Syria, and to prioritize the protection and support of Syrian civilians, including those crossing back. We also call on Syrian and international stakeholders to work with the Special Envoy to reinvigorate the political process and to demonstrate a readiness to engage on the full scope of issues necessary for a comprehensive resolution. This is a time of profound uncertainty and danger in the region. It is also exactly the time to shape a path to allow the Syrian people to realize their legitimate

aspirations; to restore Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity; and to safeguard peace and security.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: Today I will address three key issues. First, I will consider the ongoing humanitarian impact on Syria of the escalating regional conflict, including through the continued influx of people from Lebanon. Secondly, I will discuss the compounding effect of this on existing humanitarian needs and pressures, at a time when more than two thirds of the people in Syria are already in need of vital humanitarian assistance. Thirdly, I will address the heightened need for humanitarian funding and for working in ways that maximize resources.

Since I last briefed the Security Council, in October (see S/PV.9759), the hostilities in Lebanon have continued to drive thousands of people across the border into Syria every day. We welcome the continued willingness of the Government of Syria to keep its borders open and facilitate their entry. At the same time, continuing air strikes along the border have made those crossings more dangerous and challenging, as members just heard from the Deputy Special Envoy. The damage from air strikes means that vehicles can no longer traverse two of the five official border crossings. That includes the main Jdeidet Yabous crossing in rural Damascus, through which half of the arrivals have come so far, and the Joussieh crossings in Homs. People, including women, children and other vulnerable groups, have resorted to navigating the crossings on foot or seeking out longer and riskier alternative routes. Air strikes near the Joussieh border crossing and in Al-Quseir have landed close to facilities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and in one case damaged the UNHCR border post at Joussieh. Another strike in the Shamsin area damaged the Damascus-Homs road.

Civilian casualties also continue to be reported as a result of ongoing strikes in various parts of the country, including in residential areas. The strikes are also complicating aid efforts. Aid workers' movement has been scaled back, particularly to areas of Homs. The damage to border crossings has forced trucks to take longer routes, contributing to increased costs for commodities. The ongoing hostilities have also affected people's movement and response efforts in

other locations. A worker from a non-governmental organization, for example, was injured in hostilities in Aleppo governorate. It will be critical to take all feasible precautions to avoid harming civilians, including aid workers. In total, more than 540,000 people have now reportedly fled to Syria from Lebanon since late September, that is, more than half a million. An estimated two thirds of them are Syrians, more than half are children and more than 7,000 are pregnant women, while about 40 per cent of the arriving households are headed by women. The key needs of those arriving so far include food, household items, shelter, health assistance, protection and legal support.

United Nations agencies are working alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other partners to provide for basic needs at the border and at places of onward movement. As the Deputy Special Envoy said, our colleagues from UNHCR are monitoring and assessing those in need. However, since the launch of the \$324 million UNHCR-led inter-agency appeal in early October, we have received only \$55 million, or that is what is projected to be in the pipeline. The humanitarians are doing what they can, including with the existing resources on hand. But that is not sustainable in a country where 16.7 million people — more than 70 per cent of the population — are already in need of assistance. While we welcome the contributions that have been made to date and are grateful to donors for their generosity, we urge donors to step forward with more funding. There are already reports of some Lebanese families returning to Lebanon due to the lack of services and poor living conditions in Syria. UNHCR is continuing to monitor the situation, where the impossible decisions that displaced people often face are very visible.

More than 100,000 people have arrived in north-east Syria, adding to the needs in a region where three quarters of the population already requires humanitarian assistance and where conflict and other drivers of needs continue. An escalation in hostilities in the north-east late last month killed and injured dozens of civilians. The damage to civilian infrastructure disrupted access to water, electricity and fuel for hundreds of thousands of people, and several humanitarian partners were forced to temporarily suspend their activities. The region is also facing an emerging outbreak of suspected cholera, with more than 270 suspected cases and one death reported in the north-east. Many of the cases are in Al-Hol camp, where tens of thousands of people, most of them again women and children, are living

in crowded, detention-like conditions. The lack of adequate testing facilities in Al-Hasakah, along with declining resources for health services, represents a serious risk to the ability to contain the outbreak. Meanwhile, an estimated 7,800 people fleeing Lebanon have arrived in north-western Syria, where needs, displacement and civilian casualties are already high as a result of hostilities.

The host communities, already facing staggering levels of need and overstretched humanitarian services, are being pressed even further. Our partners have described how a family in Homs, already dealing with severe food insecurity, is hosting some 20 family members who have fled from Lebanon, and how a classroom in Aleppo designed for up to 45 students is now overflowing with more than 70 children. Those are communities where humanitarian assistance has already had to be dramatically scaled back. Funding for the humanitarian response plan stands at only 28 per cent, and about 2 million fewer people are now receiving critical aid each month than were a year ago.

The impact on food security is particularly alarming. Nearly 13 million people are already facing food insecurity in Syria — the fifth-highest total globally — while the World Food Programme has been forced to reduce its assistance by 80 per cent in the past two years due to funding cuts. Worryingly, the latest Hunger Hotspots report, issued by the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, identifies Syria as a country of very high concern and among the 12 countries most at risk of further deteriorating conditions in the coming six months. As the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis warned in a joint statement last week, unless more funding is received, the consequences will be dire. More funding is needed to help some 2.5 million people withstand the winter months, which are setting in. The situation is particularly serious for displaced people in camps and informal sites. In north-west Syria, some 1.4 million internally displaced people require urgent assistance, including 730,000 still living in tents. It is once again women and children, who make up the majority of these people, who stand to suffer the most. Without additional funding, respiratory infections and hospitalizations are likely to surge, particularly among young children, even as health assistance has been scaled back. And millions of children will lose out on school due to a lack of heating.

The serious limitations on resources make direct and efficient humanitarian access via all available routes even more essential. In that regard, and as the Deputy Special Envoy has also highlighted, I welcome the Government of Syria's extension of permission for the United Nations to use the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai border crossings to deliver assistance from Türkiye to north-west Syria until 13 February 2025. The cross-border operation is a critical lifeline for nearly a million people every month in Idlib and northern Aleppo. The funding shortfalls also reinforce the importance of strengthened investment in early-recovery assistance under the humanitarian response plan and the new early-recovery strategy. For example, investing in rehabilitating irrigation systems will allow increased food production and expand agricultural livelihoods, which is critical given the fact that this year's wheat harvest is expected to be nearly 50 per cent below the pre-crisis level, and also because of the food insecurity numbers that I shared earlier. Similar interventions are needed in the health, water, education and energy sectors, all of which have been decimated by years of conflict and crisis.

Finally, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria serves to underline the importance of achieving sustained progress towards peace in Syria and across the region. We once again urge support for Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to facilitate a political solution in Syria — an essential step towards ending the decade-long humanitarian crisis and enabling the people of Syria to rebuild their lives and restore hope for a better future.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Abou Zainedin.

Ms. Abou Zainedin: It was 13 years ago that we brave Syrian women and men took to the streets, claiming what is rightfully ours — a say in how we live and how our country is governed. Our message was clear — Syria is ours; it is not the property of the Al-Assad family. And now 13 years later, thousands of people continue to demonstrate in the streets of Al-Suwayda, undeterred by intimidation. For more than a year, they have been asserting that Syria is ours and not the property of the Al-Assad family — indeed it is not the property of any of the de facto authorities that have emerged in the past 13 years. Protestors in Idlib, Aleppo, Qamishli, Deir ez-Zor and beyond echo that sentiment. In the intervening years, hundreds of

thousands of us have been killed, tens of thousands forcibly disappeared or tortured to death and millions displaced. Those who remain live in a fragmented Syria ruled by de facto authorities, including the Al-Assad regime, which rules by force and not by legitimacy.

But I am not here today to recount the atrocities that the Council knows very well or to stir Security Council members' emotions or appeal to their sense of humanity — we are beyond that. I am here today to say that we are invincible, even in the face of the Council's contentious politics, and I am going to explain why and propose that we leverage that determination to break the political deadlock that we all face. To the members of the Council I say — let us speak about accountability. When Russia and China vetoed draft resolution S/2014/348 referring Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2014 (see S/PV.7180), we persisted. We found a creative workaround to the limitations imposed by the Council's political dynamics. Our documentation and advocacy led to the creation of 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, the first United Nations accountability mechanism of its kind. And that paved the way for all of us to use universal jurisdiction to pursue accountability.

Thanks to the relentless efforts of Syrian victims, survivors and human rights defenders, including women-led groups, perpetrators are facing trials today in the courts of the world in Sweden, Germany, France, the United States and the United Kingdom. And thanks to the same efforts, the Netherlands and Canada brought Syria to the International Court of Justice and the International Court of Justice issued a landmark ruling exactly a year ago, in November 2023, demanding that Syria end torture — a call the regime has blatantly ignored. As Syrians stood outside the International Court of Justice that day demanding accountability, they were still fighting for the creation of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, for their right to truth and justice. And yes — the General Assembly established it last year (see A/77/PV.85).

We did not give up on the use of chemical weapons either — a crime that shocked the world. Despite Russia's repeated vetoes (see S/PV.6627, S/PV.6711, S/PV.6810 and S/PV.7180), our determination to seek justice remains persistent. In fact, tomorrow in The

Hague, Syrian civil society will host members of the international community at their second conference on chemical weapons, at which we will highlight progress in that regard. The collective efforts of Syrian victims, survivors and human rights defenders have led to two historic developments.

First, there are the international arrest warrants for Bashar Al-Assad and others, holding them accountable for their role in the use of chemical weapons in Syria. That marks the first-ever warrant issued by a foreign court against a sitting Head of State for war crimes and crimes against humanity — a groundbreaking precedent.

Secondly, the Working Group to Advance Proposals for International Criminal Accountability for Chemical Weapon Use — the first of its kind, comprising States from nearly every region of the world — came together to say no to impunity.

The political dynamics have also hindered access to aid for millions of Syrians but not our will to act. After last year's earthquakes, it took a week for the United Nations to secure the Syrian Government's permission and approval to open border crossings into north-west Syria — an entire week, when every second counted. During that critical time, our own White Helmets, alongside tens of humanitarian Syrian organizations and voluntary groups, were the only responders. We did our utmost when the United Nations hesitated, despite legal scholars affirming that it had the authority under international law — but politics prevailed.

Then came the Russian vetoes to end cross-border aid altogether, pushing the United Nations towards a consent-based model that grants the Syrian regime power over the delivery of aid across Syria. It is a regime with a track record of deadly sieges, obstructing cross-line aid and tampering with humanitarian convoys, stripping them of life-saving medical supplies. A regime that is notorious for its innovative methods of aid diversion has in practice been granted a de facto veto power over Syrians' right to humanitarian assistance by the Council's politics — so yes, it is all politics.

Yet, on the one issue that requires political resolve and diplomatic ingenuity, the Council remains paralysed — I refer to resolution 2254 (2015). For 13 years, the international community has complicitly politicized every technical aspect of the Syrian conflict, empowering the regime and leading Syria into a political stalemate. Meanwhile, it has depoliticized the conflict's root causes, fuelling calls to normalize

relations with that narcotic regime under the guise of pragmatism and humanitarian necessity. Resolution 2254 (2015), adopted in this very Chamber in 2015, has been systematically undermined by the Council's passive approach to the conflict's political core. Let us not forget that Syria's conflict did not emerge from a vacuum — it began with a regime massacring its own people, the same regime that Council members are thanking today for opening borders and crossing points.

The political process is stalled today and has been reduced to a futile constitutional path. Worse, it is diluted by multiple trajectories, regionally and internationally, aimed at normalizing relations with the regime. It is in that context that Madaniya came into being, a collective of more than 200 organizations, some of whose members and representatives are present with me here today, working across all regions and sectors inside Syria and the diaspora, coming together to reclaim political agency in our civic space. It is not to replace any of the Syrian bodies engaged in the political process, but to assert our rightful role as civic actors in shaping the political future of our country. We propose that we use all leverage to incentivize a genuine political solution.

Two files, early recovery and refugee return, are critical here. While sustainable aid through early recovery is overdue, entrusting the Syrian regime with it undermines efforts for political progress. Council members are tampering with power dynamics on the ground. Members are supposed to be exerting pressure on the regime to cooperate in the political process, not granting it critical files to fortify its grip of power over the lives of Syrians.

Early recovery should build the foundations of a principled State, not restore a criminal regime. Support must invest in building and bridging local institutional infrastructure, including that of Syrian civil society, across all regions. It must be based on a human rights conditionality to rebuild Syria, as a whole, on a foundation of sovereignty and national ownership, claimed by its own people, not by regimes that hold power through the rule of repression and violence.

Similarly, refugee return must be voluntary, safe and dignified. Yet some member States misrepresent forced displacement as voluntary returns, portraying Syria as safe, and using displacement as a tool for normalization. Those fleeing Israeli attacks in Lebanon or deported from neighbouring countries are not "returning home". They are being forcibly displaced. This demands a

nuanced response, ensuring support and protection to those in need, while addressing the root causes so as to create the conditions for voluntary return. And how so? By incentivizing the political process.

I will leave the members of the Council with three messages.

First, members must stop tampering with power dynamics through their passive political approaches. Their inaction is undermining resolution 2254 (2015), empowering war criminals and worsening the situation, not just for us, but for the region, the international order and, ultimately, for them.

Secondly, they must leverage technical files to incentivize political progress and demand irreversible concessions that can push the political process forward. Aid and accountability have been politicized to empower the Syrian regime for too long. It is time that members ask how they can be used to shift power dynamics in favour of the Syrian people.

Finally, they must work with us. We are the stakeholders and the future of Syria. We are the future of Syria. Any political settlement that is concluded at our expense and denies our rights and dignity will inevitably fail, because we will not rest until we claim back our State of citizenship and democracy.

The President: I thank Ms. Abou Zainedin for her briefing.

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

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Before I begin my statement, I would like to express my deep regret that the British presidency, in the vein of the neocolonialism that prevails in London, sought to deliberately politicize our debate. This a genuine provocation. They invited a briefer who is driven solely by complexes, phantom pains and appetite for revenge on her compatriots, who are successfully building their peaceful life under the leadership of the legitimate Syrian Government. We have had an excellent opportunity to see that this particular briefer has no understanding at all of what is really going on in Syria. This demonstrates utmost contempt for the members of the Council and sheer disdain for the principles that are supposed to guide the Security Council in its work. We would like to express our strong protest at this. We are going to demand explanations from the presidency, and we urge them not to forget that the Security Council

is not the private property of a family of stiff-necked Anglo-Saxon neocolonialists who came to believe in their exceptionality.

We thank the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Najat Rochdi, and the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, for providing an overview of the political and humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

It is regrettable to note that Syria, which is a friend of ours, is increasingly being drawn into an expanded confrontation in the Arab-Israeli conflict zone. This has also been confirmed by the reports we have just heard from the briefers. The Israel Defense Forces continue to carry out intensive indiscriminate strikes on civilian infrastructure, including on residential buildings. On November 20, at least 36 people died and more than 50 were injured as the result of an Israeli strike on Palmyra in Syria. On November 14 and 15, Israeli airstrikes killed 15 Syrians, including women and children, and injured 16 in the Mezzeh municipality of the capital and in the Qudsaya suburb.

It is lamentable that, as part of its comprehensive support for West Jerusalem, the United States is using its military contingents in the trans-Euphrates area and Al-Tanf. These contingents are stationed there illegally, under the pretext of combating terrorism. The dismal prospects of this fight are aggravated by the Western countries' approaches to the situation in Idlib, which is under the control of the Council-listed terrorists of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. Washington's policy aimed at maintaining its de facto occupation of vast areas in the north-east of Syria and plundering the country's rich oil, gas and agricultural resources is leading to a further deterioration of the social and economic situation and a reinvigoration of the extremist underground in the Syrian Arab Republic. Thus, according to some reports, the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists have once again stepped up their plans with regard to plotting attacks against Damascus and organizing provocations, including with the use of chemical weapons. As previously, the terrorists are acting on a tip-off by Western intelligence agencies, which have now been joined by the special services of the Kyiv regime.

We remain convinced that the path to the stabilization in the Syrian Arab Republic goes solely through a withdrawal of the foreign military presence, which violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity

of the Syrian Arab Republic, and an end to the airstrikes on Syrian territory.

As the briefers confirmed today, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains extremely dire. More than 70 per cent of the population is in need of assistance. The level of malnutrition has tripled over the past five years, and the cost of living has doubled over the past year alone. Access to water and clean drinking water leaves much to be desired, and the cases of cholera reported in some areas of Syria are yet another source of serious concern. All this is evidence that the country's recovery is fraught with difficulties.

The stream of refugees fleeing Israel's military actions in Lebanon is not encouraging either, and it is putting a huge strain on the Syrian authorities. More than 540,000 Lebanese and Syrians have entered the country in the past two months, most of them heading for Government-controlled territories. That clearly shows that people feel safe where what reigns is the rule of law, not terrorist disorder and anarchy. The figures speak for themselves, no matter how our Western partners try to portray the situation. We welcome the efforts of the Syrian Government and local communities, which are doing everything they can to ensure the basic needs of the new arrivals. Entry rules have been simplified, temporary shelters have been set up and work is under way to provide schooling facilities. Local authorities are helping the United Nations and non-governmental organizations so that they can do their work at the border crossings without hindrance. Regarding the broader humanitarian context, the Syrian authorities clearly want to help all Syrians without exception, including those in non-Government-controlled areas. To that end, Damascus has once again extended the permission to use the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai border crossings until 13 February in order to enable assistance to be brought in from Türkiye. The Bab Al-Hawa crossing also continues to operate.

We call on the relevant humanitarian organizations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Secretariat to take into account Damascus's constructive approach and to step up efforts to provide the necessary assistance, including in the hosting of refugees. It is vital that United Nations entities strengthen their interaction with local authorities and coordinate with them on the ground as much as possible, in full compliance with well-known internationally recognized humanitarian principles. There is no room for politicization when it comes to helping people and

their right to development and a decent life. The work of the United Nations should be based on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, coordination and consent, especially since the Syrian authorities have openly stated their readiness to build cooperation on that very basis and have proved it through their actions.

Unfortunately, we have still seen no breakthroughs from the United Nations in that direction. Cross-line routes for the delivery of humanitarian assistance have still not been established. The work with donors is not producing the needed results, and the humanitarian appeal is only 28 per cent funded. There has been no revision of the Secretariat's disgraceful internal document "Parameters and Principles of United Nations Assistance in Syria", which plays into the Western countries' anti-Damascus narrative. Furthermore, we see that the Secretariat has published its new, highly ambiguous Early Recovery Strategy 2024–2028 for Syria, which, at first glance, bypasses the necessity of obtaining the Syrians' consent to the implementation of relevant projects on the territory of their own country. Instead, the document makes reference to the fact that the United Nations reserves the right to conclude contracts with any local partners and to mobilize funding in two separate funds, one for Government-controlled areas and another for areas that are not under Government control. We have not yet analysed how the Strategy could affect the humanitarian work of the United Nations in Syria and will provide our assessment in due course.

Another aspect directly related to the plight of millions of Syrians is the terrorizing of Syria through the sanctions imposed on the country. We once again call on United Nations representatives not to ignore the negative impact of illegal sanctions on the socioeconomic situation in Syria. In that connection, we invite everyone to participate in the Security Council Arria Formula meeting that Russia is convening on 25 November on the humanitarian consequences of unilateral coercive measures.

Our position on finding a settlement to the Syrian conflict remains unchanged. We advocate strict compliance with the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015), which envisages a political process carried out by the Syrians themselves through United Nations mediation. There can be no alternative to that. We have consistently emphasized the need to maintain a direct inter-Syrian dialogue within the framework of

the Constitutional Committee, whose work remains blocked as a result of the difficulties encountered in selecting a venue for the meetings. We believe that it should be up to the Syrians themselves to choose such a venue, in cooperation with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and in coordination with the Astana guarantor countries, Russia, Iran and Türkiye.

In that connection, we would like to point to the positive outcome of the twenty-second international meeting on Syria in Astana, held on 11 and 12 November with our partners in the Astana process, Iran and Türkiye. The meeting highlighted in particular the leading role of the Astana format in promoting a sustainable and long-term settlement of the Syrian crisis against the backdrop of the escalating tensions in the Middle East. In addition, a regular meeting of the Astana working group on the release of detainees/hostages, handover of bodies and identification of missing persons was also held on the margins of the Astana meeting. We will continue to work with our Astana partners with a view to ensuring a comprehensive stabilization of the situation in Syria and its surrounding areas.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I would like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Abou Zainedin for her powerful and precise presentation. Her remarks will resonate in the Chamber for some time to come. I hope that the Al-Assad regime's puppet masters were listening carefully — and as we have heard, the truth clearly struck a nerve.

The United States remains deeply concerned about the plight of vulnerable individuals, Syrians, Lebanese and others, who have been displaced by the current conflict in Lebanon. We are closely monitoring their well-being and treatment, and we applaud the work of the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian partners that are doing their utmost to provide aid to those in need. At the same time, we are concerned about the ongoing reports of the Al-Assad regime's abuses, including against Syrians displaced from Lebanon, who have faced arbitrary detentions, disappearances, forced conscription and death while in the custody of the regime, reportedly due to torture. We are also concerned about the escalation of Russian-backed attacks in north-west Syria that have killed and injured scores of people. Those human rights violations and abuses demonstrate that the regime, which has a long history of oppression, has not changed its ways

and is seeking to rehabilitate its image by exploiting humanitarian disasters and regional crises.

The reality is that Syria remains unsafe and unsuitable for large numbers of returnees. We have to reject the flawed notion that certain parts of the country are safe for large-scale returns. The best way to enable the voluntary return of refugees is for the Al-Assad regime to create the conditions needed for their return, which will require bold political leadership and inclusive political processes. That includes repealing Syria's Law No. 10, as well as ensuring accountability for the missing and detained, among others. Refugees should not be expected to return until they see a safe future for themselves and their children. In the meantime, we continue to support the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to improve the protection environment in Syria for the more than half a million people who it estimates have crossed from Lebanon since late September. As we continue the important work of helping the most vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, we once again urge other donors to help bridge the significant funding gaps.

It is worth repeating that the United States sanctions programme against the Al-Assad regime contains numerous exemptions and licences designed specifically to facilitate humanitarian assistance, and that we are committed to working with humanitarian partners to mitigate unintended impacts on their programmes. We would also point to resolution 2664 (2022), which established a humanitarian carveout across United Nations sanctions regimes. The resolution was an important step forward to ease the delivery of food, medicine and humanitarian aid to those most afflicted in conflict zones around the globe, while upholding robust sanctions. We are compelled to make that point because the regime and certain Council members falsely claim, on a repeated basis, that United States sanctions are the primary cause of Syrians' economic suffering — when in fact it is the Al-Assad regime's war against its own people, its destruction of Syria and its long-term and pervasive corruption, which benefits only the elites. Separately, we would like to highlight the persistent needs at Al-Hol and Al-Roj displaced persons camps, as well as at the detention facilities in north-east Syria housing former fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. There are still 42,500 displaced persons and 9,000 foreign terrorist fighters currently residing at those camps and facilities. Ultimately, the only long-term, durable solution to the challenges of those displaced

persons camps and detention facilities is the repatriation or return of both displaced and detained persons to their areas or countries of origin. Only there can they be effectively rehabilitated and reintegrated into their communities and, where appropriate, prosecuted.

Turning to the political process, we continue to support Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to advance it. To that end, we reiterate that United States sanctions will remain in place until there is, at a minimum, concrete, measurable progress towards a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We underscore that point again and again, because we want to see an authentic and sustainable political process. We stress once again that the Al-Assad regime must curb the destabilizing activities of Iran and its proxies in the region. It is telling that instead of sitting down with the opposition and forging peace, the regime prefers to lend out its own country to Hizbullah and other terrorists. It is time for Al-Assad to focus on the needs of his own people rather than his sponsors in Tehran, who wish to use Syria as a launching pad. The United States will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself from threats in Syria. In order to prevent further escalation and expansion of conflict in the region, the United States will continue working with its diplomatic partners towards resolving tensions.

And finally, with regard to the charges of some about the Western exploitation of Syrian oil and other natural resources, those allegations are patently false. Syria's natural resources are there for the benefit of the Syrian people. The United States neither seizes nor sells any Syrian oil, wheat or other commodities, including from north-east Syria, where our troops are present. To the contrary, the United States has provided millions of dollars' worth of assistance to communities across north-east Syria, helping them restore essential services, generate livelihoods and build businesses. In fact, it is the regime that owes an explanation to the Syrian people about how its natural resources have been misused. It is they who should explain why the proceeds of the country's sovereign wealth end up not in the hands of average citizens but in Moscow and Tehran. It is they who should explain why virtually any successful business in regime areas gets shaken down for bribes or forcibly sold off to regime cronies.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Najat Rochdi, and the Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division at the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, for their briefings. I also take note of the briefing by Ms. Sawzan Abou Zainedin. Switzerland supports the commitment of civil society representatives to the political process and reconciliation among Syrians.

Committing to peace at all levels is indeed necessary. Switzerland condemns the current escalation of violence and the fact that an increasing number of civilians and civilian objects have been hit by bombings and other attacks throughout Syria. We must put an end to the spiral of violence. Switzerland is committed to ensuring that all parties to the conflict respect their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities. Serious violations of international law in Syria must not go unpunished. Switzerland joins the Special Envoy in calling for the current hostilities in the Middle East and Lebanon not to be extended to its neighbour Syria and for a lasting resolution to the conflict in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We note the recent statements by the guarantor States of the Astana process in favour of such a solution. An early resumption of the work of the Constitutional Committee, as well as the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire, would send a meaningful message to that effect.

Finally, the right to know of the relatives of persons missing as a result of armed conflict is a rule firmly anchored in the Geneva Conventions. It is also an essential element of achieving lasting peace in Syria. The Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria, which is headquartered in Geneva and the mandate of which is strictly humanitarian, must be able to begin its work rapidly, in collaboration with the families of detained and missing persons and all the parties concerned in Syria and at the international level.

After 13 years of conflict, the situation continues to deteriorate. Syrians are paying the price. Unfortunately, as the months go by, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Essential needs such as food insecurity and access to healthcare continue to grow and in the coming months will be exacerbated by the harsh winter. At the same time, the increase in violence throughout the country is making the work of humanitarian actors on the ground a daunting task. In the face of such profound needs, all the modalities of access to people in need — across front lines and borders and within Syria — must be exploited. We welcome the

continuation of United Nations humanitarian operations via the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai crossings, which have been authorized for use for an additional three months. We call on the Syrian Government to extend the authorizations, including that for Bab Al-Hawa, with no time limit, in order to guarantee the predictability required for a full and effective humanitarian commitment, which is an obligation under international humanitarian law. Moreover, Israel's continued military operations in Lebanon have already resulted in more than half a million people fleeing to Syria. Switzerland calls for everything possible to be done to protect them. Those people and the host communities in which they find refuge are extremely vulnerable. To that end, Switzerland calls on the Syrian Government and the main humanitarian actors to provide greater support and protection to both the displaced persons and the host communities. The Syrian population must benefit from unconditional and depoliticized humanitarian aid.

In that regard, I am pleased to confirm that Switzerland's contribution of more than \$1 million to the United Nations inter-agency emergency appeal for Syria, in addition to its regular contribution.

"The world has let us Syrians down twice", said Ismail al-Nasser, a 35-year-old Syrian who fled Syria 13 years ago and Lebanon in October. We have a duty not to abandon them once again.

Mr. Ponikvar (Slovenia): I would like to begin by thanking Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I would also like to thank Ms. Abou Zainedin for her valuable contribution today.

The ongoing tense and violent situation across many fronts in Syria is highly worrisome, especially in combination with the escalation of violence in the wider region, in particular the war in Gaza and the ongoing hostilities in Lebanon. We urge all major stakeholders to redouble their efforts towards regional de-escalation in the interest of long-term peace and stability for all. In the growing regional turmoil, the implications for Syria and Syrians are alarming. Moreover, that is happening on our watch. Once again, tens of thousands of Syrians, many of whom have been displaced multiple times, are fleeing for their lives. Once again, they are being forced to relive a nightmare of displacement, despair and uncertainty. Most of those who are returning to Syria are doing so under adverse conditions and extreme pressure. These people — women and children in particular — are in a situation of acute vulnerability and have immense and urgent needs. In the light of

the situation that is unfolding, we call on the Syrian Government to prioritize the welfare of all people on its territory, without distinguishing between them on religious, sectarian, ethnic or political grounds. Enhancing cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an essential step in ensuring that the humanitarian and protection needs of all are fully met. We also call on the Government and the de facto authorities on the ground to ensure the long-term safety of the returnees.

The Syrian crisis remains one of the world's worst and most enduring humanitarian situations. The current influx of the displaced from Lebanon is putting an additional strain on the response, with almost 17 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. On top of that, 11 months into the year, the Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan is at only 28 per cent, as Ms. Wosornu mentioned earlier. We echo the appeal of humanitarians for an urgent and significant increase in support for the humanitarian efforts in Syria. In addition, in order to cope with the scale of the situation, all forms of aid delivery, including cross-border aid and aid delivered across the front lines, remain crucial. Humanitarian actors need greater predictability to plan their activities, and they must be able to do their work safely. With the situation becoming more dangerous and unpredictable every day, we call on all actors, Syrian and international, including Israel, to comply with international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy's efforts, and we call on the Syrian Government to engage in a political process towards a sustainable and comprehensive political solution, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Mikanagi (Japan): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their informative briefings. I also thank Ms. Abou Zainedin for her very powerful remarks.

The conflict in Lebanon, which has been escalating since September, continues to have a profound impact on Syria, with 540,000 Syrians and Lebanese now reported to have entered the country, 75 per cent of them women and children. In addition, Israel's air strikes on targets inside Syria have escalated, resulting in more civilian casualties. We cannot allow the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon to spill over into the wider region and cause further tragedy. Japan once again calls for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah. We

also urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to work diligently for a diplomatic solution in order to avoid further escalation in the region. Japan has done its utmost to help those in difficulties. On 29 October, in response to the worsening of the situation in Syria as a result of the conflict in Lebanon, the Government of Japan decided to provide a new emergency grant amounting to \$10 million for the provision of humanitarian assistance, such as daily necessities, food, water and sanitation, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme.

Even without the spillover from Lebanon, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains extremely serious. According to the United Nations, contributions to the Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan are only 28 per cent of what was requested. As for the problems caused by the crisis in Lebanon, only 17 per cent of the emergency appeal announced in September has been collected. We continue to call on all donors to provide whatever assistance they can to address the population's urgent needs. If the necessary funds are not raised before winter sets in, the people of Syria could face even harsher conditions. Even as we have to deal with other pressing issues, we must not abandon the Syrian people.

We emphasize that the only solution to the political stalemate in Syria is to advance the Syrian-led and -owned political process. It is regrettable that more than two years have passed since the last meeting of the Constitutional Committee. With people's expectations waning, we strongly urge that the next meeting be held as soon as possible. In that connection, we note that the twenty-second meeting of the Astana process was held on 11 and 12 November in Kazakhstan. We hope that the process will promote confidence-building among the parties concerned. We also note that Special Envoy Pedersen is currently visiting the region, including Damascus, and we hope that meaningful discussions will take place with the stakeholders.

It is unacceptable that the Syrian people's tragic situation is continuing because of a deadlock in the political process. We call on all parties to resolve the conflict through dialogue, so that the flames that are raging in the region can be extinguished and Syrians and other innocent peoples can return to living in peace.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings.

I also thank Ms. Abou Zainedin for sharing her powerful testimony with us today.

The Syrian people, already profoundly vulnerable after enduring 14 years of conflict, need peace, stability and political support more than ever. Yet the region remains on a precipice. Just last week, air strikes in Damascus claimed 15 lives and injured 16 more. Additional reports indicate that at least 36 people were killed in strikes on Palmyra on Wednesday. Air strikes in Lebanon have resulted in the displacement of nearly half a million people across the border into Syria. We have seen reports detailing engineering and construction work along the Alpha Line encroaching on the area of separation. Those are repeated violations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force agreement. Such actions escalate tensions and potentially threaten the viability of that 50-year-old ceasefire.

The humanitarian needs arising from Syria's protracted conflict are immense. More than 16.7 million people, including 7.4 million children, are in urgent and critical need of support. In that context, we are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in north-east Syria, including reported large-scale attacks targeting civilian infrastructure. That has resulted in disruptions to electricity and water supplies, directly affecting civilians. We commend the efforts of the United Nations and its partners in reaching millions across Syria each month. Nevertheless, we regret the chronic underfunding of the humanitarian response plan. Put simply, no further reductions can be made without undermining the ability of the United Nations to respond. Urgent and increased support, particularly in the areas of early recovery, livelihood support and resilience programming, is essential to preserving life and dignity in Syria. We stress the importance of adopting a whole-of-Syria approach in our early recovery to ensure that humanitarian aid is not weaponized by the regime. The most direct routes, both cross-border and cross-line, must be facilitated by all parties for as long as the humanitarian needs persist. That is particularly critical as we approach the harsh winter months. In that regard, we welcomed the renewal of the Bab Al-Hawa crossing in the north for three months.

Implementing resolution 2254 (2015) remains paramount. We deeply regret the continued lack of progress on that front. We once again call for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, to be respected by all parties in the region. Without those

steps, we risk a profound unravelling of the fragile foundation for peace. All parties must cease their prevarications and commit to a resumption of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. Malta reaffirms its strong support for the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and emphasizes the importance of carrying out its mandate in a gender-responsive and survivor-centred manner.

In conclusion, after 14 years of war, Syria's future is now hanging by a thread. Its economy, security and society are in ruins. While millions of Syrian people have fled to nearby Lebanon in that time, fearful of returning, we now see fears of Israeli bombardments forcing nearly half a million to return. That, along with the threat of major conflict in the region, threatens to push Syria into total collapse. We once again reiterate that our responsibility is to stop that from happening — that is the responsibility of the Council. Those with influence over the parties must ensure that Syrian civilians are protected from the devastating consequences of an all-out regional war.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council plus (A3+), namely, Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and my own country, Guyana.

At the outset, the A3+ would like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Najat Rochdi, and Director Edem Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings. We also listened carefully to the representative of civil society.

The escalating tensions in the Middle East are further complicating the path to peace and stability in Syria. Recent developments, including renewed violations of Syria's sovereignty, undermine Syria's fragile stability and exacerbate the suffering of its people. Such actions not only violate international law, but also risk reigniting a devastating cycle of violence and terrorism.

The A3+ is deeply alarmed by those developments and underscores the urgent need for all actors in the region to exercise maximum restraint and prioritize dialogue over confrontation. Syria must be spared further military escalation. The resurgence of terrorism within Syria serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of a comprehensive political solution to the

crisis — one that ensures Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The A3+ reaffirms its unwavering support for a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). In that regard, we emphasize the need to reinvigorate the Constitutional Committee and call on all stakeholders to engage constructively with the Special Envoy to break the current political deadlock. We remain convinced that an inclusive dialogue among Syrians, supported by the international community, is the only viable path to a sustainable and just resolution to this protracted crisis. The A3+ calls on all parties to demonstrate the political will necessary to restore peace and stability in Syria.

The dire humanitarian situation in Syria, exacerbated by the influx of refugees from Lebanon, has left an already estimated 16.7 million people in need, while limited funding resources further hinder efforts to address those challenges. Five hundred and forty thousand people have fled to Syria; a high proportion of them are female-headed households, placing an additional strain on both the Syrian Government and the humanitarian community, which are already struggling to meet their basic needs. The A3+ urges all parties to ensure the security of displaced persons, protect and respect their human rights and create an environment that allows for the free movement of humanitarian organizations, in order to reach the most vulnerable populations.

We express our deep concerns over the insufficient funding for both the humanitarian response plan and the flash appeal, and we call on donors to honour their commitments in that regard. The A3+ welcomes the decision of the Syrian Government to extend for an additional three months the authorization granted to the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to use the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai crossings. In that regard, we underscore the critical importance of all mechanisms, including the cross-border and cross-line mechanisms, for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Syria.

The A3+ has consistently stressed the urgent need of and called for early recovery projects to ensure an effective humanitarian response. Restoring the health system must be a priority, especially in the light of the suspected cholera cases in Al-Hasakah, which highlight the urgent need for action. The A3+ calls on all Member States to engage positively with United Nations efforts to implement an early recovery strategy, including

by lifting unilateral sanctions. The future of Syrians depends on creating an environment conducive to their safe, voluntary and dignified return to their homes.

The Middle East stands at a critical crossroads, and we cannot afford to witness the outbreak of another conflict, particularly in Syria, which has already been ravaged by 13 years of crisis. It is imperative that we all work together to prevent the recurrence of violence in Syria and to find a lasting solution to the crisis that continues to shake the country.

Mrs. Barba Bustos (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for the information provided. We have also taken note of the statement made by the representative of civil society. I welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Türkiye.

On this occasion, I would like to once again address three aspects of concern to my delegation regarding the situation in Syria.

First, with regard to the stalemate in political negotiations and the unwillingness of the parties to explore any alternative scenario, my delegation stresses that the only possible solution to the situation in Syria is political, which is why, now more than ever, the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015) remain valid. The Constitutional Committee, as a comprehensive strategy for dialogue among the Government, the opposition, civil society and other interested countries, must be reactivated without delay. We encourage Special Envoy Pedersen to continue his diplomatic efforts to decide on an alternative venue for the Constitutional Committee.

Secondly, a new humanitarian crisis is taking shape, with an increase in the number of Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese who are being forcibly displaced. Seventy-five percent of the displaced are women, children and persons with disabilities, whose levels of exposure and vulnerability increase in the face of mounting tensions. Those displacements exacerbate the situation faced by the country, in which two out of every three people are in need of humanitarian assistance to survive.

The international community must respond to the United Nations emergency appeal for an additional \$324 million to meet the emerging needs of the humanitarian response plan. The Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai crossings are operational until 13 February 2025. The Syrian Government's commitment in that area must be ongoing in order to ensure the predictability and sustainability of humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, the repercussions of the regional conflict are already exhibiting the feared contagion effect, with the escalation of violence in Syrian territory. My delegation is also concerned about the extreme volatility of the situation in the region and the parties' reluctance to exercise restraint and moderation.

Thirteen years into the Syrian conflict, and after all the efforts of the international community to support an intra-Syrian peacemaking process, it is time to give cooperation a chance; it is the only way to achieve peace and security in Syria, and for peace to spread from there to the entire region.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rochdi and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings and Ms. Abou Zainedin for her very powerful briefing and, above all, for her efforts to help the Syrian people.

After almost 14 years of war and Damascus' refusal to take account of the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, the prospect of a regional conflagration, which could extend to Syria, must be avoided. The current tensions are placing new constraints on the Syrian people, in addition to a resurgence in Da'esh activity, trafficking in Captagon and the continuing violence of the Syrian regime and its supporters against the Syrian population. We have said it over and over again: initiating a credible political process that responds to the aspirations of the Syrian people remains the only way to achieve peace. We reiterate our support for Mr. Geir Pedersen and for the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) in all its aspects. France stands ready to start lifting sanctions and funding reconstruction, provided that there is progress on the political process.

The flight of more than half a million Lebanese and Syrians from Lebanon into Syria reflects the impact of regional tensions. All those people must be given assistance and their safety must be guaranteed. In that regard, France is concerned about the arrests, forced disappearances and other grave violations of the rights of Syrians returning from Lebanon. We must work collectively to put pressure on the Government to remove obstacles to the return of refugees. That is the goal of France's work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The winter will take an even greater toll on a population exhausted by more than 13 years of war, with the cold hitting the most vulnerable hardest. Much of the Syrian

population is in the grip of hunger. Against that backdrop, it is vital to continue funding aid and galvanizing efforts to ensure that it is delivered. France has been funding a World Food Programme pilot project in 2024 aimed at making affordable bread available to 250,000 people in the north-west. In that connection, we underscore that the cross-border delivery of aid is vital and urge the Syrian Government to authorize the use of the Bab Al-Salam, Al-Rai and Bab Al-Hawa crossings without imposing time limits. At the same time, it is essential to pursue efforts for aid to be delivered across the front lines. France reiterates that international humanitarian law is binding on all actors and throughout Syria.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I also want to express particular gratitude to Ms. Abou Zainedin for her testimony, which was truly inspiring.

It is deeply worrisome that the security situation in Syria has further worsened since the last briefing (see S/PV.9759). The escalation over the past week, including intense air strikes in Damascus, north-east Syria and Palmyra, shows no sign of abating. In that context, I would like to make three points.

First, we reiterate our call for all parties to recommit to the political process outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). While Syria's security landscape is deeply interconnected with regional dynamics, the political process under the resolution remains the only agreed framework for achieving sustainable peace in the country. Accordingly, we urge all parties to uphold the principles enshrined in the resolution, including the preservation of territorial integrity and the protection of the rights of all Syrians.

Secondly, we call on Syria to provide answers to the families of missing and arbitrarily detained persons regarding their fate. Ensuring the human rights of all Syrians is more crucial than ever, particularly considering the anticipated arrival of more refugees from Lebanon. Yet despite the time that has passed, progress on the critical issue of detained and missing persons remains limited. In that context, we acknowledge the recent report of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP), which outlines the IIMP's notable achievements since its establishment last April. We commend the IIMP for its steadfast efforts in clarifying the fate of missing persons through extensive outreach and engagement. However, it is deeply concerning that it

has not yet appointed a Head, despite being operational for six months. We reiterate our call for the immediate appointment of a leader, which would serve as a vital confidence-building measure and give impetus to Special Envoy Pedersen's step-for-step approach.

Thirdly, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria demands immediate and long-term responses. A cholera outbreak, alarming food insecurity and the approaching winter underscore the urgent need for the international community to address the funding shortfall, only 28 per cent of which has currently been met. In that context, the Republic of Korea has contributed \$26 million to support Syrian refugees in the region and urges other donor countries to act swiftly to help mitigate the escalating crisis. Furthermore, the fact that the humanitarian crisis in Syria has lasted for more than a decade highlights the great need for sustainability and resilience in our efforts. In that regard, we commend the launch by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Early Recovery Strategy 2024–2028, which represents a critical step towards fostering the country's long-term recovery.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on all parties to urgently cease hostilities, protect civilians at all costs and recommit to a political solution that ensures lasting peace, security and prosperity in Syria.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings.

In the past month Israel has continued to carry out air strikes against Syria, causing heavy casualties. Israel's actions are a serious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. China strongly condemns those actions, which must cease immediately. The protracted conflict in Gaza and the escalating situation between Lebanon and Israel have plunged the entire region into turmoil. Against that backdrop, the international community must work together effectively to prevent the conflict from spreading further, which would lead to an even graver disaster. China calls on the parties concerned to respect Syria's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and immediately cease their illegal military operations against it. Foreign forces must end their illegal military presence in Syria without delay.

The recent mounting tensions between Lebanon and Israel have resulted in an influx of more than 500,000

refugees into Syria, further exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation there. China commends the positive steps that United Nations agencies have taken as part of their efforts to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to those in need. We welcome the Syrian Government's decision to extend its authorization of the use of the relevant border crossings and commend its efforts to make suitable arrangements to host refugees. We call on the parties to respond positively to the urgent appeals by humanitarian agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for scaling up humanitarian aid for Syria, honouring donor pledges in a timely manner and ensuring that humanitarian projects in Syria can proceed smoothly so as to alleviate its humanitarian situation. China reiterates that certain countries' unilateral sanctions on Syria should be lifted without delay and that the illegal plundering of Syrian resources should cease immediately so as to create favourable conditions for the recovery and growth of the country's economy.

China firmly supports the general direction of a political solution to the Syrian issue and the comprehensive facilitation of a political process in line with the principle of a process that is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. We welcome Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts, which are consistent with that principle. We look forward to seeing coordination among various existing mechanisms for dialogue and the promotion of a political solution on the basis of communication and consultation with the Syrian Government. China firmly supports the Syrian Government's counter-terrorism efforts and calls on the international community to reject double standards, in accordance with international law and the Council's resolutions, and to join forces in a spirit of zero tolerance so as to support the Syrian Government in combating terrorist forces on its territory.

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

I thank Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I would also like to thank Sawsan Abou Zainedin for her incredibly powerful testimony today.

As we heard from Ms. Abou Zainedin today, there is a vibrant community of civil society actors who stand ready to support the Syrian political process, accountability efforts and humanitarian work, with dynamism and tenacity. Where members of the Council have failed to back draft resolutions submitted in the

interest of the Syrian people, civil society actors have stepped in, creatively unblocking issues that regrettably have become politicized. I commend their tireless work to advocate on behalf of Syrians for a better and peaceful Syria, but particularly to lend a voice to those who cannot speak up for fear of the regime. The work of civil society organizations such as Madaniya serves as an important reminder of why so many Syrians took to the streets in 2011 and continue to protest peacefully for change.

Let me be clear: we remain firm in our pursuit of a political settlement, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We urge all parties to recommit to the political process. However, if we are to achieve lasting peace, we must make sure that it empowers ordinary Syrians rather than the regime and its backers. We must actively involve and consult civil society, and I encourage all members to listen to their fresh ideas.

In the absence of a political settlement and amid the regional escalation, the security situation in Syria is as dangerous as ever. Syrians continue to experience horrific levels of violence. As people flee from Lebanon into Syria, displaced civilians must be protected and given safe passage — not only when they use border crossings, which have been subjected to air strikes, but also once they are inside Syria, which remains unsuitable for safe, dignified and voluntary returns at scale. We acknowledge that Syrian authorities have allowed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and others to monitor arrivals and respond to needs. We are closely monitoring the treatment of those civilians in Syria, including the deeply concerning reports of arrests. All parties must do everything possible to protect civilians and fully comply with international humanitarian law.

Finally, to respond to the remarks of our Russian colleague about briefers, we invite civil society briefers to the Council to provide a civilian perspective, speak truth to power and hold us all to account, no matter how uncomfortable that may feel. Representing an organization that consults across a wide group of more than 200 civil society organizations within and outside Syria, Ms. Abou Zainedin has done precisely that today.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli occupation entity, emboldened

by the Security Council's inability to fulfil its responsibilities, continues its brutal aggression against the countries and peoples of our region. It continues to intensify its heinous attacks on my country's territory, targeting buildings and residential neighbourhoods that host diplomatic missions and premises and United Nations offices on an almost daily basis. The Israeli occupation entity also targets economic facilities and civilian infrastructure, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of innocent civilians, including women and children, and causing massive destruction and financial losses to public and private properties. The occupation entity is deliberately targeting border crossings, roads and bridges that connect Syria and Lebanon and are used by hundreds of thousands of people from Lebanon fleeing the Israeli killing machine.

In a flagrant violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, Israeli occupation forces continue their aggression against Syrian territory from the occupied Syrian Golan. Recently, they dug trenches and erected earthen embankments along the ceasefire line in the northern and southern sections of the separation zone. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has investigated engineering activities by the Israeli occupation forces, including the digging of a trench 350 metres long and six metres wide, as well as other violations, such as agricultural land clearing and road construction. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has informed the Secretariat of those violations and UNDOF has reported them. Today we once again warn of the danger posed by such Israeli acts of aggression, which are aimed at creating a new reality in the region. We expect the Security Council to take prompt and decisive action to stop those acts of aggression and put an end to all the violations and crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces against Syrian territory.

The most recent crime was perpetrated yesterday, when the Israeli occupation entity committed a horrific crime by launching an air strike from the Al-Tanf area, where United States troops are illegally present, targeting several buildings in the city of Palmyra in the Syrian desert, leading to 36 martyrs and injuring dozens of people, with significant material damage to the targeted buildings and the surrounding area. My country, Syria, reaffirms its inherent right to defend its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and to reclaim its occupied territories through all the means affirmed by international law.

The escalation in Israeli acts of aggression on Syrian territory coincides with an intensification of attacks by terrorist organizations, especially Jabhat Al-Nusra/Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which is listed by the Security Council. That is a clear indication of the organic ties and close collaboration between those terrorist groups and the Israeli entity in committing criminal acts, including the shelling of civilians with drones and rockets in north-west Syria. Those groups also continue to impose their extremist ideologies and killing practices, in addition to being responsible for torture, enforced disappearances, child recruitment and violence against women and girls, while taking advantage of the support they receive from some Western countries.

The United States and Türkiye continue to violate Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the Charter of the United Nations and international law by insisting on maintaining their illegal military presence on Syrian soil. Simultaneously, they support separatist and terrorist groups and steal Syria's national resources, at the expense of the Syrian people. My country, Syria, stresses the need to respect its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and emphasizes the need to immediately and unconditionally end any illegal military presence on Syrian territory.

The brutal Israeli aggression on brotherly Lebanon has led to a massive wave of displacement. Syria opened its doors and mobilized its resources to welcome hundreds of thousands of displaced Lebanese brothers, returning Syrians and third-country nationals. To date, more than 600,000 people have entered Syria, 71 per cent of whom are Syrians. In collaboration with the United Nations and its agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian partners and civil society organizations, the Syrian Government continues to provide those people with the necessary services, despite the country's significant challenges and difficult circumstances. Syria calls on others to support our humanitarian response efforts by providing adequate funding and fulfilling the relevant appeals launched by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

The large numbers of Syrian returnees from Lebanon to Syria and the multi-faceted facilities that the Syrian Government has provided for them — as we have repeatedly explained, but to which some have

turned deaf ears — prove unequivocally that the Western claims about the issue of the return of Syrian refugees are false. It is high time that they stopped repeating such allegations, which are detached from reality and conditioned by outdated and politicized intentions. Syria remains committed to improving the humanitarian and living conditions for all Syrians across the country. To that end, the Government has renewed the authorization for the United Nations to use the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai crossings for an additional three months to ensure that aid reaches its intended civilian beneficiaries in north-west Syria.

My country emphasizes the need to support the resilience of all Syrians, including returnees, through serious and tangible engagement in implementing early-recovery projects, livelihood initiatives and the provision of essential services, and to end the adverse effects of the so-called “Parameters and Principles of United Nations Assistance in Syria,” known as the Feltman paper, a document that is highly antagonistic, contradicts basic humanitarian principles and deprives the neediest, particularly women and children, of the right to adequate living conditions. Syria also stresses the need for the full, immediate and unconditional lifting of the unilateral, inhumane, immoral and illegal coercive measures that collectively punish Syrians and deprive them of their most basic needs. The final communiqué of the joint Arab-Islamic Summit, hosted by our sister nation of Saudi Arabia a few days ago, stressed the Arab and Islamic countries’ strong condemnation of the Israeli aggression against Syria. It also called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities, take necessary and decisive measures to end the occupation’s crimes and implement its relevant resolutions in order to end Israel’s occupation of Arab lands, including the Syrian Arab Golan.

I would also like to highlight the twenty-second international meeting on Syria of the guarantors of the Astana process, held in Kazakhstan on 11 and 12 November. The final communiqué reaffirmed Astana’s firm commitment to Syria’s sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity. It also pledged to continue joint efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, while opposing separatist agendas aimed at undermining Syria’s sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and condemning the repeated Israeli attacks on Syrian lands. Syria reiterates its commitment to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, without any foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. We

reaffirm that we will continue to cooperate and engage in dialogue with the Special Envoy, within his mandate as a facilitator. He is currently in Damascus and will soon hold discussions at the Foreign Ministry.

In conclusion, we regret that this month’s presidency of the Security Council did not respect the procedures for conducting the Council’s work and meetings, instead using it to serve its own agenda and to attempt to offend a Member State, for the obvious purpose of obscuring the praise that we have heard from many delegations and United Nations representatives for the Syrian Government’s efforts, whether regarding its reception of returnees from Lebanon, the extension of its authorization of the crossings or its continued daily work.

The second objective is also well-known. It is to cover up Israel’s crimes and aggression against countries in the region and the support that some countries in the Council provide to Israel. As we saw yesterday (S/PV.9790), the United States vetoed draft resolution S/2024/835, which was submitted by the 10 elected members of the Security Council and supported by 14 countries. That draft resolution would have stopped the Israeli aggression, protected the rights of the Palestinian people and saved lives. The goal of the veto was clear.

In Syria, we have hundreds and thousands of civil society organizations and courageous volunteers working day and night in partnership with the Syrian Government, State institutions and the United Nations. We are proud of them as we work together to improve the humanitarian and living situations of Syrians and provide them and those coming from our brother country of Lebanon with the support they need. They are working day and night at the borders to provide all necessary services according to the capacities available and despite the serious challenges they are facing. Unfortunately, their efforts are being obscured, and they are unable to brief the Council on the challenges they face on a daily basis owing to the politicization of humanitarian work, the lack of funding and the coercive measures instituted against my country — a collective punishment that is depriving Syrians of their most basic rights, including electricity, due to coercive measures and the fact that the United States is constantly looting our oil and fuel. That deprives Syrians of their wheat crops, stolen by the United States. Those are facts. But the Council does not invite briefings from the people who work on the ground and in the humanitarian field on

Syrian territory. It promotes a single, selective vision, an unacceptable practice that reflects the politicization of the Council's work by the current presidency in a selective approach that is neither credible nor objective.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in Syria remains dire, exacerbated by Israel's escalating violence and aggression across the region. In coordination with terrorist groups, the Israeli occupying regime is deliberately pursuing a systematic policy aimed at crippling the infrastructure of the Syrian Arab Republic. The relentless air strikes and systematic acts of aggression by that regime on Syrian territory have reached unprecedented levels, targeting civilians and critical infrastructure. Those criminal acts flagrantly violate Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Regrettably, Israel's impunity is perpetuated by the unwavering support it receives from the United States, as well as the inaction of the Security Council, as evidenced by yesterday's veto by the United States of draft resolution S/2024/835. That disgraceful veto not only highlights the Security Council's failure to uphold its Charter-based mandate but also serves as a United States-granted licence for the occupying regime to continue its carnage in Gaza and Lebanon with full impunity. That has undermined humanitarian efforts and poses a grave threat to regional and global peace. We reiterate once again our call on the Security Council to act decisively to end Israeli impunity. The Council must hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and ensure the protection of civilians. If left unchecked, Israel's ongoing crimes risk igniting a catastrophic war with global repercussions.

As highlighted in today's briefing, the humanitarian needs in Syria remain immense. Years of foreign occupation, terrorism and unilateral sanctions have devastated Syria's economy. The United States and its allies persist in their failed policy of inhumane unilateral sanctions, using them as a tool for the collective punishment of the Syrian people. Those actions are both illegal and morally indefensible and must be lifted immediately. Meanwhile, the United States and certain European countries, such as the United Kingdom, are politicizing humanitarian aid and obstructing international efforts to support Syria's reconstruction. Those harmful policies have only prolonged the conflict and exacerbated the suffering of the Syrian people.

Furthermore, Israel's relentless strikes on border crossings between Syria and Lebanon have disrupted critical aid deliveries and forced hundreds of thousands to flee. More than 500,000 people have sought refuge in Syria from Lebanon, placing overwhelming strains on Syria's already overstretched resources and host communities. The humanitarian response to that crisis demands urgent and substantial international support.

Despite those immense challenges, the Syrian Government continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience. We commend its steadfast efforts to mobilize resources to assist refugees, including those recently displaced from Lebanon. We also welcome the Syrian Government's decision to extend the permission for the Bab Al-Salam and Al-Rai border crossings for an additional three months to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in north-west Syria. That decision underscores Syria's commitment to alleviating the suffering of its people, despite external pressures. The international community must increase its support for Syria to address the urgent needs of refugees. Early-recovery projects are essential for rebuilding infrastructure and creating conditions for the safe return of refugees and displaced persons. Terrorism remains a significant threat in Syria — particularly in Idlib, where terrorist groups continue to operate. Addressing that threat requires full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Iran remains firmly committed to the Astana process, which provides a viable framework for resolving the crisis. During the twenty-second meeting in the Astana format held in Kazakhstan on 11 and 12 November, the parties reviewed the recent developments in Syria and reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. They underscored that adherence to those principles is essential for achieving lasting peace and stability in Syria and the broader region. Iran reaffirms its commitment to a political resolution of the Syrian crisis. A political solution that is led and owned by Syrians is the only viable path to resolving the Syrian crisis. Any sustainable solution must fully uphold Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, end the illegal presence of foreign forces, particularly United States forces, halt the exploitation of Syria's natural resources and end the ongoing support of the United States and Israel for terrorist groups. Iran fully supports the resumption of meetings of the Constitutional Committee to advance meaningful political dialogue. We also welcome the Special

Envoy's active engagement with the Syrian authorities, particularly his current visit to Damascus, as a vital step towards fostering progress in the political process. The Syrian people deserve peace, dignity and the opportunity to rebuild their nation free from external interference. Through collective efforts, we can restore peace and stability in Syria and in the region.

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

Mrs. Güven (Türkiye): Syria remains a central and painful chapter in the ongoing crises affecting the Middle East. While the focus often shifts to emerging crises, the unresolved situation in Syria continues to demand the urgent attention of the international community. The situation in the broader region has worsened the humanitarian crisis and triggered mass displacement. Since the recent escalation of hostilities and Israel's destabilizing actions across the region, we have seen a sharp increase in displacement to Syria. More than half a million people have crossed from Lebanon into Syria, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Alarming, 71 per cent of those displaced are Syrians, with women and children making up the majority — children alone represent more than half of them. In such dire circumstances, the international community must shoulder its responsibilities, yet humanitarian efforts remain underfunded.

As Ms. Wosornu warned, the United Nations humanitarian response plan faces critical funding shortfalls that threaten the ability to deliver life-saving assistance. Donors must step up to avoid any further cuts to funding and support early-recovery efforts. The uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid remains vital — particularly in view of the new waves of migration, which bring an additional strain. Türkiye is fully committed to facilitating those efforts and will continue to ensure assistance reaches those in need.

Türkiye is fully committed to Syria's unity and territorial integrity. Yet Syria's already bleak humanitarian and political situation has been further aggravated by terrorism. The presence of terrorist organizations in Syria undermines the country's unity and territorial integrity, while posing a direct threat to Türkiye's national security. No country can stand idly by in the face of repeated terrorist attacks against its territory and people. Indeed, the deadly terror attack in

Ankara on 23 October underscored the urgent need to root out terrorist elements in Syria. The terrorists, who are members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)/People's Protection Units (YPG)/Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), infiltrated Türkiye from Syrian territory. I would like to emphasize that Türkiye is entitled to take appropriate measures against that direct and imminent threat in accordance with its inherent right to self-defence. Türkiye's counter-terrorism operations exclusively target terrorists and their capabilities and the utmost care is accorded to avoid any harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. We will continue to counter the efforts of terrorist members of the PKK/YPG/SDF against our country. A truly unified effort is needed to combat terrorism in all its forms, without distinction. Eliminating those threats is a prerequisite for achieving stability in Syria and the region.

The escalating violence in the Middle East threatens to engulf Syria further. It is imperative to insulate Syria from additional destabilizing actions and work collectively towards a stable and peaceful future. Türkiye is fully committed to that call. We envision a Syria in which a real and sustainable national consensus can be achieved, with the international community playing a constructive role; a unified security structure can be achieved; the safe and dignified return of displaced Syrians is guaranteed; and regional peace is not undermined by the export of instability to neighbouring countries. Those objectives cannot be realized without the removal of all terrorist elements, including Da'esh and PKK/YPG from Syrian territory.

Equally, the political process must be revitalized in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Current developments should not distract us from that ultimate goal. We continue our efforts in the Astana format, among others. We also support the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to reconvene the Constitutional Committee.

The Syrian conflict continues to inflict immeasurable suffering. The international community must remain steadfast in its commitment to Syria. My country stands ready to support all initiatives aimed at achieving a credible political solution. We will continue to work with United Nations agencies and relevant stakeholders to address the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

The meeting rose at noon.