



# Security Council

Eightieth year

**9920**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 21 May 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Gerapetritis . . . . .	(Greece)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Yahiaoui
	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Denmark . . . . .	Ms. Lassen
	France . . . . .	Mr. Dharmadhikari
	Guyana . . . . .	Ms. Benn
	Pakistan . . . . .	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama . . . . .	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Totangi
	Slovenia . . . . .	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	Somalia . . . . .	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Kelley

## 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:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division and Head and Representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Pedersen.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I brief the Security Council today from Damascus, where the atmosphere is ripe with cautious optimism and a yearning for renewal, following far-reaching international moves with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Last week, in a significant development celebrated across Syria, President Trump of the United States of America announced from Riyadh that he would order the cessation of sanctions on Syria. Yesterday the European Union announced the lifting of its economic sanctions on Syria. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland revoked their previous sanctions regime last month. I have long called for bold steps on sanctions, as have millions of Syrians in and outside the country, and I warmly welcome these international steps.

I also warmly welcome the support extended to Syria and its people by countries of the region — most notably Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Qatar and other key partners. This includes initiatives not only on sanctions relief, but also to resolve Syria's outstanding obligations to international financial institutions, support the payment of public sector salaries and ensure the provision of critical energy resources.

Those are indeed historic developments. They hold major potential to improve living conditions across the country and to support the Syrian political transition. And they give the Syrian people a chance to grapple with the legacy of misrule, conflict, abuses and poverty from which they are trying to emerge.

We will follow closely and support the moves to lift sanctions. But we also know that Syria faces significant structural challenges, with an economy ravaged by more than a decade of war and conflict and a host of other destabilizing factors. Revitalizing a devastated economy will require sustained action from the interim authorities, including on overall economic reform and governance standards across the financial system, and that will need international support.

I have taken note of the decrees issued last week by the interim authorities announcing the establishment of two keenly anticipated and key institutions — the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the National Commission for Missing Persons. The decrees appointed their respective heads and gave them 30 days to form a team and develop internal regulations. The creation of a dedicated Commission for Missing Persons attests to the centrality of that issue in the Syrian national experience, which has affected almost every Syrian household, as we have heard from Syrians time and again. In its next steps, we hope that the Commission

will move to cooperate with the United Nations dedicated bodies, Syrian civil society and, above all, with victims' and survivors' associations, which have formulated concrete proposals for their inclusion into such a process. The creation of a Commission for Transitional Justice is another essential stepping-stone in Syria's recovery from conflict and the restoration of Syrians' right to truth, justice and reparation. We hope that this Commission will develop a victim-centred, inclusive and comprehensive approach to transitional justice in line with the constitutional declaration and international standards.

I appreciate the openness and willingness of the interim authority representatives to engage with us on many of those issues. I note the recent constructive meetings between my Deputy, Ms. Najat Rochdi, and several Cabinet members, which provided an important opportunity to explore further avenues of cooperation.

I have reported on, and continue to track closely, the concerns expressed by many Syrian women on a host of challenges. At the same time, I am pleased to report that the Syrian Women's Advisory Board was able to meet for the first time in Syria, in Damascus, since its inception in 2016. Board members met the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour and a member of the Supreme Fatwa Council for in-depth discussions, as well as Syrian women counterparts and diplomatic representatives. Board members and Syrian women more broadly continue to reinforce the importance of their political participation in order to remind interlocutors of their unique position to observe the situation on the ground and stress their willingness to offer advice to the interim authorities. In their engagements, the Syrian Women's Advisory Board members sought clarification on ministerial strategy, including the expected role of civil society and reassurances that women's political engagement would indeed be ensured.

In accordance with the constitutional declaration, a crucial next step in the Syrian political transition will be to establish a high committee responsible for selecting the members of the new People's Assembly — a process that includes electing two thirds of its members. That transitional legislative authority will be responsible for working on an urgent legislative reform agenda — a critical part of rebuilding Syria's political consensus and State institutions and creating the necessary frameworks on the economy, justice, political parties, elections and much more. I have discussed with the interim authorities the need for substantive efforts towards inclusivity, transparency and openness, all of which can help to ensure that the People's Assembly is seen as representative of the unity and diversity of the nation. I have shared concrete ideas on that with the interim authorities, and we look forward to furthering that engagement and support. Syrians also continue to look ahead to the envisaged future constitutional process, which must be inclusive of all social and political components in shaping a new social contract and paving the way for free and fair elections, as called for by Mr. Al-Sharaa from the outset.

However, there are the immediate challenges of protection, confidence and participation, which must be squarely faced. In that regard, there were serious setbacks in late April, when tensions dramatically escalated in Druze-majority residential areas in Damascus suburbs and then on the outskirts of Al-Suwayda governorate. That came against a backdrop of heightened sectarian incitement. The violence left residents terrified. It caused dozens of casualties among civilians, armed Druze factions and State security personnel, with reports of mortar and heavy weapons fire into Al-Suwayda. Clashes eventually subsided following agreements between the interim authorities and Druze representatives, but tensions remain, with fresh reports of rocket attacks into Al-Suwayda last night.

The intra-Syrian efforts to ease tensions and maintain shared security and stability must continue. I welcome interim President Al-Sharaa's statement on 2 May, in which he prioritized dialogue and cooperation within the framework of national

unity. But I must add that I remain concerned about the potential for new violence and the undermining of trust that such developments inevitably bring about. Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi visited Al-Suwayda in the aftermath of the clashes and met the Governor of Al-Suwayda and various groups, including Druze sheikhs, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, Bedouin tribes, leaders of armed factions and civil society representatives. She appreciated the open and substantive discussions on various challenges, including those faced by thousands of Druze students from Al-Suwayda, who were assaulted at university dormitories in several cities. As a result of those attacks, many students were forced to abandon their studies and return to Al-Suwayda. Similar concerns have been raised regarding Alawite students in the coastal regions, who are dropping out of school owing to ongoing security threats.

Let me also note my alarm at renewed Israeli air strikes in Syria in the reporting period, including during the violence in Druze areas and close to the presidential palace. Such attacks are unacceptable and must cease. Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be respected. There are clearly diplomatic possibilities, and they must be prioritized.

Meanwhile, the unacceptable violence and incitement of communal tensions in Druze areas came on the back of the grave incidents that took place in the coastal areas in March. The situation there also remains fragile. The fact-finding committee continues to examine incidents since 6 March. Deputy Special Envoy Rochdi met its members during a visit the coast and was briefed on ongoing efforts to collect testimonies. She also met representatives from the Alawite community and civil society groups who expressed deep concern about security and economic hardship, with women being particularly affected by the current situation. Interlocutors stressed the urgent need to address the growing polarization and to foster mutual understanding among the different communities. As interim President Al-Sharaa noted in his recent address: coexistence is a part of Syria's heritage and history, and it must be preserved at all costs. Efforts to counter hate speech and promote media freedom, more broadly, are indispensable in that regard.

Further steps in security sector reform are also clearly needed — along with measures on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. And, as I have reminded the Security Council on many occasions, action on the core issue of foreign fighters is also needed. Ultimately, I hope that this can contribute to the positive intention to ensure that no weapons can be held outside of State control, and I take note of the interim Defence Minister's call on armed groups that have yet to integrate with the security apparatus to do so before 28 May. And I am concerned about reports of recent attacks by unknown groups on Hmeimim airbase.

I am also concerned that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has been escalating its attacks in various areas in recent weeks, with signs of more coordinated operations involving improvised explosive devices and the use of medium-range weapons.

Regarding the northeast, the 10 March agreement continues to present a historical opportunity to solve one of the key outstanding issues in this conflict. We are continuing to deepen our engagement in support of this process, the success of which is critical for this transition to succeed.

We have seen worrisome tensions and violence around Tishreen Dam, both in late April and then again this week. We have also seen long periods of de-escalation, with the two sides continuing to talk through committee meetings.

This process needs to move forward. Compromises will be needed on both sides, and progress on all key aspects of the agreement is a priority for stability in Syria and the region — for the restoration of Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, and for the success of the overall political transition.

The challenges facing Syria are enormous, and the real dangers of renewed conflict and deeper fragmentation have not yet been overcome. However, the Syrian people have taken heart from the fact that the decisions of the past week to lift sanctions give them a better chance than before to succeed against great odds. The Syrians are looking to the interim authorities to seize this moment and push towards a fully inclusive transition in line with the principles of resolution 2254 (2015), and to all of us to do our part as genuine partners in support. The United Nations is absolutely committed to playing its full role in that regard.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Pedersen for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

**Mr. Rajasingham:** Following on from the Special Envoy's assessment, allow me to update the Security Council on the latest humanitarian situation in Syria, where over a decade of conflict has pushed 90 per cent of the population into poverty, displacing nearly 7.5 million people within Syria and more than 6 million more as refugees. Now, after so many years of suffering and hardship, the Syrian people have renewed hope.

I would like to highlight three points for the Council's attention.

First, humanitarian needs remain immense across the country, and they are growing in complexity. Today 16.5 million Syrians need protection and humanitarian assistance. Over half of the population is food insecure. Nearly 3 million people face severe food insecurity. More than 670,000 men, women and children have been displaced since November last year. That includes 15,000 people displaced between 30 April and 6 May from rural Damascus due to the violence in Druze-majority areas.

At the same time, since December, more than 1 million internally displaced people have returned to their areas of origin, including some 330,000 people from camps in north-west Syria. Damaged homes, lack of adequate services and the threat of unexploded ordnance are inhibiting returns.

Protection risks remain a major concern. Women and girls continue to be at risk of gender-based violence, although social stigma, fear of retaliation, a lack of protection services and of trust in those services mean that such violence is often underreported.

In addition, since December, more than 900 civilians have been killed or injured by unexploded ordnance, with children accounting for over one third of casualties. Since our most recent briefing (see S/PV.9904), 200 people have been killed or injured by remnants of war. In northern Syria, access to water remains limited, while across the country the health system remains under incredible strain, amid growing demand and following years of degradation.

Secondly, despite the mounting challenges, humanitarian operations continue, and progress is being made. United Nations and partners are reaching millions each month through in-country and cross-border operations. More than 1,000 trucks loaded with assistance have entered Syria from Türkiye since the start of the year — a sevenfold increase compared to last year, as cross-border access remains a cost-effective modality now reaching areas beyond the north-west.

Last month, the World Health Organization and UNICEF, supporting the interim Health Ministry, have successfully conducted a vaccination campaign, reaching 3.4 million children. The World Food Programme reaches more than 1.5 million people every month with critical food assistance.

The Syrian interim authorities continue to facilitate our vital humanitarian work across the country, and we are actively engaging with them to further streamline

procedures and reduce bureaucratic constraints, including easing the registration of humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

Finally, I would like to highlight the alarming funding situation. The United Nations and its partners are appealing for \$2 billion to reach 8 million of the most vulnerable people from January through June 2025. As of today, only 10 per cent of that appeal has been funded. The consequences are already visible and will become more so as time passes and as funding cuts take hold. The growing return of Syrians — more than 1 million internally displaced persons and half a million refugees from neighbouring countries since December 2024 — will also mean that needs will increase. Dozens of community centres and hospitals face closure in the coming weeks; some have already closed.

In north-east Syria, conditions in camps such as Tal'ah, Arishah and Tuwaynah are deteriorating, as most services remain suspended due to funding shortfalls. General food assistance has already been suspended in Tall Al-Samn and Tuwaynah camps, compounding food insecurity, malnutrition and psychosocial distress.

In north-west Syria alone, 40 of 83 protection centres have closed, leaving huge gaps in services for vulnerable people, including children and persons with disabilities. Additionally, 20 safe spaces for women and girls have closed since January, severely reducing access to support services for survivors of gender-based violence. And those are just some examples. Funding shortfalls do not mean that humanitarian needs disappear. On the contrary, they cause the needs to intensify. And the absence of support now risks reversing the small gains made over the past months.

Despite the catastrophic drop in funding, the United Nations and our partners are determined to support the people of Syria. That means a further reprioritization of the response with ever less resources. In parallel, the Syria Humanitarian Fund has initiated an \$8 million allocation to respond to urgent needs in the north-east, where services have been severely impacted by recent funding cuts. And an additional \$60 million allocation is expected to be launched soon to address some of the critical humanitarian needs across the country. United Nations agencies and their partners are currently implementing a \$20 million allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund, to support more than 1.2 million Syrians. That includes a \$3 million World Health Organization project to provide healthcare, including more than 1.3 million treatment courses. It also includes a \$3 million project by the Mine Action Service to clear explosive ordnance, which continues to kill and maim Syrians.

The international donor community needs to act fast and increase humanitarian funding. While humanitarian support remains needed in key locations, it is critical to unlock longer-term support and sustainable interventions, to help Syrians return, build back and get back on their feet and to reduce humanitarian need. Member States should start looking at options to do so.

In that regard, the United States plans to lift sanctions on Syria, as Mr. Pedersen has just mentioned, as well as the European Union's recent decision to lift its economic sanctions, can be expected to facilitate relief, recovery and development. And we continue our engagement with relevant Member States to further ensure that sanctions and other restrictions do not hinder humanitarian operations.

The Syrian people have shown resilience, but they cannot endure the crisis alone, and we must act with urgency. With adequate support and strengthened coordination, the humanitarian system can continue to provide essential relief and help lay the groundwork for longer-term recovery.



**The President:** I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing. We will circulate the text of the briefing because we lost the connection on some occasions.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

At the outset, let me thank Special Envoy Pedersen, as well as the Director of the Coordination Division and Head and Representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, for their briefings.

Change is usually gradual, and one does not come so often across a seismic shift; the fall of the former regime in Syria, in the beginning of December, was such a shift. Hope was rekindled for the Syrian people, whether residing in their country or spread around the globe. As the Secretary-General has said, we must keep that flame of hope alive, despite challenges that could extinguish it.

Today Syria has a historic opportunity to achieve progress and prosperity and to be a factor of stability for the wider region. Historically tied with the Syrian people, Greece wholeheartedly supports and will continue supporting those efforts. It was in that spirit that I visited Damascus in as early as February and have since taken part in international conferences in Paris and in Brussels. We are ready to contribute more to the reconstruction of Syria and to ensure the preservation of its rich ethnic and religious diversity.

Today I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, Syria will thrive once a fully inclusive political transition, in line with the principles of resolution 2254 (2015), has been completed. Syria's wealth and greatness lie in the diversity of its people — a mosaic of different parts, all capable of flourishing together in peace and harmony. In that sense, its transitional Government must stay the course of political inclusiveness and openness — one that ensures the protection and integration of all components of Syrian society, be it Christian, Alawite, Druze or Kurdish, and one that includes the active participation of all Syrians, including women. Some positive signs, as expressed by Special Envoy Pedersen, need to be further enhanced. We believe that there is a lot of room for improvement in that regard. The transitional Government should ensure full political representation for all Syrians, taking account of the demographic structure of the country and building credible and representative institutions. Also, the Constitution to follow the constitutional declaration must echo the voices of a multi-ethnic, multireligious society, rich in cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. We believe that keeping the national dialogue alive, with the inclusion of civil society and other voices of all backgrounds, is crucial in that respect.

The agreement reached between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Damascus on 10 March, committing the parties to engaging non-violently, is valuable. We believe addressing issues such as the Tishreen Dam, which constitutes critical infrastructure for ensuring water and energy security, is a positive step. We remain vigilant on the agreement's implementation, hoping it will contribute to regional stability. The transitional Government should ensure that armed groups in the north of the country do not disrupt that process. We call on all regional actors to refrain from violence or inviting escalation in that regard.

The withdrawal of foreign fighters and the integration of all armed groups into national security forces, while ensuring that all terrorist and violent extremist elements are excluded, as part of a wider and robust effort of security sector reform, is a prerequisite for internal security and political stability.

Secondly, we expect the transitional Government to ensure accountability and promote transitional justice. Any regression in that task will prove detrimental. The

Security Council very strongly condemned sectarian violence, culminating in the tragic death of some thousand innocent civilians, mostly Alawites and Christians, in the coastal region in March; and expects the outcome of the investigative committee established to be published soon. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and accountability served. We are equally concerned by the violence that erupted in the south, mostly targeting members of the Druze community. For Syria to turn the page, no effort can be spared to end sectarian violence. It is crucial that the transitional authorities maintain order, ensure control over armed groups, protect all Syrians regardless of their background and hold all perpetrators accountable without delay, in line with international law norms and standards. Greece calls for a swift, transparent, credible and impartial investigation by the investigative committee and for the relevant United Nations mechanisms to be allowed to also investigate those crimes. All Syrians should be able to live without fear.

We welcomed the participation of Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani at the General Assembly discussion on the latest report of 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 (see A/79/PV.65), as well as his expressed willingness to cooperate with international mechanisms for the promotion of accountability. The transitional Government owes it to the Syrian people to keep to its word on the following steps, and the world is eager to see its deeds match its rhetoric.

That brings me to my third point: all of the above transpires against the backdrop of a truly precarious and challenging economic and security situation. As outlined in the briefings we listened to today, Syria faces widespread destruction and devastation. For that reason, the delegation of Greece was among those who pledged their tangible support for Syria's recovery at the ninth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region in March. Greece remains committed to supporting Syrians as they rebuild their nation and strive towards a free and democratic future.

Equally, the European Union was swift in suspending certain restrictive measures as part of a gradual, conditional and reversible approach, to support Syria. We shall continue, ever-vigilant, to closely monitor developments, with the aim of examining further suspensions on the basis of concrete progress on accountability, inclusivity of the political process, as well as continuous respect of international law, the international law of the sea and the sovereign rights of neighbouring States.

The announcement by President Trump of lifting United States sanctions presents a big opportunity for Syria, which has to work closely with all of its neighbours so as to promote regional stability and cooperation.

Supporting Syria is also crucial in a context where the threat of radical groups re-emerging is present, and where foreign fighters may still roam free. Ensuring the viability and security of camps holding Da'esh fighters and their relatives in northeast Syria is critical in that regard. Ultimately, supporting the stability of Syria will allow its rich and talented diaspora to safely and voluntarily return home, as they deserve.

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 by upholding the relevant international agreements and Security Council resolutions. International law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the sovereign rights of States must be respected.

In conclusion, Greece wants to see Syria succeed and become a peaceful and prosperous country, to the benefit — first and foremost — of the Syrian people, but also of the wider region and as symbol for the world at large that a country can indeed



make a comeback even from the most adverse circumstances. To get there, we believe that its leadership should embrace a Syrian-led and -owned truly inclusive political transition, promoting accountability, transitional justice and viable reconciliation. We fully support the role of the United Nations and Special Envoy Pedersen along this track.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Ms. Lassen** (Denmark): We welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Gerapetritis in today's meeting. I also wish to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Rajasingham for their briefings.

Summer is right around the corner, and as a new season begins, the first six months of a new chapter for Syria draws to a close. It has been a seismic shift, as the Foreign Minister said, and many important changes have occurred, as we also heard from the Special Envoy. Now the positive statements of the past six months must be followed up with concrete action to meet the expectations of the Syrian people.

With that in mind, let me make three points.

First, the security situation needs to be improved. Reports about continued sectarian violence, in particular, involving Alawites and Druze, and the killing of civilians are deeply alarming. We condemn any such attacks, and we call on the Syrian transitional Government to clearly condemn them in word and deed. In that respect, we look forward to seeing the conclusions from the fact-finding committee, as well as a proper follow-up to ensure accountability.

Accelerating the political process and making the process genuinely inclusive is the only way to channel grievances into politics and away from violence. Accountability for past atrocities will counter calls for revenge and contribute to the prevention of new violence.

We welcome the appointment of a transitional justice commission and a commission on missing persons. As stated by the Special Envoy, the next step should be the selection of members of a legislative assembly that credibly represents all segments of society, and engaging with civil society to create a truly inclusive political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We voice our full support for the United Nations and Special Envoy Geir Pedersen in assisting this transition.

Secondly, genuine security for Syria also necessitates peaceful relations with Syria's neighbours. Recent dialogue between Syria's transitional Government and Lebanon about long-standing border issues and refugees create hope for a better future for both countries. The signing of a memorandum of understanding with Jordan, just yesterday, is also a positive development.

Similarly, outstanding issues in southern Syria and the occupied Golan Heights must be solved through diplomacy rather than military means, as stated by the Special Envoy. We reiterate our call for the full implementation by all parties of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

With regard to the wider region, last week's meetings in Riyadh were important and a signal of strong support to Syria from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. We welcome the announcement made by the United States on the lifting of sanctions against Syria. Yesterday the European Union also agreed to lift all economic sanctions on Syria. This is historic and gives the Syrian people a further opportunity to rebuild and prosper.

Thirdly, I would like to touch upon the humanitarian situation and reconstruction. With sanctions being lifted, there are better prospects for improving the humanitarian situation. Unlocking access to building materials, technologies and the ability to invest will play a decisive role in the possibilities for reconstruction, including repairing the shattered critical health, energy and agricultural industry and infrastructure throughout the country. If managed in an equitable manner, that can help reverse the spiking rates of hunger, poverty and the overall healthcare gap throughout the country. With millions planning to return home to Syria, this reprieve comes at a timely moment.

Syrians have experienced tremendous changes these past six months, and many challenges still remain. We appreciate that there are no quick fixes, but after years of suffering, the people of Syria are impatient for change. We support the Syrian transitional Government in this endeavour, and we want to see Syria succeed, as highlighted by the Minister.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and to Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division and Head and Representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, for their comprehensive overview of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Regrettably, the situation in Syria remains extremely tense. The explosive potential there is fuelled by the very challenges that we discussed a month ago (see S/PV.9904), and two months ago (see S/PV.9885), namely acute inter-ethnic and interreligious strife, difficulties in State-building, terrorist threats and the violation of the sovereignty of Syria's territory.

In March, hundreds of people, mostly Alawites and Christians, were killed by radical groups on the west coast of Syria. In late April, no sooner had the country recovered from the shock prompted by those events, armed clashes broke out in the Jaramana neighbourhood in Damascus suburb involving another ethnic group of the Syrian population, the Druze. More than 140 people perished and some 15,000 Syrians were forced to flee their homes.

Those events demonstrate the fragility of the current situation and the need to take urgent steps to strengthen interfaith and inter-ethnic accord in the country. Such measures are critical for the Syrian statehood to be built on a solid foundation that neither internal nor external threats can shake. We call on Damascus to pay special attention to this, because resolving this issue is what both the Syrian political process and the very fate of the country hinge on. A positive example in that regard is the agreement signed between Damascus and the Syrian Democratic Forces. However, when it comes to ensuring justice for other groups in Syria, much remains to be done.

Specifically, this should be a goal for the fact-finding committee that is tasked with investigating the events on Syria's west coast. We hope that the work of this committee will be comprehensive, transparent, independent and impartial in nature and will be carried out in accordance with international standards in order to hold accountable all those responsible, pursuant to the relevant Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2025/4). It is important that the outcome of the investigation be brought to the attention of Special Envoy Pedersen and the Security Council.

Among other challenges, there is a serious threat posed by terrorist groups still active in Syria. We hope that the new Syrian leadership will take active steps to resolve the problem of foreign terrorist fighters once and for all, as they pose a threat not only to Syria but also to the region and the entire world.

There can be no robust Syrian statehood unless the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the country is respected by all United Nations Member States, including Syria's neighbours. We condemn Israel's arbitrary air strikes across the country, as well as the expansion of the occupation zone in the south, which has effectively paralysed the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. We must ensure that Israel return to compliance with the provisions of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, stop shelling Syrian territory and withdraw from Syria. All the more so since Damascus has repeatedly reaffirmed its willingness to engage constructively with all its neighbours without exception.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria is one of the most acute and protracted humanitarian crises ever. For years, the Syrian people have faced shortages of basic services, instability and constant threats to their lives. The ongoing economic decline has only exacerbated the situation. Despite all the efforts of United Nations humanitarian agencies, which are providing assistance to more than 2 million people per month, they are clearly not enough to cover all the population's needs. The situation is exacerbated by the decline in international aid; only 10 per cent of the \$2 billion required for the January-June period has been received to date. We are particularly disquieted by the reported suspension of food aid, including in the Tall Al-Samn and Tuwaynah camps in the north-east of the country. In the north-west, 42 out of 82 protection centres for vulnerable groups have already closed and roughly 170 medical facilities are at risk of having to shut down.

That is happening against the background of developing progress on the return of Syrians to their homeland. The growing number of returnees will not reduce but rather will increase the scope of humanitarian needs. Unfortunately, in parallel with returns, we are seeing a trend in the opposite direction, that is, a new mass displacement of people, including due to the outbreaks of violence I mentioned earlier. Since last November, more than 674,000 people have been displaced, which clearly demonstrates the fragility of the current situation.

We have taken note of the remarks by President Donald Trump regarding steps to lift all United States sanctions imposed on Syria. Over the years, we have consistently pointed out that those illegal, unilateral economic measures seriously hinder the country's recovery and exacerbate the humanitarian situation of civilians. That fact is gradually being recognized within United Nations entities. Special Envoy Pedersen said just a few days ago — and even mentioned the same topic today — that the lifting of sanctions is crucial to enabling the delivery of essential services, including health and education services; reviving the Syrian economy; attracting support from the region; and enabling Syrians to actively participate in efforts to rebuild their country. Is that not a repetition of what we have said for years now? Unfortunately, those obvious truths are only just starting to be voiced out loud, 14 years after the conflict began.

We unwaveringly support the mobilization of broad humanitarian assistance to all Syrians. Such assistance should be carried out without discrimination, politicization or preconditions, in line with the basic principles enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Russia reaffirms its unconditional commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria. We care deeply about the fate of the brotherly Syrian people. We stand convinced that Syrians are able to determine their own fate. We want to see a strong, independent, prosperous and stable Syria. To that end, it is important that no ethnic or religious group feel oppressed or marginalized and that each group be properly represented in law enforcement and other power structures. At the same time, there is no place in the country for foreign terrorist fighters; they have blood on their hands and have nothing to do with the Syrian people.

We believe that there is no alternative to an inclusive political process, led and owned by all Syrians without exception, with the support of the United Nations, and in accordance with the principles of resolution 2254 (2015). We extend our support for the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen. We also deem it important to ensure the universal nature of the international support for the inter-Syrian dialogue.

We are committed to developing multifaceted cooperation with Syria, with due regard for our extensive historical experience and the long-standing traditions of friendship and mutual respect that characterize Russian-Syrian relations. We are convinced that the Syrian people will overcome with dignity all the challenges they face. We stand ready to engage in practical cooperation with Syria and to provide its people and Government with the necessary assistance for them to overcome the difficulties of the transition period.

**Mr. Kelley** (United States of America): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the Director of the Coordination Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva for their informative briefings on the constantly evolving situation in Syria.

President Trump's watershed trip to the Gulf this month has created the opportunity for a new chapter of peace and prosperity in the region. Six months after Syrians celebrated the end of the despotic Al-Assad regime, President Trump pledged sanctions relief for Syria to give Syrians, as he said, a chance at greatness. The President wants to see Syria and the entire region thrive. That is why he has made a bold decision on Syria with the hope the new Government will take the opportunity to rebuild and take the country from being a source of instability to a source of stability. United States Government agencies are now working to execute the President's direction on Syria's sanctions. We look forward to issuing the necessary authorizations that will be critical to bringing new investment into Syria to help rebuild Syria's economy and put the country on a path to a bright, prosperous and stable future.

The United States also has taken the first steps towards restoring normal diplomatic relations with Syria. To meet this moment of opportunity for peace and prosperity, Syria's Government must continue to take bold steps and show sustained progress on the clear expectations the United States has communicated.

We call on Syria to make peace with its neighbour Israel and join the Abraham Accords, ending a conflict that has plagued the region for far too long.

We call on Syria to quickly remove foreign terrorist fighters from the Syrian military and ensure foreign terrorists, including Palestinian militias, can no longer operate from Syria.

We call on Syria to cooperate with the United States and its coalition partners to prevent the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and ensure our collective security.

And we call on Syria to work constructively with the United States and the Syrian Democratic Forces to assume responsibility for the detention facilities and the Al-Hol and Al-Roj displaced persons camps in the north-eastern part of the country. In that regard, we also call on Member States to take responsibility for their displaced and detained nationals through expeditious repatriation and to support the returns of displaced Syrians to their areas of origin.

The new Government should also ensure all Syrians have a stake in the country's political future and that the rights of all citizens are protected regardless of religion or ethnicity.

We take note of the Syrian Government's actions so far on critical files, including the destruction of Bashar Al-Assad's chemical weapons and the search for missing United States and foreign citizens in Syria. That should give us hope for what Syrians can achieve and set expectations for what must come next.

President Trump's recent trip to the Gulf reaffirmed our commitment to partners in the region, and Secretary Rubio's engagement opened a new chapter in our relationship with Syria. In that spirit, we continue to urge the new Government to choose policies that will reinforce stability, protect the human rights of all Syrians, assure peace with Syria's neighbours, develop Syria's economy and become at long last a responsible member of the international community.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome you, Mr. President, to preside over today's meeting. I thank Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Director Ramesh Rajasingham for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Iran, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Türkiye at today's meeting.

China has been closely following the developments in Syria and sincerely hopes to see Syria restore peace and stability at an early date with the help of the international community. Recently, the Syrian interim authorities have been actively engaging with the international community, striving to gain recognition and support. Despite concerns on some issues, the international community has responded positively and with goodwill to Syria's efforts. We hope that the Syrian interim authorities will seize the opportunity and translate commitments into real action to restore stability and development as soon as possible.

Let me make three points in that regard.

First, realizing a broad and inclusive political transition is the shared expectation of the international community. China hopes that the relevant Syrian parties, guided by the principles set out in resolution 2254 (2015), will act in the long-term interests of the country and the people and promote a broad and inclusive political transition in an orderly manner, on the basis of thorough consultation and communication. The United Nations should play an active role in that process, and all parties should support Special Envoy Pedersen in implementing his mandate. China is concerned about the recent cases of severe violence in southern Syria, which resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. The Syrian interim authorities should take effective measures to ease communal tensions and guarantee the safety, security and rights of all Syrian people. We call for expediting investigations into the violent incidents in Syria's coastal areas, so as to arrive at well-founded conclusions.

Secondly, combating foreign terrorist fighters is the shared concern of the international community. The presence of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria not only threatens Syria's own security, but also poses serious challenges to regional and even global security and stability. Countering terrorism allows no double standards. Any negligence of duty or condoning of terrorists will have serious consequences that will ultimately backfire. The strict implementation of relevant Council resolutions on counter-terrorism is an obligation under international law that should be fulfilled by all parties. We urge the Syrian interim authorities to immediately take all necessary measures to combat all terrorist groups listed by the Council, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party. Syria should never become a safe haven for terrorism.

Thirdly, alleviating the humanitarian situation and kick-starting economic reconstruction is a shared task for the international community. As we speak, the humanitarian situation on the ground is dire, humanitarian operations are severely underfunded, and approximately 40 per cent of hospitals cannot operate normally, which is worrisome. China's consistent position is that relevant countries should lift illegal unilateral sanctions on Syria, and we hope that, given the changing



developments, the Syrian interim authorities will prioritize economic recovery and the improvement of people's livelihoods in their governance. The international community, especially traditional donors, needs to increase their assistance to Syria and make greater efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. In the long run, only through realizing self-driven development, can Syria's humanitarian and economic difficulties be resolved on a fundamental level. Syria used to be a country that enjoyed sound economic development in the Middle East. We believe that, with the help of the international community, the hard-working and talented Syrian people will soon be able to embark on the path of national reconstruction.

Finally, let me reiterate that Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be respected. The Golan Heights is universally recognized by the international community as occupied Syrian territory. The 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic should be observed, and Israel should immediately stop its military operations against Syria.

Together with the international community, China will continue to play a constructive role in helping Syria achieve security, stability and development at an early date.

**Mr. Dharmadhikari** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Pedersen and Mr. Rajasingham for their briefings on the situation in Syria.

More than five months have elapsed since the dictatorship imposed by the Al-Assad family collapsed. The road to transition since then has been arduous, and France wishes to stand by the Syrian people to ensure that their immense hopes raised since December 2024 are not dashed. This was the purpose of the visit to Paris on 7 May by the President of the Syrian transitional authorities, Mr. Al-Sharaa.

I have three messages for the Council in that regard.

First, we have a responsibility to help Syria recover and reintegrate into the international community. Without the prospect of an economic recovery, there can be no lasting peace in Syria or the safe, sustainable and voluntary return of Syrian refugees. With that in mind, the Council of the European Union announced yesterday, 20 May, the political decision to lift economic sanctions against Syria in order to support Syria's economic recovery. This European decision is a reminder of the long-standing commitment of the European Union, which since 2011 has stood by the Syrians as they fought for their freedom and dignity. We understand President Trump's announcements in Riyadh on 13 May as part of the same dynamic of support for Syria and its economy.

Humanitarian actors must also be able to carry out their work without hindrance and be supported, including financially, by the entire international community. The needs in that area are immense. France supports the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in that regard, as well as the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the return home of refugees who wish to return and are able to do so.

With regard to efforts to reintegrate Syria into the international community, we welcome the willingness of the transitional Syrian authorities to open up and renew contact with the rest of the world. Syria's neighbours have a special responsibility in that respect. They must help Syria to honour its commitments, including that of not posing a threat to its neighbours.

To that end, we call on Israel to refrain from unilateral actions that could aggravate communal tensions in Syria or complicate the political transition. France reiterates its call for Israel to end its military activities on Syrian territory and withdraw from the separation zone established by the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces



between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria and Israel must take into account each other's security concerns.

France also intends to pursue its facilitation efforts and to contribute to resolving border disputes between Syria and Lebanon.

Secondly, the Syrian authorities must do everything in their power to restore civil peace and put an end to interfaith violence. The attacks on the Druze population south of Damascus at the end of April rekindled the spectre of sectarian violence, a month after the massacres against the Alawite community. It is up to the Syrian authorities to do their utmost to restore harmony between all components of Syrian society.

The implementation of the principle of accountability must serve as a road map for the transitional authorities. In that respect, the results of the commission of inquiry into the violence in the coastal region raise very high expectations. Their credibility and impartiality will be a guarantee of the transitional Government's determination to ensure a Syria that respects all its components. In the long term, genuine transitional justice must be built, with the support of the United Nations. We encourage the Syrian authorities to build on the momentum of their cooperation with the United Nations.

We expect the commitments made with the Syrian Kurds to be implemented. The call made by the Kurdistan Workers' Party to lay down its arms and the announcement of its dissolution are an opportunity that must be seized to preserve Syria's unity and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, the Syrian authorities must make progress on building inclusive political institutions to build the Syria of tomorrow. The formation of a transitional Government and the publication of a transitional constitutional declaration are encouraging signals. However, efforts to achieve inclusiveness need to be given concrete expression, particularly in the forthcoming composition of the legislative assembly. The national dialogue must be continued and expanded.

France reiterates its willingness to support the Syrian authorities to ensure the success of the political transition, in the spirit of the main principles set out in resolution 2254 (2015). It has expressed its willingness to support the strengthening of the administrative capacities of the Syrian State — a point reiterated to President Al-Sharaa in Paris on 7 May. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations in that regard, in particular those of Geir Pedersen. The Syrian authorities' cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy must continue and become more structured, building on the strategic review currently being carried out by the Secretariat.

Finally, a stable Syria implies the eradication of the terrorist threat. The threat remains high. That is a priority issue for France and for the Council. It is vital that the authorities in Damascus continue to combat that threat and address without delay the issue of foreign terrorist fighters present on Syrian soil. The international community also expects the chemical weapons programme to be dismantled and calls on Damascus to continue cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The political transition under way is an opportunity to give Syria a better future and to make the country a hub of regional stability. The international community must play its part. To do so, it needs the Syrian authorities to do their part. That involves meeting expectations in terms of inclusivity, the fight against terrorism and the protection of populations.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Rajasingham, of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings today. And I welcome the participation of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as those of other countries of the region.

We are encouraged to hear about the United Nations progress in strengthening engagement with the new Syrian Government.

I will make three points today.

First, we welcome President Trump's announcement of the lifting of United States sanctions. That positive step will create significant opportunity for economic recovery and development across Syria. That follows the United Kingdom's decision in April to lift its own sectoral sanctions on areas, including trade, energy production and finance. We remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting the Syrian people in rebuilding their country and economy.

Secondly, while economic recovery is vital, it must go hand in hand with an inclusive and peaceful transition that reconciles Syria's diverse groups. The United Kingdom was appalled by attacks this month against the Druze community in Syria. There can be no lasting peace or better future for Syrians unless all of Syria's communities are protected and fully included in Syria's political transition. We call on all parties to reject violence, engage in dialogue and ensure the protection of civilians. We note progress in reconciling Syrian groups into centralized structures. Existing agreements, including those signed with the Syrian Democratic Forces and with the Druze leadership, should now be implemented in full. We also call on Israel to refrain from actions that risk destabilizing Syria and to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, as the new Syrian Government enters its third month, we look forward to seeing a clear timeline for next steps in the political transition. We welcome and stand ready to support the newly announced national Commission for Transitional Justice and national Commission for Missing Persons. Both will help Syria heal and move forward after years of suffering. That political transition should be inclusive and allow Syrians to have a say in what comes next.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom stands ready to support the Syrian Government in its next steps on the path towards a more prosperous, peaceful and stable future, which the Syrian people deserve.

**Mr. Jadoon** (Pakistan): We warmly welcome you, Mr. Foreign Minister, and it is a great pleasure for Pakistan's delegation to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting. We also thank Special Envoy, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and Director of the Coordination Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, for their comprehensive briefings.

Syria stands at a pivotal juncture. Recent developments, including the National Dialogue Conference, the interim Constitution and interim Government, are important steps towards stability. We look forward to the formation of a transitional parliament and a representative constitutional committee.

Pakistan reiterates its firm support for a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process based on key principles contained in resolution 2254 (2015). We commend all regional and international efforts towards a peaceful and unified Syria.

Allow me to make four points.

First, national reconciliation and a unified security framework are essential for sustainable peace and long-term stability in Syria. The resurgence of violence in some areas, including in the coastal regions, underscores the urgency of addressing historical grievances and fostering genuine reconciliation. We have noted the formation of the Commission for Transitional Justice and express hope that it will be guided by the principles of impartiality and transparency and supported by neutral international stakeholders, including the United Nations. We must also remain vigilant against terrorism and the presence of foreign terrorist fighters and groups.

Secondly, Syria's economic recovery continues to be impeded by sanctions. We welcome the recent announcements by the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom about the lifting of sanctions on Syria. That offers a vital opportunity to restore critical infrastructure, attract foreign investment and reintegrate Syria into regional and global economies.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation remains grave, as highlighted by OCHA Director Rajasingham. More than 16 million people are in need, and most are in poverty and food insecure. Yet funding remains insufficient. As Syrians begin returning to their communities, those needs will only grow. The international community must ensure predictable, sustained and depoliticized humanitarian assistance.

Fourthly, Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Israel's continued military actions are a blatant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, threatening regional peace and security. Those violations must end, including in the Golan Heights and areas of separation.

After more than a decade of suffering, the people of Syria deserve peace, stability and the chance to rebuild their lives. This moment demands collective resolve in support of a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process grounded in sovereignty, unity and respect for national institutions. Stabilization and reconstruction must be supported through safe and voluntary returns, economic revitalization and regional integration in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In that effort, Pakistan stands with the Syrian people in their pursuit of peace, prosperity and dignity.

**Mr. Osman** (Somalia): I welcome you, Mr. Foreign Minister, in presiding over this important meeting.

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

At the outset, the A3+ extends its sincere appreciation to Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and Director Ramesh Rajasingham for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Syria, Iran, Qatar, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in today's meeting.

At this pivotal juncture in the Syrian crisis, the A3+ reaffirms its steadfast commitment to a comprehensive and lasting political solution, anchored in the principles of Charter of the United Nations, international law and respect for Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, and which reflects the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We remain guided by the conviction that peace in Syria cannot be imposed from the outside but must emerge from within through a process that is truly Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. In that regard, the A3+ reaffirms its unwavering support for an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, in line with the key principles enshrined in resolution 2254 (2015). That process must safeguard the rights and participation of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion, and ensure their protection. The A3+ remains convinced that only a genuinely inclusive and Syrian-led transition, with robust backing from the international community, can lead to lasting peace and stability. We therefore renew our full support for the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy in advancing that process. The credibility of the process hinges not only on inclusive dialogue but also on the restoration of trust between the Syrian people and the institutions that serve them.

We are deeply alarmed by the continuing reports of violence across various parts of Syria. The A3+ condemns in the strongest terms all acts of violence

against civilians and any actions that risk inflaming sectarian tensions. We call for immediate measures to protect civilians, restore calm and prevent further incitement to communal violence. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, and we underscore the imperative of accountability for violations committed against civilians. We note and support the ongoing efforts towards de-escalation and welcome the interim authorities' engagement in dialogue and cooperation in the framework of national unity. We also commend the decision by the Syrian authorities to establish a committee on missing persons and encourage constructive cooperation with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Addressing the plight of the missing is fundamental to reconciliation and accountability.

We strongly condemn Israel's repeated violations of Syria's sovereignty, including the recent air strike near the presidential palace in Damascus. Such attacks not only undermine regional peace and security but also exacerbate sectarian tensions and create an environment conducive to the resurgence of terrorist groups. We call for an immediate end to all Israeli incursions into Syrian territory and reiterate our call for the complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces. We call for full compliance with the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Moreover, we underscore that the Golan Heights remains Syrian territory under international law, as reaffirmed by resolution 497 (1981).

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. The needs continue to grow, including with the return of 800,000 Syrian refugees and more than 1.1 million internally displaced persons to their homes. By all accounts, the resources mobilized for the humanitarian response in Syria remain vastly insufficient. We note with concern that the recent Brussels Conference yielded only \$200 million in pledges — an amount that falls far short of the scale of the crisis. We urge all donors to honour their pledges and to urgently scale up humanitarian assistance, while ensuring its delivery, in accordance with humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

The long-standing imposition of unilateral coercive measures has significantly undermined the ability of ordinary Syrians to meet their basic needs. In that regard, the A3+ welcomes the recent decisions by the United States and the European Union to lift sanctions on Syria — a step that aligns with our continued calls for meaningful and comprehensive sanctions relief. While we welcome that development, we believe that it should be part of a broader re-engagement strategy that ensures that assistance reaches those most in need and supports local recovery initiatives. Sanctions relief is critical to unlocking regional support, revitalizing the Syrian economy and enabling Syrians — both within the country and across the diaspora — to contribute actively to rebuilding their homeland. It is also a necessary step to facilitate Syria's reintegration into the global financial system. That is of particular importance as the World Bank has estimated the cost of Syria's reconstruction at more than \$250 billion. Mobilizing such resources will require coordinated international action, political will and, above all, the lifting of barriers that continue to hinder recovery.

Syria faces immense challenges, but it also holds great promise. If approached with openness, inclusion and international support, Syria's political transition and reconstruction could be a beacon of recovery and stability in the region.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that the A3+ remains fully committed to doing everything in our power to help to build a stable, sovereign, inclusive and prosperous Syria, free of conflict, division and foreign interference — a Syria that once again contributes to the peace, prosperity and stability of the whole region.

**Mr. Alfaro de Alba** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome your presence at today's Security Council meeting, Mr. President. We thank Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Director Ramesh Rajasingham, of the

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings. We acknowledge the presence of the representatives of those States that have honoured us with their participation today.

The situation in Syria remains one of the most complex and urgent on the international agenda. Against that backdrop, Panama reiterates that only a comprehensive and inclusive political process, led by the Syrians themselves with the support of the international community and under the auspices of the United Nations, can offer a sustainable solution to the conflict and contribute to the stability of the Middle East.

In that regard, Panama reaffirms the validity and centrality of resolution 2254 (2015), which not only establishes the road map towards a political solution but also underscores the importance of unrestricted respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The resolution also highlights the fundamental role of the United Nations in facilitating the political process and supporting the prevention and eradication of extremism as an integral part of the path to peace.

While violence in the conflict has declined in many parts of the country, persisting sectarian violence and pockets of insecurity threaten to undermine the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. The recent episodes in the suburbs of Damascus and in Homs remind us how fragile the current context is and how urgent it is for the new authorities to promote an environment of security and trust, in which all communities — particularly minorities — feel protected, represented and heard within the political process.

Syria remains the epicentre of one of the most serious humanitarian crises of our time. Three-quarters of its population requires assistance, more than half are food insecure and more than 7 million people remain displaced. According to the World Bank, almost 50 per cent of health centres in the north-west of the country are out of service, affecting more than 1.5 million people. The health crisis hits women hardest, limiting their access to maternal and reproductive care and increasing risks during pregnancy and the post-partum period. Against that backdrop, it is imperative that we reverse the trend of cuts to funding for humanitarian assistance, guaranteeing the resources needed to enable United Nations agencies and their partners to continue to deliver life-saving aid to those who need it most.

We are closely following the efforts of the new authorities to build an independent and impartial judicial system to ensure accountability for international crimes. In that context, we positively recognize the initiatives of the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group in the identification of victims' remains, and we encourage stronger cooperation with the specialized mechanisms established by that organization.

On governance and accountability, we appreciate the signs of openness shown by the new Syrian authorities, which have been instrumental in the reconsideration of international sanctions. We welcome with optimism the recent announcements about the partial lifting of sanctions as a positive step in the right direction, and agree with Special Envoy Pedersen in that those measures must translate into tangible improvements for the population, especially in terms of access to basic services such as health, education and livelihoods. We trust that those measures to lift sanctions — which hopefully will be comprehensive and progressive — will also contribute to creating conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons.

Panama reiterates its call to all actors involved to persevere on the path of dialogue, to avoid politicizing human suffering and to guarantee, without exception, the protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights.



In the midst of so much suffering, we continue to believe that Syria can become a symbol of reconciliation, reconstruction and hope, a Syria in which multilateralism prevails over conflict, and in which human dignity is at the centre of all efforts. In that regard, rest assured that our country will always be ready to help.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Rajasingham, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for their briefings.

This month has undoubtedly been one of the most dramatic Syria has experienced since the fall of the Al-Assad regime. A snapshot of President Al-Sharaa's meeting with President Trump symbolizes the riveting vision for a new Syria; while the image of violence targeting the Druze underscores the grave challenges the country is still facing.

Allow me to address each in turn.

Regarding the clashes in Druze areas, Damascus must take comprehensive and urgent measures to prevent any further sectarian violence as part of its inclusive transitional process. It is deeply concerning that additional sectarian violence has occurred merely two months after the coastal massacre. The most recent episode is particularly troubling, as it reportedly stemmed from a fabricated voice recording designed to incite intercommunal strife by a network of foreign accounts.

A crucial first step to prevent further violence is to ensure that all perpetrators are prosecuted without exception, and that corresponding measures are announced transparently. We urge the investigative committee on the coastal massacre to conduct its work with impartiality and to publicize its findings. We also hope that the newly formed National Commission on Transitional Justice will not limit its mandate to the crimes of the Al-Assad regime.

In parallel, Damascus must establish a State monopoly over the use of force. We look forward to tangible progress following Damascus' recent call for armed groups to surrender their weapons. Likewise, the transitional Government should prioritize, at all costs, demobilizing and repatriating foreign terrorist fighters, whose involvement has been prominent in both clashes.

Looking ahead, it is imperative that Damascus formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism. Pending final review, the Druze incident demonstrated how violent extremists can weaponize technology to incite religious hatred and unrest. In that connection, we believe Syria could benefit from the artificial intelligence (AI) and preventing and countering violent extremism initiative, implemented by Korea in collaboration with the Office of Counter-Terrorism. That project seeks to identify how terrorist actors exploit AI technologies to disseminate extremist narratives, and to support Member States in developing AI-based tools to counter those threats. We stand ready to explore ways to support Damascus in that regard.

Turning to economic and humanitarian matters, the international community should leverage recent positive developments on sanctions relief to advance Syria's early recovery. Syria's transitional efforts have been constrained by sanctions and the underfunding of humanitarian aid. In that regard, the United States announcement that it is lifting sanctions on Syria, alongside the European Union's decision also to do so, except for those related to the perpetrators of heinous crimes, is a welcome development. We trust that the lifting of sanctions will be technically comprehensive enough to mitigate the risks of overcompliance and the chilling effect often observed in private sector engagement.

However, despite such positive signals, the humanitarian situation remains dire. Some 1.7 million refugees and internally displaced persons have returned to



Syria since December 2024, and the pressure on humanitarian needs is expected to intensify as returns increase with the lifting of sanctions.

In that context, the Republic of Korea will provide \$35 million in humanitarian assistance this year, through relevant international organizations. That represents a threefold increase from the previous year, with a significant portion being directed towards early recovery. We expect that all those efforts will gradually lead to reduced reliance on external aid.

In conclusion, we commend the tireless work by Special Envoy Pedersen, OCHA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other indispensable actors on the ground at this critical juncture. We hope that their collective endeavours will help to rekindle the dreams of the Syrian people for a peaceful and inclusive nation.

**Mrs. Blokar Drobič** (Slovenia): I welcome you, Mr. Minister, to this meeting. Like others, I wish to thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Rajasingham for their briefings.

Let me begin by welcoming the engagement of the Syrian transitional authorities with the United Nations, including the participation of the interim Foreign Minister, Mr. Al-Shaibani, at the Council meeting last month. We hope that the transitional Government will continue to engage constructively and accept United Nations support as they move through the challenging transition process.

Today I wish to make the following points.

First, we have witnessed initial steps towards reconciliation. However, that is just the beginning, and continued progress is essential as the situation is still extremely fragile. To move forward, we encourage sustained efforts towards a credible and genuinely inclusive political transition — one that ensures that all Syrians, regardless of their gender, ethnical origin or religion or belief, can participate meaningfully in shaping the future of their country.

Secondly, we reiterate our call for an immediate end to violence across Syria. In that highly complex landscape, establishing a clear and coherent approach to security is vital. That must include the disarmament, demobilization and integration of all armed groups into national security forces, as part of a broader, robust programme of security sector reform. Syria also needs further international assistance to tackle its stocks of chemical weapons. We also urge the Syrian interim authorities to ensure that no space is left for the resurgence of extremism and terrorism within their territory. We strongly condemn any foreign or domestic attempts to undermine Syria's stability and prospects for a peaceful transition. We call on all actors, without exception, to fully respect Syria's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, we urge all parties, including the transitional authorities, to ensure the protection of all Syrians across all segments of society. It is imperative that the transitional authorities uphold the rights of all citizens without discrimination, maintain public order, assert control over armed groups and ensure accountability for all perpetrators, in accordance with international law. Ensuring comprehensive transitional justice is key for genuine reconciliation and lasting peace. There is no peace without justice and no justice without the truth. We reaffirm that the fight against impunity must go beyond the crimes committed by the Al-Assad regime — true accountability must encompass justice for all victims, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator.

Equally vital is the effort to uncover the fate of missing persons. That is one of the deepest wounds of any war, and it needs to be resolved in order to build a resilient society at peace with itself. In that regard, we welcome the recent establishment of the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the National Commission

for the Missing as important steps towards comprehensive justice and sustainable peace in Syria. We call for their cooperation with United Nations mechanisms and institutions, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and 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. It is also important that Syrian and international civil society organizations be associated with those efforts.

And lastly, in order to support the political process, and in tackling the manifold challenges that the country is currently facing, the international community should enhance its efforts to support Syrians in rebuilding their country. Recovery and socioeconomic reconstruction will be a crucial part of those efforts. Against that backdrop, yesterday the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of European Union (EU) member States agreed to lift all economic sanctions, while maintaining those related to the Al-Assad regime and to human rights violations. That decision, conditional on progress on the ground, follows the easing of sanctions by the EU in February in the fields of energy, transport and reconstruction, as part of the overall aim to facilitate engagement with the country and its people and businesses. In the meantime, it remains vital that sufficient humanitarian aid reach all Syrians in need. Humanitarian access must be safe and unhindered across all of Syria, and civilians, critical civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers must be protected.

Syria faces tremendous political, economic and humanitarian challenges as it tries to rebuild. Slovenia will continue to support the Syrian people in their efforts to achieve a better, more secure and resilient future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Khaddour** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome you, Mr. President, as you preside over today's meeting, and to congratulate you and the friendly delegation of Greece on its effective steering of the Security Council's work this month. I would like to thank Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy for Syria, and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, for their briefings.

A few months ago, speakers in the Council unanimously emphasized the need to seize the historic opportunity that lies ahead for Syria and the region and to act swiftly to make the best possible use of that opportunity before it slips away and hope is lost, and before frustration seeps into the spirits of Syrians, who have suffered years of oppression and deprivation.

Today we are all witnessing the international community's determination to seize this pivotal moment, reopen its doors to Syria and engage actively with it. That clearly culminated in the visit of the President of the United States of America to the region and the pivotal milestones witnessed and constructive decisions made over the course of that visit. The most notable of those was President Trump's courageous decision, announced from Riyadh — a location of great symbolic significance — to lift sanctions on Syria. That decision capped the tireless, laudable and appreciated efforts made by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, alongside Türkiye, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and many other brothers and friends in the region and the world. I also take this opportunity to thank our friends in the United Kingdom, France and other European countries who took the initiative of lifting the sanctions imposed on Syria.

That was not all — what followed was a historic meeting, which brought together the leaders of Syria, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, addressed support

for the early recovery and reconstruction process, explored Syrian-American partnership in the area of counter-terrorism and cooperation on neutralizing non-State actors and non-Syrian armed groups that hinder stability, including the Da'esh and other threats. The meeting embodied regional and international support for Syria as it moves with confidence and hope towards the future. That meeting was complemented by another meeting that brought together the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Syria, the United States and Türkiye in Antalya to discuss the particulars of lifting United States sanctions against Syria, improving relations between Damascus and Washington and building a strategic relationship between the two countries.

Arab support for Syria was also evident in the Baghdad declaration issued at the Arab Summit held a few days ago, which affirmed respect for the choices of the Syrian people, commitment to Syria's security and stability, support for its territorial integrity and rejection of all foreign interference in its affairs. The declaration strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli attacks on Syrian territory, the violation of Syria's sovereignty and the attempts to undermine and destroy its national capacities.

As the countries in the region and around the world extend their hands to Syria, Syrians themselves are uniting across all constituent groups and factions, united in their rejection of extremism, terrorism, hate speech, incitement to violence and calls for division and partition. They are moving forward on the path to building a future based on freedom and dignity, in one unified Syria whose hallmarks are progress, prosperity, knowledge and work. Syrian institutions are committed to the highest international standards, enhancing the investment climate, developing economic legislation and facilitating the active contribution of both national and foreign capital to reconstruction and comprehensive development.

The new Syria, in its sincere effort to become a country of peace and partnership, not a battleground for conflicts or score-settling or a platform for foreign ambitions, affirms that it welcomes constructive cooperation initiatives based on common interests and mutual respect, free from polarization and bloc politics. Syria pledges to all those who stood by it in its plight that it will remain loyal to that solidarity and that it will not forget those who extended a helping hand during its most difficult moments. In that context, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the fraternal joint initiative launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the sisterly State of Qatar to provide the necessary funding to pay the salaries of public sector workers and provide the necessary backing for the energy sector.

The decision to lift sanctions imposed on Syria marks a long-awaited turning point, as it offers real prospects for alleviating the humanitarian crisis and accelerating the economic and developmental recovery process in the country. Syrians have welcomed that decision with great hope. They see it as a first step towards restoring normal life, improving living conditions, reviving the economy, ensuring food security and confidently returning to the path of sustainable development.

Despite the difficult circumstances and ongoing suffering, clearly reflected in the figures presented in Mr. Rajasingham's briefing this morning, recent developments have opened the door to a promising environment for work and investment, the rehabilitation of the banking sector and a gradual improvement in infrastructure and the resumption of essential services, especially in energy, health, education and agriculture. Those steps will help to consolidate security and stability and to promote civil peace, which, in turn, will improve the humanitarian situation and accelerate the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons to the country's different regions.

We reaffirm, here, that the scale of needs requires an exceptional international response, based on genuine partnership and support for national institutions. That response should include coordinated and effective assistance to enhance efforts in

mine clearance and the removal of remnants of war, which continue to claim lives, disrupt production and hinder the return of displaced persons.

It is also essential to mobilize efforts in regard to missing persons in Syria, a humanitarian issue whose resolution would end the suffering of thousands of families that have lost loved ones. In that context, an independent body — the National Commission on Missing Persons — has been established, tasked with searching for and investigating the fate of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons, documenting cases, creating a national database and providing legal and humanitarian support to their families. In the same vein, and in recognition of the need for transitional justice as the basis for building a State governed by the rule of law, ensuring victims' rights and achieving comprehensive national reconciliation, a National Commission on Transitional Justice has been established, responsible for investigating the grave violations committed by the former regime and holding the perpetrators accountable.

While regional and international efforts are converging to support stability and development in Syria and the region, Israel continues its aggression against Syrian territory. The most recent example was the Israeli attack on the area around the presidential palace in Damascus, in a grave violation of international law, relevant Security Council resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. That is in addition to the continued illegal presence of the occupying army in parts of the governorates of Qunaytirah, Dara'a and Rural Damascus, in the south of Syria.

Syria renews its appeal to the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and take firm and immediate measures to compel Israel to immediately cease its ongoing aggression against Syrian territory and calls for Israel to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from all Syrian territory, including the occupied Syrian Golan. We also call on Member States to play an active and constructive role to help to stop that aggression, which places obstacles on the path to the stability and prosperity to which the region and its peoples aspire.

In conclusion, as Syria moves forward with confidence towards the future, it believes in peace as the best way to build a stable and secure future for all of the peoples of the region who have been exhausted by wars and conflicts. The experience of past decades has shown that there is no solution but dialogue, and no true and lasting stability without an end to occupation and the sincere pursuit of peace, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law.

The new Syria extends its hand to all those who sincerely seek to support its stability, affirming that, with the will and determination of its people, it is moving forward to build a resilient, open and secure State, one that respects the law, safeguards rights and harnesses its resources in order to ensure the well-being of its citizens and to build a future rooted in a culture of peace and tolerance, bringing stability and prosperity to the entire region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Iravani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): We welcome your presence, Mr. Prime Minister, and thank you for presiding over this meeting. We thank Mr. Pedersen, the Special Envoy, and Mr. Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division, for their insightful briefings.

On the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to make the following points.

First, Iran welcomes the growing international acknowledgment that humanitarian and reconstruction aid in Syria must not be politicized. We note the

recent announcement to lift and suspend unilateral sanctions by the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom. Those steps, so long overdue, are positive. The suffering of the Syrian people should not be used for political purposes. We call for the full and unconditional lifting of all unilateral sanctions. Those illegal measures violate the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Today more than 16 million Syrians need urgent help. Any easing of sanctions must lead to a real and immediate improvement in their lives. It must also support the return of refugees and help to rebuild Syria's economy and infrastructure, paving the way for lasting peace and stability.

Secondly, Syria has the right and responsibility to maintain peace and security throughout its territory. However, its security remains fragile, owing to the ongoing foreign military presence and illegal occupation, especially in the north-east and south. The continued occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel clearly violates international law and resolution 497 (1981). Israel's repeated attacks, including the two air strikes in May near the presidential palace, must be firmly condemned. Those acts threaten the region's peace and are made possible by United States support. We strongly reaffirm that Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. All foreign forces that are in Syria illegally must withdraw immediately and unconditionally. It is evident that only the Israeli occupying regime stands to benefit from the fragmentation and instability in Syria. Its persistent acts of aggression, repeated violations of international law and continued expansion of its occupation are clearly aimed at perpetuating a state of permanent instability in the country.

Thirdly, as a close neighbour, Iran emphasizes the need to fight all forms of terrorism in Syria, especially the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. We are deeply concerned about reports that foreign terrorist fighters are being relocated from Syria to other conflict areas. That could increase instability in the region and pose serious risks for neighbouring countries. The Security Council must remain alert and respond through strong and effective measures. We welcome the Kurdistan Workers' Party's announcement that it will disarm, and regard that as a significant step towards rejecting violence and enhancing regional stability. We express the hope that the other affiliated armed and terrorist groups, including the Kurdistan Free Life Party, will follow that path, contributing to lasting peace and security in the region.

Fourthly, the people of Syria have suffered from foreign occupation, terrorism and economic pressure. We emphasize that Syria's future must be decided by the Syrians alone, without outside interference or imposed solutions. Any political process must be led and owned by Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Iran fully supports the United Nations Special Envoy, Mr. Pedersen, and his Office in promoting an inclusive process. That process must respect Syrian sovereignty and proceed without foreign pressure. In that context, Iran supports the dialogue between the Syrian interim authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces as an important step towards national integration. We encourage inclusive engagement and dialogue that ensure equal rights for all Syrians.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council this month. We would like to thank Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Head and Representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, for their edifying briefings.

We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States.



Qatar welcomes the positive steps taken by the Syrian Arab Republic towards achieving national reconciliation and consolidating the rule of law and institutions. Those steps include the convening of the National Dialogue Conference, the constitutional declaration and the formation of a new Government headed by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, paving the way for a State underpinned by justice and liberties. We commend the openness that the Syrian Government has shown in cooperating with various international and United Nations entities. That openness reflects Syria's clear commitment to play a positive role at the regional and international levels in order to achieve security and stability and to protect human rights.

Qatar is continuing to provide comprehensive support to the Syrian Arab Republic in the areas of humanitarian and relief assistance and in recovery efforts, and the provision of essential services, including through the continuous provision of natural gas to generate electricity. As part of the continued efforts of Qatar and Saudi Arabia to support the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic's economic recovery, we announced the payment of Syria's arrears to the World Bank Group, totalling approximately \$15 million. That will help the World Bank to resume its programmes in Syria, rebuild institutions, promote capacity-building and formulate and reform policies in order to step up the pace of development.

In the area of technical assistance, a team from Qatar's internal security force carried out a humanitarian mission in the Syrian city of Dabiq. The operation — conducted as part of an international operation and in full coordination with the Syrian Government, which facilitated the team's work — led to the discovery of the remains of 30 people who are believed to have perished at the hands of Da'esh.

On the diplomatic front, Qatar continues to further the interests of the Syrian Arab Republic in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, with the aim of promoting constructive dialogue between Syria and the international community in the organization's areas of work.

Qatar underscores that improving the economic and humanitarian situation of our brotherly people of Syria should be a top priority for the international community. We therefore welcome the decision taken by President Donald Trump to lift sanctions on the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic. That is an extremely important step that will foster stability and prosperity in Syria. We would also like to express our full appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the brotherly nations of Saudi Arabia and Türkiye to that end.

Qatar reiterates its full support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria and for its fraternal people's aspirations to security and stability. Qatar condemns in the strongest possible terms the Israeli air strike that targeted the vicinity of the Presidential Palace in Damascus, in addition to the repeated attacks on Dara'a governorate and other regions, which it considers a flagrant attack on the sovereignty of the fraternal Syrian Arab Republic and a dangerous violation of international law.

In conclusion, Qatar reaffirms its support for the Syrian Arab Republic in order to fulfil its fraternal people's aspirations to security, stability and development, which will, in turn, have a positive impact on the future of Syria and the region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States. I am also pleased to welcome Your Excellency, Mr. Giorgios Gerapetritis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, to preside over this meeting. I also thank Mr. Geir Pedersen and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham for their valuable briefings.



The Syrian Arab Republic is currently undergoing an intricate and decisive phase in the light of the interconnected challenges that afflict both the State and individual citizens alike. Those challenges include a difficult humanitarian situation, internal and external security threats and a fragile economic situation. Despite all the crises and pressures, Syria continues striving to build a more stable future that guarantees the rights of all its people without exception and that enables them to live a dignified life in which security, justice and equality prevail. Despite the Syrian Government's tireless efforts to bring about national reconciliation and recovery, the road ahead remains long and complex, requiring integrated international support, genuine political will and effective solidarity from the international community in order to enhance Syria's efforts to build the State and its institutions in a manner that meets the aspirations and needs of its people, respects its sovereignty and lays the foundations for peace.

In that context, the Arab Group emphasizes the importance of supporting the Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process, with the participation of all the constituents of the Syrian people without exclusion, including women and youth, in a manner that guarantees Syria's unity and security and preserves the rights of its citizens. The Arab Group emphasizes its rejection of any form of partition or fragmentation and of any foreign interference in Syrian affairs. The Group welcomes efforts and agreements aimed at uniting the entire Syrian spectrum under the umbrella of the State, consolidating civil peace and strengthening national unity.

The humanitarian situation in Syria requires urgent attention from the international community in order to support the efforts of the fraternal Syrian people to rebuild their country and invest in economic recovery and early-recovery projects, thereby contributing to meeting the basic needs of Syrians and creating conditions conducive to the voluntary, dignified and safe return of refugees and displaced persons. In that context, the Group emphasizes the importance of the vital role played by countries hosting Syrian refugees over the past years and expresses its sincere appreciation for the efforts made by those countries to support the Syrian people and to provide them with a decent livelihood. The Group also emphasizes that host countries cannot shoulder that responsibility alone; and hence the need for the international community to provide the necessary financial and technical support to enable those countries to continue fulfilling their humanitarian role on behalf of the international community until all refugees are able to return to Syria.

In that connection, the Arab Group stresses that rebuilding Syria is a comprehensive process, where sanctions have effects on every aspect of that process, not on the economic aspect alone. In that regard, the Arab Group calls for the immediate and complete lifting of all unilateral coercive measures and other economic and financial sanctions imposed on Syria, as those measures directly affect the interests of the Syrian people and have a negative impact on the transitional political process, in the context of supporting peace and development in the country. In that context, the Arab Group welcomed last week's announcement by United States President Donald Trump regarding the lifting of sanctions on Syria. That marks a pivotal step towards opening new avenues for economic cooperation between Syria and the international community, contributing to the prosperity, development and stability of the brotherly Syrian people. The Group also commends the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its role in that regard, and we also welcome the European Union's announcement yesterday on lifting economic sanctions imposed on Syria as a means of supporting the Syrian people's efforts towards recovery and the reconstruction of their country.

On the security front, the Arab Group expresses its deep regret over the recent violence in Syria, which undermines the Government's efforts to restore control and extend its sovereignty across its territory. In that regard, the Group strongly condemns the repeated attacks by the Israeli occupation forces against Syrian

territory, including the recent strike near the presidential palace in Damascus, as well as ongoing attempts to interfere in Syria's internal affairs. Those actions pose a serious threat to regional stability and constitute a blatant violation of international law and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. The Arab Group urges the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and to compel the Israeli occupation forces to stop those violations and to respect Syria's sovereignty, and to fully and immediately withdraw from all occupied Syrian territory.

The Group also calls for enhanced regional and international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including Da'esh and other terrorist groups and elements, in order to prevent the resurgence of terrorism or its spread beyond Syria's borders. We further underscore the importance of collaborative efforts in securing the borders and combating the smuggling of drugs and weapons.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms its solidarity with Syria and its people, and we express our full support for both national and international efforts aimed at establishing a secure, unified and sovereign Syrian State, one that reflects the country's rich history and important role in the region. We further emphasize that Syria's security is an essential pillar of Arab security, and that it requires coordinated regional and international efforts to help realize a peaceful and prosperous future that fulfils the aspirations of the Syrian people while safeguarding their dignity and rights.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

**Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye):** We welcome Your Excellency and congratulate the presidency of Greece once again. I would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Pedersen and Mr. Rajasingham for their comprehensive briefings and reiterate our support for their essential work.

As we convene here today, we are presented with a genuine opportunity to support Syria on its journey towards lasting peace, stability and prosperity. Since 8 December 2024, the Syrian Administration has taken concrete and promising steps to restore security and stability across the country. Those steps must be met with decisive and constructive engagement from the international community.

In that regard, we welcome the recent decision by the United States to lift all sanctions on Syria. We also commend the announcements by the United Kingdom and the European Union concerning sanctions. Those are timely and vital developments. Lifting sanctions and alleviating economic pressure on Syria and its people will significantly accelerate reconstruction efforts, which are critical to achieving stabilization, recovery, the return of refugees and, ultimately, reconciliation.

Türkiye has played an active role in diplomatic efforts to help to remove that key obstacle to Syria's recovery. The high-level meeting held by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President Donald Trump, President Ahmed Al-Sharaa and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, as well as the trilateral meeting among Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani in Türkiye, have laid an important foundation for that new phase. We stress the importance of the swift and full implementation of the steps agreed. Any delay would only prolong instability and human suffering.

Comprehensive and sustained reconstruction efforts also remain urgent for Syria. Millions of Syrians continue to live abroad or are displaced internally owing to widespread destruction and the slow pace of rebuilding. Since 8 December 2024, more than half a million Syrians have returned to their homeland. In addition, 1.2 million internally displaced persons have left camps and returned to their areas of origin. However, millions more are still waiting for the right conditions

to return in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner. Türkiye, therefore, calls on the international community to scale up support for reconstruction. Investment in infrastructure, basic services and livelihood creation will directly contribute to regional stability and allow millions of displaced Syrians to return home. We also believe that empowering Syrian institutions and strengthening their capacity is essential for effective governance.

We reaffirm our position that any development in Syria must uphold the country's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on all segments of Syrian society to exercise restraint, refrain from provocations and prioritize calm and stability. Türkiye calls for the immediate and full implementation of the agreement between Damascus and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces, in a manner that ensures a single, centralized Administration across Syria.

Türkiye remains ready to cooperate with the Syrian Administration to secure detention centres and camps in the north-east, and to prevent any resurgence of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, particularly from Da'esh. In that context, Türkiye, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon are coordinating efforts to establish a regional mechanism to combat Da'esh. That is a serious commitment from our side.

We reiterate our call on Israel to cease its actions that violate Syria's sovereignty and threaten regional peace and security, and to withdraw immediately. The full implementation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces must be ensured by the Council.

We welcome the recent announcement by the Syrian Administration on the establishment of a National Commission on Transitional Justice and a National Commission on Missing Persons. Those are significant milestones in addressing the legacy of the conflict and fostering national healing. Transitional justice is not only a moral imperative, but also a practical necessity for durable peace. Victims have the right to truth and justice. Preventing the recurrence of past violations is central to building a Syria that is inclusive and just for all Syrian citizens. A stable and unified Syria, which is at peace with itself and its neighbourhood, and which does not offer a safe haven for terrorist organizations, will support regional security and prosperity.

Türkiye remains committed to working with the Syrian Administration and all partners in supporting the Syrian people as they build a peaceful, unified and prosperous future. Let us seize this moment of hope and turn it into tangible progress on the ground.

Türkiye will always continue to be a good neighbour for Syria and the Syrian people.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Saudia Arabia.

**Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Hellenic Republic on its presidency of the Security Council for this month, and we highly value the exemplary efforts exerted by the Greek Mission in steering the work of the Council and its committees this month. I also thank the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and the Director of the Coordination Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, for their valuable briefings on developments in the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Saudi Arabia emphasizes the importance and centrality of Syria's economic, social, security, development, humanitarian and political stability, which is of

paramount importance in supporting the stability of the entire region. The Kingdom views the recent developments in Syria favourably, given the constructive national movement that is under way in Syrian affairs, as reflected clearly and tangibly by the adoption of a comprehensive regional and international approach. Those developments are in the interest of the Syrian people and are helping to step up the pace of progress on all those tracks, with the expectation of fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people and taking them into a promising future of dignified living.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains as determined as ever to support the brotherly Syrian people through the various ordeals that they have endured. The Kingdom has stood by their side throughout the decisive issues that they have faced since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. The Kingdom has endeavoured to find political solutions at all stages of Syria's internal crises in order to guarantee the country's unity and territorial integrity. My Government has also provided humanitarian assistance over the years to help those affected by conflicts and natural disasters, embodying the deep fraternal ties that unite the Syrian and Saudi Arabian peoples. In that regard, we commend United States President Donald Trump's response to the request of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that United States sanctions against Syria be lifted. We commend His Excellency on that important step towards the reconstruction of Syria and its advancement at the regional and international levels.

We also appreciate the announcement by the United Kingdom and the European Union member States that they will lift the sanctions imposed on Syria, which, without a doubt, has tangibly bolstered the people's confidence in their new leadership and their emerging economy, protecting their national fabric and civil peace, thereby enabling them to move forward towards the desired growth and prosperity. For its part, the Kingdom supports everything that can help realize the aspirations of the Syrian people and calls on the international community to contribute to the reconstruction of Syria in these difficult circumstances, which require redoubled international efforts by all.

My country and the State of Qatar have decided, on their part, to support the payment of private sector salaries in Syria, in addition to supporting the energy sector in order to contribute to reviving the Syrian economy and relaunching the activity of the health and education sectors and of all governmental institutions. That is in addition to the Kingdom's support for, and contribution to, facilitating Syria's reintegration with the World Bank in order to enable it to obtain the necessary resources. The aim is to support the Government's efforts at the policy level, meet early-recovery and reconstruction needs, encourage private sector development and provide job opportunities. Also on the humanitarian front, and as an extension of the Kingdom's efforts in support of food security and early-recovery projects, a joint programme was concluded with the aim of promoting food security across Syria, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme.

In conclusion, the Kingdom emphasizes the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and the need to support the Syrian Government's efforts to achieve security and stability. The Kingdom also condemns the incursion of the Israeli occupation forces into Syrian territory and the raids carried out by the Israeli air force earlier this month in regions of Syria, while reiterating its categorical rejection of all such Israeli attacks targeting the sovereignty, security and stability of the Syrian Arab Republic. We regard those acts as a clear violation of international law and of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. We also emphasize the need to put an end to the flagrant Israeli violations of international law in Syria and the region, which constitute a violation of Syrian sovereignty. Moreover, we caution that the continuation of those violations and extremist Israeli policies will exacerbate the risks of violence, extremism and instability throughout the entire region.

The Kingdom also reiterates its categorical rejection of any partition or fragmentation of Syria and supports the Syrian Government's arduous efforts to achieve national reconciliation. We welcome the convening of the Syrian National Dialogue Conference and the signing of the agreement to integrate all civilian and military institutions into Syrian State institutions. My Government also welcomes all the measures taken by the Syrian leadership to maintain civil peace and the efforts exerted to complete building of State institutions in a manner that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and preserves their national fabric intact under the umbrella of the Syrian State.

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

*The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.*