

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 28 May 2021 from the President of the Security Council
addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent
Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway (on behalf of Ireland and Norway), Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the videoconference on “The situation in the Middle East (Syria)” convened on Wednesday, 26 May 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council ([S/2020/372](#)), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**
President of the Security Council



Annex I

Briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen

Let me start by highlighting the grave situation of ordinary Syrians. It is a tragic irony that this time of relative calm, compared with earlier years of the conflict, is also a period of immense and growing humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people. It is a time of economic destitution, pandemic, displacement, detention and abduction – all while violent conflict, terrorism and human rights abuses continue. These are the issues that are of deepest concern to Syrians today, that demand our attention, and on which a political process must deliver.

The military situation is relatively calm in some areas, with front lines frozen and Russian mediation helping to de-escalate fighting in Qamishli. But recurring signs of a hot conflict are abundant:

- Spikes in mutual shelling and three air strikes in the north-west
- A cross-line raid into Syrian Government-held territory
- More shelling in and around Afrin and Ayn Issa
- The south-west as tense and turbulent as ever
- More air strikes attributed to Israel in Qunaytirah, Ladhikiyah and Hama
- Reports of rockets launched from southern Syria towards the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan
- More attacks by Security Council-listed terrorist groups, including operations claimed by ISIL

The economic situation for most Syrians has hardly improved. The Syrian pound has stabilized to some extent, including against a backdrop of new Syrian Government measures. But the prices of essential goods and transportation costs are increasingly beyond the grasp of many Syrians. Basic services such as water, electricity and health remain compromised in many areas.

In short, we see the same suffering and the same pattern of events and dynamics month on month – a pattern which, I fear, is slowly inching Syrians towards an even deeper abyss.

The solutions remain unchanging too. What is required is a Syrian-led and -owned political solution, facilitated by the United Nations and backed by constructive international diplomacy. There are several things on which we have to work:

- We need a lasting nationwide ceasefire, building on the existing calm brought about by international arrangements and understandings between key international actors.
- It is important to combat Security Council-listed terrorist groups, through an approach that is effective, cooperative and inclusive of all relevant actors, and which upholds the principles of international law and prioritizes the protection of civilians.
- The humanitarian situation is dire and must be addressed with urgency. I am sure that Under-Secretary-General Lowcock will elaborate on this in his intervention – including flaring coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in some quarters, water cuts and restrictions, and low water levels in the Euphrates, impacting millions of Syrians. Let me also stress, as he will, the fundamental importance of full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of

Syria, through intensified cross-line and cross-border deliveries. As the Secretary-General told the General Assembly, a large-scale cross-border response for an additional 12 months remains essential to save lives. I appeal for the members of the Council to focus on achieving consensus to that end.

- It is important to avoid and mitigate any humanitarian effects of sanctions that could exacerbate the plight of ordinary Syrians, for example by overcompliance – something that needs to be worked on.
- A key priority must be unblocking progress on detainees, abductees and missing persons, including through unilateral releases and meaningful action regarding the missing, at a scale commensurate with the scope of this tragic issue. I have recently engaged the Syrian Government again, seeking information on the latest presidential decree of 2 May and proposing several concrete steps that could be taken on various aspects of this crucial file. We will continue to pursue that discussion.
- Steps are needed that can create a safe, calm and neutral environment inside of Syria.
- A conducive environment is required for refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes, safely, voluntarily and with dignity.
- We must continue to work for the meaningful participation of Syrian women in the political process.
- We must also facilitate the involvement of a wider range of Syrians, including Syrian civil society, in the process.
- Constructive and comprehensive international diplomacy on Syria is essential, so that all of the key stakeholders, with the influence and authority to promote progress towards peace in Syria, can be at the same table.
- This can help in developing a step-for-step approach, so that those international stakeholders, and Syrian parties too, can overcome their mistrust by laying out and agreeing precise, realistic packages of mutual and reciprocal steps to be taken, with parallel implementation and verification.

These are all well-known elements that, if realized, would help to implement my mandate, Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

A credible Syrian-led and Syrian-owned Constitutional Committee, under the facilitation of the United Nations, is an important component of a wider process. I continue to facilitate efforts to hold a sixth session of the small body of the Committee. Such a session needs to be carefully prepared, built on assurances that it adheres to and implements the terms of reference and core rules of procedure. It needs to restore and build some trust and confidence, and produce results and continued progress on the Committee's mandate to prepare and draft, for popular approval, a constitutional reform.

The Co-Chair of the Syrian Negotiation Commission communicated his acceptance of my 15 April compromise bridging proposal on 28 April. The Co-Chair nominated by the Government of Syria sent his formal response on 5 May. Deputy Special Envoy Matar will be travelling to Damascus in the coming days to pursue a clear understanding on my compromise proposal. We will, of course, brief the middle third list when we reach such an understanding. The United Nations remains ready to convene a further session in Geneva as soon as a clear understanding is in place.

As provided for in resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), a political process for a solution to the conflict would include free and fair elections, in accordance with a new constitution, administered under United Nations supervision to the highest

international standards of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate.

We take note that, today, a presidential election is being held under the auspices of the current constitution. As indicated previously, this is not part of the political process called for in Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). The United Nations is not involved in this election and has no mandate to be involved. The United Nations continues to stress the importance of a negotiated political solution in Syria to implement resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). This remains the only sustainable path to ending the conflict and the suffering of the Syrian people.

It is a source of regret that, despite our best efforts, there has been little progress this month, and indeed at all, in advancing the different dimensions of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

The broad contours of a political solution to the conflict are well understood by key stakeholders, yet none is willing to take the first step. If we continue like this, if key players are more invested in conflict management than conflict resolution, I fear that Syria will become another protracted conflict, lasting generations.

As recent weeks have shown, unresolved conflicts tend to explode in ways that we cannot predict. There are great dangers in not seizing the opportunity that the current period affords us. Despite the many catastrophes that Syrians face, there is relatively more calm on the ground than there has been in previous years. There is a shared sense that no one can dictate the conflict's outcome. And there are common interests in many key areas.

Syria needs serious attention so that we can build on this dynamic. As I continue my efforts to get the Constitutional Committee back on track, I will also be continuing a series of consultations with key stakeholders to look at ways to narrow the differences among them, particularly on a new form of constructive international diplomacy and a step-for-step approach. As I said to you last month, I believe that more and more players are receptive to this idea and want to see if it can be operationalized. I am convinced that it can.

In the meantime, we continue to benefit from our engagement with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board following their meeting in Geneva from 26 to 29 April.

We will also continue to consult the widest range of Syrian voices, communities, groups and parties from all areas of the country. Just this past month, we consulted some 200 Syrian civil society representatives through the Civil Society Support Room. Our interlocutors remain steadfast in their demand for an end to the conflict and to the suffering of the Syrian people.

I count on the support of this Council. I remain open to your advice. And I hope that our joint efforts can bring about a lasting political settlement for Syria that meets the legitimate aspirations of its people and fully restores its sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, in line with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

Annex II

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock

Complementing what Geir Pedersen, the Special Envoy for Syria, has just told the Council, I will cover four points today: first, the key water shortages in the north-east; second – again, as Mr. Pedersen began to describe – the ongoing economic crisis; third, the protection of civilians; and fourth, humanitarian access.

Let me start with the water situation. We have not covered this in detail in my previous briefings to the Council, but there are a number of problems affecting the humanitarian situation now which I thought we should draw to the attention of Council members.

Reduced water levels in the Euphrates since January reached a critical point this month.

The Tishrin dam in north-eastern Aleppo Governorate was receiving around 180 m³ of water per second. That is less than half of the minimum amount it takes to keep the dam operational. And the low water flow prompted a partial closure, which caused electricity blackouts across north-east Syria.

The Tabaqah dam, which lies downstream in Raqqah Governorate, has been drawn on as an emergency backup, but water levels there are now 80 per cent depleted.

Engineers operating the Tishrin dam last week warned of a complete shutdown if water levels do not increase.

Nearly 5.5 million people in Syria rely on the Euphrates and its tributaries for drinking water. There are about 200 water stations which pump, treat and deliver the water to those people. Those stations cannot function without electricity from the Tishrin and Tabaqah dams.

In addition to the water pumping stations, some 3 million people would lose their electricity if the dams were to shut down, as would hospitals and other vital infrastructure across the north-east.

A total shutdown of the Tishrin dam could cause internal flooding and long-term damage. Wide-ranging knock-on impacts on agricultural production and public health would also be inevitable.

Crop forecasts for this year are already poor, as Syria is suffering the effects of a drought. Below-average rainfall in the north-east has left wheat and barley fields reliant on irrigation, for which water is short.

The north-east was previously responsible for 70 per cent of Syria's wheat and barley production. If this year's crops fail, food insecurity – which, as you know, is already at historic highs – will deteriorate further.

Preventing a shutdown of the Tishrin and Tabaqah dams requires dams in Turkey to release a minimum of 500 m³ of water per second.

However, Turkey has been experiencing water shortages of its own. So we would urge all concerned to find a solution that sustainably addresses the needs of everyone in the region who depends on water from the Euphrates. There have been some reports that, in the last few days, the amount of water released downstream has increased. And I think that demonstrates that a solution to this set of problems can indeed be found.

At the Uluk water station, which I brief the Council on very frequently, and which is also powered by electricity from the Tishrin dam, water pumping remains

limited. Water levels are insufficient to reach most of the population that the station ordinarily serves, including all those people in Hasakah city and at the Hawl camp.

On 23 May, technical teams secured one-off access to repair a sudden pipeline leak, but they are still not being granted regular and consistent access to the station.

My next point is on the humanitarian impact of the economic crisis.

The Syrian pound remains at over 3,000 to the dollar, and food prices, partly as a consequence, remain at historically high levels.

More than two in five households – more than 40 per cent – report not having sufficient, or sufficiently nutritious, food.

Nealy half of the Syrian families who were surveyed in April said that adults are eating less themselves so that the children in the family can be fed.

Fuel shortages also continue across Syria. Protests in Hasakah against an increase in fuel and cooking gas prices announced by de facto authorities in the north-east last week were met with excessive force, leading to the deaths of at least five civilians, including a child. The decision to increase prices was subsequently overturned.

My next point is on protection.

Following the artillery strikes on the Atarib Surgical Hospital on 21 March, which we briefed the Council about previously, the hospital remains largely out of action, even though staff have gone back to work. Before the attack, the hospital was carrying out over 200 consultations and procedures a day. That number has dropped to around 50. Potential patients are worried about another attack, so they are reluctant to go to the hospital.

This is one of the longer-term consequences of attacks on health-care facilities. Those attacks instil fear in the civilian population, which discourages them from seeking health-care services, even though many are in desperate need of them.

As the Secretary-General says in his latest report, attacks directed against civilian objects like hospitals must be investigated. Impunity must end.

Security problems continue at Hawl. Six murders have been reported since April, and 46 since January.

Some Syrian and non-Syrian nationals are leaving the camp. More than 10,000 people have left since June 2019.

But more than 60,000 remain, and they are living in unacceptable conditions.

I have raised this issue with the Council nearly every month for years now. I am regularly told how complex and intractable the situation is. But the truth is that those who could solve the problem have simply decided not to.

So let me remind the Council again that this is a camp of children. Most of the people there are younger than 12. Almost 14,000 of them are younger than five – babies and toddlers. They do deserve a future.

My next point is on humanitarian access.

The United Nations has not been able to deliver aid to Rukban since September 2019, nor have we been able to conduct assessments. Such reports that do reach us from the camp paint a dismal picture of malnourishment, disease, and virtually no services apart from water.

Efforts continue to facilitate the departure of those who wish to leave to go to government areas, and to identify alternative solutions for those who wish to remain, while also continuing to seek access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance,

including vaccinations. It would be nice, finally after so long, to see those access efforts succeed.

The north-east of Syria continues to lack essential health supplies, including to prevent, test and treat coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infections.

And the virus is spreading again. After a 57 per cent increase in confirmed cases last month, recorded deaths from COVID-19 have increased by nearly 50 per cent.

As in other parts of Syria, extremely limited testing means that we are probably only recording a fraction of the true number of infections.

Non-governmental organizations operating in the north-east have been clear in their assessment that the loss of the cross-border authorization for use by the United Nations in Ya'rubiyah has left the region woefully underserved in health services.

A first batch of vaccines from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility has been airlifted by the World Health Organization (WHO) from Damascus to Qamishli this month. It is due to cover 9,000 health workers. Vaccinations started earlier this week.

But this is, of course, a drop in the ocean. Vaccinations in all parts of the country need to be radically increased for Syria to overcome the virus.

My final point relates to humanitarian access to north-west Syria.

The Security Council authorization for United Nations cross-border assistance into the north-west expires in just over six weeks. A failure to extend it would immediately end direct cross-border deliveries by the United Nations.

That means that food deliveries for 1.4 million people every month, millions of medical treatments, nutrition assistance for tens of thousands of children and mothers, educational supplies for tens of thousands of students – all of those things would stop.

Other crucial support that the United Nations provides to water and sanitation, health, camp management and other services would also end, along with the United Nations ability to channel approximately \$300 million in annual financing for operations to local partners on the ground.

The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, which verifies the humanitarian nature of all United Nations deliveries, would shut down. The result would be a smaller, more fragmented operation of non-United Nations actors which would be less transparent and less accountable.

As Mr. Zhang Zun knows, I am regularly asked about the status of cross-line assistance into the north-west.

And the Council knows that we have worked for months to find an arrangement for cross-line missions that all parties can agree to. Consultations continue, and I am now more hopeful that an agreement can be reached, at least for an initial set of convoys.

Meanwhile, 1,000 trucks packed with aid are crossing into the north-west through Bab al-Hawa every month. That is important, albeit far from enough.

As I have said before, with more money and more authorized crossings, we can provide more help. That remains true for the north-west, as it does for the north-east.

Ahead of the expiry of the resolution last year, we appealed strongly for an early decision to limit the uncertainty that agencies must operate in. Mr. Pedersen has issued his own appeal to the Council again today.

Without a decision so close to the expiry of the resolution, we must prepare, just like last year, for a worst-case scenario, so agencies have started pre-positioning supplies on the Syrian side of the border to draw on should access be cut.

We are also planning that the number of trucks crossing through Bab al-Hawa will increase to somewhere between 1,100 and 1,200 next month in order to help with the pre-positioning on that side.

But let me be clear that pre-positioning can only provide a very limited, short-term buffer. And owing to the low levels of funding of the operation this year, that buffer will be much smaller than it was last year.

So, to repeat again, and as the Secretary-General has said, as Mr. Pedersen has just told the Council and as I have said many times, we want to see both more cross-line and more cross-border assistance. The cross-border operation – which is a lifeline for more than 3 million people – cannot be substituted. We look to the Council to ensure that the lifeline is not severed.

Annex III

[Original: Chinese]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun

I thank Special Envoy Pederson and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. The crisis in Syria has dragged on for a decade and the security and humanitarian situation remains cause for concern. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should vigorously promote an early end to the Syrian crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

We must make every effort to push for a political solution to the Syrian issue. China supports the continued efforts by Special Envoy Pederson to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and calls on all parties in Syria to maintain communication with the Special Envoy and to advance the work of the Constitutional Committee on the basis of the existing consensus. The work of the Constitutional Committee must remain independent and free from outside interference. Steps must be taken to ensure that the political process in Syria is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. China takes note of the activities related to the holding of general elections in Syria and calls on the international community to respect Syrian sovereignty and the choices made by the Syrian people.

We must continue to improve the security situation in Syria. In recent times, the security situation in the north-western and north-eastern parts of the country has been increasingly volatile, with frequent terrorist attacks, clashes between armed groups, and tensions fuelled by foreign military activities and missile attacks on Syria. China calls on all parties concerned earnestly to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and to desist from illegal aggression, occupation and attacks on Syrian territory. Many members of the Council are concerned about terrorist activities and spillover risks in Syria. The international community should band together, in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions, to combat the terrorist forces within Syria.

We need to tackle the economic, humanitarian and reconstruction challenges in Syria in a comprehensive manner. Syria faces multiple challenges such as the epidemic, food security, currency devaluation, oil shortages and dilapidated infrastructure. Recently, the volume of water in the Euphrates River has declined, the operation of the Uluk water station has been disrupted, and local water supply, power supply and agricultural irrigation cannot be sustained. China calls on the United Nations to step up its food, vaccine and medical supplies assistance to Syria and urges all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and desist from interfering with civilian facilities. Under the influence of unilateral sanctions, aid funds cannot be remitted into Syria, rendering it very difficult to repair and rebuild infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and power plants, and even the simplest components and equipment cannot be purchased: the so-called humanitarian exemption exists in name only. Not only is it hypocritical on the one hand to be spouting humanitarian mantras, while politicizing humanitarian issues and imposing unilateral sanctions, it also renders impossible any fundamental alleviation of the humanitarian situation in Syria. It may even be said that the unilateral sanctions have become an obstacle to the reconstruction of Syria. In order to restore the operation of infrastructure and allow the Syrian people to enjoy basic services, unilateral sanctions must be lifted immediately.

We need to ensure that the entire process of humanitarian relief operations in Syria is transparent and not politicized. The United Nations cross-border transport of humanitarian supplies into Syria from outside the country must be strictly monitored

and supervised, to prevent the entry of any non-humanitarian goods. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria should be respected and the role of the Syrian Government should be brought into play. The United Nations should give priority to ensuring cross-line humanitarian relief, actively promote the elimination of hostility and building of trust among the parties concerned, seek workable cross-line solutions through joint actions between Red Crescent societies, and open up transport routes from Damascus to north-western Syria. Under-Secretary-General Lowcock has just informed us that efforts are being made in this regard, and it is understood that the relevant humanitarian agencies are also actively exploring this possibility. We believe that, through our joint efforts, the cross-line programme could be put into effect. Assistance to Syria should be underpinned by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, with no political conditions attached.

I would like to stress once again that the future of Syria lies in the hands of the Syrian people themselves. China sincerely hopes that the Syrian people will extricate themselves from the quagmire of war and restore peace and tranquillity at an early date and China is willing to continue to play a constructive role in that endeavour.

Annex IV

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation reminds us that the conflict in Syria is far from over. Working on cross-line deliveries is important. However, until regular aid corridors have been established, we need to reconsider our earlier decisions. In the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, expanding cross-border aid deliveries in July is the only responsible approach to address the enormous humanitarian needs.

Estonia calls for reauthorizing the Bab al-Hawa crossing for one year and reopening the crossings of Bab al-Salam in Idlib and Ya'rubiyah in the north-east for the same period.

A sustainable humanitarian response must be predicated on enabling access to all parts of Syria. We need to ensure the availability of COVID-19 vaccines to all people in Syria. I express my gratitude to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its continued efforts on the ground in Syria, where it assists, through partners, more than 2.4 million people every month.

Looking at the political situation, challenges persist. The mock presidential elections this week are not in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Legitimate claims of the Syrian opposition must be taken into account when looking into the future of Syria. Unfortunately, the Constitutional Committee talks in Geneva have also not produced genuine results.

Estonia encourages the Special Envoy to focus more efforts on the issue of detainees and missing persons. This could serve as a confidence-building measure to rebuild trust between the Syrian parties.

I reiterate the call of Estonia and the European Union on the need to create an international mechanism to locate missing people or their remains. There must be accountability for the many war crimes and crimes against humanity – and an end to impunity. We demand the release of all arbitrarily detained people, especially women, children and the elderly.

We welcome the overwhelming support of the largest international donors to Syria. The European Union and its member States' contributions enable a scaling-up of critical programmes to support host communities and refugees in dealing with the impact of COVID-19, as well as to alleviate the suffering of Syrian people inside the country.

Estonia and the European Union remain committed to finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria. We encourage all international actors to support the Syrian people in achieving these aims, which are set out in Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the Geneva communiqué of 2012.

Annex V

[Original: French]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière

I thank Geir Pedersen and Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

Today's presidential elections in Syria are taking place in a country torn apart by a decade of war. Hostilities continue on a daily basis and chronic instability has filled the vacuum left by the lack of political reforms. This spiral of violence can only fuel the despair of millions of Syrians, which Da'esh is trying to capture.

France has repeatedly stated its readiness to support the holding of free and fair elections in Syria, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and under United Nations supervision, in which all Syrians, including those in the diaspora, could participate. Today's election clearly does not meet the criteria for a credible election. We therefore consider it null and void. It will not help to restore any political legitimacy to the Syrian regime. It will not help to end the crisis in Syria.

The use of humanitarian aid as a form of leverage must stop.

Allow me to recall that 92 per cent of the humanitarian funding pledged for 2021 at the Brussels V Conference comes from the European Union, its member States, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan and Norway.

The cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism has never been so relevant, both in the north-west and in the north-east. A renewal for 12 months, as requested by the Secretary-General, is essential.

In the north-west, the number of people in need of assistance has risen to 3.4 million, an increase of 20 per cent since last year. There is no alternative to the cross-border mechanism, which delivers about 1,000 lorry-loads of aid each month.

In the north-east, 1.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 38 per cent more than in 2020. The so-called "cross-line" convoys, subject to the goodwill of the Syrian regime, have never been able to compensate for the closure of the Ya'rubiyah point. As long as the regime continues to hijack aid to punish the population, it is clear that "cross-line" aid from Damascus cannot be the only viable option.

The Council should therefore learn from that experience and authorize the use of the three crossing points: Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salamah, in the north-west, and Ya'rubiyah, in the north-east. We have a shared responsibility and a moral duty: that of saving lives, countering the threat of famine and facilitating coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination campaigns. Without a robust cross-border aid mechanism, it will not be possible to deliver aid independently and without regime interference, or to achieve our collective goals.

We cannot say it too many times: international humanitarian law must be respected by all: not only full humanitarian access, but also the protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel.

The roots of this war must be tackled if it is to be brought to an end.

It is high time that the Syrian regime finally committed itself in good faith to the political process led by the United Nations. More than a year and a half after the creation of the Constitutional Committee, work has still not started on the drafting of a revised constitution.

We also call for rapid and tangible progress in the implementation of all other elements of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Without this, the suffering of the Syrian people will continue to worsen.

This requires the achievement of a countrywide, sustainable and verifiable cessation of hostilities under United Nations supervision.

It also necessitates progress in preparing for free and transparent elections in accordance with the provisions of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

Lastly, this requires progress on the issue of detainees held by the regime and missing persons, a goal earnestly sought by all Syrians.

We urge the Special Envoy to make progress on all these aspects in parallel with his work on the Constitutional Committee.

For its part, France will continue its unflagging campaign against impunity for crimes committed in Syria.

Without a credible political settlement, France and its partners will remain steadfast in their position on reconstruction, normalization and sanctions. No one will be fooled by the use of sanctions as a tool to mask the responsibility of the regime. The European sanctions are targeted: they are aimed at individuals and entities that participate in the repression and derive profit from the fallout of the conflict. They include strong measures to safeguard the delivery of humanitarian and medical aid.

It is in all our interests to set aside our differences and work together for a credible political settlement, which is the only way to end this tragedy.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti

Allow me to begin by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

As things stand presently, the political track has not moved any further since our last discussion four weeks ago. The Constitutional Committee has an onerous task of preparing and drafting, for popular approval, a constitutional reform, which will contribute to the political settlement in Syria and the implementation of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). It has been 20 months since the establishment of that Committee. We hope that the Special Envoy will succeed in bringing about an understanding among all three groups on the workplan and methodology, paving the way for convening the sixth meeting.

We take note of the holding of presidential elections in Syria, which is a constitutional obligation of the State to its people, within the purview of its sovereign decisions. We also note that the elections scheduled for today are distinct from the United Nations-facilitated, Syrian-led political process.

The security situation in Syria has been relatively calm, with stable front lines for over a year now. However, frequent eruptions of violence have continued to occur, reflecting military tensions among the forces in various parts of the country. The fundamental principles of international law, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States and respect for territorial integrity and independence, have been repeatedly violated in Syria owing to the continued presence of foreign armies on the ground.

Against this background, for the United Nations-led political track to move forward, we need cooperation from all major stakeholders in the conflict. Constructive international diplomacy is the need of the hour to bridge existing divides by focusing on measured incremental positive steps. The major stakeholders of the Syrian conflict need to review their long-entrenched positions. They need to act collaboratively, strengthen the hand of the Special Envoy and thereby give a collective push to the United Nations-led political track. We believe that this can be realized if all parties agree to work together.

It is deeply concerning that the involvement of external actors in Syria has given a fillip to the growth of terrorism in Syria and in the region. The latest report of the Secretary-General dwells on the threat posed by ISIL. The latest report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) also refers to the repeated use of chemical weapons by ISIL against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. This is a cause for serious concern. The reports of the presence of mercenaries from Syria in Africa is equally worrying. This needs to be addressed with a high degree of seriousness. It is imperative that all parties adhere to their international obligations to fight terrorism and terrorist organizations in Syria, as designated by the Security Council.

India firmly believes that long-term security and stability in this region can only be achieved by preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We also remain convinced that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirm our commitment to advancing a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated political process in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

The briefing by Under-Secretary-General Lowcock has again brought out how grim the humanitarian situation remains. The scale, severity and complexity of the

humanitarian needs remain extensive. The Syrian people have suffered relentless violence and terror. Syria remains torn by territorial fragmentation. Syrian women have been impacted in disproportionate ways. The pandemic and the adverse impact of sanctions on the health facilities and humanitarian operations have only made the situation worse. There is an urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country without discrimination, politicization or preconditions.

What we need immediately is an active engagement that is both consistent with Syrian independence and territorial integrity and that addresses the urgency of the humanitarian issues to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. There is also an urgent need for concrete steps to address the hurdles that are obstructing the functioning of both cross-border and cross-line operations.

As we have mentioned earlier, India has extended developmental assistance and human resource development support to Syria through lines of credit for development projects, the supply of medicine and food, artificial limb fitment camps and capacity-building training programmes. India reiterates its steadfast commitment to continue its support for the people of Syria.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing today and for his report on the limited developments with regard to the Constitutional Committee.

It is unacceptable that the Syrian authorities continue to find reasons to avoid meaningful engagement in the work of the Constitutional Committee.

Ireland urges the Syrian authorities to end their intransigence, which continues to frustrate the prospects of real progress in the Constitutional Committee. The results of the Committee's work to date continue to fall far short of the legitimate expectations of the Syrian people.

No tangible progress on the political solution and national reconciliation foreseen in Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) is possible without a new constitution that sets out a peaceful and inclusive path for all Syrians: women, men and young people. Sadly, the elections taking place today will not bring us any closer to this goal.

While a ceasefire largely continues to hold in the north-west, it is tragic and unacceptable that, so far this year, more than 500 civilians are estimated to have died from the conflict in Syria, many of them children. The loss of further human life to a conflict that has already lasted more than 10 years is shameful.

Ireland strongly condemns those parties in Syria who continue to disregard international human rights and humanitarian law. The Syrian authorities in particular, through their repressive security apparatus, continue to arbitrarily arrest and detain their own citizens with blatant disregard for due process.

We think of the tens of thousands of those Syrian citizens who have been subjected to arbitrary detention, as well as those who have gone missing. It is an act of cruelty to leave families in limbo, unable to even ascertain the fate of their loved ones. It is unconscionable that the Syrian authorities have such callous disregard for their own citizens.

The continued efforts of Mr. Pedersen to make progress on detainees, abductees and missing persons have our full support.

We know that there can be no peace without justice, and Ireland remains strongly of the view that accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law is essential. Ireland commends the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for their work.

The reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry testify to horrific crimes, including the bombing of hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure.

Ireland strongly condemns these acts, as well as attacks against civil society and human rights defenders.

Finally, it is long past time for the Council to live up to its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to call upon the Syrian authorities to, at last, engage meaningfully within the Constitutional Committee and a wider political process, as outlined in resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

The Council must also demand that the Syrian authorities comply with their obligations under international law and end their brutal policies so that the people of Syria can live their lives in freedom and without fear. The long-suffering people of Syria surely deserve no less.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya, Martin Kimani

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

Kenya welcomes the combined consideration of the political and humanitarian situations in Syria and reiterates that the overriding interest for Kenya is in the safety, well-being and peace of the people of Syria.

During the presidential election, we hope that there will be a positive turn towards a negotiated political solution: one that prioritizes the needs and interests of the people of Syria in sustained peace.

Kenya commends the convening of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board last month. It is a significant stride in the enhancement of the role of women in the political process that will shape the future of the country.

We encourage the resumption of the Constitutional Committee sessions under a guided workplan and proposals. Their continuation will demonstrate commitment to much-needed peace and political stability.

Kenya is gravely concerned by the continuing high levels of violence reflected in sporadic cross-line fire, mutual shelling and air strikes in the north-west, north-east and south-west, as well as the central desert.

We are concerned by the continuing ability of ISIS and other terrorist groups to carry out improvised explosive device attacks and kidnappings.

We are even more concerned by the risk, growing day by day, that the overall violence will continue to be protracted. The prospect of the children of Syria becoming adults in an environment of war and terror is intolerable to Kenya.

The difficulty of the situation is that all legitimate actors must simultaneously combat Security Council-listed terrorist groups while working on a political solution that delivers a real ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities.

While these twin pillars are being implemented, the same actors must be incentivized and enabled to prioritize the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The challenge is immense for multiple actors, motivated by a multiplicity of regional and global interests, to deliver these parallel actions.

To succeed, confidence-building measures are crucial as a pathway into a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. Such measures can start at the domestic level, but they must be accompanied by their regional and global counterparts.

An important role for members of the Security Council who are involved in the process is to demonstrate such confidence-building. Kenya stands ready, as an elected member, to undertake any initiatives that may bring more unity to the Council in regard to Syria.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, food security is deteriorating. Data reveal a 72 per cent year-on-year increase in rates of poor and borderline food consumption.

We urge the international community to fully commit to meeting the call for humanitarian aid. Having said this, we are fully aware that the people have the ability to help themselves when given the space and peace to do so.

We therefore strongly discourage any unilateral sanctions that undermine livelihoods and the provision of vital public goods. At the same time, there must be accountability against those who are carrying out actions on the ground that destroy the civilian objects that the Syrian people depend on.

My last point is on humanitarian access. With more than 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid in north-west Syria alone, the cross-border aid mechanism remains a critical avenue for humanitarian assistance, including the delivery of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines.

It is important for this life-saving operation not to be disrupted and for it to continue to be complemented by cross-line deliveries. As such, we encourage the Government of Syria to continue working closely with the United Nations to ensure scaled-up cross-line deliveries of aid, especially in north-west Syria.

Humanitarian aid must be accompanied by further action in camps to disengage and deradicalize fighters and their families, at scale. Kenya has previously called upon the Security Council to remain seized of this matter and repeats that call today. Eventually, one day, these camps will close, and their residents must emerge to be productive and peaceful citizens, no matter their national origins.

In closing, Kenya notes that one of the multiple issues that we have commented on today is the need for multiple actions to be undertaken almost simultaneously. At the best of times, this is difficult; in Syria, far more so, given the number of actors at the national, regional and global levels pursuing clashing interests. Caught in the middle are the people of Syria.

Now, more than ever, the United Nations and its operational and executive bodies, including the Security Council, must be the honest brokers seeking to bring lasting relief to the people. We again urge confidence-building in the Council and more support for the Secretary-General's political and humanitarian efforts.

Annex IX

[Original: Spanish]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their detailed briefings.

I extend greetings to the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran, and I convey my warmest greetings to our colleague and friend Jonathan Allen of the United Kingdom, whose statements in this Council have always been a source of inspiration.

My delegation reiterates that the only way out of the 10-year conflict in Syria is a comprehensive political dialogue. Resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) lays the foundation for achieving this goal. We therefore express our concern at the stalemate in the work of the Constitutional Committee, since delegations have been unable to agree on working methods, despite the proposals put forward by the Special Envoy. In consequence, we call on the government-nominated delegation to participate constructively in this process.

As we maintained last month, regular and transparent election processes are the cornerstone in the building of any democratic State. We reiterate that, in accordance with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), the elections must be held after the promulgation of the new Syrian Constitution and in accordance with the highest international standards.

With regard to the situation of displaced persons and refugees, we have noted that some countries have chosen not to renew the temporary protection of Syrian refugees, despite the absence of adequate conditions for their return, which should be voluntary, safe, orderly and in accordance with international refugee and human rights law.

At the same time, the situation of arbitrarily detained and missing persons must be addressed as a matter of priority. Their whereabouts must be fully investigated, following a humanitarian approach that considers the families and offers them the possibility of ending their uncertainty.

We welcome the start of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination campaign and hope that vaccine deliveries continue and that the population will have access to them in a timely manner. The continuation of the vaccination process in north-western Syria depends to a large extent on the renewal of the humanitarian assistance mechanism.

In addition to vaccination, given the serious situation of the population, it is imperative to renew the border mechanism. These operations are necessary even if agreements are reached on the delivery of humanitarian assistance across the conflict lines, since in north-western Syria more than 80 per cent of the population needs this assistance just to survive.

It should be recalled that the operations in Bab al-Hawa are being closely tracked through the United Nations monitoring mechanism. This helps to maintain transparency and accountability when there is evidence of the diversion of humanitarian aid.

We echo the request by the Secretary-General for the renewal of the cross-border mechanism for a further 12 months, as humanitarian access needs to be expanded, not restricted.

We reiterate our concern about the children who are being deprived by the conflict and its consequences of their childhood and the development to which they are entitled. It is unacceptable that grave violations of their rights should continue, such as the nearly 5,000 such violations enumerated in the most recent report on children and armed conflict. It is therefore necessary to put an end, as soon as possible, to the suffering of the Syrian population.

Annex X

[Original: French]

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Aougui Niandou

I thank Special Envoy Pederson and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings on the Syrian crisis.

I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey in this meeting.

The Niger commends the daily efforts of humanitarian organizations that continue, without respite, to assist the Syrian populations in need. We are concerned about the increasingly disturbing humanitarian situation that Syrians have been undergoing for years, with no real prospects, while enduring the suffering caused by a war whose protagonists seem to be more concerned with their own agenda than with the search for compromise – a compromise which offers the only way of ending the crisis.

The bleak picture painted by our speakers today clearly illustrates this fact. The number of food-insecure people has reached alarming proportions, the highest in Syria since the beginning of the conflict. For millions of people, including women and children, United Nations assistance remains their only recourse in trying to meet their most basic food, water and sanitation needs.

We therefore call for simplified procedures at the Bab al-Hawa crossing point and across the contact lines, in order to expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including much-needed medical supplies and equipment so badly needed by the Syrian health system for its response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

With this scenario of immense humanitarian needs throughout Syria, my delegation once again calls for greater donor generosity and enhanced coordination among the parties concerned for the safe, unimpeded and impartial delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance to all those in need in Syria, in accordance with the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.

The current mechanism remains, until proved otherwise, the only safety net for these vulnerable populations. It is worth maintaining and even strengthening. It is my delegation's hope that the Security Council will regain its unity during the process of renewing the mandate of the mechanism in the coming days.

Where the political situation is concerned, we deplore the lack of progress in the work of the Constitutional Committee. The Committee, of whose importance there is no longer any doubt, must make room for a political debate between the various constituents of Syrian society and pave the way for an inclusive political process led by the Syrians themselves.

We urge the parties to engage in open and frank dialogue, with a view to the cooperation and compromise that are vital to any sustainable peace process. In this regard, we call on the parties to build on the momentum of previous meetings and to work together in good faith. We look forward to the visit of the Deputy Special Envoy to Damascus to help in establishing better communication with the Government.

As we have reiterated on many occasions, the work of the Constitutional Committee and efforts to bring about the cessation of hostilities must go hand in hand with other aspects of the crisis, such as an end to external interference, including support for armed groups, and the plundering of Syrian resources.

My delegation remains concerned about the resurgence in violence, including in the north-west, and calls on the parties to cease hostilities forthwith, a sine qua non for achieving tangible progress towards a resolution of the crisis in Syria.

My delegation would also like, however, to stress that the call for a ceasefire and the need for a collective effort in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic should not distract us from the fight against terrorism, in particular as evidence has shown that terrorist groups, ignoring the call by the Secretary-General for a ceasefire, are trying to take advantage of the current situation in order to reposition themselves.

We also take note of the holding of presidential elections in Syria this very day.

In conclusion, allow me to express my appreciation to Mr. Pederson and his team for their tireless efforts to lay the groundwork for dialogue with all stakeholders in the process, including the Women's Advisory Board and civil society organizations in Syria and in the region.

Annex XI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul, on behalf of Ireland and Norway

I make this statement on behalf of the co-penholders of the Syrian humanitarian file, Ireland and Norway. We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Lowcock for his briefing today.

As we have heard, and as reported by the Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary-General and a number of partners on the ground, the humanitarian situation in Syria is worse today than 10 months ago, when resolution [2533 \(2020\)](#) was adopted by the Security Council.

In a little over six weeks' time, the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism renewed by resolution [2533 \(2020\)](#) will expire. At that time, the Council confronts a choice: we can live up to our principles and support Syria's most vulnerable people, or we can fail and face the grave humanitarian consequences. The Security Council must act. We must act to ensure that humanitarian assistance continues to reach all of Syria through all modalities necessary.

We must act to ensure that access is safe, rapid and unimpeded.

In north-west Syria, the number of people in need has increased by over 20 per cent so far in 2021. Prices of food staples rose by over 200 per cent in the last year. Winter brought freezing temperatures, flooding and further hardship for the 1.6 million people, mostly women and children, living in camps and informal settlements. The cross-border provision of humanitarian assistance remains the only modality that can operate at the scale required to reach the 3.4 million people in need in this region, a fact that is unlikely to change over the next 12-month period.

Failure to agree on a renewal of the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism would mean that, in the north-west, the United Nations and its partners would cease providing monthly food assistance for 1.4 million people, educational material for tens of thousands of children, and essential medical items that supported 10 million treatments in 2020 – and now include vaccinations against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – to mention just some of the most critical areas of assistance.

As humanitarian co-penholders, Norway and Ireland have consulted all members of the Council, and we will continue to do so in the weeks to come. In keeping with our stated aim of a principled humanitarian needs-based approach, we will work to reach consensus on the renewal of a large-scale life-saving United Nations cross-border response. Let me also stress the importance of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, which ensures the verification of the humanitarian nature of all cross-border shipments at Bab al-Hawa. The United Nations cross-border operation is one of the most heavily scrutinized and monitored aid operations in the world.

Not renewing the cross-border authorization would mean losing the transparency and accountability that the United Nations provides for the humanitarian operation of warehouses at the border, at distribution points, and after distribution to beneficiaries.

On the question of cross-line support to the north-west, which has been raised frequently in recent meetings: as we have said before, we fully support the strengthening of all modalities for humanitarian assistance in Syria. However, despite efforts by the United Nations, the parties have not yet been able to reach agreement on a cross-line mission across the active front lines to Atarib. We urge all parties to facilitate a cross-line mission to the north-west without delay. But we must also recognize that it will take time to scale up, even in the best of circumstances.

The United Nations dispatched an average of 1,000 trucks of aid per month in 2020, crossing the border from Turkey to Idlib and reaching 2.4 million people each month throughout the year. Cross-line convoys, even if deployed regularly, could not replicate the size and scope of this operation. Look to the north-east: as the Secretary-General observed at the General Assembly on 30 March 2021, the situation has worsened after the closure of Ya‘rubiyah almost 16 months ago. Despite slow improvement in cross-line access, the United Nations still faces considerable difficulties and great unmet needs that continue to rise.

While this Council pursues a negotiated political settlement in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), and mindful of the Council’s strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, there is no excuse for not assisting the millions of people in need in Syria. If we fail, the Syrian people will bear a terrible cost, and no one will gain. To quote the Secretary-General: “A large-scale cross-border response for an additional 12 months remains essential to save lives”.

Let us listen to the Secretary-General, to the United Nations agencies, to the implementing partners and, most importantly, to the Syrian people. As this meeting combines both political and humanitarian agenda items, I will now speak in my national capacity on the political situation.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I will start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. We hope that the compromise proposal from the Special Envoy will lay the foundation for a continued constitutional process, leading to a reformed constitution for Syria, as part of the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned inclusive peace process.

We continue to support Mr. Pedersen's call for concrete results in the next round. And we urge the parties to contribute to the process in good faith, in the interest of the people of Syria, who need stability and peace. A political solution for Syria is overdue.

The Constitutional Committee is just one piece of the puzzle. Other parts of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) are also crucial for a political settlement. We remain deeply concerned about the countless missing persons in Syria and those arbitrarily detained. There is an urgent need for progress on this file and for the release of those arbitrarily detained. This is so important for so many people in Syria. There is a need for confidence-building measures to allow for a new dynamic in the process.

I would also like to repeat the need for broader international engagement. While the conflict remains highly internationalized, it is not enough that the Syrian parties alone negotiate. We should all contribute to a more coordinated and effective international engagement, as called for by the Special Envoy, in particular by those engaged on the ground in Syria. The step-by-step approach proposed by the Special Envoy should be explored in order to bring progress to the stalled process. We need to build trust on all sides and prepare the ground for political reforms and a political solution.

And let me again emphasize the importance of an inclusive process and of the participation of women as key to achieving sustainable peace. The Syrian Women's Advisory Board plays an important role in this regard.

We deeply regret that today's elections in Syria are not being held in line with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Elections should have been held on the basis of a reformed constitution, agreed between the Syrian parties, and be free and fair for all Syrians. This is not the case.

Children are among those who have suffered the most during the conflict.

Norway remains alarmed by the abuses outlined in last month's report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict. As I conclude, let me reiterate that this report should serve as an urgent reminder to us all of our joint responsibility to do our utmost to end the conflict in Syria.

Annex XIII

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia

We express our thanks to Geir Pedersen and Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

For Russia, it remains a priority to push forward the work of the Constitutional Committee. We believe that the Committee's drafting team in Geneva should resume its work as soon as possible. We would like to stress that, in its work, the Committee should be guided by a spirit of compromise and constructive engagement without foreign interference and externally imposed timelines;

We agree that the fragile intra-Syrian dialogue needs to be supported, in particular by strengthening mutual trust among the Syrian parties with regard to the issue of the release of detainees. In that context, it is regrettable that, in their statements, the Secretariat and our colleagues, who are constantly carping on that topic, have ignored the general amnesty announced by the Syrian authorities on 2 May. This concerns the total abolition or reduction of penalties for a wide range of persons, including those evading military service. That is an important step on the part of Damascus towards the rebuilding of State structures, the importance of which is repeatedly stressed by United Nations experts.

I am certain that, during this meeting, we will hear numerous unflattering assessments from our Western colleagues of the presidential elections that are taking place in Syria today. The tone for that has already been set by our American partners. In doing so, our Western colleagues are demonstrating their indifference to the will of the Syrians who have gone to the polls. The long queues at polling stations set up at Syrian missions in a number of foreign capitals are testimony to the people's keen desire to vote. This picture clearly does not please those who have already fashioned their own vision of the future of the Syrians. The Federal Republic of Germany has even totally prohibited the conduct of the elections on its territory. I would like to emphasize that this step violates the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and flouts the rights and freedoms of Syrians living abroad. Despite all the obstacles, voting took place at 46 polling stations abroad. Judging by the information coming in, there have been no serious problems within Syria itself either. Against this backdrop, the decision of the self-proclaimed administration of north-eastern Syria to withhold assistance to Damascus in running elections in territories under its control is cause for concern.

Let me stress once again that the presidential elections in Syria are being held in full accordance with the country's current Constitution and domestic law. They are in no way at variance with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and other international decisions, which are based on respect for the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

We welcome the launch of a vaccination campaign within Syria. We understand that more than 17,000 vaccine doses have been delivered to the north-east, more than sufficient to cover the medical staff working in that region. We look forward to providing appropriate services at the earliest possible juncture to residents of internally displaced persons camps in the trans-Euphrates area. We trust that the worsening security situation in Hulah will not undermine the efforts of humanitarian workers, and that the most vulnerable will be vaccinated against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). At the same time, in view of the country's fuel crisis, we remain concerned about the viability of United Nations logistics on the ground. We request the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to keep this issue under close review.

The reports of serious problems in the operation of the Euphrates hydroelectric power stations are very worrying. This jeopardizes not only the supply of drinking water to communities in Aleppo, Idlib and Hasakah, but also the operation of local irrigation systems that support over 400,000 hectares of crops. The importance of access to sanitation in a pandemic goes without saying. Against the background of recurrent outages at the Uluk water pumping station, the continuing problems besetting water supplies to Syria along the Euphrates River pose the threat of a humanitarian disaster for a population of over 5 million people.

At our last meeting, Mr. Lowcock spoke for the first time about the problems faced by humanitarian non-governmental organizations working in Syria when trying to conduct bank settlements. As we understand it, the problems persist because they are multifaceted in nature. It would be good to receive more information on a regular basis, with specific statistics about where things are improving and what stumbling blocks remain. We expect that subject to be broadly reflected in the Secretary-General's next report on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, for his informal briefing yesterday and we welcome the assessments of infrastructure, in the same vein, given by Mr. Lowcock today. In the context of the Syrian issue, we support in particular the view put forward by ICRC that it is extremely important to restore the critical infrastructure in the country. We regret that, for political reasons, these appeals continue to be ignored by certain donor countries. We support the assessment by ICRC that the failure to resolve that problem threatens to extend the humanitarian disaster not only within Syria itself but also into the neighbouring countries.

We are dismayed by the indifference of our colleagues regarding the dispatch to Idlib from Damascus of the United Nations/ICRC/Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) humanitarian convoy. Against this backdrop, we continue to be pressured for an extension or even expansion of the cross-border mechanism. Our Western colleagues also persist in avoiding any judgment of the actions of the terrorists holding the population of this Syrian region hostage, thereby making it clear that they will not take any steps that might create problems for the militants entrenched in Idlib. The cross-border mechanism is touted as the only possible solution to the humanitarian problems in Idlib. We cannot agree with this hypocritical formulation of the issue. This is of course something that we will need to take into account when deciding on the extension of the mechanism.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our commitment to providing comprehensive assistance to Syria. A total of 2,874 humanitarian operations have been carried out by the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides and Refugee Migration Monitoring, and a total of more than 5,000 tons of humanitarian supplies have been delivered.

Since 18 July 2018, the Centre has repaired a total of 984 educational and 254 medical institutions, 4,947 residential buildings, 6 road bridges and almost 2,000 kilometres of roads in Syria; it has laid 1,459 kilometres of power transmission lines; 266 water supply facilities and over 14,000 industrial enterprises have been commissioned. Comparable work is currently under way in 345 locations in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, Dayr al-Zawr, Ladhqiyyah, Hama, Homs, Dar'a, Suwayda', Qunaitirah and Raqqah.

We urge everyone to follow our example and help ordinary Syrians to return as soon as possible to a decent life in their great country, which, despite the illegitimate sanctions, has been able to stand its ground against international terrorism.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I thank the President, and I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Special Envoy Pedersen for their usual informative briefings.

Once again, we begin by saying that a sustainable peace in Syria can only be attained through a negotiated political solution that is in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). In this regard, the Constitutional Committee remains a vital component in the wider political process. We remain hopeful that the next session of the Committee will be convened soon and will yield positive results. We encourage all parties to remain committed to working together in a spirit of mutual respect and compromise, and we thank Mr. Pedersen for his tireless efforts in this regard.

The undertaking of confidence-building measures, such as through action on the issues of missing persons and detainees, must also be prioritized to contribute to the viability of the wider political process, and here, too, we applaud Mr. Pedersen for his efforts.

As the political and humanitarian situations are undoubtedly inextricably linked, the improvement of the worsening humanitarian crisis is dependent on a comprehensive political resolution to the conflict. It is further dependent on pragmatic international support. As such, we echo our appeal for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures which have been imposed on Syria and have adversely impacted the country's overall socioeconomic condition.

Regarding the multidimensional humanitarian response, there is currently no alternative to the cross-border mechanism, and we therefore remain in support of it. Indeed, it is imperative that both the cross-border and the cross-line modalities be scaled up and optimized to provide timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to meet the vast humanitarian needs. This ought to be done in line with the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and in coordination with the Syrian Government.

We are concerned by the reports of reduced water levels in the Euphrates River. This matter must be closely monitored, as it threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of Syrians who are dependent on its supply for drinking water, the irrigation of crops and the generation of electricity.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose a significant challenge for Syria. We are therefore pleased to note that COVID-19 vaccinations commenced in May, and we commend those countries who have provided additional vaccines to the country. The fight against COVID-19 requires international cooperation and global solidarity.

Despite the ceasefire agreement of March 2020, Syria's security situation remains extremely volatile, placing civilians and civilian infrastructure under constant threat. We echo the Special Envoy's appeal for an immediate nationwide ceasefire to ensure the protection of civilians and to prevent the further destruction of the country's infrastructure.

Operations aimed at eradicating the scourge of terrorism are necessary to protect Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. They are further necessary for the maintenance of regional peace and stability. However, we reiterate that these activities must be conducted strictly within the confines of the principles of international law. We firmly condemn all acts committed in violation of international law, for which perpetrators must be held to account.

On the point of sovereignty, we reiterate that respect for this enduring principle dictates the withdrawal of all unauthorized foreign forces present on Syria's territory.

Ten years of war have devastated Syria. Homes, schools, medical facilities and other essential infrastructure have been decimated, precipitating one of the world's largest refugee and displacement crises and depriving millions of the fundamental human rights to education and an adequate standard of living, inclusive of health care and other social services. Vulnerabilities are high and women and children are most at risk. It is past time to change this.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains committed to helping the people of Syria and supporting the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, which is the only path towards lasting peace and stability.

Annex XV

[Original: Arabic]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb

It is now more urgent than ever before to give new impetus to collective action from the international community and the Security Council, to coordinate diplomatic efforts and to find constructive compromises for peace and security in Syria, which will also make possible the restoration of security and stability throughout the region. As we have seen time and time again, and over a number of decades, the region is witnessing the proliferation of conflict, occupation and volatility in the absence of real and sustainable prospects for settlement. That is hampering the will and aspirations of its peoples for a better future in an ambience of security and prosperity.

In this context, we reiterate the firm conviction of Tunisia that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Syria. The solution requires a comprehensive and lasting political settlement that is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, and facilitated by the United Nations, as outlined in resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), with the active participation of Syrian women, and that tackles the deep roots of the crisis, puts an end to external interventions and the presence of terrorist groups, preserves Syria's unity and resilience and responds to the legitimate aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people for security, dignity and development.

In this context, Tunisia hopes that the deadlock in reaching a settlement will be overcome through the resumption, on a regular and continuous basis, of meetings of the Constitutional Committee and its small body in Geneva and the holding of its sixth round in the foreseeable future, in order to achieve the desired progress in the constitutional process. In that connection, we also express our support for the good offices of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Pederson, aimed at advancing the expanded political process in accordance with the terms of reference of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), by ensuring that the common interest of the international community is formulated in concert with the best interest of Syria and the Syrians and in line with a confidence-building and cooperation-based approach to the issues between the Syrian parties and to those among the international parties.

We are deeply concerned about the marked increase in the level of armed violence and tension in recent times across Syria, in parallel with the intensification by the organization "Da'esh" of its terrorist activity, compounding various manifestations of the crisis and exacerbating the human suffering of the Syrians.

Humanitarian necessities must clearly prevail over political considerations, so that the suffering of the Syrians is brought to an end, that they can enjoy safe and decent living conditions and that the basic needs for shelter, food, medicine, medical care and other essential basic services can be met for those among them seeking assistance.

We are bound yet again to stress the need for collective and coordinated action by the international community in accordance with international law to end the presence and growing influence of terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council that have found safe haven in some parts of Syria, taking advantage of the security and political vacuum, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the continuation of the armed conflict. This action is essential for the attainment of a long-term political solution to the Syrian crisis and the establishment of security and stability across the entire region.

Lastly, Tunisia looks forward to a compromise solution that will contribute to the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery mechanism and reflect the unity of the Council, its shared vision in the quest for the necessary solutions, its credibility and its authority in maintaining international peace and security, which would have a positive impact on the Syrian political process and contribute to advancing the desired settlement of the crisis.

Annex XVI

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

Colleagues, we have a Security Council resolution which should govern all our efforts: resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), passed unanimously. The full implementation of that resolution is the only sustainable solution to the conflict in Syria. It is clear on the sequence of steps needed to achieve a political settlement.

Syrians are to convene to draft a new constitution, facilitated by the United Nations. Following this, there are to be free and fair elections administered under the supervision of the United Nations, as an objective, impartial, neutral and independent party, to ensure that the elections satisfy the highest international standards of transparency and accountability.

The charade taking place today is not part of this process and does not come close to meeting those requirements. This exercise is presumably designed to sustain Assad's dictatorship, but it is hard to see how it helps. Only countries which take a similar approach to their own people – depriving them of the opportunity to choose their leaders, denying them the right to participate freely in politics or even to speak their mind – will consider these to be “elections”. And judging by the company that the Syrian regime keeps here in the United Nations, those countries are already in the bag.

For the rest of the United Nations membership, it is a grotesque joke, perpetrated by a man who has far worse crimes to answer for, having gassed, tortured and starved a people who still will not accept him as a legitimate leader.

So what should the regime be doing, once today's distraction is out of the way? It should actively participate in the political process set out in resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). The first step should be genuine and constructive participation in the Constitutional Committee. And the regime need not wait to take confidence-building actions, such as the release of political detainees or providing information to families of the missing. My Russian colleague mentioned the very limited amnesty of 2 May; that amnesty did not include tens of thousands of Assad opponents and political detainees held for years without trial. There is rather further to go.

I will now turn to the humanitarian situation. When the Council authorized the United Nations to deliver cross-border aid in 2014, over 10 million people required assistance. Since then, the mechanism has enabled over 46,000 trucks to deliver cross-border assistance to many millions of Syrians dealing with the worst impacts of this terrible conflict. It has ensured a principled, needs-based and transparent response, ensuring that aid goes to the most vulnerable, wherever they live.

Seven years later, certain members of the Council suggest that the humanitarian situation has somehow moved on. And yet, as a direct result of the loss of border crossings last year, there are now 13 million people in need in Syria: an increase of 2 million in just one year, and 3 million higher than when we first mandated the United Nations to deliver cross-border aid.

We were all warned that this increase was coming: in his report of December 2019, the Secretary-General warned that the United Nations did not have an alternative means of reaching people in the absence of cross-border assistance. The impact has been clear.

The closure of the crossing in Ya‘rubiyah in 2020 means that 1.8 million people are now in need of assistance in the north-east, an increase of 38 per cent in one year. Cross-line assistance has made some progress but has not come close to filling the assistance gap. Aid workers in the north-east have faced severe shortages of personal protection equipment and COVID-19 tests, which could have been resolved quickly by the World Health Organization (WHO) through a cross-border response.

The loss of Bab al-Salam has led to a more dangerous, less efficient and less direct response in the north-west. Aid and supplies must now travel across lines of control, multiple checkpoints, and areas still facing conflict. Deliveries that once took 6 hours can now take as long as 25 days.

2.4 million people depend on aid delivered through the only remaining mandated crossing at Bab al-Hawa. This includes food assistance for 1.4 million people monthly, nutrition assistance for tens of thousands of mothers and children, educational material and critical medical items. As we set out last month, the closure of this crossing would cause the COVID-19 vaccination response to cease, directly contradicting resolution [2565 \(2021\)](#), not only unanimously passed but co-sponsored by all members of the Council.

The United Kingdom welcomes continued efforts to negotiate cross-line access in the north-west – all modalities, both cross-border and cross-line, need to be pursued. But as the Secretary-General set out in the General Assembly in March, cross-line convoys cannot replicate the required size and scope of the cross-border operation. Given that no cross-line mission has arrived in the north-west from Damascus, cross-line assistance is not yet a viable alternative. It is reckless to suggest otherwise.

In order to meet escalating humanitarian needs in Syria, the United Kingdom therefore calls on the Council to renew the Bab al-Hawa crossing and reauthorize the Bab al-Salam and Ya‘rubiyah crossings for a period of 12 months.

My Russian colleague said that donors should invest more. But who will pay the huge amounts needed? Those who support Assad? Russia will not. Humanitarian aid is not a priority for Russia – according to the Financial Tracking Service of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, since 2018, Russia has contributed only \$36 million to the Syria humanitarian appeal of the United Nations. That represents 0.42 per cent of the total donated in that time. Contrast that with the huge amounts spent on military activity in Syria. Even if Russia wanted to, it probably could not afford to. China prefers bilateral aid, tied to infrastructure and loans. I do not know whether Syria is an attractive investment destination for China.

Since 2018, four donors – the United States of America, Germany, the European Union and the United Kingdom – have contributed over \$5.5 billion, or 65 per cent of the amount donated to the United Nations appeal. They provide food, clean water, shelter, medical care and education for Syrians, wherever they are: in Assad-controlled areas, in opposition areas, in neighbouring countries. All have been clear that they cannot move to fund reconstruction without a sustainable political solution; the risks of conflict destroying the investments made are just too high.

Annex XVII

Statement by the Deputy Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

Today – in theory – should be a joyous day for Syrians. If the elections under way were free and fair, we would be celebrating democracy in action. But, sadly, they are not. Today's elections in Syria are an insult to democracy and to the people of Syria. As the Security Council has unanimously declared in its resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), elections should occur pursuant to a new constitution and under United Nations supervision in a safe and neutral environment. None of that is happening today. And so yesterday, Secretary Blinken, along with the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, issued a joint statement deploring these illegitimate elections.

The people of Syria do not need sham elections. They need food, humanitarian support, and – most of all – peace. The United States Government reiterates its full support to the Special Envoy to broker a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria. That solution begins with the adherence to a nationwide ceasefire. Once again, we call on the Assad regime and Russia to uphold the current ceasefire lines. In addition to holding a fraudulent election, the Assad regime continues to perpetrate atrocities and subject Syrian men, women and children to arbitrary detention, torture and mass murder. The United States will not normalize nor support any other benefits to the regime – not until the regime demonstrates willingness and progress in achieving the political reforms that are called for in resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). That resolution remains the agreed and established path for a political solution to the conflict in Syria.

Turning to the heartbreaking humanitarian conditions that Under-Secretary-General Lowcock has just outlined in stark terms, it is clear that the vast needs have grown – by more than 20 per cent, we assess, over the last year. The United States, in response to this, supports all methods of delivering aid to Syrians throughout the country, including via cross-line deliveries. But the truth is that cross-line deliveries, even if executed properly and unhindered, do not have the capacity to fully address the needs of the Syrian people. There is simply no alternative that can match the scale and scope of the United Nations cross-border humanitarian mechanism. And let us also be clear that, as we have heard, one crossing point alone cannot meet the vast needs of the Syrian people. We need to reauthorize Bab al-Hawa for 12 months. And we need to reinstate the crossings at Bab al-Salam in the north-west, and Ya'rubiyah in the north-east, for another year, as well. If we do not, people will die. It is that simple.

In February, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2565 \(2021\)](#) on the topic of combating and sustainably recovering from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The resolution calls for full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical personnel to facilitate – among other vital safety measures – COVID-19 vaccinations. There is no reason for Syria to be an exception. And the renewal and expansion of the cross-border mechanism is the only way that the Council can ensure that life-saving vaccines are provided to all Syrian citizens.

We cannot know just how badly COVID-19 is ravaging Syria, but we do know that there is a tremendous shortage of COVID-19 testing kits for north-east Syria. And the World Health Organization (WHO) continues to struggle to get these kits across lines. Prior to the loss of the Ya'rubiyah crossing, WHO would have been able to bring them in across the border. And if the United Nations loses access to the sole remaining border crossing, the COVID-19 crisis in Syria will go from dire to disastrous.

The United States stands with the Syrian people, so we call on the Assad regime to adhere to a ceasefire, deliver on confidence-building measures and fully engage in the political process. And we call on the Security Council to reauthorize and expand United Nations cross-border humanitarian assistance. The United Nations cross-border mechanism in Syria is one of the most rigorous and accountable mechanisms that exists.

The Council has the power: the power to save lives and stop the spread of COVID-19. We can provide the Syrian people with their last, best hope of a healthy future. We must act together. We cannot turn away.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

Let me start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran in today's meeting.

On the political track, Viet Nam would like to reiterate the central role of a comprehensive and lasting political settlement in order to bring an end to the decade-long period of hardship for the Syrian people. We look forward to the substantial discussion within the framework of the Constitutional Committee, as well as progress on unlocking the broader political process.

To make this happen, we would like to emphasize the vital importance of building trust among concerned parties. We fully support the bridging task of the Special Envoy and his team, especially in creating favourable conditions for the continuation of Constitutional Committee talks.

In the meantime, the facilitating role of the international community is critical. Renewed diplomatic efforts among relevant international interlocutors are needed more than ever to give strength to the current political process.

It is equally important to preserve the calm security situation on the ground in order to focus on a peaceful solution to the conflict. My delegation therefore calls upon all parties to refrain from any action that could further deteriorate the situation. We support efforts to combat terrorist groups so designated by the Security Council. These efforts should be conducted and coordinated to best ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian law, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions.

On the humanitarian front, my delegation shares the serious concerns over the relentless humanitarian crisis in Syria, which has been severely aggravated by the economic downturn and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) impacts in the past year. Food is now a daily struggle for 12.4 million people, while the shortage of fuel and basic goods continues to be acute. The issues concerning the Uluk water station and various internally displaced person camps remain unsettled. We are also concerned over the water insecurity situation relating to the recent dramatic drop in water levels of the Euphrates River, which may cause severe economic and humanitarian impacts in the north-east.

In this regard, we continue to stress the importance of maintaining safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to enhance the response throughout the country. We call upon all parties on the ground to create the most favourable conditions for humanitarian relief operations. All issues that have humanitarian implications should be addressed in a timely manner.

Given the complicated COVID-19 situation, particular focus should be placed on the distribution of vaccines all over the country. My delegation also supports the appeal of the Secretary-General for the waiving of sanctions that hinder the humanitarian response to the pandemic.

We commend the enormous efforts of the United Nations, humanitarian and health-care workers on the ground, as well as the valuable contributions of international donors. The continued assistance of the international community to the Syrian people remains crucial.

The lengthy delay in the search for a lasting political settlement continues to put the lives of millions of Syrian people, especially children, at risk.

Viet Nam strongly believes in our primary duty to be united in supporting the Syrian people towards achieving a political settlement, led and owned by themselves, in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and fully compliant with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Annex XIX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

I would like to begin by reiterating our commitment to support the restoration of the unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

In his recent visit to Damascus, our Foreign Minister conveyed this message to the President and the Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic. He also reiterated Iran's support for the Syrian presidential elections and hoped for their success.

Committed to the peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis, we remain hopeful that the ongoing consultations will soon result in the holding of the Constitutional Committee's sixth meeting. To that end, we encourage the Committee's Co-Chairs to engage constructively with Mr. Pedersen, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

Parallel efforts must also be made to ensure the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria through ending the occupation of its territory, including the occupied Syrian Golan; the withdrawing of all uninvited foreign forces from that country; ceasing to support any separatist tendencies or illegitimate self-rule initiatives; and preventing the violation of Syrian sovereignty, in particular by acts of aggression of the Israeli regime, which Iran condemns strongly.

More importantly, the shielding of terrorist groups in certain parts of Syria must come to an immediate end. Attempts to portray some terrorist groups as moderates or to categorize them as good and bad terrorists must stop. They must neither be shielded nor be allowed to use civilians as a shield.

Alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people is imperative and requires the constructive cooperation of the entire international community. The Council must go beyond the old debate on so-called "cross-line and cross-border access", depoliticize the humanitarian assistance-related subjects, and focus on measures that can actually and quickly lessen the suffering of those in need, ensure fair distribution of aid to people under or outside the Government's control and, more importantly, encourage and ensure the soonest return possible of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. Obviously, in so doing, the sovereignty of Syria must be fully respected and ensured.

In this context, once again, we call for the removal of unilateral sanctions on Syria. They are irresponsible, immoral and unconstructive. Such unlawful and unjust measures only prolong the suffering of the people, delay the return of refugees and displaced persons, hamper the reconstruction efforts and adversely impact the political solution.

We condemn weaponizing food and medicine through sanctions and, as our Foreign Minister stated on his recent visit to Damascus, we will support the Syrian Government's efforts in resisting this economic terrorism.

We will continue our efforts in assisting the people and Government of Syria to overcome the enormous challenges they face.

Annex XX

[Original: Arabic]

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Chinese Presidency for the wise management of the work of the Security Council this month, which has been witness to very serious developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of the continuing Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people. These attacks have yet again revealed the double standards and political hypocrisy practised by the permanent Western members of this Council, with all their talk about the humanitarian situation, international law and its humanitarian branch, and human rights instruments.

In Syria, we have been witnessing on a daily basis the repercussions of the aggressive policies of the United States and some of its Western allies, since they started fuelling and drawing out the crisis in my country. These countries ignored the emergence of the growing threat of terrorist organizations and covered up the crimes of those organizations, then imposed unilateral coercive measures as a tool of economic terrorism, illegally concocting pretexts for the crimes of the so-called “international coalition” through a distorted interpretation of the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, they have remained silent about the American occupation of the north-east of Syria and the Tanf region and the Turkish occupation of parts of the north and north-west of the country, not to mention the continued Israeli occupation and assaults on the sovereignty of Syrian territory, while ensuring that Israel remains unaccountable.

The hostile policies of these Western countries and their shameful silence on that matter have encouraged the Erdoğan regime to continue perpetrating its crimes against the Syrian people, including its use of water as a weapon of war against civilians. Not only has the Turkish regime cut off drinking water from the Uluk station 23 times, depriving the people of the city of Hasakah and its surrounding areas, it has also disrupted the supply of water to Syria by blocking the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at the Syrian-Turkish border. This has led to a significant decline in the flow rate of water into the Euphrates River, from 500 to about 249 cubic metres per second – in other words, to less than half what it was – and the river level has fallen by approximately 5.5 metres. This is in clear violation of the relevant bilateral agreements between the two countries, seriously affecting the supply of drinking water, irrigation water needed for crop production in Aleppo, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr governorates and their surrounding areas and limiting the ability of the power stations along the river to generate electricity, not to mention the catastrophic effects on brotherly Iraq.

Added to which, the Erdoğan regime is continuing the construction of two additional dams, raising the number of dams built by Turkey since 1970 to seven, another serious violation of bilateral agreements, including the 1987 Syria-Turkey protocol on matters pertaining to economic cooperation, deposited with the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, and also the Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and other treaties related to international rivers.

These practices of the Turkish regime are aggravating the humanitarian and living situation of millions of Syrians and increasing the burden borne by the Syrian Government and its partners in their efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in all areas where Syrian lives depend on water supplies from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

We call on the Member States of the Security Council, and primarily those paying lip service to humanitarian concerns, to move urgently to pressure their Turkish ally to keep international waters out of political conflicts, to pump water back to its natural level in accordance with the agreements in force, and to prevent the use of water as a weapon of war against civilians.

In their statements, some fellow members of the Security Council continue to call for the extension of the cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery mechanism. In this context, my delegation reiterates its position on this politicized mechanism, which over the past years has revealed the serious flaws that have dominated its operation, both in terms of its violation of Syrian sovereignty and the manner in which it serves the interests of the Turkish occupation and terrorist organizations loyal to it, notably Hay'at Tahrir al-Shams/the Nusrah Front, which, along with its associated entities, controls Idlib. Added to these flaws are the shortcomings associated with oversight arrangements, distribution and the final destination of the aid.

We reiterate that the mechanism for delivering assistance from inside Syria is the optimal system, most closely aligned with international law, for the delivery of assistance, and that the Syrian Government is providing all necessary facilities for the work of the United Nations. In this regard, we recall the approval granted by the Syrian Government to the convoy to Atarib in the north-west 13 months ago and note that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has still not been able to obtain the approval of the Turkish occupation and its terrorist organizations to carry out the convoy. That is also the case with the convoy to the town of Sarmada.

In fulfilment of the constitutional requirement to hold presidential elections, on 20 May our embassies and diplomatic missions abroad saw an unprecedented turnout of Syrians living outside Syria coming to cast their ballots and choose their candidate from among the three candidates who met the constitutional requirements to run in the electoral race. Today, polling stations in all Syrian provinces have seen a massive turnout of millions of Syrians to participate in these elections.

Fulfilment of this important constitutional requirement means preserving the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence of the Syrian Arab Republic, a principle underpinning all Security Council resolutions related to the situation in my country, and the cornerstone of any effort to resolve the crisis in Syria.

Holding these presidential elections on time will ensure that State institutions are preserved and able to function properly, and will contribute to restoring security and stability and overcoming the effects of the terrorist war that has ravaged the country over the past 10 years. The performance by a very large number of Syrians of this national duty and the exercise of their constitutional right at home and abroad conveys several important messages. In so doing, the Syrian people are affirming their commitment to the independence and unity of their country and their refusal to submit to any pressure or blackmail; they are affirming that they alone, and not some small group of countries that have worked for years to undermine their unity, have the right to grant legitimacy to any constitutional entitlement; and they are affirming their free and independent decision to support their homeland. They are also affirming that the economic terrorism imposed on them will not deter them from shaping their own future and freely choosing those who will represent them. Through this, they are also expressing their rejection of all foreign campaigns of interference and the prevention of their elections by certain Western countries.

All conspiracies targeting the Syrian people, their unity, independence and territorial integrity have come to nothing in the face of their resolve to stand firm and defend their homeland, and their insistence on exercising their electoral right in full view of the whole world.

We therefore call on certain countries to hear and see what the Syrians expressed during those elections, to respect the will of the Syrian people, to put a halt to their aggressive policies, to refrain from the imposition of dictates and conditions, and to support the efforts of the Syrian State and its institutions to overcome the crisis and restore security and stability to the entire territory of Syria. Is it not shameful that, under false and illegal pretexts, certain countries that claim to be democratic are endeavouring to further their conspiratorial designs and cover up their failure to achieve their hostile goals in Syria by preventing Syrians from going to their embassies to perform their national duty? Is it not shameful that some in Europe should resort to threatening Syrians who go to the polls with expulsion and prosecution, and to issuing hollow statements against the elections and their legitimacy? We have grown accustomed to their repeated and empty phrases; the Syrian people will not heed them and will continue to march towards the elimination of terrorism and the ending of all external interference in its internal affairs.

Lastly, the Syrian Government is continuing to follow the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pederson; it reaffirms its commitment to a political process with Syrian ownership and leadership and its positive and constructive engagement in facilitating the sixth round of the Constitutional Committee, which we look forward to convening soon. In this context, it stresses the need for full respect for the Committee's terms of reference and rules of procedure, and for there to be no interference in its work or efforts to force it to come to certain conclusions or to impose on it time frames that are illogical and unrealistic.

Annex XXI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Lowcock for their briefings.

As we are approximately one month away from the renewal of the United Nations cross-border mechanism, it is important to acknowledge once again the vital role of these operations that deliver life-saving assistance to millions of Syrians.

North-west Syria is devastated by bloodshed and suffering. Internally displaced persons continue to account for more than half of the population. Displacement is still a daily reality owing to violence, the fear of escalation of the conflict, and reduced access to shelter and humanitarian assistance.

The forced displacement of Syrians by the regime is yet another concerning development. The regime is trying to send civilians living in the south to the northern parts of the country, without coordinating with the legitimate opposition. These attempts aim to create faits accomplis on the ground.

Food insecurity remains at alarming levels. The severity of the situation is further revealed during Ramadan.

As the conflict continues, we are also witnessing a rise in chronic diseases which result from the long-term lack of access to health care and difficult living circumstances. Constant attacks by the regime have rendered hospitals unable to cope with the existing health challenges. According to the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination programme, only 7.5 per cent of the population in the north-west will be vaccinated by next year. United Nations cross-border operations are vital for the transfer not only of COVID-19 vaccines but also of critical medical equipment.

There is a growing sense of despair and hopelessness among the population, resulting in increased needs for mental health care and psychosocial support.

The suicide rate has consistently increased since the second half of 2020 to the current point, where there are seven suicide attempts every 48 hours. Most of these cases are among young people, who are overwhelmed by the challenges that they face and have given up any hope for the future.

The Security Council must provide these innocent people with long-term support and certainty. Renewing the cross-border resolution for another 12 months, including the reopening of additional crossing points, would be an important step in that direction.

To set the record straight, I would like to share the following information regarding the water level of the Euphrates River.

As part of the adverse impact of climate change on our water resources, since July 2020, all parts of Turkey have received below-average rainfall nearly every month. In this context, overall precipitation decreased by almost 23 per cent compared with last year. In April 2021, the natural flow of the Euphrates River was reduced by 54 per cent compared with the average natural flow levels for the same month. In May, it witnessed a 72 per cent reduction.

Despite this alarming hydrological and climatic reality, the average amount of water released by Turkey from the Euphrates downstream in the first half of the year was over 500m³ per second.

As in the past, Turkey will continue to take all necessary precautionary measures. At the same time, downstream countries are equally responsible for the utilization of the transboundary waters in an efficient and sustainable manner and for operating their downstream dams in a way that secures water, even for dry periods.

Regarding the situation at the Uluk water station, as Under-Secretary-General Lowcock has underlined, the water supply remains limited owing to the continued power cuts. The electrical supply to Ra's al-Ayn and Tall Abyad from the Tishrin dam through the Mabrukah and Darbasiyah electricity stations, which is the only source of electrical power to the region, continues to be deliberately interrupted by the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) on a regular basis.

Turning to the political track, we continue to support efforts towards finding a solution to the Syrian conflict in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). However, the political process is not advancing in a satisfactory manner.

The regime continues its attempts to stonewall progress in the Constitutional Committee. It is even questioning and trying to retreat from decisions previously reached on issues such as working methods. We attach importance to the reconvening of the Committee as soon as possible. However, this has to be done in adherence to the Committee's rules of procedure. And the next round should be results-oriented. We support Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts towards that end.

The international community must be vigilant about the so-called presidential elections in Syria. We cannot allow this sham election to become yet another excuse for the regime's intransigence.

For over a decade now, the regime has resorted to all kinds of tactics to avoid negotiating a genuine political solution. The Council should not tolerate another decade of war in Syria.

The so-called presidential elections are a theatrical farce that does not meet any of the criteria outlined in the road map of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

The sham elections are not being organized pursuant to a new constitution. They are not administered under the supervision of the United Nations, in observance of the fundamental principles of good governance and the highest international standards of transparency and accountability.

They are far from free or fair. Not only does this election not contribute to the efforts for a political solution, it also undermines them.

We support calls for accelerating the political solution in a comprehensive manner that encompasses all aspects of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). We welcome the Special Envoy's proposals in that regard. It would be useful for countries that can contribute to the solution of the conflict to get together and discuss all dimensions of the issue and exchange views on the way forward.

For our joint efforts to yield meaningful results, calm on the ground must be preserved. The regime continues to violate the ceasefire. We cannot allow the regime to scale up its violations with the ultimate aim of ensuring the ceasefire's collapse.

Furthermore, PKK/YPG continues to target civilians and our borders. Tall Rif'at and Manbij remain launching pads for this separatist terrorist organization that also threatens Syria's territorial integrity. We will not tolerate attempts to accord legitimacy to this terrorist entity or to incorporate them into the political process.

I would like to conclude by re-emphasizing the vital importance of the continuation of the United Nations cross-border operations.

As we speak, around 5 million Syrian people squeezed into north-west Syria are looking at us, hoping that the Council will care about their pain and suffering. They desperately need the cross-border mechanism.

The international community cannot afford to disrupt one of the most sophisticated, scrutinized and transparent humanitarian assistance systems in place. The whole world is watching the Security Council. It is time to stay united and act together.

The previous speaker has repeated again his usual delusional allegations and shameless lies and does not deserve my response.

The answer to the criminal regime he represents will be given by the Syrian people, when they save and rebuild Syria.
