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Eightieth year

9896th meeting

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New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bonnafont	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Ms. Parmanand
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Ms. Spencer-Coker
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Jambert-Gray
	United States of America.	Ms. Shea

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: Since the fall of the former Al-Assad Government on 8 December 2024, the Security Council has been regularly briefed on Israeli violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, as members will hear from Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. The Secretary-General has been clear in his condemnation of all actions that are inconsistent with the Agreement.

There have been hundreds of reported Israeli airstrikes across Syria since 8 December 2024, in the south-west, on the Syrian coast, and in north-eastern Syria, Damascus, Hama and Homs. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have publicly confirmed they have built multiple positions in the area of separation in the Golan. Israeli officials have also spoken about Israel's intentions to stay in Syria "for the foreseeable future". Such facts on the ground are not easily reversed. They do threaten Syria's fragile political transition. Most recently, as conveyed to the Council by the Syrian Permanent Mission on 7 April, at dawn on 3 April, there were reports that Israel carried out multiple airstrikes across Syria, including in Damascus, the Hama military airport and the T4 military airport in Homs. Israeli simultaneous attacks in Dara'a reportedly resulted in nine civilian casualties.

The Syrian interim authorities condemned these attacks, qualifying them as a blatant violation of international law and Syrian sovereignty and an attempt to destabilize Syria. Let me also recall earlier indications by the Damascus authorities, as had been published in numerous media outlets, of not presenting threats to its neighbours and seeking peace on their borders.

The Israeli Minister of Defence was quoted on 3 April as qualifying the recent airstrikes in Syria as a warning for the future, as he added that Israel would not allow Syria to become a threat to Israel's security interests.

Considering these developments, let me recall the Council's presidential statement of 14 March (S/PRST/2025/4), which reaffirmed the Council's strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and called on all States to respect these principles and to refrain from any action or interference that might further destabilize Syria. The Council's commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity grows in importance by the day. Syria's opportunity to stabilize after 14 years of conflict must be supported and protected, for Syrians and for Israelis. This is the only way regional peace and security can be realized.

Let me conclude by recalling the statement made by Special Envoy Pedersen on 3 April about the Israeli military escalation, that such actions undermine efforts to build a new Syria at peace with itself and the region and destabilize Syria at a sensitive time. Syria is at a crossroads and deserves a chance to continue to work towards an inclusive political transition, whereby the Syrian people can overcome the conflict, revive their economy, realize their legitimate aspirations and contribute to regional stability. Furthermore, short-term and tactical security actions and gains should not derail prospects for peace agreement between the two neighbours and long-term stability at their internationally recognized border.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for giving me this opportunity to brief members on the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the implementation of its mandate.

(*spoke in English*)

The situation in the UNDOF area of operations since the closed Security Council consultations on UNDOF on 19 March, has remained volatile and continues to be characterized by significant violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces, with the entry of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into the area of separation since 8 December 2024. The IDF currently occupy 12 positions that they established on the Bravo side — 10 in the area of separation and 2 in the area of limitation in the vicinity of the Bravo line. They also continue to construct counter-mobility obstacles along the ceasefire line and have flown, on several occasions, aircraft across the ceasefire line and helicopters into the area of separation.

The IDF also continue to impose some restrictions of movement on UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel in the area of separation. Their restrictions on the movement of people residing in the area also continue. Residents in some areas have protested disruptions from IDF activities, including disruption of farming, detentions of civilians and seizure of large numbers of livestock. We have conveyed these concerns to our Israeli interlocutors. Some residents have also appealed to UNDOF to ask the IDF to leave their villages.

(*spoke in French*)

In this difficult operational environment, UNDOF personnel, supported by the Observer Group Golan, continue to carry out their mandated activities to the best of their ability, namely observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from their positions, as well as patrolling and reporting on developments. Allow me to provide an update on the security situation developments in the UNDOF area of operations.

Over the past few weeks, UNDOF personnel have observed multiple explosions on the Bravo side, which they believe to be significant kinetic activity related to IDF efforts to “demilitarize southern Syria”.

(*spoke in English*)

On 27 March, following an IDF attack on a location in the area of limitation, the IDF stated that “during a planned IDF activity, a number of armed individuals opened fire from Koayiah on IDF forces” and “the IDF sent an aerial instrument to scan the field [...] the aerial instrument was attacked”.

Most recently, early in the morning of 3 April, UNDOF personnel in the area of separation observed IDF troops in vehicles moving in a south-easterly direction on the Bravo side. The UNDOF personnel later heard and observed multiple explosions in the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed those explosions to be a result of the impact of IDF artillery fire, likely in Nawa and Tasil. On 3 April, the IDF informed UNDOF that:

“In the past few hours, the IDF has struck remaining military capabilities in the areas of the Syrian military bases Hama and T4, along with additional military infrastructure in the Damascus area. The IDF will continue to act to eliminate any threat to the citizens of the State of Israel”.

In addition, open sources reported, on 3 April, incidents of residents in Dara’a, including Tasil and Nawa, clashing with an IDF convoy that attempted to enter the towns, forcing the convoy to retreat under IDF air cover.

UNDOF continues to liaise with both parties and engages on specific issues affecting UNDOF operations and on complaints conveyed to UNDOF by residents in the area of separation. In their engagement with the UNDOF leadership, senior IDF officials have restated that their presence in the area of separation was necessary to secure it from what they describe as “terrorist elements” and stated that Israel had no territorial ambitions in Syria. They have reiterated Israel’s expectation of the demilitarization of the area south-west of Damascus.

On the Bravo side, UNDOF is reinforcing its coordination mechanism through new liaison arrangements with Syrian authorities. This includes enhancing information-sharing protocols and regular consultative meetings.

It remains critical that all parties uphold their obligations under the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, including by ending all unauthorized presence in the areas of separation and limitation, as well as refraining from any action that would undermine the ceasefire and stability in the Syrian Golan. There should be no military forces or activities in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. All actions that are inconsistent with the Agreement are unacceptable. UNDOF must have freedom of movement in its area of operations. The freedom of movement and safety and security of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel conducting their mandated tasks is of the highest priority.

(spoke in French)

To conclude, I count on the continued cooperation of both parties to ensure that the Force can fully carry out its mandate. UNDOF remains essential to the stability of the Golan and the region. We are grateful to the Security Council for its continued support for UNDOF, and I reiterate that this support is now more than ever essential, in these difficult times.

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

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

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

At the outset, we would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for their valuable briefings.

The A3+ is concerned about Israel’s military escalations in Syria, which are taking place at a critical period in Syria’s history, exacerbating the already fragile situation in the country. We understand that the recent air strikes have reportedly resulted in nine civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. The

A3+ strongly condemns those military operations. They violate international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and in particular Article 2, paragraph 4, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

In that regard, we stress the importance of ensuring full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also echo the Special Envoy's concern that such actions undermine efforts to build a new Syria that is at peace with itself and the region. It is crucial to highlight that Syria has neither threatened nor attacked Israel. Furthermore, we must recognize that the ongoing violence exacerbates the humanitarian crisis, which has already displaced millions and left countless others in desperate need of assistance. It is vital to reiterate that both civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The A3+ is also concerned about the impact that the destruction of Syria's military capabilities could have on the country's stability and its ability to ensure security and combat terrorism effectively. The A3+ reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. Those principles must be respected by all, under all circumstances. Upholding international law is not a matter of choice but an obligation. Israel's escalatory actions, compounded by inflammatory statements by Israeli officials about the "indefinite" presence of their forces on Syrian territory, are contributing to instability and threatening regional peace and security. The A3+ therefore makes the following calls.

First, we call for the immediate cessation of attacks against Syria's infrastructure. Such actions destabilize the country and could incite further unrest and conflict among neighbouring countries.

Secondly, we call for full respect for the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, including provisions related to the area of separation. In that regard, we underscore that there should be no military forces, military equipment or personnel in the area of separation other than those of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

Thirdly, we call for an end to the Israeli incursion and the complete withdrawal of its forces from Syria's territory. We emphasize that the Golan Heights is an occupied Syrian territory, as reaffirmed by resolution 497 (1981). The Security Council must uphold its resolutions and ensure the complete compliance of all parties.

The A3+ stands ready to work with all Member States to ensure a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis in Syria, prioritizing the needs and aspirations of the Syrian people. Syria's prosperity is critical to the stability of the entire region. Any actions by external actors that jeopardize Syria's security must be condemned by the international community. Rebuilding Syria requires an investment in dialogue, not sanctions; enhanced collaboration, not aggression; and steadfast support, not desertion. The international community must echo the calls of the Syrian people by mobilizing the necessary resources, lifting unilateral sanctions and providing the required support to Syria.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for their briefings.

In December 2024, under the pretext of a "limited and temporary operation", Israel deployed troops to the area of separation between Israel and Syria and has maintained that deployment to this day. During that period, the Israeli military has frequently conducted air strikes against Syria, promoting "demilitarization" in southern Syria. Last week, Israel launched air strikes on multiple targets within Syria, causing significant casualties and damage to facilities. Israel's actions severely violate international law and infringe on the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. We condemn those actions and urge Israel to immediately put an

end to those attacks and to withdraw from Syrian territory as soon as possible. The 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces should be upheld, and the fulfilment of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force's mandate should be ensured.

At present, the situation in Syria is at an important and sensitive stage. A smooth political transition is the key to restoring peace and stability in Syria and should be the primary goal of the joint efforts of all parties. We hope that the Syrian interim authorities will follow the principles set out in resolution 2254 (2015) and engage in broad dialogue and consultations with all sectors of Syrian society in order to promote an inclusive political process. In that regard, we call on all parties to actively support and cooperate with the work of Special Envoy Pedersen. We urge the Syrian interim authorities to move forward with the investigation of the violence in the coastal region in a transparent and responsible manner and to publish the results of the investigation in a timely manner, under the oversight of the international community.

I would also like to emphasize once again that the Syrian interim authorities should fulfil their counter-terrorism obligations and take decisive measures to combat all the terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.

Since the outbreak of the current round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Middle East has been mired in deep turmoil. Recently, Israel ignored strong opposition from the international community and resumed military operations in Gaza, posing further challenges to regional security and stability. That is deeply concerning.

We urge all parties concerned to remain calm and exercise restraint, abandon the obsession with the use of force and refrain from actions that exacerbate regional tensions and return to the right track of a political settlement to resolve differences through dialogue and negotiation. The international community, especially influential countries, should step up their diplomatic efforts and play an active and responsible role in the political settlement of the conflict. China is ready to work with the international community to continue to make unremitting efforts to promote long-term peace and stability in Syria and to restore peace and tranquillity in the Middle East.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting requested by Algeria and Somalia in response to the latest wave of Israeli aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for their briefings.

Pakistan is deeply alarmed by Israel's ongoing and escalating attacks on sovereign Syrian territory. Those strikes represent a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

The recent air strikes targeting multiple locations in Syria, including civilian infrastructure and urban centres, have caused civilian casualties and pose a grave threat to regional and international peace and security. Such actions further undermine Syria's pursuit of political stabilization and national reconciliation objectives which are supported by the Council and the wider international community. We echo Special Envoy Pedersen's strong condemnation of those military escalations. As he rightly stated, they undermine efforts to build a new Syria at peace with itself and the region. His warning must be taken seriously.

We are witnessing a deeply troubling pattern: continued unprovoked Israeli military aggression, repeated violations of the Disengagement Agreement and illegal military presence in the area of separation, and open declarations of indefinite

occupation. That blatant disregard for Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity must be unequivocally condemned.

The Secret-General's latest report (S/2025/154) also highlighted how Israeli restrictions have severely hampered the ability of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to fulfil its mandate, including planned patrols and freedom of movement. The 1974 Disengagement Agreement remains binding. No force other than UNDOF should be present between the Alpha and Bravo lines. Any unilateral violation of that agreement is unacceptable.

Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan remains illegal and, as per resolution 497 (1981), is null and void. The Council must demand Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights. The Security Council cannot allow illegal military actions to set dangerous precedents.

The presidential statement of 14 March (S/PRST/2025/4) reaffirmed Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and urged all members to uphold those principles. Israel's actions are in direct violation of that consensus. The Council must act decisively and ensure accountability.

Pakistan remains attached to the principle of a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process grounded in the principles contained in resolution 2254 (2015). Sustainable peace in Syria depends on inclusive political transition, national unity and reconciliation. Recent progress, including the formation of a transitional Government, the adoption of an interim constitution and the integration of civil and military institutions, must not be derailed by external military interference.

The humanitarian consequences of the attacks are devastating. With more than 16 million people already in need, the deliberate targeting of civilian areas and infrastructure only deepens the crisis and violates the core principles of international humanitarian law.

We are equally concerned about the broader regional implications. Continued escalation risks igniting wider conflict at a time when diplomacy, de-escalation and reconstruction must be the priority.

The Council must send a clear and united message. Violations of sovereignty cannot be normalized, and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations must be upheld.

We listened carefully to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari. Those are serious findings on which the Security Council should pronounce, since the Council's calls are not being heeded. We are ready to work with Council members and the penholders in that regard.

In conclusion, Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the brotherly people of Syria. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Syria's sovereignty and political independence and the right of its people to live in peace, security and dignity, free from occupation and external aggression.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for their briefings.

As Council members, we should all agree that a stable and sovereign Syria is critical for our collective security.

President Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu earlier this week, and they had a constructive discussion on the importance of regional peace, security and stability.

The United States shares Israel's concerns about Syria becoming a base for terrorism, and both our countries have been clear that they oppose malign actors using Syria as a platform to foment instability.

We know that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Al-Qaida continue to plot and conduct attacks within Syria. And we know Hizbullah and other Iran-backed terrorists are trying to regain a foothold in Syria to threaten Israel and other regional States. And we know that terrorists — both Syrian and foreign — were complicit in last month's atrocities in western Syria.

In that context, Israel has an inherent right of self-defence, including against terrorist groups operating close to its border.

We welcome the Syrian Permanent Representative's 3 March letter to the President of the Security Council stating that Syria will not be a haven for terrorism, nor will it be a part of any axes or polarization or become involved in any conflicts or wars that threaten the security and stability of the region (see S/2025/120). That is a positive message of intent by the interim authorities.

As we have said since 8 December 2024, we will judge the Syrian interim authorities not by their words, but by their actions. The United States continues to support efforts that will bring lasting stability between Israel and Syria, and we hope to see a restoration of calm so that Syrians can live in peace with their neighbours.

Broad and enduring stability in Syria will also depend on advancing justice and accountability. We know that that is true not only for American families whose loved ones have gone missing in Syria, but indeed for all whose loved ones have been missing. We continue to call on the interim authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, protect minorities and advance accountability for brutal crimes, including the recent atrocities in western Syria.

We have welcomed recent statements by both Israel and Türkiye that they do not seek conflict with one another in Syria. The Council should recommit itself to combating terrorism in Syria, call on Iran and other external actors to stop arming and advising terrorist groups and urge States in the region to rein in the actions of proxies who threaten regional peace and security.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for their briefings.

Four months ago, Syrians opened a new chapter, bringing hope for a more stable and secure future. It is clear that many serious challenges lie ahead and will need to be addressed on the path to building a new Syria. Let me make two points in that regard.

First, a peaceful and secure Syria is in the interests of all Syrians, of the country's immediate neighbours and of the wider region. It is equally in the interests of the entire international community. The best way to achieve that goal is through diplomacy and dialogue. Once again, we urge all parties to refrain from violence and to exercise maximum restraint at this critical juncture. We call on all States with influence to use it to that end and to promote dialogue and confidence-building.

We have been saying this for years, and we remain resolute. It is vital that Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity be fully respected. The Syrian people need peace and our firm support. We therefore reiterate our unwavering call for the full respect of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. We acknowledge the interest of countries in the immediate neighbourhood to ensure that events in Syria do not pose a risk to their security. However, we remain convinced that external military interventions in the fragile moment of Syrian transition do not contribute to that legitimate objective — indeed, they could have a countereffect.

In that vein, we condemn the repeated and intensifying military escalations by Israel in Syria, which risk undermining an already fragile security situation in Syria and beyond. We call on Israel to immediately cease the bombings and to withdraw from the zone of separation defined by the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force must be fully able to carry out its mandate and, to that end, must be granted freedom of movement. The ceasefire must be preserved, and the Agreement implemented. In addition to being illegal, prolonged Israeli incursions risk undermining the transition process in Syria, worsen tensions and risk destabilizing the region.

Secondly, an inclusive political transition is in the interests of both the Syrian leadership and the Syrian people. We take note of recent developments towards political transition, including the unveiling of a new and expanded Cabinet. In that regard, we encourage the interim authorities to continue working towards a credible, inclusive and sustainable transition, one grounded in good governance and transparency. That includes the formation of a provisional legislative council and a committee to draft the new Constitution, along with preparations for free and fair elections. Those should be in line with the relevant international standards and the key principles of resolution 2254 (2015).

In conclusion, let me reiterate that, in a highly unstable regional environment, Syria has a historic opportunity to become a centre of peace and security. That requires proactive engagement by all stakeholders. In Syria, it requires the interim authorities to make the right decisions, based on an inclusive national dialogue, for the benefit of all the Syrian people and in full respect of their human rights and freedoms. It also requires increased and continued regional and international support, and again, it requires respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. Slovenia remains ready to work with others, both in the Council and elsewhere, to assist Syrians in realizing a new Syria — one that is free, inclusive and secure — in a secure and stable region.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama welcomes the convening of this emergency meeting requested by Algeria and Somalia on the situation in Syria, and it appreciates the reports presented by the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, and by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, whose explanations have updated us on recent incidents of concern.

Our country reiterates its firm commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and integrity of the entire territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and for its inalienable right to determine its future without external interference of any kind and in accordance with international law.

On 1 March, the formation of a new Government in Syria was announced. We believe that this new phase constitutes an opportunity to move towards an inclusive political process that guarantees the participation of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, creed or gender, and that contributes effectively to the stability and security of Syria and the region. Syria requires the assistance and the firm engagement of the international community. After 14 years of bloody civil war, it is necessary to support the Syrians in building effective governance that prevents the infiltration of extremist influences into their politics and that combats any activity by terrorist groups on their territory.

Panama joins the call made by the Special Envoy, who stressed the urgent need to prevent any new cycle of violence in Syria and to focus efforts on confidence-building, inclusion and economic recovery. Similarly, Panama expresses its deep concern at the recent air strikes in different regions of Syria, which have affected strategic infrastructure, including scientific research facilities, airports and other areas of

military and civilian importance. Those events, reported by various sources, elicit concern for various reasons, particularly given that they have caused many casualties and significant material damage and created a climate of uncertainty and greater instability at a particularly sensitive time for the country. We especially regret the impact that that situation is having on the civilian population, and we stress the importance of ensuring at all times the protection of civilians and strict respect for international humanitarian law.

Panama takes note of recent reports by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, which conducted an inspection mission to several locations in southern Syria, including areas in Dara'a governorate, that were affected by last week's attacks. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force having gained access to the region, it was able to attest to the severity of the damage in key areas, both military and civilian.

Panama reaffirms its support for the verification and monitoring work carried out by the United Nations Force, which is essential to preserve stability, guarantee compliance with international agreements and protect the most vulnerable communities.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for their detailed briefings on the situation in Syria.

We consider today's emergency meeting, which was requested by our Algerian and Somalian colleagues and supported by the Group of Arab States, to be very timely. In the four months since the change of regime in Damascus, Israel has already carried out more than 700 strikes against Syria. Recently, the geographical span of the strikes has expanded, with the Hama air base and a military facility near Palmyra being targeted as well. The Israelis retain control over the buffer zone occupied since 8 December 2024, as well as a significant part of the territory in the south of Syria. We are alarmed by the statements made by senior Israeli officials regarding the need to demilitarize southern Syria and Israel Defense Forces plans to remain in the country indefinitely.

Those actions constitute a gross violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which under no circumstances must be called into question, regardless of who is in power in Damascus. In that context, it is worth noting the statement by Mr. Ahmed Al-Sharaa, who on 16 January reaffirmed his country's commitment to the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and its readiness to host and defend peacekeepers. In general, despite Israeli provocations, the new Syrian authorities still have not demonstrated any hostile intentions towards Israel, nor do they pose any real threats to its national security.

We would like to recall that in March, at the initiative of Russia and the United States, the President of the Security Council made a statement (S/PRST/2025/4), in paragraph 4 of which the Council unequivocally calls on all States to refrain from any action or interference that may further destabilize Syria. Also, Israel's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Danny Danon, sent a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council as early as 9 December 2024 (S/2024/887), asserting the temporary, limited and defensive nature of the measures taken by the Israeli army in southern Syria, including in the area of deployment of peacekeepers of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan.

We call on the Israeli side to reaffirm in practice its commitment to the Disengagement Agreement and international law, as set out in the letter, and to immediately return to the implementation of that agreement without any

preconditions. At the practical level, that includes the withdrawal of Israeli army units and the cessation of arbitrary strikes.

In general, we consider any attempts to destabilize Syria or derail efforts to normalize the situation in the country to be detrimental to the security of the entire Middle East. Only a strong, united, prosperous and independent Syria, in which the rights of all ethno-religious minorities are respected, will become a home for all Syrians, a Syria that will embark on the path to national reconciliation and that will have a unified army and security service with experienced Syrian professionals in its ranks. Such a Syria will become a reliable and predictable neighbour for all States in the region. We strongly condemn any attempts to exploit the period of political transformation and economic uncertainty to impose foreign and alien directives on the Syrian people. Such actions will not support Syrians but, on the contrary, will generate spiralling processes and spawn chaos in the country for years to come. We must not allow that to happen.

We also reaffirm our unwavering and principled position regarding Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

We believe that a durable normalization of the situation in Syria is only possible through inclusive intra-Syrian dialogue aimed at achieving national consensus and advancing a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with the core principles enshrined in resolution 2254 (2015). We believe that the United Nations should play a key role in supporting the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. We extend our support to the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and call on the Syrian authorities to proactively engage with him.

In addition, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the importance of a transparent and objective investigation into the recent wave of violence in the coastal areas of Latakia and Tartus, where hundreds, if not thousands, of Alawite, Christian and other ethnic and religious minority civilians have been killed and injured. We are awaiting the activities of the special committee established by the Syrian authorities. The outcome of its work must be promptly brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council. That demand is similarly set out in the relevant presidential statement which, *inter alia*, emphasizes the need to expeditiously bring all those responsible to justice.

Only on such a solid, just and inclusive foundation is it possible to build a new Syria, in which the rights of all ethno-religious minorities and all citizens of that country will be upheld. We trust that the Syrian authorities will adopt a constructive approach to implementing the provisions of the aforementioned presidential statement.

Russia is a loyal, tried and true friend of the Syrian people, and we continue to champion Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We sincerely hope that the Syrians will make and implement the right decisions that will guarantee the political and social stability of the country and progressive and sustained development for the benefit of its residents, barring none. We stand ready to contribute to that goal as a permanent member of the Security Council, as well as through bilateral channels.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): Let me start by thanking our briefers, Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, for the valuable information they have provided.

Today I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected by all. Syrian sovereignty has been systematically violated. We reiterate our call for the full implementation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and emphasize the responsibility of all parties to uphold their international obligations. While we

recognize the right of Israel to defend itself and ensure the security of its citizens, we stress the need for that to be done in accordance with international law and with the utmost care to avoid civilian casualties. We express our condolences for those deceased and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured. We similarly draw attention to violations of Syrian sovereignty in the north, coupled with ongoing violations and kinetic activities further exacerbating Syria's instability. We deplore attacks in Syria's north and north-east, among others on the Tishrin dam, which is key for local water security. Greece continues to stand firmly in support of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, stressing that a united, secure and peaceful Syria is the best way to ensure the well-being of its people and regional stability for Syria and its neighbours.

Secondly, a truly inclusive political transition, combined with transitional justice, is the key to viable peace in the country. Following the fall of the previous regime in Syria, Greece remains steadfast in its solidarity with the Syrian people, as we work towards the recovery of the country. That recovery can only be achieved through a truly inclusive political transition, one that is guided by the principles of resolution 2254 (2015), supporting the formation of credible and resilient State institutions that respect international law and the international law of the sea. The protection and the full integration of all Syrian communities, including Christians, Alawites, Druze and Kurds, is key for national reconciliation and the long-term prosperity of the country. We are encouraged by the recent engagement between interim President Al-Sharaa and Special Envoy Pedersen on the importance of a transparent election process for an interim people's assembly. The atrocities committed in the coastal region, as condemned by the Council's presidential statement of 14 March (S/PRST/2025/4), underscore the urgency of full accountability and inclusive justice. That is crucial for the credibility of the interim authorities. In that regard, we eagerly await the outcome of the independent fact-finding committee set up to identify those responsible for the mass killings and to bring them to justice. We also reaffirm our support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic — all critical United Nations mechanisms in terms of accountability.

Regarding the constitutional declaration and the political transition, we take note of the formation of a transitional Government in Damascus, and we consider the inclusion of representatives of ethnic and religious groups to be crucial for its success. We note, however, that those developments were not made with the universal acceptance of all communities, and there might still be some question marks as to how representative the makeup of this transitional Government is. We are equally concerned that, among other factors, the increased influence of the executive power on the formation of the legislative authority might not lead to a truly inclusive and viable political process.

My third and last point is that we must not lose sight of the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Recognizing the severe humanitarian crisis in the country, Greece made, at the recent recovery conference in Brussels, a pledge in support of Syria's recovery, contributing to the European Union's overall commitment of some €2.5 billion in a tangible reflection of our commitment to help rebuild Syria. Within the European Union, Greece has supported the easing of sanctions, while emphasizing that that should be done in a gradual, conditional and reversible manner. That approach is being taken in solidarity with the Syrian people, as a means of showing that expectations are being met in terms of an inclusive transition, accountability, transitional justice and full adherence to international law, including the international law of the sea.

In conclusion, let me stress that the only viable future for Syria is one of peace, justice and inclusiveness. Greece remains committed to supporting a political transition that respects the rights of all of Syria's diverse communities, advances

the prosperity and security of the Syrian people and ensures regional stability. For that purpose, we must continue to uphold Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, free from external influences and interventions.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for their briefings and for their continued efforts to support stability in Syria.

As we have heard, the situation in Syria remains volatile. That was shockingly clear one month ago, when violence and widespread killings of civilians rocked Syria's coastal region. Denmark strongly condemns those acts of violence. We reiterate the need for a thorough investigation and for the perpetrators to be held accountable. What is needed now is a safe and stable Syria — one that can heal from the horrific crimes of the past and look to the future. That is true for all Syrians and for the wider region.

Allow me to make three points.

First, we reiterate our full support for Syria's territorial integrity, political independence and sovereignty. While we acknowledge Israel's legitimate security concerns, we remain concerned at the recent Israeli attacks in Syria, with reported civilian casualties. Let us be clear: attacks against strategic infrastructure are not going to create a more stable Syria. Those developments will only further fuel tensions and insecurity. Instead, the focus should be on our collectively addressing security concerns, including the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups and the reported remaining chemical weapons in Syria.

Secondly, we reiterate our full support for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. We call for the full implementation of the 1974 Agreement between Syria and Israel. For decades, UNDOF has worked to address both Israel's and Syria's security concerns. We are deeply concerned at Israel's statements that its presence in the area of separation in the Golan Heights could be for an unlimited period. UNDOF must be allowed to implement its mandate unhindered. Accordingly, Israel must withdraw from the area of separation.

Thirdly, let me reaffirm Denmark's steadfast support for a genuine political transition in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The national dialogue, the constitutional declaration and the recent announcement of the Syrian transitional Government are all steps to that end. We further underline the importance of a truly inclusive transition, in which Syrian women are fully represented. This is all taking place against the backdrop of a dire economic situation, with profound humanitarian consequences for the people of Syria. While the response to immediate needs remains critical, the crisis can be addressed only through sustained support for recovery and reconstruction. The United Nations, through Special Envoy Pedersen, is well placed to assist the transitional Syrian leadership in charting the complex path forward.

In conclusion, significant strides have been made along Syria's path to a new future. However, challenges remain both politically and in terms of security. The international community, in particular the Council, has a responsibility to support the people of Syria on that path. Denmark remains committed to that end.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for their informative briefings.

After four months, the Syrian people have finally witnessed the launch of a transitional Cabinet — a critical first step in the long-awaited inclusive transition. However, Syria once again finds itself caught in a web of escalating geopolitical tensions, which are hampering its prospects for recovery and reconciliation after decades of unbearable suffering. I would like to make three points in that regard.

First, all hostilities violating Syria's territorial sovereignty must stop. Since the fall of the Al-Assad regime, Syria has neither attacked neighbouring States nor indicated any intention to resort to aggressive action against them. In stark contrast, Israel has persistently conducted more than 500 air strikes since that time and is maintaining a military presence far beyond the Bravo line — a clear violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. While we acknowledge Israel's security concerns, including the risks of terrorism, we emphasize that such concerns cannot serve as justification for the use of force against a neighbouring State and its civilians, particularly in the absence of clear evidence of an imminent threat. The right to self-defence, as enshrined in international law, is temporary and contingent, not open-ended. Accordingly, we express our grave concern at Israel's assertion that it will maintain an indefinite presence on Syrian land, and we urge Israel to live up to its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the 1974 Agreement. That includes reverting to its prior commitment of ensuring freedom of movement for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. We also call upon the United Nations and those with influence over the parties on the ground to pursue a sustainable solution that respects the sovereignty of Syria and promotes long-term regional stability.

Secondly, we urge all parties to prioritize the safe and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. We express deep concern at Israel's air strike last week targeting the vicinity of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in Barzah — a site known to have been involved in developing chemical and missile technologies during the Al-Assad era and which was inspected by the secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) during its visit last month. As the OPCW Director-General said in December 2024, such air strikes not only create a risk of contamination but could also lead to the destruction of valuable evidence for investigations related to past use of chemical weapons. Moreover, they may impede the growing momentum in cooperation between the OPCW and Syria. We therefore urge all the relevant actors to refrain from actions that could undermine the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Syria.

Thirdly, we urge the transitional Government to advance a more inclusive political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). While external threats continue to pose challenges, Syria's internal stability is equally at risk as a result of ongoing sectarian violence and exclusion from the political process — a situation that could be addressed through better planning and improved communication.

In that regard, the United Nations stands as a capable and willing partner. With its long-standing experience in facilitating political transitions through both political engagement and technical assistance, the United Nations is uniquely positioned to provide vital support for narrowing existing capacity gaps and rebuilding trust.

We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to conduct an integrated strategic assessment and hope that this will spur progress on inclusive governance, security sector reform and transitional justice.

In conclusion, the track record of the interim authorities over the past four months shows that, while progress has been limited, meaningful steps forward are possible provided that the international community remains constructively engaged and firmly supportive. We simply cannot afford to lose this historic opportunity to bring Syria back on a path of peace and legitimacy. This process must not be derailed as a result of Syria regressing into a geopolitical battlefield.

Ms. Jambert-Gray (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for their briefings today.

I will make three points.

First, since the Council last met on this issue (see S/PV.9885), Syria has made further positive progress in its political transition. The United Kingdom welcomes the announcement on the formation of the new Syrian Government, and we look forward to the protection of human rights, unfettered access for humanitarian aid, the safe destruction of chemical weapons and the combating of terrorism and extremism.

The Government's formation marks an important milestone in the transition. We hope that this spirit of inclusive representation will be carried forward in State institutions and in any further appointments, including to the legislative council, and towards a clear timeline for the next phases of the transition. The United Kingdom stands ready to work with the Syrian Government to that end and to support an inclusive, stable and prosperous future for the Syrian people.

Secondly, this opportunity for stability is being threatened by continued violence. We are concerned about Israeli strikes and incursions into Syria, with reports of civilian deaths. Those actions risk destabilizing Syria and the wider region, and that is in no one's interest. We recognize Israel's focus on protecting the security of its borders and its people, but the actions it takes must be proportionate and in line with international law. We call on all actors to uphold the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect Syria's territorial integrity and to prioritize diplomacy over force.

Thirdly, it is the Syrian people who will suffer most from this worrisome escalation. After 14 years of tyranny and conflict at the hands of the Al-Assad regime, the Syrian people still face a staggering humanitarian crisis. And that is why the United Kingdom has recently pledged up to \$207 million in critical humanitarian assistance. Our focus should now be on supporting Syrians to rebuild their country. We therefore call on all parties to ensure that humanitarian access remains possible across Syria and that civilian lives are protected. The United Kingdom will continue to work with our international partners to support Syrians as they look to build a better future.

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

I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; and Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific; for their briefings, which underscore the gravity of the security situation in Syria.

Syria has embarked on a historic transition process since the overthrow of Bashar Al-Assad's dictatorship. This opportunity raises many hopes for the Syrian people after decades of violence. The aspirations of the Syrian people deserve to be supported, and that is the path that France has chosen. In an unstable regional environment, the political transition must enable Syria to become a pole of peace and security. That requires the cessation of all hostilities in Syria and respect for the territorial integrity of Syria, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions. These are essential elements for guaranteeing a peaceful political transition and the stabilization of the country. The fragmentation of Syria is in nobody's interest.

We reiterate our call for Israel to put an end to its military activities on Syrian territory and to withdraw from the separation zone provided for in the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Syria and Israel must take into account each other's security concerns.

In this period of transition, we must also prevent Syria from succumbing to fragmentation. With that in mind, the Council has called for the whole truth to be uncovered about the unacceptable sectarian violence that claimed civilian lives in

March. Those responsible must be brought to justice. France will carefully examine the conclusions of the commission tasked by the transitional authorities to investigate those crimes, and the follow-up action that will be taken.

In north-east Syria, the agreement in principle signed between the transitional authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces is a positive first step towards achieving a negotiated solution for the unification of Syria and ensuring the rights and interests of the Syrian Kurds.

The terrorist threat remains high. It is vital that the authorities in Damascus continue their unwavering fight against that threat, particularly against Da'esh, and resolve the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. The international community also expects the Syrian authorities to dismantle the country's chemical-weapons programme, in full cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Finally, to achieve a just and lasting peace in Syria, it is vital to guarantee the inclusiveness of the political transition. The first encouraging results have been achieved with the holding of a first session of national dialogue and the announcement of a new Government. That Government must implement the commitments made by the Syrian transitional authorities and meet the expectations and needs of the Syrian people. One such expectation that it has implemented is transitional justice. Those responsible for committing crimes must not remain unpunished. In that regard, France supports the United Nations mechanisms established to combat impunity in Syria and their cooperation with the Syrian authorities. At the same time, the national dialogue must continue and involve all components of Syrian society.

France reiterates its commitment to an inclusive and representative political transition, in the spirit of the principles of resolution 2254 (2015). We support the efforts of Mr. Geir Pedersen to promote that process. A relationship of trust between the Syrian authorities and the United Nations that will help give concrete expression to the international community's support for Syria.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you and your team every success. I also wish to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Denmark, and her team for their effective management of the Council's work during the past month. I thank you for your prompt response to the request to convene this emergency meeting, and I also thank the delegations of brotherly States of Algeria and Somalia and the member States of the Group of Arab States in New York for their support of the Syrian Arab Republic's request to hold this meeting. I also thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for their briefings. I welcome Major General Anita Asmah, Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), who is present at today's meeting. I thank her and her team for their efforts to uphold UNDOF's mandate.

Over the past four months, a majority of States Members of the United Nations, including within and outside the Council, have emphasized the need to support Syria and the Syrian people during this sensitive phase of their present and future. We have all witnessed the international consensus on the need to unite efforts in order to end the protracted suffering of the Syrian people and to support Syria's stability, security and territorial unity and integrity, as that would positively reflect on the stability of the region and the security and well-being of its peoples.

In parallel with those positive and constructive declarations and initiatives undertaken by Member States, regional and international organizations and political groups to support Syria and its people — as we witnessed during the Arab summit hosted in Cairo, the session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah, the conferences in Aqaba, Riyadh and Paris, the Brussels donors' conference and other international forums held in Davos and Munich — the Israeli occupying authorities have persisted in their aggressive actions, which constitute a challenge to those international efforts and aim to threaten the unity and integrity of the Syrian territory, undermining the efforts of the Syrian Government and imposing a new reality that contradicts Syrians' hopes and aspirations to live in their homeland in safety and peace.

The Israeli occupying authorities have escalated their aggression against the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, posing a serious threat to international peace and security and gravely violating international law, the Charter of the United Nations and its relevant resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Since December 2024, the occupation forces have launched hundreds of air strikes against my country, the most recent of which involved the launching of several air strikes in the space of 30 minutes at dawn on Thursday, 3 April, on five areas across the country. Those attacks resulted in the near-total destruction of Hamah military airport, the injury of dozens of civilians and military personnel and destruction and extensive damage to other military and civilian facilities in the governorates of Homs and Damascus. Concurrently with that aggression, units of the Israeli occupation forces penetrated the Dara'a countryside and bombed the Sad-Jubailiyah forest area west of Dara'a, killing nine civilians and wounding others. That aggression was preceded by another attack on the village of Kuwayah in the Dara'a countryside, which resulted in the death of seven civilians.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General concerning the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)(S/2025/154) highlights some aspects of the Israeli aggression against Syria. It clearly indicates the incursion of the Israeli occupation forces into the buffer zone, the significant alteration of the situation there and the impact on the Force's operations since 8 December 2024, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Moreover, the report notes the complaints of our people in the areas that were subjected to an incursion by the Israeli occupation army about it preventing farmers from accessing their agricultural lands and sources of livelihood and causing damage to them, arresting Syrian citizens, stealing their belongings, destroying roads, disrupting electricity, water and Internet services and occupying and damaging buildings belonging to the Quneitra governorate.

Israeli practices in the territories it has recently infiltrated are not limited to what I just mentioned. They have also extended to threatening the water security of Syria and neighbouring countries by seizing control of water resources in southern Syria and diverting river flows away from springs in Mount Hermon and southern water resources. That will endanger Syria's water and food security. Furthermore, the Israeli occupation entity continues its provocative practices against Syria and its people by establishing military outposts and bases for its forces and promoting tourist tours for settlers in the areas it has invaded. That exposes the falsity of the occupation entity's claims that its incursion is temporary and limited and clearly reveals its aggressive and expansionist intentions and its contempt for the Charter of the United Nations, the foundations of international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

While reaffirming the content of its four latest related letters — most recently the complaint submitted to Your Excellency, the President of the Security Council and His Excellency the Secretary-General on 7 April, which will be issued as document S/2025/216 — Syria renews its strongest condemnation of the blatant Israeli attacks

and the provocative statements by Israeli officials calling for what they termed the disarmament of the Syrian State in the southern provinces and for promoting false claims about protecting certain components of Syrian society, pretending to protect them.

While expressing its gratitude to the States that have stood by its side and clearly condemned the Israeli attacks and called for their cessation, Syria calls on the Security Council to condemn those aggressions and take immediate and decisive action to compel Israel to immediately cease its ongoing aggression against Syrian territory, withdraw immediately and unconditionally from all Syrian lands, fully comply with the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, respect the mandates of UNDOF and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and implement the relevant Security Council resolutions — in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) — in order to end the Israeli occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan and the grave threat it poses to Syria's unity, sovereignty and security.

While reaffirming its inalienable right to extend its sovereignty over all its territories, Syria rejects any Israeli attempts to interfere in its internal affairs, destabilize its security and stability or impose a new occupation reality. Syria affirms its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, the provisions of international law and international legitimacy resolutions as the basis for achieving stability and peace in the region. I cannot fail to commend the efforts of the UNDOF and UNTSO peacekeepers and their leadership in New York City and in the field and their determination and commitment to fulfil their mandate despite the significant challenges they face as a result of the practices of the occupation forces, including restrictions imposed by the occupation forces on their freedom of movement. Syria reaffirms its willingness to spread its forces along the lines of separation and to commit to the Disengagement Agreement.

In conclusion, with every day that the Security Council delays upholding its responsibilities to maintain international peace and security and halt the ongoing Israeli aggression against my country, the potential for instability increases, and the threat posed by that aggression to my country, the region and its peoples grows. Attempts to impose solutions by force and to give precedence to the law of force over the force of law are doomed to failure, not to mention the fact that they do not serve regional stability and contradict the strenuous efforts being made to consolidate the values and culture of peace in the region and advance it towards prosperity and development.

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

Mr. El-Sonni (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for answering the call of Somalia and Algeria to hold today's emergency meeting, which was also requested by the Group of Arab States. I would also like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for their briefings.

The Arab Group expresses its strong condemnation of the repeated military escalation against Syria by the Israeli occupation forces, especially the attack that targeted several areas at dawn on Thursday, 3 April. We recall that such attacks constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and undoubtedly threaten the peace and security of the entire region and exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people who are already suffering as a result of the crisis that has been ongoing for years.

The attack by the occupation forces, which targeted five different Syrian regions, including the almost complete destruction of the Hama military airport and the serious damage to civilian and military facilities in the governorates of Homs and

Damascus, is only one in a series of attacks that are aimed at undermining Syria's security and endanger the lives of civilians and threaten regional and international efforts to promote stability in the region.

The Arab Group stresses that those attacks are not only a violation of Syria's sovereignty and a threat to its territorial integrity and unity but are also in blatant disregard for the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), which call for ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. They are also a flagrant violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and a clear violation of the mandate of the United Nations forces operating in the region — whether they be part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force or the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

The Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms those attacks, calls on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to assume its legal and moral responsibilities to pressure the Israeli occupation forces to immediately stop their aggression, adhere to international law, and completely and unconditionally withdraw from the occupied Syrian territories, including the areas into which they have recently moved in a clear attempt to exploit the current circumstances in Syria and to expand their occupation. Therefore, the Security Council must take urgent measures to put an end to those provocative actions before the situation worsens and spirals out of control, threatening international peace and security, whether in the region or beyond.

The Arab Group also underscores that, at the same time that progress is being made with regard to the transitional framework, following the fall of the former regime and the implementation of related reforms, there is a need to lift the economic sanctions against Syria as soon as possible. Those sanctions undermine the interests of the Syrian people and the recovery of the Syrian economy. The Arab Group also emphasizes the importance of continuing the comprehensive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process that includes all segments of Syrian society for a better future, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). That must be a component of the international efforts to support peace and prosperity in Syria.

In that regard and in the same context, the Arab Group also condemns the continued Israeli occupation of five sites in southern Lebanon, in addition to the designation of two buffer zones on Lebanese territory and the prevention of access to them, which is a flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006) and a blatant violation of the declaration of cessation of hostilities. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility and compel the Israeli occupation forces to fully and immediately withdraw without preconditions from all occupied Lebanese territory.

The Arab Group commends the progress in the deployment of the Lebanese army in the area south of the Litani River and reiterates that it stands with Lebanon in support of its security, stability and sovereignty.

In conclusion, in the light of the efforts by most countries around the world to de-escalate international tensions and put an end to the wars and conflicts that have been brought to a head by the Israeli occupation forces' violation of the ceasefire agreement — whether in Gaza or with the continued flagrant violations in the West Bank — the attacks show the clear intention of the Israeli occupation forces to destabilize the entire region and their desire to continue the series of wars and fighting for only one reason. They are a shameful and obvious attempt to divert attention from their national political crises and to justify the continued presence of those in power.

Therefore, we express our full support for Syria and its people and affirm that Syria's security is an integral part of Arab security. We call for concerted regional and international efforts to put an end to those violations and ensure respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and resolve this situation, which could push the entire region into the abyss. It is time for Syria to heal its wounds and enjoy stability, safety and security.

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

Mr. Miller (Israel): I thank our briefers here today.

Amid serious and sustained instability, we are witnessing the re-emergence of radical Islamic armed groups — groups committed only to destruction, terror and the annihilation of our nation. Those groups in southern Syria are working to establish military infrastructure in areas just kilometres from Israeli communities. That infrastructure includes rocket launchers, explosives and underground facilities, all designed to threaten the lives of innocent civilians.

Israel cannot and will not allow that to happen. We have been clear and consistent. That is our policy. We will do whatever is necessary for however long it takes to prevent another 7 October 2023.

The images of 7 October 2023 are burned into the minds of our people. We know what happens when a terrorist network is permitted to entrench itself, when warnings are ignored, when red lines are crossed without consequence. We have seen the signs, organized terrorist cells, foreign-built weapon systems and the consolidation of hostile forces in southern Syria.

We have acted, and we will continue to act. Our actions are guided not by ambitions of expansion, but purely by necessity, security and prevention.

Those clear priorities have defined recent Israeli operations in Syria. One such example is a ground mission recently conducted by Israel Defense Forces special forces in central Syria. There, our forces dismantled an underground missile factory constructed by Iran. That factory of death had already begun producing precision-guided missiles, several of which were subsequently used in attacks on Israeli territory by Hizbullah. That factory is no longer operational.

In the weeks that followed, Israeli forces confiscated or destroyed more than 3,300 weapons and military assets which belonged to Hizbullah, among them long-range rocket components, drones, anti-tank missiles and tools for cross-border infiltration. Those weapons were manufactured for a clear purpose: attacks on Israeli civilians and on regional stability.

Let me be clear: Israel does not seek territorial gains in Syria. Our operations are precise and rooted exclusively in threat neutralization. Where threat exists, we will meet it without hesitation.

We must remind the Security Council that it is not only Israeli civilians who stand to suffer from the growing entrenchment of jihadist groups. The Druze community of southern Syria, with whom Israel shares historic and familial ties, is increasingly at risk from the spread of jihadist groups in their traditional areas. Those extremists threaten the fabric of diverse communities. We are committed to our Druze communities in Israel and to doing everything to prevent harm to their Druze brothers in Syria, and we will take the steps required to maintain their safety.

Israel continues to coordinate with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force under the framework of resolution 350 (1974). We respect the mission's mandate, and we support its stabilizing role along the disengagement lines. But let us be frank — peacekeeping efforts alone cannot stop the spread of sophisticated

weaponry. They cannot intercept Iranian missile parts or dismantle terrorist tunnels. They cannot prevent the creation of launch sites embedded in civilian terrain. We are committed to deconfliction, and we are committed to dialogue, but we are also committed to the protection of our people, and that must take precedence when lives are at stake.

The Syrian Government is in transition, and its authority throughout much of the country remains fragmented in reality. Control is contested. Security forces are overextended, and in the absence of cohesive governance, it is the most radical and violent actors who are taking advantage of that reality. Among the most troubling developments is the resurgence of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad activity in southern Syria. In recent months, Hamas operatives have re-established command centres and weapons caches in areas such as Bayt Jinn and the Dara'a refugee camp, again using refugee camps near Damascus as a cover for military build-up. Those actions directly endanger Israeli citizens and must be addressed with urgency.

In addition to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad continues to operate with Iranian backing, maintaining dozens of command centres in Syria. Those groups are not independent. They are proxies of Iran, trained, equipped and funded with clear goals: to attack Israel and destabilize the region. The recent movement of hundreds of Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists from Lebanon to Syria only underscores that threat. Terrorists thrive in instability. That is not theoretical. It is a pattern, one that the Council has seen and discussed too many times in this Chamber before. The Council must acknowledge that reality. Southern Syria is vulnerable to becoming a forward base for extremist groups unless the international community, including this body, treats the situation with the urgency, seriousness and clarity that it demands.

Israel's position is principled and consistent. We will act to prevent the consolidation of terrorist groups along our borders. We will maintain a demilitarized buffer zone to keep civilians safe. We will support humanitarian cooperation with threatened communities, especially the Druze. We will engage constructively with international mechanisms. Above all, we will continue to dismantle, disrupt and deny the ability of our enemies to prepare for the next war. That is not escalation; it is protection. It is what every responsible nation would do in our position and what any Government here would demand if the same threats were directed at its citizens.

We urge the Council to adopt a posture grounded in realism, not political rhetoric. The challenges in Syria are not going away. If left unaddressed, they will grow, and they will not remain confined to one border. The international community must understand what is at stake not just for Israel, but for all those who wish to see this region free from the grip of terror. We should all remember that a selective approach by the Council, scrutinizing Israel while turning a blind eye to State and non-State actors fuelling terror and chaos in Syria, will not serve the cause of peace and stability. A genuine commitment to stability in Syria requires acknowledging and addressing the full spectrum of threats facing the region. Israel will continue to defend its people decisively, consistently and in accordance with international law.

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

Mrs. Güven (Türkiye): At the outset, let me express our appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for their comprehensive briefings.

We meet today at a critical moment for Syria. The decisions of the international community will influence whether Syria advances towards peace and stability or falls back into conflict and fragmentation. Despite immense challenges, the new Syrian Administration has made notable progress. The National Dialogue Conference, the constitutional declaration and the formation of a technocratic Government reflect

a commitment to building an inclusive national consensus. Those steps signal the Administration's will to lead a Syrian-owned, Syrian-led political transition, in line with the aspirations of its people. We also note the responsiveness to regional and international concerns. Their engagement with various countries and their constructive dialogue established with the United Nations bodies, in particular the Office of the Special Envoy, are commendable.

We welcome Syria's proactive approach on the chemical weapons file. Its firm commitment to the complete destruction of remaining stockpiles is commendable. The Syrian authorities granted full access to the relevant sites and extended full cooperation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons technical team. Taken together, those steps point to a readiness to open a new chapter based on constructive engagement with the international community. The Syrian authorities have also made clear that they harbour no hostile intent towards their neighbours.

Despite those positive signs, Israel continues its unprovoked aggression against Syria. Repeated air strikes and land incursions without justification violate Syria's sovereignty and threaten regional stability. We therefore echo the condemnation expressed by the Special Envoy. The Council must act urgently to prevent further escalation. Israel's military actions undermine not only Syria's internal security, but regional stability as well. They also weaken Syria's capacity to fight Da'esh, directly harming our collective counter-terrorism efforts. Strikes on suspected chemical storage sites create serious risks and hinder accountability. Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity must be fully respected. We call on the international community, especially the Council, to end Israeli aggression and ensure full implementation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

Eliminating terrorist organizations in Syria, including Da'esh, the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), remains essential for lasting peace and unity. We prioritize cooperation with countries in the region to address shared security threats. Last month's meeting among Türkiye, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria is a strong example of regional ownership and collective resolve. We are closely following the agreement reached between the Syrian Administration and the so-called SDF. Terrorist structures must be dismantled. All armed elements must surrender their weapons to the Syrian State. All terrorist entities must be removed from Syrian territory. The security responsibilities of detention centres and camps in the north-east must be swiftly transferred to the Syrian Administration. Türkiye stands ready to cooperate with Syria on that vital task.

Failure in Syria is not an option. A successful political transition is imperative, not only for Syria but also for regional stability. We must support the Syrian Government in building on recent gains. Yet, humanitarian funding for Syria remains insufficient. We call on all members of the international community to mobilize resources for urgent humanitarian needs and Syria's reconstruction. Barriers to cash flow and investment must be lifted. All sanctions should be removed unconditionally to enable Syria's integration and allow its people to rebuild their lives. The international community bears a collective responsibility to help the Syrian people recover with dignity. It is time to demonstrate genuine solidarity.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.