



Security Council

Eightieth year

9904

th meeting

Friday, 25 April 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bonnafont/Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Bendjama
	China.	Mr. Fu Cong
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Pakistan.	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Moscoso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Ms. Swallow
	Slovenia.	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America.	Ms. Shea

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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 the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: I am very pleased to brief the Security Council for the first time in the presence of my dear friend Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani. I welcome him to New York. His participation today reflects the significant developments that Syria has undergone in recent months. I appreciate his commitment to fostering regional stability and engaging constructively at the international level. Equally, I welcome the Security Council's unity on Syria, as demonstrated in its statements of December and March, and its continued support for a Syrian-owned, Syrian-led and United Nations-facilitated political transition in line with the key principles of resolution 2254 (2015).

It is only four and a half months since the fall of the former regime and the opening of a new chapter in Syria's history. I salute the Syrian people who, amid continued suffering and many uncertainties and dangers, show overwhelmingly that they want the political transition to succeed. The legacy of misrule, conflict, abuses and poverty from which Syria is trying to emerge is one of the heaviest that any State or people anywhere has had to face in modern times. That means that the situation is inherently still extremely fragile. The vital ingredients to address that fragility are clear. We need genuine political inclusion so that all Syrians can participate meaningfully in shaping the country's political future, along with countering extremism and terrorism, and real support from the international community to give the transition a chance to succeed against great odds.

That political transition is now at a critical juncture. The legal vacuum that existed before the constitutional declaration was issued has been partly filled by it. Syria has moved beyond a caretaker Government to a new, expanded and more diverse Cabinet. That is an improvement from what came before. Yet it is still not a fully inclusive framework for political transition. And that leaves many Syrians unsure of their place in the emerging new Syria. There is obviously a concentration of power. And plans for establishing the rule of law, a new social contract and, ultimately, free and fair elections remain to be seen. Many women are telling us that they are worried about societal and political trends — and there is only one woman among the 22 members of the Cabinet. Many among Syria's components are still reeling from the violence on the coast in March, which took a toll on confidence and trust. The March events were of course sparked by a violent challenge to State authority. With State authority far from being established, a range of armed groups

still operating and unprecedented levels of poverty, in a country that is still heavily under sanctions — those there are serious underlying tensions on several fronts.

I appreciated the open and substantive discussion on those challenges with interim President Al-Sharaa in Damascus two weeks ago, which built on several meetings with him and with Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani. A crucial next step in the political transition are the plans to establish the interim people's assembly. President Al-Sharaa explained his thinking on that in quite some detail. On my part, I stressed the need for substantive efforts towards inclusivity, transparency and openness, given that that body will have an urgent legislative reform agenda on many areas that affect all Syrians and the need to ensure the body is seen by Syrians as representing both the unity and diversity of the nation. I had the pleasure of meeting the Foreign Minister this morning, and we shared ideas, options and best practices with the interim authorities on those issues. I welcome the Minister's readiness to deepen the dialogue on that important matter.

Also in Damascus, we discussed the need for a future constitutional process that is not framed as a technical or expert exercise alone, but rather one that involves all of Syria's societal and political components in shaping together Syria's new social contract and laying the basis for free and fair elections thereafter.

The situation on the coast remains an urgent challenge. In Damascus, I met with members of the Alawite community, who conveyed their deep concerns and presented harrowing accounts of violations. I talked with President Al-Sharaa at length about that, along with a member of his civil peace high commission, who detailed their efforts to address the issue. Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi met with the independent national investigative and fact-finding committee, whose mandate has now been extended by three months. I appeal to Syrians with allegations of violations to engage with the committee, which is examining all incidents since 6 March and until the time it ends its mandate. And I appeal to the interim authorities to make the committee's findings public, in line with international standards, and to take the necessary steps to bring perpetrators of violence against civilians to justice, as called for by the Security Council.

But a sense of grievance still exists on both sides — a deep feeling of exclusion from the political process and the public sector, on one side, but also profound grievances towards persons associated with the former regime, on the other. The interim authority needs to ensure that all segments of Syrian society are not only protected but also feel that they will be full participants in political life and State structures, including in terms of security. Meanwhile, every step towards establishing the rule of law and moving on transitional justice will help reassure all components of Syrian society. It will help reduce the likelihood of individuals or groups taking justice into their own hands or committing revenge-driven attacks, sporadic incidents of which, worrisomely, continue.

We are also receiving reports of women and girls being abducted. I raised that with the Minister this morning, who agreed that anything of the kind is unacceptable and invited me to share any information we have on that, which we will of course do. It is important to reassure the communities impacted by the matter.

Another key task is to pursue a peaceful reintegration of north-east Syria. I reiterated to President Al-Sharaa my welcome of his 10 March agreement with Mr. Mazloum Abdi. I conveyed the same message to Mr. Abdi. There have been a number of very encouraging steps and signals: the formation of committees and reciprocal visits; the development in the north-east of a common negotiating approach involving a range of Kurdish parties; a deal on mutual security arrangements in Kurdish-majority areas of Aleppo city; agreed withdrawals from Tishrin Dam,

which need to be implemented; efforts to forge common ground on education; and, importantly, a marked military de-escalation by all Syrian and international actors.

It is critical that those and other steps, many of which are of a confidence-building nature, feed into the broader political process in line with the key principles of resolution 2254 (2015), in which all Syrian sides and segments must participate. The question of the north-east presents major challenges and risks, namely, the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, inside and outside of camps, as international funding is dwindling; a sizeable military force still operating outside of Damascus' command structures; a complex demographic and political mix; and key political demands regarding Kurdish rights and issues of decentralization and identity. Both sides will need the political will to compromise so that north-east Syria can be integrated through a Syrian-Syrian process in a way that maintains stability in the country and the region and restores Syria's sovereignty and unity. We are deepening engagement in support of that process. Its success is crucial for the viability of any Syrian political transition.

As I discussed with President Al-Sharaa, there is a positive intention to ensure that no weapons can be held outside State control — whether in the north, south, east or west of the country — coupled with ideas on how to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate different factions. That process is complex and will take time. An enabling political environment of inclusive governance structures that receive timely and adequate international support would help with the integration of the remaining armed factions into a national army and their disarmament.

I had a detailed discussion with President Al-Sharaa on the concerns of Council members related to foreign terrorist fighters. The issue remains a very serious one, and there is a need to see more progress on that front. I note the fact that exchanges are continuing on the issue with several relevant States.

Ongoing Israeli violations of Syria's territorial integrity are undermining the transition. A violent confrontation in early April in Dara'a governorate between Israeli forces — well beyond the 1974 lines — and armed locals resulted in nine civilian casualties on the Syrian side, according to the Syrian Arab Republic. A week later, there was a wave of Israeli air strikes on Damascus, Hama and Homs, including airbases, reportedly causing casualties, including among civilians. Those attacks must cease. I also reiterate my appeal for full respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and for the Council to hold Israel to its commitment that it does not seek territorial gains in Syria. Israel must withdraw and respect Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence. This highly confrontational approach is not warranted, particularly given that there is plainly scope for diplomacy. This was clear from my meetings in Damascus. I welcome the regional talks that have taken place, including talks between Türkiye and Israel in Azerbaijan, which I hope can contribute to de-escalation.

The economic situation in Syria is truly disastrous, and levels of humanitarian assistance are dwindling — a huge danger, which the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will no doubt be addressing. Beyond the humanitarian, there can be no successful political stability and transition without genuine economic recovery and stability. I commend the support of the region, which is enabling Syria to see debts to the World Bank repaid. And I note the meetings that Syrian financial officials have had in recent days with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C.

I appreciate the sanctions relief measures taken to date, and I welcome the fact that discussions are continuing regarding civilian public sector salaries. I also note the actions taken yesterday by the United Kingdom, with further designations lifted and sectoral sanctions revoked. Almost all Syrians in and out of the country echo

the call for sanctions easing at a larger scale and quicker pace. That is essential to reactivate Syria's economy, to realize concrete support from the region and to enable many to actively participate in a national effort to rebuild their country.

The reality is that the complex intersection of sanctions on Syria hampers peace dividends that we should be seeing from the suspensions already granted, and the chilling effect of sanctions is long-lasting. I therefore call on Governments to engage with the private sector in order to ensure that sanctions suspensions granted so far in critical sectors, such as energy and banking, are indeed materialized. I also urge the further relaxation of sanctions on investments, exports and services, all of which impact the delivery of essential services, including health and education. And a crucial part of that is enabling the States that want to help to be reassured that they can do so without fear of secondary sanctions.

In conclusion, a lot has been achieved, and there is much to commend and support, but the challenges are huge, and the situation is extremely fragile. There is a need for much more political inclusion and for much more economic action. With a sea change on both these elements, the political transition in Syria can succeed. Without both, it likely will not — and the consequences would be unacceptable. We cannot accept that course of events. That is why the United Nations is working to facilitate and assist a Syrian-led and -owned process, working in accordance with our mandate under resolution 2254 (2015). I hope the Security Council can continue support that work.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing, which was hopeful, but also emphasized the challenges to overcome.

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: Allow me to acknowledge the participation of Minister Al-Shaibani in today's meeting, which is an important signal of how timely and critical this discussion is for Syria.

Special Envoy Pedersen has set out the complexity of the challenges Syria is navigating as its people seek to seize a historic opportunity for a better future. And all of this is taking place against the backdrop of what remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises: nearly three-quarters of the population are in need, more than half are facing food insecurity and 7 million people are displaced.

Today I want to highlight four main points for the Council's attention.

First, while we welcome the significant reduction in hostilities, we must keep a clear focus on de-escalating conflict where it persists and ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The improving security situation in parts of Aleppo governorate and north-east Syria in recent weeks — following agreements between the interim authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces — has already had tangible benefits for civilians. Attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure have receded. Movement restrictions have eased in parts of Aleppo city. Thousands of people displaced in the north-east are preparing to return to Afrin.

Following an agreement on joint administration of Tishrin Dam in eastern Aleppo, UNICEF and other partners are coordinating with the relevant authorities on expanding the supply of power from the Dam to water facilities serving more than 3 million people.

In the coastal areas, despite a marked improvement in the security situation, incidents affecting civilians continue to be reported. Tens of thousands of people remain displaced, including more than 30,000 people who have fled to Lebanon. The United Nations is working with local partners to deliver critical assistance, although insecurity continues to limit access to many rural areas.

During the past month, Israeli air strikes continued in various locations, and incursions in southern governorates have led to armed confrontations on multiple occasions. Some incidents have resulted in civilian casualties.

Meanwhile, explosive remnants of war continue to injure or kill people, including children, on a near daily basis. More than 700 casualties have been recorded since 8 December — an average of more than five people each day.

Secondly, we continue to provide critical assistance to millions of people each month, and to do so in a way that maximizes our limited resources. The United Nations and its partners are providing support for health and water facilities that have been hollowed by years of conflict and underinvestment.

This month, the World Health Organization is providing essential medicines to health facilities in Aleppo, Hama, Latakia and Tartus to enable treatment for more than 100,000 patients with chronic illnesses in the next three months and, with support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-managed Central Emergency Response Fund, delivered 2.7 tons of trauma surgery kits, essential medicines and other emergency supplies to hospitals in Deir ez-Zor in the northeast. Non-governmental organizations have begun rehabilitating hospitals damaged by years of war in areas like rural Damascus and Idlib.

Alongside providing clean water and sanitation services to displaced families in internally displaced persons sites, UNICEF and other partners are rehabilitating 180 water and sanitation facilities, including water treatment plants, in cities, water pumping stations and sanitation plants.

Since December, over 2,000 unexploded ordnance items have been securely discarded in more than 1,400 clearance operations. We continue to provide vital assistance, including food, household items and support for clean water to people affected by last month's violence in coastal areas, and we continue to pursue all available routes to provide aid as efficiently as possible. Since the start of the year, 960 trucks have delivered aid through the cross-border operation from Türkiye, a relatively cost-effective route — more trucks than during the whole of 2024. On Tuesday, for example, 24 trucks carried food and other supplies for more than 55,000 people through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing.

Thirdly, we need more funding to sustain that work, let alone scale it up further. To date, we have received \$186 million, less than 10 per cent of the requirements for the first half of 2025. That continues to translate into serious consequences for our response. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expects its team in Syria to shrink by 30 per cent, at a time when the need to support refugee returns is growing. Nearly half of UNHCR's 122 community centres will close by the summer without more funding. The World Food Programme has warned that it needs \$100 million to avoid a disruption to food assistance in August. Many non-governmental organizations, in particular in the north-east, are facing particularly alarming shortfalls. In Deir ez-Zor, hospitals serving more than 200,000 people are at risk of closure next month without additional funding. In the north-west, over 170 health facilities risk running out of funds by the end of next month.

Finally, we need to sustain momentum for investment in Syria's recovery and development. Without that, the scale of humanitarian needs will far exceed our ability to respond to them. Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, who have expressed their desire to return home, will continue to be dissuaded by a lack of basic services and livelihood opportunities, and the hope of seizing this critical opportunity to build a more prosperous future risks slipping away.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Msuya for her briefing, which shows the gravity of the humanitarian situation and the international community's commitment.

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

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings on the dynamic political and humanitarian situation in Syria. We also acknowledge the presence here today of Syrian interim Foreign Minister, Mr. Al-Shaibani.

The United States continues to closely monitor the actions of the Syrian interim authorities. We remain hopeful that the interim Cabinet, announced by the interim authorities at the end of March, represents a positive step. However, we expect to see additional action and the appointment of more qualified and representative individuals to serve in critical positions. As we have repeatedly made clear, we will hold the Syrian interim authorities accountable for fully renouncing and suppressing terrorism, adopting a policy of non-aggression towards neighbouring States, excluding foreign terrorist fighters from any official roles, preventing Iran and its proxies from exploiting Syrian territory, destroying weapons of mass destruction, assisting in the recovery of United States citizens disappeared in Syria and ensuring the security and freedoms of all Syrians.

The Syrian people also deserve leadership that is transparent, accountable and fully committed to a more peaceful and prosperous future, after 54 years of ruinous rule under the Al-Assad regime. We have noted the interim authorities' decision to extend the mandate of the independent national investigative and fact-finding committee on the coastal violence. We expect that this time will be used to visit all locations where atrocities were committed, to interview as many survivors as possible and to produce a comprehensive report that will lead to action by the interim authorities. We expect all perpetrators to be held accountable, especially those in leadership roles or who are otherwise high-profile. That will send a clear message to all Syrians that no one is above the law in the new Syria.

We also expect the interim authorities to continue to make progress in allowing, securing and facilitating the access of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to chemical weapons storage locations and evidence, leading to the eventual destruction of all chemical weapons.

We can and should herald the recent adoption of a United Nations resolution renewing the International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, responsible for investigating atrocities committed under the Al-Assad regime since March 2011 (Human Rights Council resolution 58/25). We commend Syria's support for that renewal — the first such support on its part in the Commission's history. The Syrian people also deserve answers about their missing loved ones so that they can finally have a measure of closure. To that end, we urge interim authorities to work closely with both the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, including by facilitating the opening of offices in Damascus for both institutions as quickly as possible.

Last week, the United States announced that we will consolidate our military bases in Syria. That consolidation reflects the significant progress that the United States, with our partners and all members of the international counter-Da'esh coalition, has made towards downgrading the appeal and operational capability of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), both regionally and globally. As that

consolidation takes place, consistent with President Trump's commitment to peace through strength, the United States Central Command will remain poised to take all necessary action against remnants of ISIS in Syria. We will also work closely with our partners, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Free Syrian Army, to respond to emergent terrorist threats.

We continue to follow the implementation of the 10 March agreement signed with the Syrian Democratic Forces and the development of the details of the agreements. The model of agreement in Aleppo and the peaceful integration of interim Government forces and the SDF are indeed encouraging signs of progress. We expect to see similar progress around the Tishrin Dam and in Afrin and Deir ez-Zor. The implementation of those agreements must lead to a unified State security structure and a framework that ensures that ISIS fighters remain in detention. United States military forces will continue to take all necessary actions so that ISIS can never reconstitute itself.

The volatile security landscape in Syria necessitates continued coordination to address intertwined ISIS-associated humanitarian and security challenges in north-east Syria. It is critical to our collective security to responsibly reduce the population in the detention facilities and the Al-Hol and Al-Roj displaced persons camps through the expeditious repatriation of Iraqis and third-country nationals who are in the care of the Syrian Democratic Forces. While we appreciate the countries that have repatriated some of their nationals from the region, it is time for all countries of origin to accelerate the repatriation of all of their nationals from north-east Syria, whether displaced persons or detainees. It is also important for Governments to ensure that they have the capabilities to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals returning from north-east Syria. The return of Syrian displaced persons from Al-Hol and Al-Roj to their communities is also critical, and we encourage the interim authorities and the United Nations to finalize preparations for those returns. The United States continues to observe the actions of the interim authorities and will determine our actions on the basis of a pattern of behaviour. The core leadership must move beyond its past. For the sake of Syria's future, we hope that they will reaffirm the hopes of the Syrian people to see a calm, stable country so that Syrians can finally live in peace with themselves and their neighbours.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and to the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, for the comprehensive overview of the situation in Syria. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Syria, Mr. Asaad Al-Shaibani.

We share the assessment that the security situation in Syria remains exceedingly alarming. We are troubled by the ongoing clashes between the Syrian National Army and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), despite the fact that a formal agreement was arrived at to integrate both groups into the new national security forces. We have observed that the Israelis continue to carry out arbitrary strikes targeting the entirety of Syria and are expanding their presence in Quneitra, where they have already established a military base. Unfortunately, the situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border remains tense, and there is an ongoing, persistent terrorist threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups, which remain rampant in Syria.

Against that backdrop, it is important for the calls to preserve Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity not to remain empty slogans, but for them to be respected in practice by all States Members of the United Nations, including Syria's neighbours. There is a need to see to it that Israel reverts to complying with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, halts its strikes on Syrian territory and withdraws its troops

from Syria, especially given that Damascus has repeatedly reaffirmed its willingness to build constructive relations with all neighbours, bar none.

We value the progress that has been achieved in the dialogue between the Syrian authorities and the Kurds, including the agreement on the handover of control to the authorities of the Shaykh Maqsur neighbourhood in Aleppo and Tabqa Dam on the Euphrates River, as well as the launch of the working groups, which was stipulated under the agreement signed on 10 March in Damascus between Mr. Ahmed Al-Sharaa and SDF commander Mazloum Abdi. We believe that the successful establishment of cooperation with the Kurds will help to advance international and intranational cohesion for Syria and will send a positive message to the other ethno-religious minorities.

Against that backdrop, we remain alarmed about the situation in the coastal areas, first and foremost in the Latakia and Tartus governorates, where instability and tensions persist. Those regions have not yet recovered after the recent tragic events, which affected Alawite civilians the most and forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Let us recall that many of the victims and those who fled the violence have found temporary refuge outside of the country. Some have taken cover at the Russian Humaymim airbase, where they remain to this day. We call upon the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to pay particular attention to the humanitarian situation in those regions, in which, according to United Nations estimates, at least 1.2 million Syrians are in dire need of assistance. We believe that the ongoing reconstruction of the United Nations humanitarian architecture in Syria should reflect the specific needs of the country's coastal regions and that the specialized structures should be endowed with the necessary resources to respond proactively to emerging challenges.

There remain many unresolved questions regarding the developments in western Syria. In that respect, the work of the independent national investigative and fact-finding committee established on 9 March to investigate the deadly events in the western coastal areas of Syria is of particular significance. We have taken note of the decision taken by Mr. Ahmed Al-Sharaa to extend the deadline for the submission of the report by three months. We hope that that time will be used to ensure that the investigation is comprehensive, transparent, independent and impartial in nature, that it is carried out in accordance with international standards to hold all perpetrators to account, as stipulated in the relevant presidential statement (S/PRST/2025/4). That will shape the foundation of future relations between Damascus, the Alawite community and other ethno-religious minorities. It is important for both the Security Council and the Special Envoy to be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

There is also a need to address and get to the bottom of the reports of mass abductions of Syrian women and girls in the west of Syria. Such developments are unacceptable for any secular State. The perpetrators must be identified and punished.

Syria continues to experience one of the most acute and protracted humanitarian crises in modern times. The overwhelming majority of Syrians live below the poverty line, and millions remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Children are particularly vulnerable, insofar as they have been stripped of access to basic services, including education. Every day, they have to cope with the consequences of the profound socioeconomic crisis.

We have seen positive signals from the new Syrian authorities. They have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate on humanitarian matters. We welcome the visible uptick in the work to rebuild critically important infrastructure and in measures to deliver food and medical assistance. We commend the positive trends that have been observed with regard to the return of Syrian refugees. More than 430,000 people have returned to the Syrian Arab Republic in the past four months.

However, we must acknowledge that the level of humanitarian assistance remains objectively insufficient as a result of the catastrophic funding shortfall. As of today, only 9 per cent of the required \$2 billion requested for the period from January to June has been mobilized. That is very concerning, especially given that the voluntary repatriation of refugees must be accompanied by the creation of appropriate conditions for a dignified life. Otherwise, humanitarian problems and social tensions will continue to escalate.

We call upon the international community to urgently mobilize resources, demonstrate solidarity and prevent the hope for peace and reconstruction in Syria from being extinguished. Russia remains committed to assisting the Syrian people. We continue to deliver assistance, both bilaterally and through international organizations. Despite the financial restrictions imposed on the Russian Federation by the West, we recently managed to make another voluntary contribution to the budget of the World Food Programme, \$5 million of which will be allocated for the delivery of food to Syria. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Syrian authorities are finalizing the modalities for the implementation of an \$8 million project funded by the Russian Federation to help to rebuild the agricultural sector in the country.

We continue to advocate for the fact that there is no alternative to an inclusive, Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process with support from the United Nations, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of resolution 2254 (2015). We extend our support for the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen. We also deem it important to ensure that the international support for intra-Syrian dialogue be universal in nature. Sidelining any of the leading global and regional players will merely make that process more tenuous and fragile.

We hope for a Syria in which no ethnic and religious group will feel disadvantaged or marginalized and in which all groups are adequately represented in the security and governmental structures. Such a Syria will be impervious to any attempt to undermine its sovereignty or territorial integrity. At the same time, there can be no room in the country for foreign terrorist fighters, who have blood on their hands, and those people have nothing to do with the Syrian people. That is a very serious problem, and we hope that the new Syrian leadership will take vigorous steps to address it.

We reaffirm Russia's commitment to developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial cooperation with Damascus on all matters on the bilateral agenda in order to reinforce the traditionally friendly Russian-Syrian relations. We believe that the Syrian people will manage to surmount all the challenges that they face, and we stand ready to do everything possible to assist them in doing so.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. We welcome Minister Al-Shaibani's participation in the meeting today. We see it as an important signal of his commitment to engaging with the international community to bring peace and security to his country.

(spoke in Arabic)

I welcome him.

(spoke in English)

I will focus on three key areas.

First, after 14 years of brutal conflict, nine out of 10 Syrians live in poverty, and millions are suffering from food scarcity and malnutrition. Improvements in the humanitarian situation are not only moral imperatives — they represent the foundation for lasting stability in Syria. We cannot expect a nation to make political progress if

the people are hungry, displaced or deprived of basic services. On the ground, that means providing a reliable energy supply — especially electricity — while at the same time securing access to water and food. Denmark's support for Syria spans many years. Since the beginning of the conflict, we have given some \$900 million to Syria and neighbouring countries. Today that commitment remains steadfast. At the recent Brussels Conference, Denmark pledged a further \$95 million in support for Syria and its neighbouring countries. Syria's needs remain immense, commensurate with the scale of its devastation. We urge the international community to remain engaged.

Secondly, relief and recovery efforts must advance in tandem with improvements in security. Indeed, neglecting one inevitably undermines the other. We all recall the violence and the widespread killings of civilians that rocked Syria's coastal region last month. Denmark strongly condemns those acts. We reiterate the need for a thorough investigation and for the perpetrators — regardless of their affiliation — to be held accountable. Such internal stabilization efforts are critical in Syria. However, we must also bear the broader security situation in mind. In that respect, let me reaffirm Denmark's full support for Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. We reiterate our full support for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and call for its full implementation. We also cannot allow the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh to re-emerge. Efforts within Syria and internationally should be directed towards that aim. Ultimately, when a sense of normalcy and safety begins to return, communities can begin to heal and reconcile. That can also help to build the necessary confidence in the political process.

That brings me to my third point. We call for a credible, inclusive and transparent Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition process — one that is in line with the principles of resolution 2254 (2015) of the Security Council. We welcome the formation of the transitional Government as a step in the right direction. Equally important is the resumption of a national dialogue with civil society organizations. The best way to ensure that all aspects of the political transition are truly robust is to make them genuinely inclusive. When everyone sees themselves in the process and when the needs and expectations of communities are heard and the diversity of Syrian society is represented, a shared future can be forged. An ambitious, transparent plan for transitional justice is another fundamental aspect to end impunity and prevent future atrocities in Syria. In that regard, we reiterate our full support for the work of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to assist the transitional Government in that process. We call on the Syrian transitional Government to continue to engage meaningfully with the United Nations and to provide input for the ongoing strategic assessment for the future presence of the United Nations in Syria.

In conclusion, the Syrian transitional Government has an enormous opportunity to transform the country for the better, but it cannot do it alone. Denmark will continue its strong support for Syria and the Syrian people. We look forward to working closely with Syria, the Security Council and the broader international community to that end.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): I would also like to thank our briefers — Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya — for their detailed briefings and committed work on this file.

Several months since the seismic change that took place in December 2024, Syria is still striving to find its footing. A demanding political transition is currently unfolding, against the backdrop of precarious economic and security conditions. We are ready to offer support to Syria's transition and to ensure that the Syrian people

see peace and prosperity once more, after 14 years of bloodshed and deprivation. In that context, I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, the political transition in Syria must be fully inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, as justice and accountability remain critical. Acknowledging the presence of the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Al-Shaibani, here with us today, let me reiterate that Greece stands in full support of the Syrian people. We are committed to continuing to engage positively with Syria and helping it towards a brighter, more prosperous future for the benefit of the whole region. The Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs was one of the first European Union (EU) Ministers to visit Damascus in February and offer a concrete signal of support in that regard. At the same time, we expect Syrian decision makers to opt for political inclusiveness, fully protecting and integrating all components of the Syrian society. That includes Christians, Alawites, Druze and Kurds. It also entails the active participation of women in the process. It is of paramount importance to avoid relapse into sectarian and intercommunity violence.

Against that backdrop, we took note of the formation of the transitional Government in Damascus. While it does indeed include one representative per society component, much is left to be desired, as it does not fully take into account the demographic data. We consider that there is still space for improvement, especially in terms of the participation of women and the representation of all components of Syrian society, also in key Cabinet positions. Likewise, the constitutional declaration — as a framework for a multi-ethnic, multireligious society — is a significant first step, but State-building principles, such as the separation of powers and the introduction of checks and balances, are indispensable for the viability of institutions and the legitimacy of the Administration.

Progress along the political transition track has not been met with universal acceptance from all communities. Their concerns and aspirations can be better expressed through the national dialogue, which we urge the authorities to keep alive in the ensuing political transition. We also encourage the deeper involvement of civil society components. As Special Envoy Pedersen noted, the need for repairing deep sectarian fractures and mistrust is huge, and comprehensive work is required. Similarly, the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Damascus of 10 March is valuable, committing the parties to engaging non-violently. We welcome the recognition of key Kurdish needs it implies and the apparent stabilization of northern Syria it entails. We are closely monitoring the next steps and implementation, considering the inclusion and integration of the Kurdish population in Syria to be essential for its stable future. We urge all regional actors to refrain from violence and inciting escalation in that regard.

Recent political transition developments were overshadowed by the appalling violence in the coastal region in early March, involving the deaths of more than 1,000 innocent civilians, mostly Alawites and Christians. The violence was rightfully and strongly condemned by the Council on 14 March (S/PRST/2025/4), clearly highlighting the urgency for full accountability and transitional justice. The swift decision of the caretaker authorities to establish an investigative committee to hold the perpetrators accountable is seen as a positive move by the international community. We are now eager to welcome the publication of the transparent and impartial investigation process, encouraged by the positive meeting of the committee with Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo in Syria during her recent visit. In the same spirit, we invite the transitional Government to allow the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate all violations, and we look forward to the presentation of the eleventh report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism at the General Assembly on 29 April, encouraged by Minister for Foreign Affairs Al-Shaibani's scheduled participation

in said discussion. Likewise, we were encouraged by the extensive discussion between the Syrian transitional President and Special Envoy Pedersen on 6 April, fully supporting more substantive and frequent engagement between Syria and the United Nations.

Secondly, Syria's economic conditions are precarious, while international support is critically needed. I wish to reiterate Greece's full solidarity with all Syrian people. Recognizing the harsh humanitarian conditions, as described by Assistant Secretary-General Msuya during her sobering briefing, we pledged our support for Syria's recovery at the recent Brussels Conference, contributing to the EU's commitment of some €2.5 billion. With our consent and constructive engagement, the EU was swift in suspending certain restrictive measures as part of a gradual, conditional and reversible approach and will continue to examine possible further suspensions on the basis of close monitoring of the situation on the ground. That approach is adopted in solidarity with all Syrian people, as we attempt to ensure that expectations are met in terms of an inclusive political transition, accountability and full adherence to international law, including — let me stress — the international law of the sea. In that context, we must also not lose sight of the right of all Syrians to return home and help to rebuild their country.

Thirdly and lastly, the security situation requires our collective vigilance. As often described by briefers to the Council, the threat of radical groups re-emerging in Syria is ever present, as foreign fighters still operate within the country. As advocated by Special Envoy Pedersen and other Council members, an effective approach to comprehensive security sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, is sorely needed. That is an area in which the United Nations is well-placed to contribute significantly, enjoying the required experience and expertise. We thus invite Syria to positively engage with the United Nations towards that goal. We also believe that it is significant for regional stability to ensure the viability and security of camps the holding Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham fighters and their relatives in north-east Syria.

We equally welcome as important for regional stability that Syria intends to positively engage with regional partners, such as Lebanon, and we hope that dialogue on bilateral issues, such as border delimitation, will begin.

Last but not least, we would be remiss not to reiterate our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, which must be fully respected by all, upholding relevant international agreements and Security Council resolutions.

As Syria stands at a crossroads, we must remain cautious of the dangers and challenges that lie ahead. We believe Syria's future can be bright and prosperous at the end of an inclusive political transition, involving transitional justice and accountability, as well as the improvement of the country's economic and security conditions. The Syrian people can count on Greece to be on their side along that path.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, in today's meeting. We also thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their valuable briefings.

Syria, with its ancient, rich and diverse heritage and resilient people has long stood as a cradle of civilization.

Today, after years of conflict and suffering, it finds itself at a pivotal juncture. Recent political developments present an opportunity for peace, unity and reconstruction. We are hopeful that the new Syrian leadership will chart a course towards inclusivity, stability and prosperity. The international community must seize this moment to support Syria's transition.

Pakistan has been concerned about the protracted conflict in Syria and its profound humanitarian and regional consequences. Addressing that crisis requires a comprehensive approach — one that acknowledges the interlinked challenges facing the Syrian people. Allow me to highlight five key points in that regard.

First, we welcome the formation of Syria's new Government. That step has filled the constitutional vacuum and restored a legitimate framework for international engagement. It is a necessary move towards peace and national reconciliation. Pakistan continues to support a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led inclusive political process based on the principles contained in resolution 2254 (2015). We recognize regional and international efforts aimed at facilitating Syria's peaceful transition and reintegration into the international community and call for all those efforts to be aligned solidly behind the overall shared objective of durable peace and stability in Syria.

Secondly, sanctions remain a major impediment to Syria's recovery. With more than 80 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and with the economy in crisis, unilateral coercive measures severely constrain humanitarian efforts and post-conflict reconstruction. Those measures limit access to essential goods, services and financial resources. In the light of the evolving realities on the ground, we urge a comprehensive reassessment of the sanctions, which must not hinder humanitarian relief or national recovery.

Thirdly, transitional justice and national reconciliation are essential. The recent violence in coastal regions underscores the urgency of addressing historical grievances and promoting inclusive justice. Any transitional justice mechanism must be impartial, objective and avoid a retributive approach. It should be supported by neutral international stakeholders, including the United Nations. We note the recent extension of a deadline for the fact-finding committee and stress the importance of a transparent and credible inquiry into recent incidents.

Fourthly, stability in Syria hinges on the unification of its military and security institutions. We must also remain vigilant against terrorism. The United Nations sanctions regime should be reviewed to ensure it supports humanitarian and reconstruction efforts while maintaining safeguards against the resurgence of terrorist groups and their affiliates. Striking that balance between enabling recovery and countering terrorism must guide our collective approach.

Fifthly, Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Pakistan is deeply alarmed by the continued and intensified Israeli air strikes on Syrian territory and statements about the long-term military presence in southern Syria. Those actions constitute blatant violations of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Pakistan strongly condemns those violations and calls for full compliance with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights remains illegal. In line with resolution 497 (1981), it is null and void. The Security Council must demand Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights.

Finally, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. More than 16.5 million people require assistance. Nearly 40 per cent of hospitals and over 50 per cent of primary healthcare facilities are non-functional. The scale of the suffering calls for urgent and sustained international assistance. Alongside emergency relief, we must prioritize the restoration of basic infrastructure and essential public services to support long-term recovery.

In conclusion, at this consequential moment in Syria's journey, the imperative is clear: to transform the promise of peace into a tangible reality for its people. That demands a comprehensive approach and continued international engagement and support that empowers the Syrian people to shape their own destiny. After years

of conflict and immeasurable suffering, the Syrian people deserve a future that is marked by dignity, stability and opportunity. Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Syrian people and remains firmly committed to supporting all credible efforts towards a united, peaceful and prosperous Syria.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. Let me also welcome Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani to the Council. On the day the new Syrian flag was raised here at the United Nations, his presence is a powerful reminder of the opportunity that lies ahead for Syria to carve out a more secure, peaceful and prosperous future. The United Kingdom stands with the Syrian people as they seize this historic moment.

I will make three points today.

First, we have already seen welcome progress in Syria's political transition. That includes the formation of a new Government, the creation of a Constitutional Committee and work to address immediate security threats, including from chemical weapons. We have seen important steps towards reconciliation among Syria's diverse communities, including the recent agreement signed with the Syrian Democratic Forces. It is important that the outreach and consultation continue to help build a stable and unified country working in the interests of all Syrians. And after years of war and brutality under the Al-Assad regime, issues of transitional justice and accountability must be prioritized. That includes steps to find missing persons and provide much-needed peace of mind to the families who have paid the ultimate price.

Secondly, economic recovery will be a crucial part of efforts to build a more prosperous Syria. This week's meetings of the international financial institutions, with the participation of the Syrian Government, are an important step in boosting international community support to drive investment and economic growth. And this week the United Kingdom lifted sanctions on sectors, including trade, energy production and finance. We hope that these steps will help remove barriers to investment in Syria's economy, especially in the energy and electricity generation sector, which is essential for Syria's reconstruction.

Finally, we reiterate that respect for Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity is crucial for both Syrian security and that of its neighbours. We are concerned about Israeli actions that risk destabilizing the region, and call on all actors to uphold the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

Syrians have already suffered greatly from years of conflict and misrule. As we heard from the briefers, they face considerable political, economic and humanitarian challenges as they emerge from this dark chapter in their history. They deserve a better and more secure future. The United Kingdom will continue to support the Syrian Government and its people in their efforts to achieve that.

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 one (A3+), namely, Guyana, Sierra Leone, Somalia and my own country, Algeria.

At the outset, the A3+ warmly welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Asaad Al-Shaibani, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The participation of Mr. Al-Shaibani is a clear reflection of the interim authorities' commitment to working with the international community towards achieving an inclusive political transition in Syria and underscores the importance of inclusive dialogue in shaping Syria's future. We also extend our sincere appreciation to Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings.

Syria stands at a pivotal moment in its history. Having endured profound hardship, its people now look to the future with hope and cautious optimism. That hope must be nurtured through sustained international support and cooperation.

Syria's people envision a brighter Syria — built by and for all Syrians — where no one is marginalized, where human rights and dignity are upheld and protected and where the Syrian people exercise full sovereignty over their territory.

The A3+ firmly believes that a successful and inclusive transition must be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, with the strong backing of the international community. That process must remain aligned with the principles of resolution 2254 (2015). At this critical juncture, the role of the United Nations remains essential, and we reiterate our support to Mr. Pedersen in that endeavour. We therefore reaffirm the importance of safeguarding the independence and operational capacity of the United Nations agencies.

The A3+ welcomes the recent announcement by the interim authorities of a new transitional Government and looks forward to subsequent steps that will help ensure an inclusive political process. We underline that lasting peace requires the engagement of all components of Syrian society. Inclusivity is not just desirable — it is essential for sustainable coexistence and national reconciliation. That includes empowering women, youth, and communities. In that regard, we commend the ongoing dialogue between the interim authorities and various Syrian communities. Differences can and must be addressed through dialogue and reconciliation — not confrontation.

The A3+ calls for the dissolution of all military factions and for their smooth integration into the new Syrian army. That step is critical for national unity and establishing a stable security environment. We also stress the importance of ensuring accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed throughout the Syrian conflict. Justice and accountability are vital elements of reconciliation.

The pain of the Syrian people runs deep, but we believe in their resilience and their capacity to find durable solutions to their challenges, with the full support of the international community, including the Security Council.

The A3+ reiterates its unwavering support for Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Those are not abstract ideals, but fundamental principles that must be respected by all. In that vein, the A3+ remains seriously concerned about Israel's repeated attacks and violations of Syria's sovereignty. The A3+ strongly condemns these military operations, which violate international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, in particular Article 2, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. We call for full compliance with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

Moreover, we urgently call for an immediate end to Israeli incursions into Syrian territory and a complete withdrawal of its forces. The Golan Heights remains Syrian under international law, as reaffirmed by resolution 497 (1981).

After enduring one of the darkest chapters in its history, Syria has now embarked on the arduous path of rebuilding. That path requires the unwavering support of the international community. Syria must not become a theatre of geopolitical competition or a haven for terrorism. Regional and international actors must refrain from actions that could undermine Syria's stability. Cooperative, rather than competitive, international engagement is essential for Syria's recovery. At the same time, conditions must be created to prevent the resurgence of terrorism, which threatens both Syrians and broader international peace and security.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. Rising needs, coupled with unilateral sanctions, have worsened the plight of civilians, with more than 1.5 million displaced persons having returned home since November. Those circumstances do not create a conducive environment for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of

refugees and internally displaced persons. The A3+ calls upon donors to honour their financial pledges to humanitarian operations in Syria. We must help Syrians rebuild their lives and communities, including by investing in infrastructure, education and healthcare, in order to lay the foundations for long-term stability and prosperity. In that context, we welcome the engagement between the interim authorities and international financial institutions. Access to funding is critical, but its impact will remain limited as long as unilateral sanctions persist. Therefore, the A3+ calls for the lifting of unilateral sanctions, as the original justification for them no longer applies.

In conclusion, the people of Syria deserve our steadfast support through concrete action, not just words. Unity and solidarity will be key in overcoming those challenges. Lasting stability and prosperity will require a comprehensive approach — one that promotes security, economic recovery and inclusive governance. All efforts that risk derailing the transitional process in Syria must be avoided. Now more than ever, the Security Council and the international community must stand united in support of Syria and its people.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings and welcome Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani and the representatives of Iran, Libya and Türkiye to today's meeting.

The situation in Syria is now at a critical stage. China is watching developments in the situation in Syria very closely and sincerely hopes that, with the help of the international community, Syria will restore stability as soon as possible and embark on a path of peace and development.

China looks forward to a broad and inclusive political transition in Syria. For some time now, all parties in Syria have been striving to promote a political transition. China hopes that, in line with the long-term interests of the country and its people, the parties concerned will achieve reconciliation through dialogue and consultation and find a reconstruction plan that fulfils the people's wishes. In that process, the principles of resolution 2254 (2015) should be implemented and the rights of all Syrian people should be guaranteed. China supports the role of the United Nations in Syria's political transition and calls on all parties to actively support Special Envoy Pedersen in his duties. Last month, indiscriminate killings against civilians took place in the Syrian coastal region. We expect the Syrian interim authorities to advance investigations in a transparent and responsible manner, promptly make the findings public and accept the oversight of the international community.

The high level of terrorist activity in Syria is a cause for concern. The presidential statement adopted by the Council last month (S/PRST/2025/4) emphasized the serious threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters to Syrian and regional security and reaffirmed its unanimous position on combating foreign terrorist fighters. The Council's resolutions on terrorism must be fully and effectively implemented. There can be no double standards on counter-terrorism, and sheltering terrorists or condoning terrorism will ultimately lead to disaster. We urge the Syrian interim authorities to effectively fulfil their counter-terrorism obligations and to take all measures to combat the Council-listed terrorist organizations, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party.

Syria faces a dire humanitarian situation and the acute challenge of underfunding. According to the latest United Nations data, 90 per cent of Syrian families are in deep poverty. Cereal production this year is expected to be lower than in previous years, and the return of more than 400,000 refugees to the country has further exacerbated humanitarian needs. Traditional donors should step up humanitarian assistance to Syria.

China strongly condemns Israel's frequent air strikes against southern Syria. The sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be respected. The Golan

region is recognized by the international community as occupied Syrian territory. The 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces should be respected. Foreign forces should end their illegal military presence in Syria.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that China has long pursued a policy of friendly cooperation with Syria, has never interfered in Syria's internal affairs and has always respected the choices made by the Syrian people. We stand ready to work with the international community and to continue to make unremitting efforts towards promoting long-term peace and stability in Syria and restoring peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Syria, for joining us today. I would also like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, for their briefings and their continued dedicated endeavours.

Taking this opportunity, I am pleased to inform colleagues in this Chamber that the Republic of Korea formally established diplomatic relations with Syria two weeks ago. That was done through the signing of a joint communiqué between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries in Damascus. With that step, Korea now holds diplomatic ties with all United Nations Member States but one.

We sincerely hope that our cooperation with the new Government of Syria will contribute to the country's stability and development. Hoping for that historic momentum to continue, I would like to make the following points today.

First, we call for sustained efforts to safeguard the fragile security gains. Syria has experienced a notable reduction in security incidents since the most recent Security Council meeting (see S/PV.9896), and we believe that that encouraging development is attributable to revitalized diplomacy among key actors. We hope that that trend will continue, allowing space for a peaceful and orderly transition to take root. Yet we remain deeply concerned about Israel's continued incursions in Syria's territory, a clear violation of international law, including the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces. Security concerns should be addressed via diplomatic engagement with Syria, not militarily.

Secondly, Syria's counter-terrorism efforts must continue in parallel. The evolving security landscape, including the realignment of the foreign military presence amid sporadic attacks by Da'esh, brings new challenges to Syria's ongoing fight against terrorism. We welcome, therefore, the arrest of two senior leaders of Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Syria. We encourage further efforts to ensure all foreign terrorist fighters are prosecuted, rehabilitated and repatriated, in line with international standards. Sustained action is essential to prevent Syria from once again becoming a haven for violent extremism.

Thirdly, we call on Syria to prioritize justice in its inclusive transition, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). That cannot be achieved without addressing past grievances and rebuilding trust across sectarian and political lines. In that context, we welcome Syria's decision to extend the mandate of the committee investigating last month's coastal massacre for an additional three months. We expect the committee's findings to be properly communicated to the public so that it can foster nationwide reconciliation. We urge Syria to redouble its efforts in ensuring accountability, as failure to do so risks further marginalizing affected communities and weakening vital disarmament and demobilization efforts.

In conclusion, Syria's transition is currently constrained by humanitarian and economic challenges and exacerbated by sanctions and underfunded humanitarian assistance. As such, we hope recent sanctions relief measures — such as those in

the United Kingdom, United States and European Union — can be expanded so that Syria can reactivate its economy.

For our part, the Republic of Korea will provide \$35 million in humanitarian assistance this year, which is a three-fold increase from the previous year, along with 2,400 tons of Korean rice and essential medical supplies. We hope that that timely contribution will help Syria lay the foundations for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing and for his efforts to help Syria through the transition process. He continues to have our full support. I also would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for her briefing. We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Mr. Al-Shaibani, to the meeting.

If Syria's historic transition is successful and inclusive, Syria has the opportunity to become a stable, secure and prosperous country, in which the rights and dignity of every individual are respected and safeguarded, a country at peace with itself and its neighbours. It is a monumental task that requires the proactive engagement of the entire society. In Syria, it requires making difficult yet necessary decisions, anchored in the rule of law and based on an inclusive national dialogue. Syria requires increased and continued regional and international support.

In that regard, let make three points.

First, violence must end, and Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence must be respected. We acknowledge that countries in the immediate neighbourhood have legitimate security interests. Those would be best served by a peaceful and stable Syria. External military interventions do not contribute to that objective. On the contrary, those actions risk further destabilizing Syria and the wider region, which is in no one's interest. In that vein, we reiterate the need to fully respect the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces. We call on all parties to refrain from any activity that could further inflame tensions, escalate conflict, exacerbate human suffering and jeopardize a credible, inclusive and peaceful political transition. In that highly complex landscape, a clear path forward on security issues is essential and must include a comprehensive security sector reform. We call, therefore, on Syria's interim authorities to not leave any room on its territory for the return of extremism and terrorism.

Secondly, an inclusive political transition must include transitional justice. In line with the core principles of resolution 2254 (2015), only a transition in which all Syrians can freely express their expectations, and which is founded on the full respect for human rights, can rebuild the fabric of society and restore much-needed trust. We encourage continued efforts towards a credible and truly inclusive transition with full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of Syrian women, youth and civil society in all transitional and peacebuilding efforts. One of those key expectations is the adoption of a swift and transparent approach to transitional justice. Ensuring accountability is essential for achieving national reconciliation — accountability for the heinous crimes committed against the Syrians by the former regime and those perpetrated by armed groups, including recent violence and killings. The key to break the cycle of violence is fighting impunity and establishing accountability for perpetrators. We welcome the authorities' displayed openness to countries' visits and cooperation with United Nations mechanisms and institutions, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. We strongly encourage future coordination and cooperation in that regard. They are all a reflection of a genuine wish of the international community to help.

Thirdly, to support the political process, the international community must focus on supporting Syrians to rebuild their country. We call on all parties to ensure that humanitarian access remains safe and unhindered across Syria and that civilians, critical civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers are protected. Urgent challenges such as food insecurity, water scarcity, fuel shortages, landmine contamination, displacement and critical shortages in healthcare require our immediate attention.

In conclusion, Slovenia remains ready to work with others and to assist Syrians in realizing a new, free, inclusive and secure Syria in a stable region.

Mr. Moscoso (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the briefers — the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Joyce Msuya — for their valuable contributions. We also recognize the presence of His Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. We welcome the participation of the delegations of Libya, Iran and Türkiye in today's meeting.

Panama believes that Syria's stability is essential to ensuring the security of the region, and for that reason, supporting sustainable paths towards peace and social cohesion is not only a shared responsibility but an inescapable priority. We recognize that the situation in Syria remains complex and that the support of the international community and the United Nations system — in particular the work carried out by Special Envoy Pedersen — is key to contributing to building an inclusive, diverse and viable political process for a new Syria, with the potential to heal and start afresh. Panama reiterates that respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic must be the inalienable basis on which all forms of international aid to Syria should be founded, in accordance with the spirit of resolution 2254 (2015).

With the recent formation of a Government in Syria, the country is at a crucial political moment in its journey towards a more representative and stable Syria that prioritizes national reconciliation and the welfare of its people, after 14 years of devastating civil conflict. Building effective governance must prevent the infiltration of extremist influences into Syrian politics and combat the development of terrorist activities on its territory. We encourage all parties to use peaceful negotiation to move towards a just and lasting peace, which will make it possible to stop the violence and reach agreements that prioritize the protection of civilians, in particular children, women and the elderly.

We take note of the recent changes in the regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — a decision that marked a significant step in the United Nations efforts to transition to a new phase in Syria and a united coordination structure, reflecting the positive developments that have been achieved on the ground. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that, while the conflict has subsided in many parts of the country, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is far from over and remains a matter of deep concern. More than 16 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance, and most of them are women and children. According to figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it is estimated that, from 8 December 2024 to April 2025, approximately 437,000 Syrians have crossed borders from neighbouring countries back into Syria and 1 million displaced persons have returned to their homes. It is critical to ensure that those returns are voluntary, safe and sustainable and that dignified conditions are guaranteed for all internally displaced persons, who still face enormous challenges on their way to a stable and dignified life.

We also reiterate that international sanctions continue to pose obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. That is why we join those calling for its flexibility, as the Syrian people deserve a genuine opportunity to move towards economic recovery and reconstruction. Moreover, the presence of chemical weapons and unexploded ordnance continues to pose a threat to the population. Therefore, if the recent progress in Syria is to be sustainable, the disarmament process must move in parallel with efforts to strengthen governance and security in the country. The indiscriminate violence that occurred on 6 March threatens the political transition and requires an exhaustive investigation, in which justice must prevail, and tangible progress must be demonstrated in the construction of an independent and democratic judicial system. We believe that Syria requires a comprehensive process to address, with the requires sense of responsibility, all violations of human rights and international law registered during the conflict as a clear signal to end the era of impunity. Panama reiterates its support for the specialized and independent bodies established by the United Nations to advance the search for detained and missing persons and the collection of evidence. Missing persons matter, and reuniting them with their families also heals wounds, which is something that this process needs if it is to provide full accountability and move towards justice without distinction.

We reiterate our strong support for the work of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, which we believe is an essential mission for preserving stability, avoiding further escalation and facilitating the conditions for dialogue. We also reiterate our commitment to the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Failure to comply with the Agreement threatens the safety of local populations and deployed international personnel. Panama is following the current Syrian political process very closely, and we hope that it will lay the foundations for achieving a lasting peace for Syria and that it will also contribute to the stability of the Middle East. We think that it is incumbent on the Syrian people to carry out their own dialogue process that ensures the participation of all sectors of society, paying particular attention to the inclusion of women and ethnic and religious minorities. The political will those groups demonstrate will be essential to making that a practical reality.

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

I would first like to thank the Special Envoy, Mr. Pedersen, and the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Msuya, for their briefings on the situation in Syria and for their efforts and those of their teams on the ground for the Syrian people. I also welcome the presence at this table of His Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian transitional Government.

After decades of oppression and a long period of tragedy, Syria has, since 8 October 2024, been engaged in a transition phase, and it is not excessive to describe that phase as historic. This period comes with legitimate expectations, but everyone is aware of the immense challenges that must be faced. France wants to stand by the new Syria and to send four messages today.

First, we encourage the Syrian authorities to give absolute priority to the restoration of civil peace and national reconciliation. To achieve that objective, the declaration of the Paris Conference on Syria of 13 February — endorsed by the Syrian authorities — sets out the main principles. First of all, restoring civil peace means continuing the fight against terrorism with absolute determination, including engaging fully against Da'esh and resolving the problem of foreign fighters. Tangible gestures are also expected in terms of dismantling the chemical programme, in conjunction with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Restoring civil peace also means ensuring the protection of all Syrians, regardless of their ethnic, religious or gender affiliation. The massacres that took place in early March in the coastal region have revived fears and raised expectations in terms of accountability. The conclusions of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic — the mandate of which has been extended — will therefore be closely scrutinized, and the credibility of the new authorities is at stake. Beyond those massacres, it is important to implement a genuine transitional justice process in order to bring to justice those responsible for the crimes committed in the past few decades and to reconcile Syrians with the support of the United Nations, and I will come back to that point.

Restoring peace, lastly, means preserving Syria's unity. The agreement on principles signed by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa and Mr. Mazloum Abdi on 10 March and its initial outcomes — namely, the agreement on the Kurdish neighbourhoods of Aleppo and on the management of Tishrin Dam — are steps in the right direction. Moreover, the success of the political transition hinges on the political reconstruction of Syria. Progress has been made. A transitional Government was established, a national dialogue was held, and a transitional constitutional declaration was adopted. Efforts to ensure inclusivity must nevertheless be sustained over time and appear credible to the Syrians. We therefore hope that the national dialogue will continue and lead to the holding of free and transparent elections.

The third point concerns Syria's economic recovery. Reconciliation and the return to peace will be consolidated by economic recovery, giving all Syrians the opportunity to build a normal life. It is therefore urgent that the Syrian authorities restore the administrative capacities of the State and the economic fabric of Syria.

Secondly, we welcome the work of the United Nations in support of the transition's success. That is critical. In the political domain, the work undertaken by the Special Envoy with the Syrian authorities to help to implement the main principles of resolution 2254 (2015) has enabled a dialogue of trust with the transitional authorities to be established. That is a foundation upon which we must build. In the humanitarian domain, in which needs are enormous, the commitment of the United Nations is critical. The efforts of the humanitarian community and, in particular, of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian refugees must be supported. In order for United Nations action to be effective, humanitarian actors must have the means to carry out their work without any hindrance, and they must have the full support, including the financial support, of the entire international community. Lastly, we support the proposals of the United Nations mechanisms established to combat impunity in Syria to cooperate with the Syrian authorities. Those institutions have all the credibility necessary to help establish such transitional justice. In that connection, I welcome the presence of Ms. Quintana in the Chamber.

Thirdly, the international community has a role to play in facilitating the country's economic recovery. France has contributed to lifting several restrictive European measures in such key economic sectors as transport and energy. We have offered our full cooperation with the transitional authorities, including in terms of transitional justice and helping to facilitate the settlement of border disputes with Lebanon. On 13 February, in Paris, France also encouraged coordination between international financial institutions, United Nations agencies and the Syrian authorities. The goal is to support the country's reconstruction as promptly as possible and to meet the country's recovery-related needs, particularly in the areas of health, support for the Syrian agricultural sector and access to education.

Finally, it is critical that Syria's neighbouring countries and capitals assist it in becoming a hub for regional stability while respecting its territorial integrity. In that regard, we welcome the resumption of constructive dialogue between Syria

and several of its neighbours, in particular Lebanon. In that spirit, French President Emmanuel Macron organized a dialogue between the Lebanese President and the Syrian interim President at the end of March. We call on Israel to stop its military activities on Syrian territory and withdraw from the area of separation established by the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Syria and Israel must be mindful of one another's security concerns.

This morning, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic raised Syria's new flag at the United Nations. May that gesture mark the shared commitment of the new Syrian authorities and the United Nations to a peaceful, reconciled and rebuilt Syria, for the benefit of the Syrian people and the entire region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shaibani (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to address the Security Council on this historic day, a day on which, just before this speech, the flag representing the new Syria — a Syria of freedom and dignity — was hoisted on its mast at the United Nations, along with 192 other States, our partners in the international community. I extend my warm congratulations to all Syrians on this historic moment. This flag is not just a symbol. Rather, it is a declaration of a new existence emerging from the womb of suffering. It embodies a future born of steadfastness and a promise of change after years of pain.

It is only after great sacrifices, after a march of blood and tears, that this day has come. Hundreds of thousands were killed and disappeared, all traces of them having vanished in the prisons of the Al-Assad regime. This day belongs to them as much as it does to us. We will never forget them, and we will continue to work tirelessly to achieve peace and justice for them, their families and loved ones and for all those who dreamed of such a day. For decades, Syria's story has been synonymous with the cruelty of the Al-Assad regime. During its oppressive rule, the country was plunged into darkness, and citizens were systematically killed, tortured and disappeared. Chemical weapons were used, millions were displaced, and generations were broken, crushed by pain and loss. The regime's actions have not only caused profound human tragedies for the Syrian people; they have also allowed destabilizing forces to spring from our soil. Under Al-Assad's rule, our land became a hotbed of drug production and a haven for foreign militias and terrorist organizations, which have found a foothold, compounding our suffering and that of the entire region. The brutal policies of that era deepened divisions and forced entire families to emigrate, leaving behind homes and dreams that were reduced to ashes in the flames of battle. And yet I am here today, representing the new Syria.

After the fall of the Al-Assad regime, within a remarkably short period of just over four months, and following 14 years of Al-Assad's war on his people and 54 years of repression, Syria is finally catching its breath. Syria has opened its doors to the world. Presidents, foreign ministers and international figures have arrived. Throughout the diaspora, Syrians are now exploring the possibility of returning home, in the hope of contributing to the country's reconstruction. For the first time, major international organizations and United Nations human rights institutions have been granted tangible access to our territory, something the former regime repeatedly denied.

The era of systematic bloodshed, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances and impunity for the transgressors is over. Aircraft are dropping flowers instead of barrel bombs, as was witnessed on Revolution Day a few weeks ago. The export of narcotics, which threatened our region, was decisively tackled through the hard work of our security services, which are also working around the clock to combat

the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham/Da'esh terrorist organization. We are in constant coordination with the countries of the region and the world and stand ready to confront those challenges.

On the issue of chemical weapons — a stain on the history of the Al-Assad regime and the impotence of the international community — our constructive cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the ground shows that our actions match our words. We are in constant coordination with the relevant countries, and we request intensive support in that area.

Over the past four months, through unprecedented cooperation, Syrians have achieved the impossible. The caretaker Government preserved State institutions and prevented them from collapsing. Today we have succeeded in integrating Syrian competence, skill and diversity into a transitional Government, which was unanimously welcomed by the Human Rights Council in a resolution last month (Human Rights Council resolution 58/25). We have also united the military factions, ending the era of factionalism with the dissolution of all of them without exception and beginning constitutional steps towards genuine reform. We launched a national dialogue in which, for the first time, nearly 1,000 Syrians gathered in the presidential palace to discuss issues affecting Syria's future.

In response to the tragic events along the Syrian coast in March, regime affiliates attempted to ignite a civil war by committing horrific massacres against a large number of security personnel and civilians. And, until yesterday, we were still being subjected to those attacks, which were aimed at provoking sectarian reactions. In that regard, we established a civil peace high commission and a fact-finding committee to hold perpetrators accountable.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Security Council, we sent humanitarian aid to civilians in the Humaymim airbase. We are ready to fulfil all commitments to enable them to return to their homes soon.

We will announce soon a transitional justice commission and a commission for missing persons. We are also ready to fully coordinate with the United States in searching for the missing Americans in Syria. We will also announce genuine steps to form a national parliament representing the Syrian people.

Syria today is for all Syrians — for those who were silenced under Al-Assad's rule and now express their opinions freely, for Syrians who were displaced from their homes and can now return to their homes. In these four months, Muslims in Syria celebrated Eid al-Fitr, Christians celebrated Easter peacefully in their churches and some Syrian Jews returned home for the first time and visited their synagogues. For the first time, there was a Kurdish leader in Damascus, through the mediation of the United States, paving the way with the President of the Republic towards a Syria that respects its ethnic and cultural mosaic, a principle that we explicitly enshrined in our new constitutional declaration.

Yes, Syria is diverse, but it is not divided into a majority and minorities, but rather is the country of strong, optimistic Syrians, who are working together to build a future that they were once deprived of and that is now possible and achievable.

However, as we enter this new era, great challenges continue to threaten us and the international community. We have stressed that Syrians are equal before the law in terms of rights and duties, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Syria has opened its doors to States and given hope to its people to return, yet the burden of sanctions continues to threaten its stability. When international organizations and corporations seek to invest in and rebuild our economy, they find that those expired sanctions stand in the way. Those restrictive measures, imposed on

the previous regime, prevent capital and expertise from entering our country while allowing illicit networks to flourish. In fact, it seems that those, often associated with extremist or terrorist organizations, who benefit from operating in the shadows, are the ones who really benefit from the continuation of those sanctions.

It also reinforces extremist narratives that oppose international openness, hinder investment, leave Syrians who want to return unable to do so and make those who remain in Syria unsure of the prospects for their lives in their country. Those who demand more from Syria are the same ones who insist on maintaining many sanctions against it. Those sanctions force Syria to play the role of an aid dependent country, rather than being a partner in global economic growth. They also prevent the smooth functioning of international and civil society organizations and constrain our ability to implement transitional justice and ensure security.

The lifting of sanctions could be a crucial step in transforming Syria from a country known for its dark past to an active and powerful partner in peace, prosperity and the international economy. The stability of Syria affects us not only as Syrians, but also the stability of the entire region.

In that regard, I must refer to another destabilizing factor, which is the issue of Israeli strikes on Syrian territory. Those actions are not only a flagrant violation of international law and Syria's sovereignty, but also a direct threat to regional stability. The ongoing aggression destabilizes our reconstruction efforts and undermines the peace and security we seek to achieve.

We ask the Council to bring pressure to bear on Israel to withdraw from Syria and implement the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. We have repeatedly announced our commitment that Syria will not pose a threat to any country in the region or the world, including Israel.

I express my sincere thanks to the Governments that have stood with us over the years and to those that have taken steps in recent months to stand with the Syrian people. I appreciate the countries that have begun to lift sanctions and reopen their embassies and those that recognize what is at stake in Syria's success or failure.

Let us seize this defining moment. The Security Council, and the international community as a whole, has an opportunity to support Syria's future. Syrians are ready to reshape the future of their country and establish a new paradigm for what a successful post-conflict transition looks like anywhere in the world. We hope Council members will be our partners on that path.

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, I would like to welcome is Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. In my national capacity, I extend to him the greetings of the people and the Government of Libya and congratulate him on what has been achieved and on raising the new flag of Syria, despite all the sacrifices and tragedies the country has faced.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Syria and its people are going through a delicate stage in its history after long years of pain and suffering. We have the chance today to build a bright and more stable future for all Syrians without exception — a decent life with security, justice and equality and a unified and sovereign State that can maintain its stability and territorial integrity and meet the needs and protect the rights of its people without destructive foreign interference.

In that context, the Arab Group reaffirms the importance of supporting all sincere national efforts that are based on an inclusive Syrian dialogue that ensures the unity of Syria, meeting the aspirations of its people, freeing it of foreign terrorism and establishing a comprehensive and sustainable political track that preserves the rights of all Syrians following decades of oppression, injustice and destruction, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

The Arab Group welcomes the formation of a transitional Syrian Government and considers it a positive step towards strengthening the pillars of the Syrian State on the basis of inclusive national foundations. The Group also categorically rejects any attempts at partition, fragmentation, concession or imposing a new reality on the ground and stresses the need to support efforts to consolidate national peace and reject any attempts at foreign interference in its internal affairs. The unity and territorial integrity of Syria is not up for negotiation, nor can it be subjected to bargaining. We also support the efforts of the Syrian Government to combat the terrorist organization Da'esh and terrorism in all its forms and to eradicate its sources, as they are a threat to the security and stability of Syria and the entire region.

On the humanitarian track, the Group of Arab States believes that the continued deterioration of the situation requires urgent and effective action by the international community in order to progress from the stage of relief to that of early recovery and development, which would include investment in the housing, health, education and energy sectors and help to foster conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced people.

In addition to progress in the transitional framework after the fall of the former regime and the implementation of the relevant reforms, we point to the importance of working towards the immediate lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on Syria. Those sanctions are no longer justified and are unnecessary and contrary to the interests of the Syrian people and the recovery of the country's economy. They stand in the way of the much-awaited political transition and international efforts to support peace and prosperity in Syria. We underscore that the issue of sanctions must not be used as a bargaining chip to blackmail the Syrian people and must not be politicized, as has happened in other countries. The Group also calls on international donors to fulfil the pledges they made at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, in particular those to support humanitarian efforts, the return of refugees and displaced people and reconstruction programmes.

The Group of Arab States condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing aggression by the Israeli occupying forces against Syrian territory, which represents a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and puts regional security in grave peril. The Group calls on the Council to take urgent action to compel the Israeli occupation forces to bring those violations to an immediate end, to respect Syria's sovereignty and to withdraw fully and unconditionally from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Syrian territory, including those areas into which they recently made incursions in a clear bid to exploit the current situation in Syria in order to increase their presence there. The Council must take urgent action to stop those provocative acts; this absurdity will bring the entire region to the brink.

In conclusion, the Syrian people, who have withstood a series of ordeals and conflicts, now deserve a genuine chance for peace, dignity and prosperity. The Arab Group reaffirms once again that it will stand by Syria and its people and support all national and international efforts aimed at ending their suffering and fulfilling their legitimate aspirations to a future that is worthy of them and their ancient civilization.

We reaffirm that Syria's security is an integral part of the security of all Arabs. We call for concerted regional and international efforts to put an end to all

violations and harmful interventions, to ensure respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and, above all, to end the double standards, which unfortunately have become a hallmark of our times. It is high time that the Syrian people enjoyed stability, security and safety.

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

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor this month, I wish to congratulate France on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I also commend Denmark for its effective leadership and successful conclusion of its presidency in March. We appreciate Special Envoy Pedersen's and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya's insightful briefings. We acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani in today's meeting.

In the light of the evolving situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to make the following points.

First, Iran reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces in Syria illegally. Ending their occupation is essential for restoring Syrian sovereignty and achieving lasting peace. In that context, the Israeli regime's escalating military aggression against Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity constitutes a blatant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, relevant Security Council resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

The latest reports by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force confirm Israel's illegal incursions into the buffer zone and detail the occupying force's abuses. At the same time, Israeli military forces are entrenching their presence by establishing military outposts and promoting tourism in the occupied areas — clear evidence of their expansionist agenda. Israel's objective is the systematic destruction of Syria's infrastructure and the dismantling of its military and defensive capabilities, rendering Syria unable to defend itself against further aggression. Israel's acts of aggression are possible only because of the full political and military support of the United States, which is directly responsible for Israel's continued violations. The Council must act now. Silence only encourages further aggression and impunity, just as we are tragically witnessing in Gaza.

Secondly, as highlighted by the Assistant Secretary-General in today's meeting, despite the Organization's commendable efforts, Syria is facing a severe humanitarian crisis. Approximately 16.7 million people, more than 70 per cent of the population, need aid — the highest level since 2011. More than 7 million individuals are internally displaced, and millions more have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Humanitarian efforts are underfunded. As of March 2025, only 10 per cent of the \$1.2 billion needed has been raised. We are deeply concerned about continued United States sanctions on Syria. Those sanctions are unjustified. They block reconstruction, hurt the economy, prevent refugees from returning and cause suffering to the entire Syrian population. We call for their immediate and unconditional removal.

Thirdly, we are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of civilian life in Latakia and Tartus on 6 March, especially among the Alawite community. We support the Council's call for an independent and transparent investigation (see S/PRST/2025/4). Syria's interim authorities must ensure accountability and protect all communities, in line with international law.

Fourthly, Iran stresses the importance of fighting terrorism in Syria, especially foreign terrorist fighters. Those groups remain a serious threat to Syria and the wider region. Foreign terrorist fighters must be returned to their countries and held accountable under international law. Iran is ready to work with all responsible partners to fight terrorism.

Fifthly, Iran supports a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process that is in keeping with resolution 2254 (2015). A peaceful solution must include free and fair elections, national dialogue and an inclusive Government that represents all Syrians. The United Nations must lead that process fairly, while respecting Syria's sovereignty.

Lastly, Iran's position on Syria is clear and consistent: we support a sovereign, stable and united Syria, free from terrorism, occupation and foreign interference. Iran has never taken any action to destabilize Syria or the region. Any attempts to distort Iran's position are politically motivated, and Iran categorically rejects them.

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

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Msuya for their detailed and informative briefings. I would like to sincerely welcome Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani. His presence here is not only a testament to the progress Syria has achieved in such a short period but also represents the strong commitment of Syria to international engagement.

Since the fall of the previous regime, the Syrian Administration has made noteworthy progress. In just four months, the Administration has achieved what many once deemed unthinkable, namely, the successful convening of the National Dialogue Conference, the announcement of the constitutional declaration and the formation of a technocratic transitional Government. Those milestones mark a clear and promising path towards a Syrian-owned, Syrian-led political transition that aligns with the aspirations of the Syrian people. They also represent critical steps towards a national reconciliation, following decades of devastation and repression by the former regime.

In the wake of the establishment of the transitional Government, we observe growing public support, both within Syria and among its diaspora. A recent survey published in the international press reflects that trend — the overwhelming majority of Syrians are optimistic about the future, feel freer and believe that the security situation has improved. However, sustaining that renewed sense of national hope requires not only continued effort by the Syrian authorities, but also concrete support from the international community.

Reconstruction is essential to achieving lasting peace and stability in Syria. The restoration of vital infrastructure, the provision of uninterrupted public services and the improvement of living conditions must become our shared priorities. We, therefore, call on the international community to actively support reconstruction efforts and, critically, to lift sanctions without delay. Those measures are urgently needed to restore the country's economic viability and social fabric.

In that context, we welcome the constructive engagement established among the Administration and international institutions such as United Nations bodies, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Monetary Fund. I hope that others will follow. Those interactions illustrate a genuine willingness by the Syrian authorities to open a new chapter through transparency and cooperation. We believe that those channels will soon facilitate Syria's reintegration into the global financial system, enable new investments and strengthen efforts to address humanitarian needs and accountability mechanisms.

We are also encouraged by signs of growing institutional capability within Syria. The Government is increasingly able to maintain order, and even in the face of provocations affecting the south we observe growing understanding among local elements and Damascus. The threat posed by Da'esh, to varying degrees, is still present in the country and the Syrian Administration's efforts to fight terrorism should be further supported by the international community.

We prioritize cooperation with countries of the region to address shared security threats. The neighbouring countries of Syria, Türkiye, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon are coordinating their efforts to form a regional mechanism to fight Da'esh. However, the continued and unprovoked aggression by Israel remains a grave concern. Those acts violate Syrian sovereignty and pose a serious threat to regional peace and security. Repeated air strikes and incursions not only undermine Syria's internal stability but also weaken its ability to fight Da'esh, thereby compromising our collective security. We unequivocally condemn those attacks and urge the Council to take immediate and resolute action to prevent further escalation. Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity must be fully respected and must be protected. The full implementation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement must be ensured.

The future of Syria must not be held hostage by terrorist entities. Organizations such as Da'esh and the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) must not be allowed to play any role in the country's future. We are following closely the implementation of the recent agreement among the Syrian Administration and the SDF. It is essential that all terrorist structures be dismantled. All armed elements must disarm and surrender their capabilities to the Syrian State, and all terrorist actors, especially foreign terrorist actors, must be expelled from Syrian territory. We also reiterate Türkiye's readiness to cooperate with the Syrian Administration to secure detention centres and camps in the north-east of the country, which is an issue of shared security interest.

Türkiye remains fully committed to supporting the Syrian people in overcoming the challenges of this new chapter. We stand ready to work in close coordination with Syria, regional partners and the international community to ensure that this opportunity for peace and stability is not missed.

Syria's revolution took a long time, unfortunately, and cost a lot of casualties and the destruction of the country. Unfortunately, a lack of coordination and understanding among the international community played a role in that. Now we are here, and we have the opportunity to work with Syria and among ourselves to help to realize the aspirations of the Syrian revolution and people sooner rather than later.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.