



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

*Provisional*

**9163**<sup>rd</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 25 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Biang. . . . .	(Gabon)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil. . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Issahaku
	India . . . . .	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya. . . . .	Ms. Muigai
	Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America. . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

### The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022) (S/2022/775)

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

### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

### The situation in the Middle East

**Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022) (S/2022/775)**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/775, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021) and 2642 (2022).

I give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I brief the Security Council after a busy period of diplomatic engagement, including a visit to Damascus. Before I update members on that, let me first thank all those Syrians, from inside and outside Syria, who continue to engage with us, especially Syrian women.

In a few days, we will mark the twenty-second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). Over nearly 12 years of conflict, there is almost no indignity that Syria's women and girls have not suffered: poverty and malnutrition; detention, disappearance and abduction; sexual assault and rape; forced and early marriages;

violence of multiple kinds when bearing children; and the denial of education and livelihoods. Women civil society activists are too often targeted by violence when attempting to engage in public life. Women political and civic leaders struggle to secure their rightful seats at negotiating tables.

Nonetheless, Syrian women are successfully heading households, assuming responsibilities in their communities and demanding full representation in political processes. They help guide the interventions of the international community in the humanitarian sphere. They advocate for the rights of the detained, abducted and missing. Many find ways to come together across divides and articulate an unrelenting demand for dignity for all Syrians. They embody a hope that a political settlement can bring about real peace and enable Syrian women to assume their rightful and hard-earned place in society.

Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi and I will continue to engage and develop platforms such as the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the Civil Society Support Room to ensure women's equal access to the political process. We continue to advocate for quotas in Syrian political bodies of at least 30 per cent, and we seek to create opportunities where issues of importance to women can be raised, including in the Constitutional Committee. I look forward to engaging with the Women's Advisory Board again in Geneva next month.

We also continue our regular dialogue with a wide range of Syrian civil society representatives — men and women — through the Civil Society Support Room. Syrian civil society is keen to put forward its knowledge, expertise, time and ideas to help Syria move towards a comprehensive political solution. Recently, we launched a thematic group on issues related to local governance and decentralization. Another group of Syrian experts will start discussing issues related to protection needs. That engagement helps to build trust among Syrians and also provides us with advice on possible openings for the political process.

Tragically, however, the political process has yet to deliver for the Syrian people, and they continue to suffer, not least from acute violence. Even as the strategic stalemate persists, the conflict remains very active across Syria. Let me mention a few examples.

After infighting among armed opposition groups in recent weeks, Security Council-listed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham deployed fighters in Afrin and

reached the outskirts of Azaz. There are now reports that they are withdrawing from Afrin following a ceasefire. Elsewhere, the listed terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant remains a serious threat. Since the so-called caliphate fell, one of the largest weapons caches was recently discovered in north-east Syria, underlining the group's continued capacity to stage attacks.

Pro-Government air strikes were reported in north-west Syria, both in Idlib and also on the outskirts of Azaz, in areas where strikes had not been reported for a very long time. Violence in the north-east continues, with frequent reports of drone strikes, mutual shelling and confrontations between the Syrian Democratic Forces, on the one hand, and Türkiye and armed opposition groups, on the other.

Strikes were reported in the vicinity of United States forces in Deir ez-Zor. The south-west continues to see a string of security incidents every month, including ambushes, assassinations and attacks with improvised explosive devices. There was an unclaimed attack on a bus carrying Syrian Government soldiers in Damascus. Strikes attributed to Israel have hit targets in Syria, including once again Damascus and Aleppo international airports.

I reiterate my call on all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, preserve deconfliction channels and de-escalation agreements and build on them towards a full nationwide ceasefire. I also call on them to continue to find cooperative ways to counter Security Council-listed terrorist groups in a manner that fully respects international humanitarian law and preserves stability, as well as Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. It is unacceptable that hostilities continue to result in civilian casualties, including many child casualties. We once again conveyed our concerns to key stakeholders in recent weeks and will continue to raise them with members of the ceasefire task force here in Geneva.

Let me also stress the scale of the economic challenges in Syria and my concerns about Syrian humanitarian suffering and livelihoods. The Syrian pound has lost a tremendous amount of its value in recent weeks, which in turn has seen food and fuel prices jump to even higher record prices. Syrians are enduring the worst economic crisis since the war began, and it will only get worse this winter for the vast majority of them. It is vital to ensure increased

and unfettered humanitarian access to all people in need throughout Syria via the most direct routes, including cross-border and cross-line access. And the deeper causes of economic suffering in Syria need to be addressed, both by the Government and by outsiders.

As my colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will brief the Council, the recent cholera outbreak is spreading rapidly. Cases have already spread to Lebanon, and other countries in the region have also expressed concern about the prospect. That was preventable and serves again as a reminder that we need to find a solution to alleviate the severe health and water conditions throughout Syria.

My team and I continue to pay very close attention to the file on detained, disappeared and missing persons. We have deepened our engagement with victims, family associations and civil society organizations, which continue to lead the way and are voicing their priorities and pursuing solutions. Regrettably, we continue to receive reports of arbitrary arrests throughout the country. Meanwhile, six months after the presidential amnesty decree, there is nothing new to report. Despite our continued engagement, official information is not forthcoming, and independent monitoring has not been facilitated. In that context, and also more generally, families stress the concerns that arise from the lack of transparent communication and the resulting vulnerabilities and lack of confidence.

In recent weeks, I engaged widely with diplomatic counterparts at the General Assembly in New York and in Washington, D.C., Berlin, Geneva, Damascus and Amman. I met with the Syrian Foreign Minister and the President of the Syrian National Council. I also met with the Foreign Ministers of Iran, Russia, Türkiye, Egypt and Jordan and other senior officials from the Arab world, the United States, Germany and other European countries. I will continue that engagement in the period ahead.

I am pushing all stakeholders to engage in step-for-step confidence-building measures to help advance the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). The key Syrian and international stakeholders need to rebuild their confidence that cooperation on Syria is indeed possible, that the other side is willing and able to deliver and that Syria can be firewalled from other conflicts. Such confidence can be built only through concrete actions. In order to serve that purpose, the initial steps must be precise, reciprocal, verifiable and implemented

in parallel, and they must address the daily concerns of the Syrian people. The dialogue necessary to achieve that has deepened as a result of my most recent engagements, with some key stakeholders identifying concrete areas for potential steps and all engaging with heightened interest. Those discussions need to be further developed. I particularly look forward to further engagement with the Syrian Government in that area.

I continue to work to unblock obstacles to reconvening the Constitutional Committee here in Geneva. Council members will recall that the Syrian Government nominees decided not to come to Geneva, pending the resolution of issues related to the venue cited by the Russian Federation. I have discussed the issue with senior Russian counterparts, our Swiss hosts, the Syrian Foreign Minister, the Syrian Government-nominated co-Chair of the Constitutional Committee in Damascus and the Syria National Council.

Even if sessions were to resume in Geneva, that would not be sufficient to restore the credibility of the Committee in the eyes of most Syrians and international stakeholders. That is why I am seeking to work with the parties and the co-Chairs so that, when meetings reconvene, there will be the political will to engage in a spirit of compromise and at a faster pace, with better working methods and more substance.

Let me recall that the Syrian-led and -owned political process is designed to reach a negotiated political solution to implement resolution 2254 (2015). Such a solution must rest on Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, and it must enable the Syrian people to determine their own future via a process that culminates in free and fair elections administered under the United Nations supervision, with the participation of all eligible Syrians, including members of the diaspora. Such a political solution is the only path towards a sustainable peace.

Sadly, we are currently a long way from that goal, and there are challenging diplomatic and ground realities that make advancing towards a comprehensive solution difficult. But the status quo should not be acceptable, and there are ways forward. I appeal to all Council members for support for my efforts to create some movement among the Syrian parties and key stakeholders as we seek to advance the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ghelani.

**Ms. Ghelani:** As the Special Envoy has mentioned, communities in Syria are caught in the middle of a spiralling security, public health and economic crisis. They are basically struggling to survive. Allow me to share the latest facts.

The conflict continues to cause civilian death and injury, primarily along the front lines. As the Special Envoy has already described, the ongoing active fighting and its impact on civilians and civilian structures have continued. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at least 92 civilians were killed and 80 injured in August and September alone. Twenty-seven of them were killed by explosive remnants of war. Syria is reporting some of the largest numbers of victims of explosive ordnance worldwide, and two in three victims are children. And the deaths and injuries do not stop when active fighting stops. Those weapons pose a lasting, deadly threat to civilians. Security operations in Al-Hol camp in August and September damaged shelters and temporarily restricted people's access to humanitarian assistance and services. In addition, many children were detained, and humanitarian partners still lack access to them.

I would like to give a little more detail about the cholera outbreak that is rapidly spreading throughout Syria and has been made worse, as was also mentioned, by the country's severe water shortages. More than 24,000 suspected cholera cases have been reported and cases have been confirmed in all 14 governorates. At least 80 people have died so far. While that is a tragedy, it should not come as a surprise. Millions of people across Syria lack reliable access to sufficient and safe water, and the health system has been devastated by more than a decade of conflict. Insufficient and poorly distributed rainfall in many places, severe drought-like conditions, low water levels in the Euphrates River and damaged water infrastructure are all factors compounding the outbreak. From 11 August to 20 October, the Allouk water station was unable to service close to 1 million people in Al-Hasakah city and surrounding camps with water. Some water reportedly reached the city on 22 October. A similar situation is unfolding in Al Bab, in Aleppo governorate, where 185,000 people still face severe water shortages.

The United Nations and our partners have been sounding the alarm on the water crisis in northern Syria for the past year at least. The crisis is likely to get even

worse. The outlook from now to December suggests an increased probability for below-normal precipitation and above-normal temperatures. If that materializes, it will further exacerbate an already dire water crisis. The equation is simple. When people drink the same contaminated water that they use to irrigate their crops and when they do not have sufficient water to practice proper hygiene, waterborne diseases spread, causing people, especially children, to fall ill and sometimes die. The three-month cholera response plan coordinated by the United Nations requests just over \$34 million to assist 162,000 people with health services and 5 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance. Our two pooled funds, the Syria Humanitarian Fund and the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund, will make around \$10 million available to partners across the country. We are grateful to the donors who pledged new support to the cholera response, but much more is needed. It is also now critical that donors convert their generous pledges into early disbursements of funding.

The water scarcity has also affected crops and farmers' livelihoods, driving prices up and putting food further out of reach for millions of people. Syria is now experiencing its lowest wheat harvest since the crisis began, following two consecutive seasons of drought-like conditions. Food insecurity is spiralling out of control and malnutrition rates are rising. Syrians today can afford only 15 per cent of the food they were able to purchase only three years ago. The lack of water leaves the communities affected, and particularly women and girls, more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

We are just weeks away from another winter in Syria, and a painfully familiar scenario will soon unfold. Snowstorms, sub-zero temperatures, strong winds, rains and flooding are expected to hit soon. Over the past decade, we have seen year after year what that means for families living in tents and makeshift shelters. We have also seen how severe fuel and electricity shortages make it very difficult for families to keep warm and for essential services to keep functioning. This year, the number of people who need winterization assistance has increased by a staggering 30 per cent across the country compared to the previous year. In the north-west, some 2 million depend on winter assistance to meet their most basic needs. Most are women and children living in camps with limited or no access to heating, electricity, water or sewage disposal. Humanitarian partners have launched a winterization response, but it remains grossly underfunded, with the

shelter and non-food-items sector funded at just 10 per cent. If that gap is not filled, families will not receive the heating, fuel, blankets and winter clothes they desperately need to keep warm.

The United Nations and its partners will continue to provide life-saving assistance, such as food, water, health and protection services, to millions of people across Syria. And because early-recovery and livelihood activities are a core pillar of the humanitarian response, we are providing more than life-saving assistance. We are supporting the repair and rehabilitation of critical basic civilian services. We are providing access to electricity and removing debris and solid waste, launching income-generating activities and providing vocational and skills training and interventions to support the social cohesion of communities. But we need support for two crucial aspects.

First, we need access to all people who need humanitarian assistance. That includes continued cross-border access and increased cross-line access, in line with what international humanitarian law requires of all parties to armed conflict. A non-renewal of the authorization to carry out cross-border humanitarian assistance at the peak of winter and in the middle of a massive cholera response could cut off access to millions of people in the north-west just when they need it most. At the same time, we need the continued facilitation and support of all parties to increase cross-line access throughout the country. In the north-west, the eighth cross-line mission to Sarmada, in Idlib governorate, was completed over the weekend. The inter-agency convoy delivered 503 metric tons of food for more than 56,000 people, as well as nutrition, shelter, water, sanitation items, health kits and other supplies.

Secondly, we need urgent funding. Almost 11 months into the year, our humanitarian appeal for Syria still faces significant funding shortages. We must bring the world's focus back to what the women, men and children of Syria need most — immediate aid, early recovery, hope for a dignified life and a better future. And above all, they need peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Ghelani for her briefing.

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

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and



Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Reena Ghelani for the briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

We advocate advancing a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process with United Nations assistance. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to deliver on his direct mandate established in resolution 2254 (2015). The key element in that process is the Constitutional Committee, within which there is direct inter-Syrian dialogue on constitutional reform.

Currently, the meetings of the drafting committee of the Constitutional Committee have been suspended, inter alia because Geneva has lost the status of a truly neutral platform as a result of Switzerland supporting the anti-Russian and anti-Syrian sanctions. We hope that this problem will be overcome either by selecting an alternative venue or by providing appropriate guarantees from the Swiss side to the arriving representatives.

The situation in Syria continues to be of concern. In addition to the existing problem areas in the territories not controlled by Damascus, primarily Idlib and the trans-Euphrates area, the situation in the north of the country also has a destabilizing effect. Idlib has long been turned into a Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorist enclave. The withdrawal of fighters from the southern part of the de-escalation zone did not take place, the M4 road has not been unblocked, there are no joint patrols and there is no separation of moderate fighters from terrorists. Western countries' backing of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists is linked to recent attempts by the terrorists to expand their zone of control beyond Idlib.

A serious problem remains — Washington's intent to encourage Kurdish separatism and deepen the territorial rift in Syria through their continued illegal presence in the trans-Euphrates region and around Al-Tanf. In addition, the Americans and their allies are promoting the reinstallation of terrorist structures and their arbitrary actions in the Al-Hol and Rukban refugee camps.

With regard to Rukban, whose inhabitants have recently been a source of active concern for our American colleagues in the Council, we would like to stress the following. Over the past nine months, only 730 refugees have been able to leave the camp for areas controlled by the Syrian Government. The rest are being held against their will by pro-American illegal armed

groups. According to our information, the victims of the fighters are denied access to humanitarian assistance, medication and education. The American command, demonstrating its impotence in providing security guarantees in the territory it controls, continues to block the arrival of a joint mission of Russia's Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides and Refugee Migration Monitoring in the Syrian Arab Republic and international humanitarian organizations to conduct a real assessment of the situation in the camp and evacuate the remaining refugees. The United States, as the occupying party, bears full responsibility for the civilians therein.

Another destabilizing factor in Syria is Israeli attacks, with their systematic violation of the airspace above Syria and neighbouring Arab countries, in the course of which strikes are being carried out against civilian targets. The Syrians have repeatedly launched appeals in that regard to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, citing the numerous violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international humanitarian law. We consider it unacceptable to leave those letters unanswered, all the more so because on other topics the Secretary-General expresses his views and assessments much more actively, sometimes without even waiting for the States Members of the United Nations to express their positions.

Returning to the topic of Idlib, we certainly welcome the recent dispatch of another cross-line humanitarian convoy to Sarmada. However, let us be frank — this is only the eighth convoy, and there is no real enthusiasm to increase humanitarian assistance to Syria's rebel-held areas, in cooperation with the Government. This situation looks especially cynical in the light of the fact that Damascus regularly issues the necessary permits. It is worth noting that both the Secretariat and those who allege that there is insufficient security in the region are actively and demonstrably clamouring for cross-line access in other country contexts, where the intensity of hostilities makes such operations much riskier for the security of humanitarian workers. We see this as yet another display of double standards.

Overall, the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Syria continues to deteriorate, primarily in Government territories, where 67 per cent of the population lives. In fact, many of those living there are forced to fight for their survival. The main reason for that is not — in any way — the actions of the Syrian

authorities, but rather the consequences of United States and European Union sanctions, combined with new challenges, such as the pandemic, a food crisis and a growing number of cholera cases.

The specialized agencies of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross are chronically short of funds to extend urgent assistance to all those in need. The humanitarian plan is only 25 per cent funded. Western donors, led by the United States, only declare their generosity, but in reality they are plundering Syrian natural resources. According to estimates of Syria's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources, the country's energy-sector losses as a result of the actions of the United States and the Kurdish Administration amounted to more than \$107 billion, due, among other things, to the activities of American companies such as Delta Crescent Energy, as well as the consequences of the so-called Caesar Act.

In that regard, we attach great importance to the regular review of international humanitarian activity in Syria as part of informal interactive dialogue designed to ensure the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022). That is important not only to ensure a conscious and informed decision regarding its extension in January 2023, but also for creating the basic conditions needed, *inter alia*, for the return of Syrian refugees. For neighbouring Lebanon, continuing to host Syrians on its territory has already become an unbearable burden. The country's authorities openly declare that, but none of our Western partners is interested in a fundamental solution to the problem, just as no alternatives are being proposed to return people to normal life. Humanitarian workers are passively looking on, fearful of provoking anger in the West with actions and initiatives that run counter to the political stances of well-known Western capitals.

The refugee problem requires an urgent solution. At the end of September, a boat that left Tripoli capsized and sank. According to different sources, 120 to 150 Syrian refugees headed to Europe were on board. One hundred people died, and the survivors are being cared for. The ships of the Mediterranean group of the Russian navy took part in the rescue operation. Such refugee tragedies are yet another grim wake-up call.

For our part, we are doing everything we can — in close cooperation with Damascus — to rectify the humanitarian situation on the ground. Thanks to those efforts, more than 2 million Syrian citizens have

returned to their homes to date. Of those, more than 1,375,000 are internally displaced persons and more than 1 million are refugees from abroad. Since 2018, we have repaired and put into operation more than 22,000 socially significant and industrial facilities in various regions of the country, and construction work is under way at more than 4,100 additional facilities.

In the past month alone, 11 new farming cooperatives were established in the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Tartus, Dara'a and As-Suwayda, in support of farmers. Concessional lending programmes were launched in the country, and the main irrigation station was put into operation in the province of Deir ez-Zor, enabling the use of about 7,500 hectares of agricultural land. In addition, in the provinces of Damascus, Deir ez-Zor and Homs, the construction of 921 residential properties is being completed. Those housing units are to be donated to refugees and internally displaced persons.

In addition, we are working to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of Syria. Through the efforts of representatives of the Department for Rescue Archaeology of the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Syria's Directorate-General for Antiquities and Museums, the first stage of restoring the Arch of Triumph at Palmyra has been completed. As part of that project, Russian and Syrian experts are successfully carrying out a set of activities in order to provide a post-traumatic response, conduct comprehensive archaeological research on the territory of the arch and work on its restoration.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Ghelani for their informative and sobering briefings.

We are deeply troubled by the renewed and intensified fighting in the north-west. The violence endangers civilians and interferes with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, compounding an already dire situation and creating conditions that could lead to significant displacement. Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a designated terrorist group, must stop its escalatory actions in the area. The Syrian people have suffered enough, and this new round of violence only exacerbates conditions on the ground.

As we heard from the United Nations and its partners, the growing cholera epidemic reflects the still worsening humanitarian situation. The time to ramp up our assistance to the Syrian people is now, before the outbreak spirals further out of control. For our part, we

provided funding to help first responders throughout the country to deliver medical care, nutrition and clean water. Those efforts are essential to saving lives and stopping the spread of the infection. We are also proud to support humanitarian early-recovery projects that are rehabilitating community water systems, which is critical to preventing future outbreaks.

But, with thousands of suspected cases and mounting deaths, the situation will only worsen without unfettered access for humanitarian actors. Central to that effort is the renewal and expansion of the United Nations cross-border aid authorization in January. While there has been some notable progress on cross-line assistance, cross-border deliveries are the only realistic mechanism to ensure that millions of people in north-west Syria get the help that they need through this upcoming winter and beyond.

Russia's decision to block a 12-month extension of the cross-border mandate is having real consequences on the ground. The humanitarian operation is among the largest and most complicated in the world. Yet the Council was not able to give United Nations aid workers what they most need to succeed: a resolution mandate that prioritized the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people above cruel political calculation.

The United Nations is having trouble recruiting staff to join the mission given the uncertainty after January. Procurement has been undermined because orders need to be placed months in advance. Aid workers are spending time worrying about contingency plans rather than on how to roll out stronger interventions, including early-recovery.

As we heard on many occasions here in the Security Council, from United Nations reports, from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and at the informal interactive dialogue in September, the United Nations operation is transparent, efficient and apolitical. It delivers assistance based on need — full stop. As we look to January, we need to be focused on the renewal of that life-saving mandate.

In addition to our efforts to meet the immediate needs of the Syrian people, we must also stay focused on a long-term political solution. The United States fully supports Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to revive the Constitutional Committee and take other steps to achieve the aims of resolution 2254 (2015). It is imperative that the Al-Assad regime take meaningful action to demonstrate its commitment

to the political process. One such action would be to provide information about the approximately 130,000 disappeared or arbitrarily detained Syrians.

Human decency demands that the Government at least provide basic information on the whereabouts and well-being of detainees to families that have been left in the dark. But information, while critical, is in no way enough. Providing information to victims' families should be pursued in parallel with other efforts. We call on the regime and all parties to the conflict to immediately and humanely release all unjustly detained persons, clarify the fate of those missing or forcibly disappeared and provide support to the victims' families.

The United States fully supports the establishment of a stand-alone entity with a humanitarian mandate focused entirely on clarifying the fate of all Syria's missing persons — people who went missing at the hands of the Al-Assad regime, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) or other parties to the conflict. Confirming the whereabouts and status of the thousands of missing Syrians and releasing the arbitrarily detained are essential to achieving a stable, just and enduring peace in Syria. We believe that the new entity will be vital to that work.

As was detailed in the Secretary-General's recent report (A/76/890), while there are various entities that work on aspects of that important file, none have the explicit mandate to solely focus, or conduct investigations, on the missing and the detained. We stand with the Syrian human rights defenders, survivors and families working on the file. We look forward to continuing to support them, Syrian civil society, the United Nations and NGOs in order to make genuine progress towards the establishment of a new mechanism. Nearly every Syrian family has been traumatized by the disappearance of a loved one, and we all have a responsibility to do right by those families and those still detained.

If I may, I will just respond to some comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation. As we said many times, the United States is in Syria for the sole purpose of enabling the ongoing campaign against ISIS. We are committed to preserving our limited presence in north-east Syria as part of a comprehensive strategy to defeat ISIS and Al-Qaida, working by, with and through the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and other local partners. On the issue of Syrian oil, Syrian



oil is for the Syrian people. The United States does not own, control or manage any of those resources, neither do we wish to. As part of the effort to defeat ISIS, the SDF will continue to deny ISIS access to oil and gas revenue in north-east Syria, which it previously used to fund its terror campaign.

**Mr. Mythen** (Ireland): I deliver this statement on behalf of Norway and Ireland as co-penholders on the Syria humanitarian file. We thank Director Ghelani for her briefing today.

In this reporting period alone, 92 civilians, including 35 children, were killed as a result of hostilities. Let us consider that for a moment. Thirty-five children were killed in the past 60 days in Syria — 35 young lives lost. It is unacceptable that many attacks appear to be directed against civilians or carried out near locations of a civilian character.

Furthermore, we are deeply worried by the significant increase in child recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict. We call on all parties to engage with the United Nations with the aim of signing and implementing action plans to strengthen the protection of children.

We repeat our call on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law, including the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. We also call on all States with influence over the parties to the conflict to be proactive and take all possible steps that can lead to increased protection and safety for the civilian population in Syria.

Cholera was confirmed in all governorates of Syria — yet a further challenge to a health system that has been decimated by more than 11 years of conflict. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations and partners to respond to the outbreak, which highlights the difficulties posed by the severe water shortages throughout Syria.

Not only are water shortages now threatening lives, but they also risk exacerbating a food and protection crisis that is already desperate. The lack of available water severely increases the vulnerability of affected communities. The levels of acute and severe food insecurity are quite simply staggering. As stated by the Secretary-General, Syrians can afford only one sixth of the food that they could purchase in 2019 (see S/2022/775).

Negative coping mechanisms, which particularly impact women and children, continue to increase. Children are withdrawn from school to help support their families, forced to work or forced into early marriage. Suicide rates among young women and girls are rising. The destructive effects of nearly 12 years of conflict are robbing them of their futures.

Humanitarian needs are at their highest-ever levels. Syrians will once again face a bitter winter. Six million people are in need of winter assistance — a figure that has grown by 30 per cent since last year. We know that winter will threaten the lives of millions of Syrian men, women and children.

Soaring fuel prices mean that families will once again be forced to choose between keeping warm and eating. Many are living in overcrowded, old tents, exposed to harsh weather. They urgently need our help.

Early-recovery support is changing lives and building resilience, from the rehabilitation of hospitals, bakeries, water systems and classrooms to the installation of solar systems. Since January, more than 8 million Syrians have benefited directly or indirectly from early-recovery projects, which are taking place in every governorate of the country. More than 40 per cent of the projects that received funding by late August contribute to the provision of electricity to support basic needs or electricity in households.

Norway and Ireland strongly support the use of all modalities to reach the many Syrians in need across the country. We welcome the completion of the eighth cross-line delivery. The efforts of the United Nations and humanitarian partners with regard to cross-line deliveries are clear, and we encourage them to continue.

The United Nations cannot increase the rates of cross-line deliveries by itself. We call on all parties to support cross-line deliveries, including by providing timely security guarantees. The cross-border operation remains an absolutely critical lifeline, for which there is currently no substitute. It is imperative for the Council to work together to confirm the continuation of the highly monitored operation at Bab Al-Hawa. I reiterate the commitment of Norway and Ireland to supporting the people of Syria. Our collective efforts on the Council must be dedicated to them, so that they can hope for a better future.

I will now address the political situation on behalf of Ireland. I want to thank Special Envoy Pedersen for

the update on his recent travel, as well as his continued efforts on step-for-step confidence-building measures. European Union foreign ministers agreed to engage in that process in January, while Damascus and its allies have not, despite repeated calls by Ireland and others. Ireland calls for the calming of tensions and hostilities between the belligerent parties across Syria. We call on them to exercise the utmost restraint to spare civilians any further horrors. There must be a nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Only a political solution can bring the stability and security needed for the Syrian people. Ireland supports the efforts of the Special Envoy to resolve the issues that are preventing the holding of a ninth session of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. We call for full and meaningful engagement by Damascus and reiterate that the Committee should meet in Geneva. Any new constitution and related political process must be fully inclusive and benefit from the full, equal and meaningful engagement of women.

Ireland reiterates its call on Damascus for transparency on the release of arbitrarily detained people, in particular on the implementation of the amnesty decree announced in April. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/775) documents that detainees in custody are dying from alleged natural causes, with families denied the opportunity to question the cause of death or even know the whereabouts of their loved one's body — that is unconscionable. The reported arbitrary arrest of 19 civilians during the reporting period is very troubling. Ireland thanks the Secretariat for the Secretary-General's study on missing persons in Syria (see A/76/890) and calls on the international community to support a process to enable Syrian families to find answers on the fate of their loved ones.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Geir Pedersen and Ms. Reena Ghelani for their thorough briefings today. We highly appreciate their efforts on that dossier.

Despite the ongoing developments in the security and humanitarian situations in Syria, it is unfortunate that the Syrian dossier does not garner enough attention in the international arena. The diplomatic efforts to reach a solution to end the crisis have also waned. Therefore, we would like to remind everyone that the Syrian dossier is no less important than the other dossiers on our agenda. The living conditions of

the Syrian people are among the worst in the world. They deserve our attention and interest, just as other conflict-affected peoples.

We will not be able to break the current deadlock in the political process if international efforts are not focused on achieving that goal. We appreciate in that regard the continuous attempts of the Special Envoy, in his engagement with the Syrian parties, to find a solution to the crisis, and we stress the need to include women in those efforts. The deadlock that has paralysed the work of the Constitutional Committee over the past months must be overcome, as the Committee is the only platform through which to carry out a constructive and national Syrian-led and -owned dialogue in order to move the political process forward without foreign interference or dictates. That does not only apply to logistical matters, but must also include a clear timeline and an agreed plan for the next steps on the constitutional track. The United Arab Emirates will continue to reiterate its rejection of foreign intervention in Syria's affairs, as well as our calls to end such intervention in order to maintain Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The security situation will not improve without efforts to address the chaos in security, of which the terrorist Da'esh organization and other groups are taking advantage to launch attacks against Syrian territories. What Mr. Pedersen has mentioned about Da'esh weapons caches is a source of concern, as is the fact that Da'esh has extorted and looted local communities in the eastern Deir ez-Zor governorate to fund its terrorist activities. We have also heard concerning reports about other groups that have been gaining control over a number of Syrian areas in northern Aleppo during the past few weeks. We demand the withdrawal of those groups and a halt to all hostilities in northern Syria to ensure the protection of civilian lives.

The developments I have just mentioned illustrate the continuing threats and long-term repercussions posed by those groups to the security and stability of both Syria and the region as a whole. Those situations must be addressed and not ignored. We reiterate here that the safety and stability of Syria is an integral part of the safety and stability of the region.

The worsening humanitarian conditions and the economic regression in Syria will not improve unless sustainable solutions are reached that go beyond temporary and limited measures. That requires

international efforts to focus on early recovery and reconstruction. We note also that the humanitarian situation is becoming more dangerous owing to the cholera outbreak in all Syrian governorates. In addition, there are growing concerns regarding the crowded conditions in camps for displaced people, which suffer in particular from a lack of clean drinking water. In that regard, we commend the United Nations for setting a plan to respond to that epidemic.

We also stress the need to providing the appropriate security conditions to allow the passage of humanitarian convoys to their intended destinations in order to ensure the unhindered and impartial delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need throughout Syria, including women and girls. In that regard, we welcome the recent entry of the seventh and eighth convoys into north-western Syria and the distribution of foodstuff by the World Food Programme.

In conclusion, I would like to note that every day that goes by without finding a peaceful solution is one more day added to the suffering of the Syrian people. We must therefore restore the international momentum to end the current impasse on the political track.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Ghelani for their briefings and welcome the delegations of Syria, Iran and Türkiye to today's meeting.

Mexico deplores the armed clashes that continue to affect the daily lives of civilians in regions such as Afrin, Idlib and Raqqa. We deplore the attacks that have affected five internally displaced persons camps in Bab Al-Hawa, as well as those in the vicinity of schools and health-care facilities. We reiterate that all the parties to the conflict must respect the rules of international humanitarian law, without exception.

We call on the parties to agree a nationwide ceasefire in order to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population and create a space for the resumption of the political process. We hope that the small body of the Constitutional Committee will be able to hold its ninth session before the end of the year.

Mexico is confident that the Special Envoy's recent meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria, as well as the President of the Syrian National Council, will serve to gradually advance the discussions and build confidence between the parties.

Although the implementation of the general amnesty decreed in April has thus far resulted in a limited number of releases, it can help create better conditions for dialogue. We therefore support the Special Envoy's follow-up efforts in that regard.

We urge the Syrian authorities to take concrete steps towards national reconciliation, including by clarifying the status of missing persons and ensuring unimpeded entry for humanitarian agencies into detention centres.

As humanitarian needs continue to grow, access to humanitarian assistance is a priority. What occurred at Al-Hol camp is therefore worrisome, as insecurity forced some organizations to temporarily suspend their services, thereby affecting education and health services.

The increase in the number of cholera cases has further aggravated the humanitarian situation. The country's 14 governorates are already in an emergency situation. In addition to the much-needed medical response, access to safe water and sanitation is essential for combating such outbreaks, and power generation and early-recovery projects are therefore critical.

The onset of winter will bring with it new challenges in providing energy and ensuring the availability of food and sanitation services, which will increase the population's dependence on the humanitarian assistance that is essential for more than 6 million people in extremely vulnerable situations, including displaced persons, older persons, women and children.

Lastly, the entry into the north-west of the country of the eighth cross-line convoy last weekend will benefit 56,000 people. That is a step in the right direction, although it is clearly insufficient to cover all the needs of the nearly 2.4 million people who benefit from aid through the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing. Therefore, we once again stress the need to renew the authorization.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I make this statement on the political situation in Syria in my national capacity.

I thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing. Norway continues to give its full support to him and his team. We are pleased to hear that he has continued consultations with the relevant actors regarding the step-for-step approach. Norway shares his view that there are areas of shared interest in which it is possible to find common ground, and there is certainly an urgent need to implement confidence-building measures to move the political process forward.

Progress relating to missing and arbitrarily detained persons in Syria could be one such issue. Some progress has been made following the Syrian authorities' announced amnesty. Still, strengthened efforts by the Syrian authorities in implementing the amnesty are needed.

With regard to the Constitutional Committee, Norway will continue to urge the parties to get back to the negotiating table and contribute constructively to the process.

We are concerned about the recent violence in northern Syria, including in Idlib. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to which the Director for Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also referred, at least 92 civilians were killed in the period covering August to September. Let me again highlight the need for a national ceasefire and remind the parties of their obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The lack of progress towards a political solution also has a negative impact on the socioeconomic situation. We are worried about the lack of economic opportunities, the continued brain drain, the increased recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups and the smuggling of drugs. Those negative trends must be reversed.

In conclusion, we welcome the Women's Advisory Board's meeting held earlier this month and its close dialogue with the Special Envoy. The group plays a vital role in providing key perspectives and input to the political process and the work of the United Nations. We are pleased to support its important work.

**Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil): Brazil thanks Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Ghelani for their briefings.

With more than half of the population needing life-saving assistance and without a political solution on the horizon, there is not much room for disagreement on the importance of keeping the Security Council's attention on Syria. The cholera outbreak is just another consequence of the precarious situation in the country after 11 long years of conflict. New humanitarian crises will arise as long as no action is taken to change the situation on the ground.

We were glad to learn that early-recovery activities increased and that 151 of the 350 projects contributed to the provision of electricity to support basic services

and household electricity. However, without a ceasefire the sustainability of early-recovery projects will remain elusive.

We remain very concerned about the consequences of foreign intervention in Syria. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/775) concludes, the frequency of attacks harming civilians points to a general lack of compliance by all parties, who are under an obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. The constant threat of terrorism must also be tackled as a collective menace, with the cooperation of all parties.

Winter in Syria is approaching, and with it will come the expiration of the authorization of resolution 2462 (2019) for cross-border operations. In less than three months, we will have to decide on a way forward on that issue. While pursuing a true humanitarian, depoliticized approach, we should start working together in order to reach common ground on the renewal of the mandate. The figures show that, although initially planned to be a temporary arrangement, cross-border operations remain the mainstay of the humanitarian assistance being provided in Syria. Cross-line numbers have increased slightly; yet they remain far from the goal of replacing cross-border operations.

Brazil supported the idea of a further debate on Syria as an opportunity to analyse in depth what can be done to unlock the debate on humanitarian assistance to the country. The next informal dialogue should be used for more transparent discussions on the challenges ahead of us, including the humanitarian impact of sanctions. In his report, the Secretary-General reminds us that, as early as March 2020, he called for the waiving of sanctions that might impede access to essential health supplies and food to the Syrian population. Brazil echoes his message of encouragement to all relevant parties to find ways to address the challenges in that regard and to facilitate humanitarian actors' adequate and reliable access to financial services.

The humanitarian situation in camps across Syria is dire, with a large number of women and children in need of assistance. Brazil agrees with the Secretary-General that the arbitrary deprivation of liberty to many people in camps, including children, based on unproven links with terrorist groups, remains a key human rights concern. The question of the whereabouts of missing persons should also be addressed as a matter of priority.

Last week, we held an open debate to address the resilience of women in armed conflict (see S/PV.9158).



Syrian women continue to be disproportionately affected by the crisis, including through gender-based violence, forced or early marriage and restricted access to livelihood opportunities. Brazil calls on the Council to commit to maintaining full access to education and the workplace for girls and women, stressing that their empowerment and protection are not just a moral and ethical duty but also a necessity for economic prosperity.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the low levels of funding for Syrian humanitarian responses are also a sign of the fatigue of international humanitarian assistance capacity, with serious crises on several fronts. The Syrian people do not want to live on humanitarian aid forever, at home or abroad. It is essential to put the needs of civilians first in a genuine search for a viable solution to this terrible conflict.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Ghelani for their briefings.

As we say every month, the war in Syria is not over. The clashes in north-west Syria in recent weeks are further proof of that. Some 60 people, including a dozen civilians, are said to have lost their lives in the fighting, while more than 6,000 civilians fled as troops from the terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham arrived in the town of Afrin and its surroundings. The regime and its allies are clearly allowing the situation to fester, continuing to play into the hands of the terrorist groups and holding hostage the Syrian people, who have been yearning for a lasting peace for years. We reiterate our call for a national ceasefire.

The work of the Constitutional Committee must resume in Geneva, as agreed by the Syrian parties in the terms of reference. Russia must stop obstructing the process. Furthermore, France reiterates its support for the Special Envoy's step-for-step approach. For that approach to bear fruit, all parties — and the regime first and foremost — must commit to it in good faith. It is delusional to believe that the use of force can lead to a peace plan. Only the conditions set out in the unanimously adopted resolution 2254 (2015) can pave the way for a lasting peace based on a tangible political process.

The civilian population continues to endure the consequences of the war. As winter approaches and the cholera epidemic spreads, the question of how to help the millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance is extremely worrying. The United Nations

estimates that there is a 30 per cent increase in needs compared to 2021. It will be essential to ensure that the cross-border mechanism is renewed for at least another 12 months. We know that the uncertainty is hampering humanitarian actors in their efforts to save lives.

Syria's neighbours have made enormous efforts to host Syrian refugees on their territory, and the international community has supported them since the beginning of the conflict. For example, Europe and its member States have allocated €25 billion in response to the consequences of the Syrian crisis over the past decade. While we believe that the future of Syrians is in Syria, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights only 1.7 per cent of the region's refugees want to return to Syria, due to what is seen as a lack of adequate protection of their rights and integrity, and despite the socioeconomic difficulties they face in their host countries. The fact is that security conditions have not been met, as several Syrians who tried to return to their country have testified. They have faced arbitrary arrests, torture, confiscation of property and forced conscription at a time when the regime claims that the war is over. By maintaining the obstacles that it has created to their return, the regime is filtering its nationals, thereby continuing the policy of demographic engineering that it has been carefully implementing since the beginning of the conflict.

For those reasons, I reiterate that the conditions for the dignified, safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees have not been met, and only the regime can remove those obstacles to their return. France is mobilizing in support of neighbouring countries that are dealing with the consequences of that crisis. Against that dramatic backdrop, the fight against impunity remains our priority. Unfortunately, Syria continues to record some of the darkest statistics in our history. More than 100,000 people have disappeared, an unprecedented number. That is why France will continue to fight relentlessly for accountability.

Finally, in the absence of any progress on the political process in Syria, the French and European positions on the lifting of sanctions, on normalization and on reconstruction will remain unchanged.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms. Ghelani for their updates.

Little has changed in Syria since our previous meeting on the issue (see S/PV.9130), except for renewed

and increased fighting. A human-made catastrophe has entered its second decade, marked by continued destruction, destitution and dehumanization — the abhorrent work of a regime that clings to power by suffocating the aspirations of the Syrian people for a dignified life in their own country. The inability of the Council to act has prolonged that brutality and suffering, but that does not have to be the fate of the Syrian people or of the Council.

In exactly six days, we will celebrate the twenty-second anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the landmark resolution on women and peace and security. But there is not much to celebrate in Syria, where the reality is one of the continued and increasing oppression of women. That oppression has brought on them extreme poverty, malnutrition, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, sexual violence and human trafficking. Despite all of that, and in adversity and perilous circumstances, Syrian women have refused to allow the Al-Assad regime to relegate them to the role of nothing but victims. They have paid a heavy toll, but they have resisted and are still coping with enormous challenges in managing their households and preserving their role in public and political life. We applaud the efforts made by Special Envoy Pedersen to never lose sight of the plight and role of women in the Syrian conflict, as he reaffirmed in his remarks today, as well as to ensure their legitimate place in the political process in order to jointly shape the future of Syria.

On the security front, violence continues unabated. There is infighting in the north, and now, as other speakers have already mentioned, Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham — a Security Council-listed terrorist group — is expanding its activities and has been able to reach Afrin. That is a clear sign that terrorism remains a growing plague with the potential to spread its violent activities and ideology further. The ongoing deterioration of the security situation is serving only to exacerbate the dire humanitarian and economic situation in the country. Cholera has returned to Syria, killing at least 70 people so far. That shows again how urgent it is to restore the country's health services and water and sanitation facilities. The cross-border mechanism therefore remains a crucial lifeline for millions. Its renewal is vital because it is a matter of saving human lives.

We see no progress whatsoever on the fate of detainees and those who have been forcibly disappeared.

When the so-called presidential amnesty was announced in April, we expressed doubts. Now it is clear that it was nothing more than a smokescreen for the regime to distract the international community with an empty gesture. After six months, there is still no information about the release of detainees or their whereabouts. The issue of detainees is a purely humanitarian issue, not merchandise for political haggling, and the Council should make it a priority. That is why Albania strongly supports the recommendations of the landmark report issued by the Secretary-General in August (A/76/890), especially the need to create a new mechanism for the disappeared in Syria, as well as a trust fund to help those who have lost them.

I conclude with where everything should begin, which is the political process — or as I have expressed repeatedly here, the absence of a genuine political process. The Al-Assad regime and its enablers take turns to trade excuses to avoid participating in the political process and effectively freeze even the most minimal movement that could be noticed in the Constitutional Committee. There seems to be no end to the list of excuses to not move forward the political process. We should not be fooled by smokescreens, excuses and actions in bad faith. We should demand transparent, tangible, precise and variable measures to unlock the political process and ensure a political transition in Syria.

There can be no chance for peace, prosperity or justice in Syria without a due political transition that should lead to a new, democratic Syria through a process that is owned and led by the Syrians themselves. Syria belongs to its people through their own free will, not to one family through its repressive grip.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): Let me thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Pedersen and Ms. Ghelani for their briefings today.

I would like to make three points.

First, the United Kingdom supports the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to advance the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) through the step-for-step initiative. We welcome the news of his recent discussions in New York, Damascus and elsewhere. But Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress, and we call for their participation in good faith. We urge them to depoliticize the Constitutional Committee. We are clear that the Committee should

reconvene in Geneva, as agreed, and begin to focus fully on substance rather than process.

Secondly, the United Kingdom is appalled by the human rights situation in Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured since the beginning of the conflict, including in the notorious Sednaya prison, where, as civil society representatives have told us repeatedly, detainees are tortured and killed on a daily basis. We strongly condemn those violations. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), which includes the release of those arbitrarily detained, together with a nationwide ceasefire, unhindered aid access, conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified refugee return and free and fair elections, pursuant to a new constitution. The United Kingdom is closely monitoring the escalation of hostilities in north-west Syria. It is essential that all parties to the conflict respect the ceasefire.

Lastly, as we have heard, the spreading cholera outbreak highlights the frankly horrifying humanitarian context and the need for a sustained response by the humanitarian community. The United Nations is stepping up its cross-line delivery where possible. But cross-border delivery remains a vital lifeline for many in the north-west. We look forward to the Security Council renewing the cross-border mandate in January, ensuring aid for millions of Syrians during the winter months.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Pedersen and Director Ghelani for their briefings.

With regard to report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/775) and the briefings we just heard, China would like to emphasize the following four points.

First, we must continue to advance the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. For a period of time, the Special Envoy and his team have travelled extensively to meet with all parties and make positive efforts to promote the political process in Syria, and China welcomes this. We hope that all parties concerned will remain constructively engaged with the Special Envoy, strive to effectively resolve the substantive differences concerning the session of the small body of the Constitutional Committee and actively respond to the Special Envoy's step-for-step initiative to inject impetus into the early resumption of the political process in the country.

Secondly, we must fight terrorist forces in Syria with resolve. Syria is faced by an increase in terrorist threats, and Security Council-listed terrorist groups have significantly expanded their control in the north-west part of the country. Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind. The international community should actively support the Syrian Government's counter-terrorism efforts and, in accordance with international law and the relevant Council resolutions, should adopt uniform norms to jointly fight all terrorist organizations in Syria listed by the Council, completely cut off their sources of weapons, personnel and funding and cease abetting, shielding and using them for political purposes.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to improve Syria's humanitarian situation. Resolution 2642 (2022), which should be effectively implemented, provides comprehensive and balanced arrangements for improving the humanitarian situation in Syria. Over the past two months, a significantly larger number of early-recovery projects have been funded. The projects to provide electricity, which are urgently needed by the Government, account for a considerable portion of them. China encourages the United Nations and the international community to continue to increase investment in early-recovery projects. Since the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), there have been only three cross-line deliveries in north-western Syria, and their efficiency and scale continue to require improvement.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate that cross-border assistance is only a temporary arrangement made under special circumstances. The transition to cross-line operations must be accelerated, and a clear timetable should be set for the final termination of cross-border delivery. The recent and rapid spread of cholera in the country has resulted in a growing number of confirmed and suspected cases and deaths. China is deeply concerned about that. The fragile health system is a weak link in response efforts. The international community should actively support the recovery and development of Syria's medical and health-care system and help the country overcome difficulties.

The water shortage is the underlying cause of the outbreak. China calls on all parties concerned to make concerted efforts to swiftly ensure a stable supply of water throughout Syria and immediately stop the deliberate destruction of water-supply facilities. Unilateral sanctions have led to the serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and offset the

humanitarian efforts of the international community. They must end immediately.

Fourthly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria must be safeguarded. Foreign military intervention is the major cause of the protracted Syrian crisis. Throughout the years, several countries have carried out military operations in Syria without the consent of the country's Government, thereby undermining its security and stability, exacerbating the humanitarian situation and violating the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Türkiye has carried out four military operations in Syria since 2016, and it recently stated that it would launch a new one there. The Syrian Government has repeatedly opposed and condemned such actions. China calls on Türkiye to earnestly respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and engage in dialogue and cooperate with Syria to resolve the relevant issues.

**Mr. Raguttahalli (India):** I join others in thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the Director for Operations and Advocacy at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings.

I will focus my remarks on the political process, terrorism and the humanitarian situation.

The stalemate in the political process has become unsustainable, as made evident by the Special Envoy's briefing. There has been hardly any progress recently, particularly with regard to the Constitutional Committee. Since its previous meeting in Geneva in June, the small body of the Constitutional Committee has not met, and there is no clarity on the way forward. It has been three years since the establishment of the Committee. It was expected to build trust and confidence among all three sides through its collaborative action. However, that has not been the case thus far.

In that regard, we have noted the efforts made by the Special Envoy, including his recent meetings in Damascus. We continue to support his step-for-step approach and call on all sides to engage with the Special Envoy in a constructive manner. India has been consistent in calling for support for regional efforts in finding a long-term solution to the conflict. The improvement in Syria's relations and engagement with its Arab neighbours is a positive development. We hope that the upcoming meeting of the League of Arab States to be held Algiers and its members' deliberations will

positively contribute to the United Nations-facilitated political process.

The threat of terrorism in Syria and the region cannot be ignored. The listed terror entities, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, have remained active in Syria, as is evident from attacks across Deir ez-Zor, Al-Hasakah, eastern rural Homs and Hama. The January Al-Hasakah prison attack incident was another such instance. The global fight against terrorism cannot and should not be compromised for the sake of narrow political gains. The international community should also display a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism.

With regard to the security situation, we remain concerned about the overall situation in Syria. There is an urgent need for serious attempts to achieve a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire. As mentioned by the Secretary-General in his most recent report (S/2022/775), Syria does not need more military operations. We believe that the withdrawal of all foreign forces is essential to realize that objective. We also reiterate our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The humanitarian situation remains a matter of concern. As we heard from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 14.6 million people need humanitarian assistance, a 9 per cent increase as compared to last year. Food insecurity has reached historic highs. The economic situation has become dire, further aggravating the situation. Low funding levels for the Syrian humanitarian response continue to be cause for concern.

We note the importance of the humanitarian assistance provided to Syria under the United Nations-mandated mechanism. At the same time, humanitarian assistance cannot be a matter of political expediency. Linking humanitarian and development assistance with progress in the political process will only exacerbate human suffering and should be avoided. The focus should also be on early-recovery projects and cross-line operations.

Decisive progress on the political track in Syria remains an urgent imperative to alleviate the suffering of its people. To that end, all parties, particularly the external players, need to demonstrate their commitment in tangible terms to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned



United Nations-facilitated political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

In conclusion, let me underscore India's sustained commitment to extending development assistance and human resource development support to Syria. Our continued efforts to assist the people of Syria in their endeavour to seek lasting peace and stability remains steadfast and unwavering.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Gabon.

(*spoke in English*)

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Ghana, Kenya and my country, Gabon.

We thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and the Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Reena Ghelani, for their briefings on the most recent political and humanitarian developments in Syria. We also welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Türkiye.

We note with regret that the security situation in Syria remains volatile. Idlib, in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, is the scene of persistent violence, air strikes, mutual bombardments and clashes. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, during the period under consideration 92 civilians, including two women and 35 children, were killed as a result of the hostilities, while at least 80 civilians were injured, including five women and 38 children.

In addition to the countless deaths and injuries caused by the war, air strikes and bombings continue to interrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid that is vital for the population. We are deeply concerned about the security operation carried out at Al-Hol camp from 25 August to 17 September, which temporarily affected the delivery of humanitarian services, and we call on the parties to create a safe environment and grant unimpeded access.

Furthermore, the conflict remains active, with escalation along various axes in the north-west, north-east and south of Syria marked by the increased frequency of attacks and the use of explosive weapons

in densely populated areas in disregard of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

We are also concerned by the Security Council-listed terrorist groups, such as the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, expanding their territory in Syria. Any expansion of listed terrorist groups will only exacerbate the precarious security situation and continue to put innocent civilian lives at risk. We therefore call for concerted efforts to combat Security Council-listed terrorist groups.

The A3 also calls on the parties to respect international humanitarian law and spare civilians and civilian objects.

The human cost of the conflict in Syria is staggering. The country remains one of the most complex humanitarian emergencies in the world, with more than half of the population in need of life-saving assistance. The daily life of Syrians is marked by the difficulties of access to food, drinking water and basic services.

In addition to the plethora of problems facing the Syrian people, the outbreak of a cholera epidemic in 13 of its 14 governorates is deeply troubling. But fortunately, the United Nations and its partners are supporting the response to, and the prevention of, the epidemic.

Meanwhile, the economic crisis continues to negatively impact Syrians across the country because of their reduced purchasing power. The fate of ordinary Syrians is also compounded by the limited electricity supply, which unfortunately impacts the functioning of basic services.

We note that the United Nations continues to support humanitarian assistance and recovery initiatives, as well as humanitarian access, including cross-border missions, throughout the country, in accordance with resolution 2642 (2022).

The A3 shares the view that the massive cross-border operation supported by the United Nations remains an indispensable platform for reaching many people in need, and there is currently no substitute on that scale. We are also in favour of extending the mandate of the cross-border mechanism, which is due to expire in January 2023.

We welcome the recent cross-line convoy deliveries of food aid. We are pleased to note that the sixth and

seventh convoys crossing the line, consisting of 14 and 16 trucks, respectively, provided food and non-food aid to more than 43,000 people in north-west Syria. We also commend the 12 consignments of cross-border deliveries through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing point. It is therefore critical that all modalities of aid to the millions of people in need continue to be strengthened.

However, we are very concerned about the low levels of funding for the humanitarian response in Syria, particularly as we approach the winter season, when needs tend to increase. A total of 6 million people in Syria are in urgent need of assistance this winter, an increase of more than 30 per cent as compared to last year. We therefore call for greater solidarity on the part of the international community and increased humanitarian funding, including for early-recovery and livelihoods programmes.

The situation of women in Syria is another source of concern for the A3. Women are disproportionately affected by the crisis, including through violence, forced and early marriages and limited access to livelihoods. That is unacceptable.

Also, we encourage the Syrian Government to make the necessary legislative and administrative reforms to eliminate discrimination against women with a view to achieving true equality between the sexes. Women have displayed a determined resilience through this crisis and should therefore be included in political engagements. We therefore call for actions to mainstream the voices of women in political efforts. In that regard, the A3 continues to commend the Special Envoy's continuous engagement with the widest spectrum of Syrian women in pursuit of a political solution.

We welcome the holding of the first informal interactive dialogue under the aegis of the Secretary-General on 26 September, at which Member States were able to discuss their essential role in ensuring the full implementation of resolution 2642 (2022).

The A3 notes with interest the continued efforts of the Special Envoy to urgently convene the ninth session of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva. That will be an opportunity to address substantive issues, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Confidence-building can be enhanced through the steps-for-steps model by addressing the situation of detainees, including facilitating the release of detained vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, women and

children, some of whom are exposed to the coronavirus disease and cholera pandemics due to their poor prison conditions, as well as by clarifying the status of missing persons, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The A3 therefore impresses upon the Government of Syria the importance of making progress in that area, which would lead to systematic releases in a coordinated manner.

We cannot emphasize enough that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. The national ceasefire therefore remains an imperative as a precursor to the much-anticipated political solution. The A3 therefore reiterates our call on the parties to prioritize the needs of civilians, to exercise restraint and to engage in serious negotiations.

We support and encourage the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen, as well as those of regional and international actors, to achieve political stability in Syria, while respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the country.

In conclusion, the A3 member States reiterate their solidarity with the Syrian people in their quest for lasting peace.

*(spoke in French)*

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syria) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, since this is the first time I take the floor under Gabon's presidency of the Security Council for this month, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency and wish you every success in discharging your tasks.

I listened attentively to the briefings of Mr. Geir Pedersen and Ms. Reena Ghelani, and I would like to make the following remarks.

First, the basic principle assured by all United Nations resolutions on Syria is respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. That is also the criterion for any approach to the political or humanitarian situation in Syria. Any illegal military presence on Syrian territories is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and must end immediately and unconditionally. In addition, the fight against terrorism in its various forms and its total eradication

can be achieved only through full cooperation and coordination with the Syrian State.

In that regard, my delegation stresses its total rejection of the White House announcement on 12 October to extend what it called the “national emergency with respect to the situation in Syria” and of the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s communiqué on 13 October in response to that United States announcement. My delegation believes that the justifications in both statements are unacceptable because they are issued by two parties that violate the United Nations Charter and international law through their occupation of Syrian territories, their interference in Syria’s internal affairs, their squandering of the national wealth of its people and their support for separatist militias and terrorist groups. They therefore have no right whatsoever to claim that they are eager to bring peace and stability to the region.

Secondly, proceeding from the readiness of the Syrian Government to meet all constitutional obligations on time and despite all the harsh circumstances it has gone through over the years of the terrorist war, Syria has continued to take the necessary measures to enable the Syrian people to exercise their rights and duties on all entitlements. On 18 September, Syria held elections for local municipalities, where 59,000 candidates competed over 19,086 seats. That reflects the broad democratic popular participation with the aim to promoting decentralization and strengthening local governance in every village, region, city and governorate.

Thirdly, local settlement and national reconciliation is the approach taken by the Syrian Government as a way to normalize the situation throughout the country, promote national unity and ensure cohesion in Syrian society. In that context, 21 general amnesty decrees were issued, the latest of which was Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022, issued by the President of the Republic, which reflected the progress in the State’s ongoing efforts to establish national reconciliation, social harmony and achieve sustainable stability. The Syrian State will continue its efforts pursuant to that approach, which has proven to be effective on the ground and has led many Syrians to return to their normal lives.

In parallel, Syria has positively addressed all efforts and initiatives related to the political track and supported the meetings held according to the Astana format, the latest of which was the Tehran summit meeting. Syria welcomed its outcome. We

have maintained contact with Special Envoy Pedersen, who visited Damascus a few days ago and met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. The Minister called on the United Nations to assume its role, in line with its Charter, to put an end to violations of Syrian sovereignty resulting from the United States occupation of parts of north-eastern Syria and the Turkish occupation of parts of northern and north-western Syria, as well as from the continued Israeli occupation of the Golan and its repeated attacks on critical facilities and infrastructure in Syria, which threaten peace and security in the region.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Syria used to be one of the most stable and prosperous countries in the world. It was self-sufficient with regard to food and provided all basic needs to its people in a manner unmatched in the region. However, the terrorist war waged against it since 2011 changed that situation and led to a grave humanitarian crisis that has been exacerbated by unilateral coercive measures and the plundering of Syria’s national wealth.

Syria is continuing its tremendous efforts to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground, including by providing all facilities to the United Nations to improve and promote the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, as well as implementing the early-recovery projects, as stipulated in resolution 2642 (2022). Despite some reservations on that resolution, we still look forward to it being an additional step towards improving the humanitarian situation in Syria if Western countries are committed to the full implementation of its provisions, stop politicizing humanitarian and development work in Syria and cease setting up obstacles and restrictions, especially by insisting on the imposition of unilateral coercive measures.

Unfortunately, the first meeting of the informal interactive dialogue on the review and follow-up of the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022) clearly showed that Western countries continue their politicized approach and the imposition of formats aimed at manipulating and distorting the management of that dialogue so that it was no longer interactive. My delegation therefore hopes that the next meeting will be a genuine and interactive dialogue that contributes to a real and serious discussion about defining the obstructions and difficulties facing the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022) and how to overcome them

before the resolution's mandate ends at the beginning of next year.

I would like to briefly mention some aspects of the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people.

First is the harm caused by the inhumane siege imposed on the Syrian population by the United States and other Western countries due to the ongoing imposition, extension and expansion of the scope of their illegal coercive measures. My delegation stresses the need to immediately lift those measures, as they are inhumane and immoral.

Secondly, the United States occupation forces continue to plunder Syrian oil and wheat. Hundreds of trucks recently transported oil and wheat to northern Iraq through illegal border crossings, with the cooperation of the Kassad separatist militia. In that regard, I would like to respond to what was said by the representative of the United States of America and to draw the attention of Council members to the fact that the main base of the United States occupation forces in north-east Syria is in the Al-Omar oilfield, which is the largest in north-east Syria. That is clear evidence that United States forces seek to plunder Syrian oil. The estimated direct and indirect losses of the oil and gas sector up to mid-2022 have so far reached \$107 billion. My delegation stresses the need to immediately end that illegal American presence without preconditions and provide compensation for those losses.

Thirdly, the Turkish regime and its mercenaries continued to halt the operations of the Allouk water station for the third consecutive month, depriving nearly 1 million citizens in Al-Hasakah city and its vicinity from the only source of water in a situation of increased thirst and serious health pandemics, especially the spread of cholera. My delegation stresses that the solutions proposed to resolve the issue of water cuts are useless and that, if the international community fails to take immediate action to stop and condemn such practices, it will lead to increased suffering for civilians and the deaths of children, women and the elderly.

Fourthly, the spread of the cholera epidemic, which Syria eradicated decades ago, has unfortunately returned to pose an additional threat to the lives of Syrians. That is the result of the continued use of water as a weapon against civilians and the vast damage caused to the water and sanitation infrastructure due to the terrorist war launched against Syria. In that context, my delegation notes that the Syrian Government is

making great efforts to limit and prevent the spread of the epidemic by raising awareness and providing health education regarding cholera and ways to prevent it. We also follow up on all reported cases and provide treatment, while ensuring the safety of water sources and addressing other causes of the disease. In that context, we cooperate with United Nations organizations and specialized agencies and provide them with all the necessary facilities for conducting field visits, the most recent of which was the visit to Ras Al-Ayn town in Al-Hasakah governorate. However, the international efforts failed due to Western countries insisting on continuing their policies, with no regard for the lives of women, children and those with special needs.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Jalil Iravani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

The Syrian people are still suffering. The humanitarian situation remains difficult, causing a significant impact on the Syrian people. More needs to be done in many areas to alleviate their suffering. Providing humanitarian aid to those in need is critical, and ensuring safe, rapid and unhindered access to aid for those in need throughout Syria must be a priority in this situation.

Preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria is also crucial. It must be accomplished as soon as possible. That can be done by ending the foreign aggression against Syria, as well as the country's occupation, dealing with terrorist threats and lifting the cruel and illegal sanctions imposed on the Syrian people.

We support the Syrian Government's full cooperation with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations involved in delivering aid in Syria. In that context, we applaud the Syrian Government's efforts to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground, including by providing assistance to the United Nations to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need and implement the early-recovery projects mandated by resolution 2642 (2022). Moreover, the ongoing efforts to effectively implement resolution 2642 (2022) must be accelerated and be focused on the early-recovery projects essential to people, such as electricity, water, sanitation, health, education and shelter.



We urge all stakeholders and donors to support the full implementation of the resolution, stop politicizing humanitarian and development efforts and remove obstacles in their way, particularly by refraining from imposing unilateral coercive measures. We regard the first session of the informal interactive dialogue, which was held on 26 September, as an initial and significant step to review and follow up on the implementation of resolution 2642 (2022). However, we believe that politicizing such a meeting will only undermine the resolution's goal and its implementation. We hope that the next meeting will be a real interactive dialogue, contributing to serious discussion about identifying the obstacles and difficulties facing the implementation of the resolution and how to overcome them before the mandate of the resolution expires early next year.

The only way to improve the situation in Syria is to achieve a political solution through a Syrian-owned and -led political process facilitated by United Nations efforts. To that end, we support the convening of the next meeting of the Constitutional Committee, as its ongoing work is critical to reaching a political solution. Iran supports the constructive engagement of the parties with the Special Envoy and with the political process in order to effectively settle the differences concerning the Constitutional Committee meetings. In that regard, we welcomed the Special Envoy's recent visit to Damascus, particularly his meeting with Syria's Foreign Minister on 17 October. We are maintaining our contact with the Syrian Government, the Special Envoy and our Astana format partners in order to facilitate the next Committee meeting as soon as possible, and we support Mr. Pedersen's efforts in that regard.

The free movement of terrorist groups within Syria's territory where foreign forces are illegally present is a danger to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as regional peace and security. As has been said repeatedly, the fight against terrorism must not be used to violate Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We emphasize the need to end the illegal presence of foreign forces in parts of Syria, which has created ideal conditions for terrorist activity.

The Israeli regime's aggression against Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity continues unabated, despite the Syrian Arab Republic's repeated requests for the Security Council to clearly condemn it. The Council's silence has emboldened the Israeli regime to carry out its aggression and crimes more openly and broadly, especially its systematic and intentional

targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure in Syria, which is a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

Preserving the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of United Nations Member States is a cornerstone of the Charter of the United Nations, on which the international legal order is built. The Security Council must stop applying a double standard and condemn Israel's aggression unequivocally, holding that lawless regime accountable for its crimes, which jeopardize regional peace and security.

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

**Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Türkiye): I too would like to thank Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Ghelani for their briefings.

The international community needs to step up its efforts in support of a political solution in Syria. The Syrian crisis should not be a frozen conflict. Treating it as such would be a great injustice not only to regional stability but also to the millions of Syrian refugees scattered all over the world, especially in neighbouring countries. We hope that the ninth session of the Constitutional Committee takes place as soon as possible under United Nations facilitation.

The Syrian opposition has displayed a constructive attitude since the very beginning. The regime should reciprocate that approach, abandon its intransigence and actively engage on the political track in order to resolve the conflict. If the people of Syria are to have a future, there must be a Syrian-led political solution. Türkiye will never give up on our Syrian brothers and sisters and will continue to support them in their pursuit of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

I want to repeat once again in this Chamber that the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) terrorist organization poses a grave threat not only to the territorial integrity of Syria but also to my country's national security. The agreements of October 2019 that we concluded with the United States and the Russian Federation have so far not been fully implemented. Apart from Tal Afar and Manbij, the 30-kilometre zone along our border has not been cleared of terrorist elements. The PKK/YPG and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are misguidedly supported by some because of their claim that they are fighting Da'esh. In reality, however, the PKK/YPG and the SDF continue to attack Syrian

civilians and target Türkiye's borders with the very weapons provided to them to fight Da'esh. On average, the SDF carries out 100 terrorist attacks every month in northern Syria. It does not even bother to cover up its crimes, but rather openly claims responsibility for those attacks, publishing them on its social media pages. I ask those who still support that terrorist organization — or express concerns about to Türkiye's determination to eliminate that terrorist separatist threat — how long they will continue to ignore its crimes.

Turkish counter-terrorism operations are carried out to combat all terrorist organizations that threaten our nation's security, in the exercise of our inherent right of self-defence, as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with Security Council resolutions on the fight against terrorism. We are determined to continue that fight. As we have done in the past, Türkiye is taking every possible measure both to achieve that objective and to prevent harm to Syrian civilians in the region.

Since the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) in July, there have been monthly cross-line deliveries to the north-west. But we continue to stress that security conditions must be improved to enable more regular and expanded cross-line shipments to Idlib. As happened in September, this past weekend before the most recent cross-line delivery there were reports of artillery fire by the regime forces. It is crucial that we call for increased cross-line access to the local populations while at the same time combating attacks that endanger the delivery of that assistance. It will not be possible to regularize cross-line access if it is being facilitated only by Türkiye, the Syrian interim Government and local actors. It is essential that the regime and its supporters adhere to the commitments they made regarding the security conditions on the ground within the framework of the ceasefire arrangement of 5 February 2020.

We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the long-standing request of the Syrian interim Government for the Ras Al-Ayn and Tel Abyad regions to benefit from United Nations humanitarian assistance. We are aware of the plans that the United Nations made in January and May to ensure humanitarian access, neither of which could be implemented owing to the negative attitude of the regime and its supporters. Now, after three years, UNICEF and the World Health Organization are finally expected to deliver medicines and assistance for leishmaniasis and cholera through cross-line assistance to that region very soon.

In Syria, waterborne diseases are most common in the Ras Al-Ayn and Tel Abyad regions as a result of the blocking by the regime and the PKK/YPG of the electricity supply to that area. There has been no electricity transmission to those regions from the south since February. The humanitarian system simply cannot ignore that fact when addressing the issue of electricity in Syria. Let me once again set the record straight on the Allouk water station — water can only be supplied from Allouk to the south if a sufficient amount and voltage of electricity is supplied to Allouk from the Al-Darbasiyah transformer, which is under the control of the PKK/YPG terrorist organization. No electricity was supplied to the Allouk station for weeks between the third week of August and 19 October, which is one of the reasons for the spread of the cholera epidemic in the region. Currently, 18 of the 24 wells, as well as three of the 12 water pumps, are active in the station and water is being supplied to the south from Allouk. There are no access problems at the station either. Maintenance and repair teams from the south have had regular access to Allouk — a total of 107 times so far this year, to be precise. We expect similar access to be provided to other infrastructure in the region, especially the Al-Darbasiyah transformer and the Ayn Al-Bayda water station.

We encourage an appropriate review of United Nations humanitarian aid to Syria, in accordance with needs. In that regard, we support early-recovery and resilience projects. It is crucial that all in Syria benefit fairly from early-recovery and resilience projects, based on the needs assessment to be made by the United Nations. We cannot afford to turn our backs on those furthest behind. We expect a detailed list of needs, prepared by the Syrian interim Government and submitted in a timely manner to the United Nations, to be duly integrated in the early-recovery and resilience planning of the Organization.

The Syrian people are once again caught between violence and starvation and an unforgiving winter. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/775), 6 million people are in urgent need of winter assistance in Syria this year, which amounts to an increase of more than 30 per cent compared to last year. I wish to stress once again that the resolutions adopted by the Security Council since 2014 have affirmed the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political unity of Syria. They establish the control, oversight, transparency and accountability of United

Nations aid and allow the Security Council to monitor the process.

We cannot change the events of the past, but we can change the course of the coming winter to save the lives of the Syrian people, who have no other option but to rely on the United Nations to get them through winter. We urge the Council to continue to do what is right and to preserve the indispensable United Nations cross-border mechanism beyond January 2023, as foreseen in resolution 2642 (2022).

With regard to the hallucinatory statement made by the representative of the Syrian regime, I will not honour his delusional accusations with a response.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*