



Security Council

Seventieth year

7595th meeting

Tuesday, 22 December 2015, 10.20 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Power (United States of America)

Members:

Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
Chad	Mr. Cherif
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Wang Min
France	Mr. Delattre
Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/962)

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15-44641 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 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) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/962)

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/1001, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Angola, Chile, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/962, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2258 (2015).

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

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation supported the adoption of resolution 2258 (2015) because we believe that it is important to maintain the cross-border provision of humanitarian assistance. It allows us to access people in hard-to-reach areas who cannot be

reached by other means. However, we regret that in the course of drafting the resolution, certain suggestions that we considered timely have not been taken into account..

The Russian delegation recommended the extension of the United Nations mechanism for humanitarian monitoring established under resolution 2165 (2014) for all cargo entering Syria that is declared to be humanitarian. We understand the burden that would be borne by the United Nations in that respect, but we are truly concerned that the supply of weapons to fighters is not stopping and that foreign terrorist fighters from across the world continue to join the ranks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and other armed terrorist groups.

Unfortunately, that supply crosses Syria's borders, quite often through the very crossing points where the United Nations mechanism is at work. In spite of the United Nations presence and the resolve of the international community as a whole to end the Syrian crisis and cut off terrorists, border crossings are used for purposes wholly other than humanitarian and often under humanitarian pretexts. This needs to stop.

We call special attention to the preambular part of the resolution, in which the Security Council expresses its interest in receiving more detailed information from the Secretary-General on the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations, in accordance with resolution 2165 (2014). The Security Council, which has established the mechanism and is responsible for it, must be informed of the nature of the humanitarian assistance entering the country, through which civilian crossing points it is entering, and how much of it is reaching the people. Generic information on the number of convoys and approximate estimates of the number of those in need are not enough. We hope that future reports of the Secretary-General will provide more comprehensive and detailed information in that regard.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): In our work on the Security Council, we have attached high importance to the humanitarian situation in Syria because we firmly believe that we must alleviate the humanitarian suffering there. The region must also avoid the serious fall-out from the crisis.

We worked very closely with our partners in the Security Council, as well as with Luxembourg and Australia, in order to submit resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014), both of which are based on the

reports of the Secretary-General focused on making humanitarian assistance — including the food and medicines critical to millions of Syrians — accessible to Syria across its borders with Turkey and Lebanon. Throughout this year, we have worked very closely with the aforementioned partners, as well as with Spain and New Zealand in recent weeks, and consulted with all Council members, concerned countries and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enable the United Nations and its partners to deliver humanitarian assistance to Syria, which we hope to do in the early weeks of next year.

Today's adoption of resolution 2258 (2015), authored by Jordan, New Zealand and Spain, will allow the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mission to operate for at least another year so as to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical aid, reaches those who most need it in remote and besieged areas. Regrettably, in the past terrorist groups have hindered the delivery of such assistance.

The co-authors of today's resolution — Jordan, New Zealand and Spain — thank all members of the Council for their cooperation, consensus and partnership, which have enabled us to adopt the resolution unanimously. We are very grateful to all for their cooperation, in particular over the past two years in which we have been members of the Council, and underscore once again the importance for the Council to work tirelessly to ensure that humanitarian assistance continues to reach Syria, particularly given the millions who are in dire need of it.

In conclusion, against the backdrop of resolution 2254 (2015), the first and second Geneva communiqués and the Vienna statements, we stress the importance of reaching a political settlement to the problem in Syria.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the three authors of the important resolution 2258 (2015): Jordan, New Zealand and Spain. The resolution represents a genuine step forward, as it seeks to facilitate access for humanitarian agencies across borders and front lines within Syria so as to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population. The United Nations Verification and Inspection Mission, provided for under resolution 2165 (2014), allows United Nations humanitarian convoys to cross borders and front lines so as to continue to delivery assistance to millions of Syrians in need. There are growing numbers of Syrian isolated in hard-to-reach areas. The mechanism is

therefore more critical than ever, and it was crucial to extend and strengthen it.

Having said that, I recalled in our consultations yesterday that humanitarian access is not enough. Ongoing violations of international humanitarian law, in particular indiscriminate attacks on civilians — including with barrel bombs — and the use of hunger as a weapon of war against civilians, are unacceptable and should be condemned as forcefully as possible. The Council should remain more active than ever on this topic.

Mr. Wang Min (China): China welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2258 (2015). The conflict among the various parties in Syria goes on. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate amidst the devastation wrought by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist organizations, bringing untold suffering to the Syrian people. China is deeply saddened by the situation and sympathizes with the plight of the Syrian people.

China supports the efforts of the United Nations humanitarian agencies in undertaking relief activities and coordinating international assistance in Syria, on the basis of respect for Syrian sovereignty. We call on the parties in Syria to honour their respective obligations and to effectively implement resolution 2258 (2015) and all previous resolutions of the Security Council so as to ensure that cross-border relief can make a real difference in easing the suffering of the Syrian people.

At present, fighting terrorism is the highest priority of the international community. We hope that the international community will give full consideration to the need to combat terrorism in delivering cross-border relief, and that it will form synergies in the fight against terrorism. A political settlement is the only way to resolve the crisis and an essential option for mitigating the humanitarian situation in Syria and relieving its people's suffering.

On 18 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted 2254 (2015) on the political process in Syria. The resolution embodies the broad consensus within the international community and demonstrates the important role that the Council can play. It also reflects the earnest hopes of the Syrian people and has given impetus to a political solution. China hopes that the parties will work together, swiftly implement resolution

2258 (2015) and give peace a chance so that the Syrian people can regain tranquility.

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

The briefing in the Security Council yesterday by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres and Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (see S/PV.7592) was clear. The humanitarian situation in Syria is dire and it is getting worse.

Thirteen and a half million people in Syria — more than half of the pre-war population — are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. That is 1.2 million more people than required humanitarian assistance last year. The scale of the crisis makes it all the more critical that the mechanism to deliver humanitarian aid across conflict lines and through border crossings established by resolution 2165 (2014) works as it is supposed to, thereby allowing lifesaving assistance to reach those in the greatest need. The mechanism, which includes monitoring and reporting, has facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance more effectively and efficiently, but it continues to face significant obstacles that prevent critical assistance from reaching people who desperately need it.

As yesterday's briefings underscored, humanitarian access to millions of people inside Syria is still either restricted or denied. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), from 1 September to 30 November, the United Nations and its partners accessed just one third of the hard-to-reach locations. An estimated 4.5 million people live in those hard-to-reach locations, meaning more than 3 million people could not be reached. We know this is an enduring and serious problem, yet until now, the Council and the international community have been unable to fix it, notwithstanding our collective efforts through the Vienna process to secure a long overdue political settlement, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). According to the United Nations, there has been no improvement in access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas. In many places, the access situation is even worse.

The situation is catastrophic for the 400,000 Syrians living in besieged areas. OCHA reports that only 1 in every 100 people living in a besieged area has received food aid, and an even smaller proportion has received

health assistance. As we all know, the dire humanitarian situation has not only caused immeasurable suffering for Syrian men, women and children and led to countless deaths — so many of them preventable — but the humanitarian catastrophic situation also continues to drive the displacement of Syrians inside the country, often for the second or third time, and continues to lead one wave after another of Syrians to flee their country, helping fuel the largest refugee crisis in a generation.

The resolution adopted by the Council today underscores the urgent need for assistance across conflict lines and calls for Syrian authorities to “expeditiously respond to all requests for cross-line deliveries” (*resolution 2258 (2015), para. 3*) by the United Nations. People's lives depend on those requests being approved, yet more than half of requests made in 2015 for cross-line deliveries remain pending. Often, the Syrian Government just ignores the United Nations requests; they do not even bother to respond. Acute malnourishment and disease are prevalent, yet nothing seems to create a sense of urgency in dealing with the requests by the United Nations on the part of the Syrian Government. The International Syria Support Group, OCHA and members of the Council have repeatedly called on the Syrian authorities to approve the requests. But even when cross-line delivery requests are approved, they are too often prevented from being acted upon. Half of the approved requests have subsequently been held up by the Syrian security forces. This record, which is worse than that for 2014, is unacceptable, and the Council, which adopts these resolutions, should not accept the denial of requests and a pattern of a failure to even respond to requests.

Humanitarian access to territory held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, where about half of the besieged and hard-to-reach population lives, is also extremely limited, thus exacerbating the suffering that the terrorist group inflicts on the Syrian people. As the resolution reiterates, medical assistance is crucial. As such, the resolution recalls the obligations of all parties under international humanitarian law, including the need to cease all attacks against civilians as well as against medical facilities and medical personnel. According to Physicians for Human Rights, medical facilities have been attacked 112 times in 2015, more than during any other year of the conflict. Nearly two thirds of hospitals in Syria have been destroyed or are only partly functional as a result of attacks. The lack of health-care workers, facilities and medical

supplies forces Syrians to seek lifesaving assistance elsewhere. According to credible reports, Russian air strikes have hit major supply routes, interrupting humanitarian programmes, killing civilians, including first responders, and hitting schools and markets.

There are of course many other profound challenges in Syria, including terrorism, which we are working to address through various initiatives that themselves are critically urgent. Yet it is incumbent upon the Council to ensure that resolutions aimed at addressing humanitarian challenges remain focused on responsibly addressing those concerns. We all understand that the most effective way to resolve Syria's crisis, including

its dire humanitarian situation, is through a political solution. The adoption in the past week of resolution 2254 (2015) provides a genuine opportunity to reach a nationwide ceasefire and foster a political process that could lead to a political transition in Syria based on the Geneva communiqué. As the Council, we must do all within our power to seize this opportunity. At the same time, until that day comes, we must look out for the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, who are in desperate need of our help.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.