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New York

President:	Mrs. Balta	(Greece)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Alrowaiei
	China	Mr. Sun Lei
	Colombia	Mrs. Ríos Serna
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mrs. Liolocha
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Latvia	Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes
	Liberia	Mr. Brown II
	Pakistan	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Foster
	United States of America	Ms. Bruce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question in the Middle East

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. George Batah, Founder, Syrian Youth Empowerment Initiative; and Mr. Hajir Maalim, Regional Director, Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa, Plan International Inc.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Cordone.

Mr. Cordone: I am briefing the Council from Damascus following engagements in New York during high-level week, including a meeting between President Ahmad Al-Sharaa and the Secretary-General, who welcomed steady progress in Syria and reaffirmed the United Nations' readiness to support Syria's political transition, economic recovery and reconstruction.

The economic situation is one of the keys to the success of the transition and stability in Syria. Greater availability of goods, investment announcements and renewed financial connections are encouraging. But success will ultimately be measured by tangible improvements in people's daily lives, benefiting all Syrians. For many, essentials have become harder to afford. Recent fuel price increases have driven up transport and production costs, compounding currency depreciation and further eroding purchasing power. Food prices rose by an average of around 30 per cent following the increases. In response to demonstrations across the country, the authorities announced measures to mitigate the impact, including reduced diesel prices. Economic pressures are also affecting essential services. The World Health Organization has highlighted shortages of medicines and medical supplies. Teachers have protested over salaries and working conditions, while disruptions to municipal services have compounded daily hardships.

On the positive side, sanctions relief has opened opportunities for investment and financial collaboration. Finance Minister Barnieh has outlined reforms to strengthen public financial management. The European Union announced €620 million in support and the World Bank has approved $175 million in agriculture projects. Syria will also be well represented at this week's annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund taking place in Bangkok.

The task now is to translate these opportunities into sustained support for Syria's recovery. Syrians expect international political goodwill to turn into financing, technical assistance and projects that deliver tangible benefits to communities. Reforms to strengthen institutions, transparency and equitable growth are also expected. Following on from the meeting with the Secretary-General during the high-level week, we are exploring with the Government the possibility of supporting an international recovery and reconstruction conference, grounded in Syria's priorities.

Recovery also demands investment in Syria's human capital. An estimated 2 million children are still out of school. Damaged facilities, teacher shortages and economic hardship continue to impede access, while the return of displaced families is bringing additional pressures to bear. I welcome efforts to rehabilitate schools and reinstate dismissed teachers. At the same time, university admission guidelines, recently reissued, have caused alarm regarding access to certain fields of study, including reserving degrees in specific institutions to male or female students, a prohibition on joining political parties or organizations as a prerequisite of enrolment and restrictions faced by persons with disabilities. I urge the authorities to review these guidelines, in consultation with all stakeholders, to ensure equal access to higher education, free from direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, disability or political affiliation.

Recent incidents of violence are a reminder of the scale of communal wounds and grievances that contribute to the fragility of Syria's transition. On 30 September, seven people were killed and four injured when gunmen attacked a minibus in Homs. The victims were reportedly Alawites, and witnesses alleged that the attackers questioned passengers about their sectarian identity. I welcome the authorities' announcement of an investigation. It is equally important to reassure affected communities, prevent reprisals and avoid collective blaming.

Concerns over communal security have also been heightened elsewhere. On 3 October, unidentified individuals on motorcycles reportedly entered and opened fire at shops and civilians in Al-Suqaylabiyah, triggering protests by the local Christian community and a security response. There are unresolved tensions since the civil war between the town and surrounding communities. Additionally, tensions rose in the predominantly Shiite town of Nubl, following reports of a kidnapping that the authority subsequently said was fabricated. Once again, such incidents illustrate how quickly local disputes and rumours can acquire a sectarian dimension, underscoring the need to respond promptly and address communal grievances, prevent incitement and rebuild trust.

In this context, I commend the initiative taken by the Government to develop a national action plan against hate speech, which remains a serious concern across Syrian society. It must be confronted and prevented from escalating into incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, while respecting freedom of expression, in accordance with international law. Yesterday, my Office and United Nations experts facilitated a workshop, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, to begin such a process. The United Nations will continue to cooperate with the authorities in this regard, including by supporting inclusive consultations.

Syria continues to confront attacks by Da'esh, such as the one on 17 September in Dar'a Governorate, resulting in the killing of three members of the internal security forces. Gas pipelines were also reportedly sabotaged in Dayr al-Zawr on 28 September and Homs on 7 October. I welcome the international pledges this month in Rome of more than $75 million in support of counter-terrorism efforts in Syria.

Israeli military activities in southern Syria continued on a daily basis. They include expanding engineering and construction works, checkpoints, searches, detentions and shootings. I echo the concerns expressed last week by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights about the continuing impact of such activities on civilians, including the killing, on 5 October, of a man near an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military position. There were other incidents of IDF shootings of civilians and detentions, with a total of 49 individuals reportedly remaining in Israeli custody. On 23 September, 14 members of a settler group crossed the ceasefire line before Israeli forces returned them.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for an end to the violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and for full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Diplomacy is the only way to reach agreement on security arrangements consistent with international law.

In Suwayda', there were fewer violent incidents along contact lines this month, and movement along the Damascus-Suwayda' highway improved. However, the political stalemate continues. Tensions persist among Druze factions over the future of Suwayda' and its relationship with Damascus. At a demonstration on 7 October, some participants displayed Israeli flags, although that should not be seen as representative of the wider Druze community.

Beyond those political divisions, serious humanitarian and human rights concerns remain unresolved in Suwayda'. They include the educational future of more than 14,000 Suwayda' students, the situation of detainees and missing persons and obstacles to the return of displaced Druze and Bedouin families, all of which are compounding mistrust among communities.

Accountability is equally important to rebuilding trust. Judicial proceedings related to violations committed during the violence of July last year have commenced, and sentences have been issued in a number of cases involving all parties. I welcome those steps. Nevertheless, continued attention to fair trial safeguards, including the right to a defence, remains important to strengthening confidence in the judicial process.

Ultimately, and despite foreign interference, a durable resolution in Suwayda' requires a Syrian-Syrian dialogue to address local concerns within the framework of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. My Office stands ready to support efforts to revive the September 2025 road map, restoring State authority while addressing legitimate community grievances.

In the north-east, implementation of the 29 January agreement continues, including the gradual integration of former Syrian Democratic Forces personnel into State institutions and the transfer of salary payments to Damascus. Challenges remain regarding the number of personnel integrated and the unresolved status of the Women's Protection Units. Education in the Kurdish language and the recognition of school certificates are still under discussion, while housing, land and property disputes remain, impeding returns.

Demonstrations in Hasakah calling on the Government to assert its sovereignty drew contrasting reactions from Arab and Kurdish communities, underscoring the importance of advancing integration through dialogue rather than confrontation.

Institutional reform and development are another important part of Syria's transition. On 16 September, the People's Assembly passed legislation abolishing the Al-Assad-era Counter-terrorism Court, nullifying its rulings and establishing mechanisms for property restitution. Ministerial hearings on education and energy were early examples of the Assembly's emerging oversight role.

Work is also continuing on draft transitional justice legislation. It will be vital that the legislation ensure impartial accountability, addressing individual responsibility regardless of the identity of the victims or perpetrators and respecting due process. We look forward to the submission of the draft law for debate and adoption by the People's Assembly. The United Nations stands ready to advise on that and other legislative drafts, in full respect of Syrian leadership and ownership. I also encourage the strengthening of cooperation between Syrian institutions and international mechanisms supporting transitional justice.

Looking ahead, my Office continues to engage with the authorities in discussions on their plans for future electoral events and United Nations support. The Council will also recall that the Constitutional Declaration envisages the drafting and adoption of a permanent constitution during the transitional period. We continue to underline the importance of an early start to such a process, ensuring that it is inclusive, transparent and participatory, and are ready to support it. It will be especially important in affirming the equal rights of women and Syria's diverse communities.

On 5 October, the authorities published a draft law governing non-governmental organizations, reportedly informed by contributions from some 1,000 civil society representatives, which is welcome. I encourage the authorities to maximize further meaningful consultation and ensure that the final legislation protects civic space, enabling organizations to operate freely.

Civil society representatives have continued to call for stronger representation of women in public institutions, including a target of 30 per cent. The recent graduation of 150 female police officers is a welcome step towards greater participation in the security sector. We encourage broader efforts to ensure that women are meaningfully represented in decision-making and play a full role in public life.

Let me conclude by reiterating my Office's readiness to develop our cooperation with the Syrian Government, working from inside Syria and seeking to effectively connect Syrian and international efforts to ensure the success of a Syrian-led and -owned transition.

The President: I thank Mr. Cordone for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yahya.

Mr. Yahya: I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone for his continued engagement on behalf of the people of Syria.

Syria is at a critical juncture. Since January 2025, we have seen important signs of progress. More Syrians are returning home. Recovery is real. Across the country, people are starting to believe that they can rebuild lives that have been shattered by years of conflict. Since December 2024, more than 1.82 million Syrian refugees and 2.04 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their areas of origin. Those returns reflect the determination of Syrians to shape their own future.

However, those returns do not mean that humanitarian needs are over. For many families, they mark the beginning of a new struggle. Homes have been damaged or destroyed. Jobs are scarce. Schools, hospitals, water systems and power networks need repair. Many returnees still depend on humanitarian assistance as they try to rebuild their lives.

Among IDPs, returnees and host communities, protection risks remain high. They include gender-based violence, disputes over housing, land and property rights and a lack of civil documentation. More than 5.5 million people remain displaced inside Syria, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. More than 770,000 people still live in camps. Of those, three quarters are women and children. Nearly 30,000 persons with disabilities face serious barriers to accessing essential services, mobility support and lasting solutions.

As we move to support returns and the transition to recovery, we must not lose sight of the families and individuals who remain at risk and in need of support. Winter risks making the reality worse for IDPs and many returnees. Displacement sites are especially exposed to harsh weather. Tents and inadequate heating put children's

health at particular risk with the start of winter. The United Nations and our humanitarian partners are finalizing a winter plan to protect the most vulnerable. Without timely funding, they will face another severe winter without life-saving support.

Mines and explosive ordnance stand directly in the way of returns and recovery. Since the Council last met on Syria (see S/PV.10225), at least 14 people have been killed and 41 injured in explosive ordnance incidents. As of December 2024, 2,500 casualties have been reported, including over 900 people killed. Children account for one in every three deaths from explosive ordnance. While the vast majority of incidents take place in areas of high levels of return and on agricultural or grazing lands, the reality is simple: families returning home are exposed to risk of death and injury. Farmers cannot safely work their land. Children cannot safely travel to school. Communities cannot rebuild. The “no mines” initiative is not simply a safety measure; it is a prerequisite for building Syria’s future.

Emergency aid alone is not enough. We must also invest in lasting solutions. As was highlighted during the recent high-level week event on Syria, the “no camps initiative” hosted by the Syrian Permanent Mission means more than just closing physical camps; it means eliminating the need for camps by building conditions that allow people to genuinely and sustainably return. Families need safe homes. They need schools, hospitals, jobs, livelihoods, demining and protection services. Crucially, humanitarian development and financial partners must work together with the Government to meet these basic requirements and make a transition out of humanitarian need possible. The goal must not be simply to help families to return but to concretely help them stay and rebuild their lives.

The 2026 humanitarian needs and response plan is only 32 per cent funded. It should not be surprising how that affects humanitarian action and support. Despite severe funding shortages, humanitarian organizations continue to deliver across Syria. Since the beginning of the year, an average of 2.4 million people have received emergency assistance each month, including food, medicine, clean water, protection services, nutrition and emergency shelter. Syrian organizations are at the heart of these efforts. They make up nearly 60 per cent of our partners on the ground. The opportunity in Syria is real but without investment it risks becoming a missed opportunity.

My asks are straightforward.

First, sustain humanitarian funding and support the most vulnerable. Millions still depend on life-saving assistance, and winter is approaching fast.

Secondly, invest in the Syrian people and in lasting solutions, including the Government’s “no camps” and “no mines” initiatives. Invest in basic services and in conditions needed for sustainable returns. Invest in an economy that can offer Syria a more sustainable future.

Lastly, protect Syria from renewed instability and safeguard the progress already made. The people of Syria deserve a chance not only to survive but also to rebuild and prosper. We must not allow this opportunity to slip away.

The President: I thank Mr. Yahya for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Batah.

Mr. Batah: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to address the Council.

My name is George Batah. I am a co-founder of Syrian Youth Empowerment, a college-access organization established in 2016 by Syrian students and refugees in

the United States. We were founded on a simple belief: education is not only a personal opportunity; it is one of the foundations of a peaceful, prosperous and self-reliant Syria. With the support of hundreds of mentors and volunteers, Syrian and non-Syrian alike, we have helped more than 400 students access higher education. Together, we have helped generate more than $90 million in scholarships at leading universities in 12 countries, including Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, the University of Cambridge, the University of British Columbia, Cornell University and many more. These students are not simply scholarship recipients. They are the future doctors, engineers, educators, researchers, entrepreneurs and public servants. They are part of the generation that will help to rebuild Syria.

For more than 14 years the Syrian people have endured war, displacement, destruction and immense loss. The Al-Assad regime devastated our communities, damaged education infrastructure and contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions of Syrians just like me to seek refuge around the world. But it did not destroy the determination of the Syrian people. It did not destroy our commitment to education. It did not erase Syria's history, civilization or desire to contribute to the world.

I am proud to speak to the Council today from Damascus, to speak freely for the first time in my life, after 14 long years away from my family, my hometown and my people. What I am witnessing here is extraordinary. I would argue that it is the most hopeful and exciting place on earth at the moment. There is a powerful energy across the country. People are looking for opportunity, for growth, for economic development and most importantly for the chance to rebuild our country. We are also working to renew the meaning of being Syrian — a shared identity grounded in dignity, responsibility, creativity and hope.

This moment presents a historic opportunity, but the challenges remain enormous. After more than 14 years of war, approximately 2.7 million Syrian children remain out of school, and around 8,000 schools are non-functional. Many other schools are overcrowded, lack basic water and sanitation services or are being used as shelters by displaced families. Millions of children are therefore growing up without consistent access to safe, quality learning. Every year outside school increases the risk of child labour, early marriage, exploitation, recruitment and permanent exclusion from education and the workforce. Children who have already lost years of learning need more than a school building. They need accelerated learning, psychological support, trained teachers, safe transportation, learning materials and a realistic pathway back to the education system.

Universities have also been deeply affected. Campuses and student housing have been damaged, attacked or repurposed. Insecurity and checkpoints have made travel dangerous for students and staff. Large numbers of academics and students have been displaced or forced to leave the country, weakening teaching, research and professional training. The loss of libraries, equipment and reliable electricity has further reduced academic capacity. Economic hardship, interrupted documentation and declining household incomes have made university attendance increasingly difficult. Many young Syrians have been unable to complete their degrees, while Syria has lost much of the skilled workforce needed for recovery. Protecting and rebuilding universities is therefore not only an education priority; it is also essential to restoring Syria's health, engineering, legal, scientific, economic and public service institutions.

The challenges are immense, but there has never been a more important time to invest in Syria's education system. The Syrian people are ready. Young people are ready. Communities are ready. Government institutions are increasingly working with civil society organizations and international partners to respond to the urgent needs

and plan for recovery. What Syria needs now is partnership through investment that is coordinated, transparent, inclusive and focused on long-term capacity, not only emergency relief. I urge Member States, international financial institutions, universities, philanthropic organizations and the private sector to support five priorities.

First, invest in repairing and reopening schools and universities, including laboratories, libraries, student housing, water systems, electricity and digital infrastructure.

Secondly, support teachers, professors, administrators and researchers through training, fair compensation, psychosocial support and opportunities to reconnect with the global academic community.

Thirdly, expand scholarships, fellowships, distance learning and degree-completion programmes for Syrian students inside and outside Syria.

Fourthly, recognize the skills and qualifications of Syrians who studied during displacement must be recognized and create pathways for refugees and members of the diaspora who want to return and contribute.

Fifthly, ensure that education recovery is inclusive, reaching girls, children with disabilities, displaced communities, rural areas and students who have missed several years of school. Education is one of the few investments that strengthens every other sector at the same time. It improves health outcomes, creates employment, supports accountable institutions, strengthens social cohesion and gives young people a reason to build their future at home.

Syria can become a powerful example of how a society rebuilds after war, not by forgetting its wounds, but by transforming them into a commitment to opportunity, dignity and peace. I have seen what Syrian students can achieve and are capable of when they are given access, mentorship and belief. The same potential exists across the country.

The international community should not wait for Syria to become fully rebuilt before investing in its people. Investment in education is how rebuilding begins. I urge members to invest in Syria, support its growth and stand with its efforts to restore its education infrastructure and human capacity. The Syrian people have preserved their will to learn, create and rebuild. With meaningful partnership, we can help build not only a stronger Syria, but a more peaceful and prosperous region.

The President: I thank Mr. Batah for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Maalim.

Mr. Maalim: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council today.

My name is Hajir Maalim, and I am the Regional Director at Plan International Inc, a humanitarian and development organization working in 80 countries, including Syria. Today, I would like to draw the Council's attention to education in Syria and what is at stake for children at this pivotal moment in the country's future.

Syria stands at a critical moment of transition. As families begin to return and communities seek to rebuild after years of conflict, education must be recognized as essential infrastructure for recovery. The choices made now will determine whether a generation of Syrian children can rebuild their lives or whether years of lost learning will continue to deepen inequality, vulnerability and instability.

During my recent visit to Syria, I met parents who were doing everything possible to keep their children in learning, even when that meant sending them to war-

damaged schools with few resources and inadequate facilities. Yet, what struck me was not the devastation, but the determination of the Syrian people. I saw children sitting on the ground under the scorching sun, singing school songs with hope and resilience. I witnessed the same determination among Syrian refugee children in Azraq camp in Jordan, who dream of returning home but fear that their education may be interrupted or lost altogether. I also met Syrian officials developing a national youth strategy that recognizes a simple but vital truth: education must go beyond classroom learning to equip young people with the skills, agency and opportunities they need to contribute to their country's future.

These experiences reinforce one clear message: education must be at the centre of Syria's recovery, return and peacebuilding agenda. This is particularly urgent as large numbers of displaced Syrians and refugees return to communities in which education services are already under immense strain. Families are far more likely to return and remain when children can access education. For many, the presence of a functioning school, qualified teachers and recognized pathways back into formal learning is a decisive factor in whether return is sustainable. Education is also one of the most effective investments in peace and stability. Communities are more resilient when children are learning rather than being exposed to child labour, exploitation, recruitment or early marriage.

Education builds social cohesion, strengthens resilience and lays the foundations for recovery and long-term development. For this reason, the Council should act on its commitments under resolution 2601 (2021), which reaffirms the right to education and its contribution to sustainable peace and security, by placing safe and equitable access to education at the centre of its engagement on Syria. We must place the most vulnerable children at the heart of the response, particularly girls, displaced and returnee children, children with disabilities and those who have lost years of learning due to conflict.

Today, around 2.7 million children remain out of school, while nearly 8,000 schools are non-functional or require urgent rehabilitation. Millions remain out of school because of protection concerns, administrative barriers and inability to afford schooling. Returnee children often face additional barriers related to documentation, recognition of previous learning, different curricula and long periods outside formal education. Removing these barriers and ensuring every child can learn safely and with dignity must be our collective priority. We must also invest in safe, protective and inclusive learning environments. Schools are more than places of learning. They are spaces of protection, healing and hope. During my visit to rural Damascus, I saw first-hand how schools can provide psychosocial support, life skills and a sense of normalcy for children recovering from years of conflict.

Attention must be given to preventing violence, discrimination and exclusion while ensuring that children, and particularly girls, can continue their education without interruption. Safety must extend beyond the school gate. Explosive ordnance contamination continues to threaten children's lives and restrict safe access to schools and essential services in many communities.

Rebuilding Syria's education system will require far more than repairing damaged classrooms. It will require investment in teachers, education institutions, learning quality, accelerated and catch-up learning programmes and flexible, accredited pathways for children whose education has been disrupted. Without these investments, an entire generation risks being left behind even if school buildings are rebuilt. Critically, Syria's education sector requires predictable and sustained financing.

Despite overwhelming evidence that education reduces protection risks, strengthens social cohesion, supports recovery and contributes to stability, the education sector remains severely underfunded. At present, only 16.5 per cent of the humanitarian response plan's education requirement of $337 million has been funded. Yet, in the context of Syria's recovery, $337 million is a modest investment with guaranteed transformative returns. The international community must view education as a strategic investment in peace.

The Council should also encourage sustained support for integrated programmes that link education with child protection, mental health, psychosocial support, livelihoods and community recovery. It should also encourage investment in national and local education capacity so that recovery strengthens the system as a whole.

Ultimately, the success of Syria's recovery will be measured by the opportunities available to its children and young people. Sustainable peace will depend on whether they can access quality education, develop the skills needed for the future and play a meaningful role in rebuilding their communities.

My message to the Council is a call to action: education is a peacebuilding, protection and stabilization imperative. As Syria rebuilds, education must be linked to skills development, youth leadership, psychosocial well-being, sports and pathways to decent work. Education must remain accessible to children wherever they are on their journey, whether displaced, returning home or rebuilding their lives in communities affected by years of conflict. Investing in children and young people today is one of the most effective actions the international community can take to secure Syria's long-term stability, recovery and peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Maalim for his briefing.

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

Ms. Bruce (United States of America): I thank today's briefers. The United States welcomes the ongoing progress that the Syrian authorities continue to make on political, humanitarian and security priorities.

We welcomed President Al-Sharaa and the Syrian delegation back to New York for General Assembly high-level week last month, when Syria joined other regional partners in a meeting of the member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and other countries, which included a discussion of shared efforts to counter Iran's malign influence throughout the region. Justice and accountability for missing Americans remain a top United States priority; and the United States and Syria co-hosted an event highlighting the voices of families of the missing, their ongoing need for answers and closure, and the critical need for accountability.

We were also pleased to participate in the repatriation of 36 stolen Syrian antiquities to the Syrian people. We encourage Member States to cooperate with Syria to prevent and interdict antiquities trafficking, not only to safeguard Syria's heritage, but also to deny terrorists and criminals a source of financing.

The United States was proud to co-chair, alongside Italy, an ad hoc meeting earlier this month of the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) , including the Government of Syria. This meeting provided an opportunity to mark the end of Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and to thank Syria for progress in degrading ISIS. Operation Inherent Resolve has achieved its central military purpose: ISIS no longer controls territory in Iraq or Syria, and its ranks have been decimated in both countries.

We celebrate that the Coalition has a partner in Damascus that recognizes the ISIS threat and is determined to work with the Coalition to diminish it. Lasting security in Syria depends on strengthening inclusive, sovereign State institutions that are capable of representing and protecting all communities, so that they can partake equally in their country's future.

Last week, we welcomed the Syrian Minister of Finance and Governor of the Central Bank to New York for discussions with United States financial sector representatives on the critical steps that Syria has taken to reintegrate its financial system into the global economy. In Suwayda', we reaffirm our support for the trilateral road map announced by the United States, Syria and Jordan. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and continue the implementation of the road map towards accountability, security, reconciliation and the safe return of displaced Syrians. We continue to encourage Israel and Syria to exercise restraint and pursue de-escalation. The United States remains engaged with both countries to support dialogue and peaceful solutions.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mohamed Yahya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive briefings on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We have listened carefully to the representatives of civil society. At the same time, we must emphasize that such speakers should present information to the Security Council regarding issues of international peace and security, whereas other topics should be discussed in detail in specialized United Nations forums.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the Syrian authorities to overcome the numerous challenges of the transition period. Over the past two years or so, the Syrian Government has achieved some success. However, the overall situation in the country remains difficult. Major tasks — such as eradicating terrorism, strengthening State institutions and rebuilding an economy devastated by years of crisis — remain pressing. This situation is compounded by Israel's aggressive external interference. We would like to elaborate on those points.

We consider it fundamentally important that the State-building process initiated by the Syrian leadership takes into account the interests of all ethnic and religious groups within Syrian society. We support the authorities' stated commitment to protecting the rights of all citizens, without exception — whether they are the population of the southern province of Suwayda' or the residents of the area east of the Euphrates. We are closely monitoring the reintegration process in the north-east, including the intra-Syrian consultations held in October regarding specific aspects of law enforcement and judicial system operations, as well as issues of education. We hope that the good-faith implementation of the agreement between Damascus and the former Syrian Democratic Forces will lead to long-term stabilization east of the Euphrates and prevent clashes between the Arab and Kurdish populations, which we have observed with concern in Hasakah province since late September.

Damascus' counter-terrorism campaign deserves unequivocal support. We must highlight the recent operation to apprehend a senior Da'esh leader in the Damascus region, who was implicated, among other things, in last year's bloody terrorist attack in Homs. The discovery of new terrorist cells and the grim overall statistics regarding their attacks confirm that Da'esh militants still retain significant combat capabilities in Syria. We look to the Syrian authorities to take further decisive steps to eliminate the terrorist underground, including foreign terrorist fighters.

Since the Council's previous meeting on Syria (see S/PV.10215), United Nations experts have not recorded any deterioration in the country's humanitarian situation.

However, the absence of bad news does not necessarily indicate positive momentum. Syria still requires assistance to restore key socioeconomic sectors. Much remains to be done for the people to return to a truly peaceful life. We trust that the experience and projects of relevant United Nations agencies and specialized bodies will prove effective in that regard.

We are monitoring, with cautious optimism, the return of Syrians to their places of origin. This process requires the restoration of infrastructure and housing, which is a challenging task for a country that has long suffered under the yoke of illegal sanctions and has even been prevented from importing basic construction machinery. We recognize that the situation cannot be remedied overnight. In this regard, the priority must remain a stable and predictable transition from humanitarian aid to development assistance — a shift for which we have long advocated. We expect the "Syria Without Camps" initiative mentioned at today's meeting to be implemented in precisely that spirit.

We share concerns regarding persistent landmine contamination, particularly in the context of ensuring food security. Farmers across the globe are currently preparing for the new harvest season. However, the restoration of agriculture, the revitalization of villages and the return of farmers to normal life are impossible while there are traces of war on the ground. Amid the drought that the country has faced all summer, it is unacceptable that some fields remain inaccessible to farmers. For Syria to regain its former role as the breadbasket of the Middle East, identifying and destroying unexploded ordnance and landmines remains a key priority.

Improving the humanitarian situation requires adequate and predictable funding. We call for the allocation of funds to be guided by the priority needs of the Syrian people and for operations to be closely coordinated with the Syrian Government. This is the only way to ensure effective coordination between international and national efforts to rebuild the country.

It is clear that the wide range of challenges in the humanitarian, military and political spheres requires the full attention of the Government, international support and the absence of external irritants. This seems to be a truism, yet some countries deliberately choose to ignore it. We are referring to the confrontational policy of Israel, whose illegal activities on Syrian territory are becoming increasingly systematic and persistent. It employ all types of coercive measures, including the creeping occupation of the country's southern regions, regular raids deep into Syrian territory that result in the deaths of local residents and the arbitrary detentions of civilians.

We urge West Jerusalem to stop undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, to immediately withdraw from the occupied territories, including the Golan Heights, and to quit making provocative statements threatening to expand the occupation area. West Jerusalem has specific obligations under both the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and relevant resolutions, which must be respected. We recall that the Council members' common position on this matter was reaffirmed following the consultations on 8 October. We expect that the Israeli side will hear the unified voice of the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, as well as the calls for peaceful coexistence with its neighbours that have been made in the Chamber.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone, Assistant Secretary-General Yahya, Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim for their briefings. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya to the Council.

Nine months into 2026, the security situation within Syria remains fragile, as we were reminded on 30 September, when seven people were killed in an attack on a

bus in Homs. Terrorist groups continue to pose a serious threat, and inter-sectarian violence continues to take place. We commend Syria for its efforts to combat terrorism, including the Syrian authorities' efforts to stop planned attacks by Da'esh on places of worship just last week.

We are further encouraged by the integration of the former Syrian Democratic Forces into the Syrian army. In this connection, we continue to call for inclusive security sector reform and look forward to hearing updates about how this reform process will proceed.

An inclusive political process encompassing all components of Syrian society is fundamental to achieving lasting peace. Denmark supports Syria's efforts towards a political transition and a comprehensive transitional justice process in line with international standards. This should be implemented with a clear and transparent road map, along with sound institutional checks and balances.

The full participation of women, minorities, young people and civil society remains essential. In parallel with this political transition, there is an urgent need for recovery and reconstruction. After more than a decade of war, we recognize the immense scale of these needs, and we echo President Al Sharaa's call in his address to the General Assembly for Syria's partners to support the country in this endeavour.

We thank all our briefers today for underscoring that education is central to Syria's future and its future stability and security. A generation of Syrian children has lost years of schooling, and recovery will not succeed unless that is reversed. We therefore urge that education be placed at the heart of Syria's national recovery, with sustained protection for children, safe and equal access to schools across the whole country and the funding and support needed to rebuild the education system at all levels.

Denmark and the European Union (EU), for our part, are already stepping up. Just two weeks ago, the EU's High Representative visited Syria and voiced Europe's support for recovery efforts as a foundation for voluntary and dignified returns. She also stressed that successful transition depends on national reconciliation and accountability.

In addition to the European Union's comprehensive assistance, Denmark also supports Syria's recovery bilaterally. In 2026 alone, Denmark expects to commit approximately $76 million through a combination of early recovery, stabilization, and humanitarian and migration activities.

The continued presence of mines and unexploded remnants of war remain a major obstacle to recovery, as we just heard from Assistant Secretary-General Yahya. Denmark is proud to support various initiatives, both through the United Nations and Danish non-governmental organizations, undertaking humanitarian mine clearing and assisting the Syrian authorities with mine clearing-capabilities and training. We also support the Syrian authorities' "no camps, no tents" initiative through our humanitarian efforts and recovery support.

In closing, Syria remains on an encouraging trajectory despite the many internal challenges. The international community should do all it can to make this transition succeed. However, major external challenges remain and continue to threaten the country's fragile transitional process. The continued Israeli presence in southern Syria poses an imminent risk to the stability of Syria, as well as the region. We call on Israel to withdraw from Syrian territory and to comply fully with its obligations under the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Denmark once again reiterates its full support for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We reaffirm our support for a diplomatic solution to address the security of southern Syria and hope for the swift resumption of the Syria-Israel talks to this end.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): We thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Yahya for their briefings. We also take note of the remarks made by Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim. We welcome the participation of Syria, Türkiye and Libya in today's meeting.

Today, amid the challenges of recovery and reconstruction, there is a renewed sense of hope in Syria. A country that has witnessed years of conflict is steadily reclaiming its rightful place in the region and the wider international community. Its renewed diplomatic engagement, the restoration of national institutions and the gradual revival of economic activity offer highly encouraging signs of a new chapter in Syria's history. Pakistan shares in this optimism. Our warm and fraternal ties with Syria continue to grow. The leadership of our two countries recently met on the sidelines of the General Assembly high-level week, reaffirming our shared commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations.

Allow me to emphasize four points.

First, Pakistan welcomes the Syrian Government's efforts towards national reconciliation, inclusive governance and the advancement of the political transition. Syria's unity and diversity are mutually reinforcing. In this context, we welcome the progress in engagement with the Syrian Defence Forces and hope that outstanding challenges, including the situation in Suwayda', will be addressed through dialogue, accommodation and peaceful engagement, with full respect for Syria's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Secondly, Syria's reconstruction and economic revival deserve sustained international support. The lifting of sanctions by the United States and the European Union, together with expanding investment and economic partnerships with friendly and brotherly countries, particularly countries in the region and European partners, will provide an important impetus to Syria's recovery and development. At the same time, sustained humanitarian assistance remains essential to addressing the needs of the Syrian people.

Thirdly, the continuing threat posed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups, including foreign terrorist fighters, requires sustained vigilance. We support Syria's efforts to counter terrorism, consolidate security and strengthen national institutions.

Fourthly, it is deeply regrettable that, even as Syria pursues national reconciliation and economic recovery, continued Israeli military actions threaten to undermine these efforts. These illegal actions are not only flagrant violations of international law and Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are also profoundly counterproductive to the prospects for regional peace and stability. While Syria works to consolidate peace and recovery, such violations serve only to create further instability. They must cease. We reiterate our call for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Syrian territory and full respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The occupied Syrian Golan remains Syrian territory under international law and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

We appreciate the constructive and measured engagement of the Syrian leadership in wisely navigating the country's challenges amid a complex regional situation. Pakistan will remain a steadfast friend and partner of Syria. Our fraternal relations, rooted in shared cultural bonds and mutual respect, will continue to deepen and flourish. The people of Pakistan will continue to stand in solidarity and friendship with their Syrian brothers and sisters.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Deputy Special Envoy, Mr. Claudio Cordone, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim for their briefings.

Since our most recent meeting (see S/PV.10225), the high-level week marked a new stage of Syria's return to the international community. Addressing the General Assembly, the Syrian President once again demonstrated that his country's diplomatic isolation has come to an end and that it is determined to act as an active and committed member of the international community.

The recent resolution of the Syrian nuclear issue, made possible by accelerated cooperation between the Syrian authorities and the International Atomic Energy Agency, confirmed that this political commitment is translating/being translated into concrete action on the most critical issues.

Over the past year, Syria has made significant progress, which we welcome. On the domestic front, the foundations of a new Syrian State are being laid, with the formation of the People's Assembly and the launch of work on transitional justice. Internationally, Syria has forged strategic relations with numerous States and has sought to improve its relations with its neighbours. It continues to exercise restraint in the face of regional escalation and is positioning itself as a pole of stability within the region. These advances constitute key steps towards an inclusive, protective and secure transition, which it is our Council's duty to support.

Among the key issues in this regard are a number of political, economic and diplomatic priorities. First and foremost, with regard to civil peace, we commend the Syrian authorities for their efforts in the fight against terrorism, including as part of the international counter-Da'esh coalition, even as the threat remains very real. France condemns the attack on 30 September against a bus carrying civilians in the Homs region, which claimed the lives of several Alawite victims. This attack serves as a reminder of the need to continue consolidating a united and pluralistic State that respects all its constituent groups. Similarly, the situation in Suwayda', more than a year after the conclusion of a road map to end the crisis, remains untenable, particularly for the Druze community.

With regard to the full and equal inclusion of women in the life of the country, France is concerned about the decision to exclude female students from certain technical education courses. We call upon the authorities to guarantee women and girls equal access to education and employment and to public life.

Next, I turn to the ability of all inhabitants of a diverse and multifaceted Syria to enjoy their fundamental freedoms. In this regard, the cultural and linguistic rights of the Kurds must be upheld.

Finally, on the issue of reconstruction, while 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons have returned home, humanitarian action, particularly in the area of demining, remains a prerequisite for recovery and reconstruction. The lifting of sanctions should lead to a return of investment. The prospect of an international conference on the reconstruction of Syria, as desired by the Syrian authorities, will make it possible to coordinate the international community's efforts. More generally, we reiterate our support for the United Nations, which remains engaged in support of Syria, both politically and in humanitarian terms.

It is essential for the Security Council to fully assume its responsibility to ensure full respect for Syria's sovereignty. Attempts to destabilize Syria undermine the efforts of the Syrian authorities and threaten the stability of the entire region. We call on Israel to cease its incursions into Syrian territory and to withdraw from the

positions it has occupied since December 2024, in accordance with the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. A stable Syria, integrated into its regional environment, is the best scenario for the security of both parties.

France will remain committed to standing with the Syrian people to support this path towards a sovereign, pluralistic, peaceful and prosperous Syria.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Claudio Cordone; the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mohamed Yahya; the co-founder of the Syrian Youth Empowerment Initiative, Mr. George Batah; and Mr. Hajir Maalim, Regional Director for the Middle East and Eastern and Southern Africa at Plan International Inc., for their briefings. We also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and Libya, who honour us with their participation.

On 8 October, the Council issued a statement in which it reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and urged all parties to respect and fully implement the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Panama firmly aligns itself with this position and reiterates the importance of full compliance with the Agreement and respect for the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

After years of conflict, Syria needs to preserve the political space and all available resources for its recovery. In a regional context marked by increasing escalation, we consider it essential to keep the country out of all regional conflicts. Syria's stability cannot be assessed solely on the basis of a reduction in hostilities, but also on the basis of the State's ability to meet the needs of its population. In this regard, economic recovery is an indispensable component in consolidating the country's stability. The rehabilitation of infrastructure, the restoration of basic services and the creation of economic opportunities are essential to improving the living conditions of the population and laying the foundations for a sustainable recovery. Similarly, the humanitarian response and the creation of conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons are key priorities.

Furthermore, the onset of winter will exacerbate the needs of millions of people, particularly those living in precarious conditions in terms of shelter, heating and sanitation. It is essential to step up winter assistance and guarantee sufficient resources to meet humanitarian needs, which continue to far exceed the available funding. Unity in Syria must also be built through concrete guarantees for all its citizens, regardless of their origin, community or place of residence. Education is an essential part of this effort.

In Suwayda' Governorate, tensions have affected students' access to examinations and the continuity of education. According to recent reports, out of the approximately 13,700 students expected to complete their examinations in 2026, only 150 have been able to do so. We commend the United Nations for its noteworthy efforts to address this situation and urge all parties to implement the 2025 Suwayda' road map, prioritize student well-being and ensure the continuity of education through inclusive solutions. At the same time, it is important that efforts aimed at addressing educational needs in Suwayda' be situated within a broader national vision. The recovery of Syria's education system must benefit all children and young people across the country, including those who sought refuge abroad because of the conflict, as well as those who remain in communities affected by displacement and the destruction of infrastructure.

For the Syrian people, the construction of a modern, inclusive State governed by the rule of law represents an aspiration forged through decades of sacrifice.

Honouring that legacy requires a transition that ensures justice for victims and lays the foundations for a State that protects all citizens and where no one is above the law.

Ms. Foster (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone, Assistant Secretary-General Yahya, Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim for their briefings.

The United Kingdom welcomes the progress that Syria has made in recent months. President Al-Sharaa's participation during the General Assembly high-level week was an important demonstration of Syria's continued engagement with international partners as the country works towards a more peaceful, stable and prosperous future.

In this regard, I will make three points.

First, economic recovery is essential to Syria's future. Many Syrians continue to face significant economic hardship, including rising living costs and pressure on household incomes. Political progress must increasingly be accompanied by tangible improvements in people's lives. We therefore welcome the Syrian Government's efforts to attract investment, strengthen regional economic ties and support reconstruction and livelihoods. The international community should continue to support measures that restore economic opportunity, improve basic services and create conditions for sustainable recovery, including for displaced Syrians to return home. For our part, the United Kingdom is committed to supporting Syria's recovery. We have allocated $90 million this financial year, including support for education, entrepreneurship, agriculture and livelihoods. This will help to create jobs, address continuing humanitarian needs and build confidence in Syria's future.

Secondly, recent reports of sectarian tensions and violence underline the importance of ensuring that Syria's political progress remains inclusive. Lasting stability depends on all Syrians having confidence that their rights and security will be protected and that they have a stake in their country's future. The United Kingdom therefore continues to emphasize the importance of inclusive governance, meaningful participation by all communities and credible transitional justice processes. Accountability and equal protection are essential to building trust and preventing renewed instability.

Thirdly, respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains essential to long-term stability, political progress and economic recovery. In that regard, I reaffirm the United Kingdom's long-standing position that we consider the Golan Heights to be occupied Syrian territory.

The progress achieved so far is real, but it is not yet secure. The task now is to translate political progress into economic opportunity, inclusive governance and lasting stability for all Syrians. The United Kingdom will continue to support that effort.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their important briefings. We have taken note of the statements made by the civil society representatives, Mr. George Batah and Mr. Hajir Maalim. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya and the Republic of Türkiye in today's meeting.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its steadfast position in support of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic, considering this a fundamental pillar for achieving security and stability,

creating the conditions conducive to the country's recovery and restoring its role at the regional and international levels.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its firm stance regarding Israeli attacks and incursions into Syrian territories, including the recent actions involving the so-called Sufa 53 Line, viewing them as violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity and breaches of the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Kingdom emphasizes the importance of avoiding any steps that could escalate tensions or impose a new reality on the ground. We emphasize the necessity of Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Syrian territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and the need to adhere to the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and to relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 497 (1981). We also underscore the importance of continuing diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation and enhance security and stability in the region. The Kingdom of Bahrain commends the role played by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and stresses the need to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of its personnel, enabling the Force to fully execute its mandate.

At the political and developmental levels, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the importance of continuing to support the Syrian Government's efforts to consolidate stability, foster national reconciliation, uphold the rule of law and promote civil peace and coexistence. We emphasize the need to ensure the participation of all segments of Syrian society in shaping their country's future.

The Kingdom supports national efforts to achieve transitional justice and address the issue of missing persons, thereby fostering trust and reconciliation. We support efforts to lift sanctions against Syria in order to enable the brotherly Syrian people to rebuild and recover. Furthermore, we emphasize the need to translate political and developmental support for Syria into practical and tangible steps that strengthen State institutions, drive economic recovery and reconstruction and improve living conditions for the Syrian people, thereby supporting the country's stability and realizing its people's aspirations for a more secure and prosperous future.

At the humanitarian level, we welcome the return of Syrian refugees and displaced persons to their homes. The sustainability of such returns requires the provision of basic services, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the improvement of living conditions. The Kingdom calls on the international community and donor entities to continue to support humanitarian needs and ensure the unhindered delivery of aid to those who need it, while also strengthening early recovery and reconstruction efforts to pave the way for their sustainable, dignified and safe voluntary return.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its solidarity with the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic, as well as its support for Syria's security and stability and the fulfilment of its people's aspirations.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Yahya for their briefings. I also listened attentively to the statements by the two civil society representatives and welcome the Permanent Representatives of Syria, Türkiye and Libya to today's meeting.

For some time, thanks to the joint efforts of the Syrian transitional Government and all parties, the situation in Syria has remained generally stable, the momentum of economic recovery has continued to build, and the humanitarian situation has improved to some extent. At the same time, Syria continues to face many formidable challenges in its national development and reconstruction.

We look forward to the Syrian transitional Government taking further pragmatic measures to respond effectively to the concerns of the international community and making positive efforts in a direction consistent with the interests of the Syrian people.

China believes that, under the current circumstances, four issues merit particular attention.

The first issue is the political transition. Syria has made progress in conducting a national political dialogue, establishing and improving State institutions and advancing an inclusive political transition. At the same time, Syria's internal tensions are complex and difficult to resolve, divisions among communities persist and localized armed clashes continue to occur from time to time. China supports the Syrian transitional Government in upholding the principle of inclusiveness, ensuring that people have accessible channels through which to express their aspirations, properly addressing the legitimate concerns of all parties through inclusive dialogue, guaranteeing the legitimate rights of all communities on an equal footing, achieving internal reconciliation at an early date and advancing national reconstruction through sound governance.

The second issue is the terrorist threat. The security situation in Syria remains fragile. Frequent terrorist attacks have caused large numbers of civilian casualties, and energy facilities have repeatedly been damaged, which warrants heightened vigilance. Foreign terrorist fighters entrenched in Syria constitute a terrorist scourge that threatens the peace and security of Syria and other countries in the region. The international community must remain united, strengthen cooperation, reject double standards and combat terrorism in all its forms. The Syrian transitional Government should maintain a firm position on counter-terrorism, translate its political commitments into concrete action and resolutely combat all international terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council, including the East Turkistan Islamic Movement.

The third issue is the economy and people's livelihoods. After many years of war, Syria faces an exceptionally arduous task of reconstruction. The Syrian transitional Government is working vigorously to attract foreign investment, repair infrastructure and promote the restoration of agricultural production. The "no camps" vision recently proposed by the Syrian side, which supports the sustainable return of refugees abroad and displaced persons, is a positive initiative. With winter approaching, the humanitarian situation in Syria will become even more acute. We encourage the United Nations to play its coordinating role and mobilize all parties to increase and promptly deliver humanitarian assistance to Syria, giving priority to food, medical supplies, tents and other winter essentials so that the Syrian people may have a warm winter.

The fourth issue is sovereignty and security. A safe and stable surrounding environment is an important prerequisite for Syria's national reconstruction. The Golan Heights is occupied Syrian territory, as recognized by the international community. Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity must be respected. Israel should end its illegal presence on Syrian territory and cease its illegal military activities there. The relevant Security Council resolutions and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces should be implemented.

China stands ready to continue working with the international community and to contribute to the early achievement of security and development in Syria and the full restoration of peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Mohamed Yusuf (Somalia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and my own country, Somalia.

We thank Deputy Special Envoy Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Yahya for their comprehensive briefings. We have listened carefully to the testimony of Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya and Türkiye in today's meeting.

The A3 welcomes the positive momentum in Syria. Despite persistent challenges, the Syrian Government has demonstrated resolve in restoring national institutions and responding to the aspirations of the Syrian people. Sustained international support will be essential to consolidate that progress and ensure that Syria's transition delivers lasting peace, stability and prosperity for all Syrians.

In that context, the A3 wishes to highlight the following points.

First, we welcome the Government's efforts to consolidate the political transition and strengthen national institutions. We take note of its engagement with the United Nations on preparations for parliamentary and presidential elections under a new constitution, including possible United Nations electoral assistance. We encourage continued progress towards an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, with the meaningful participation of women, youth, civil society and all communities. Resolution 2254 (2015) remains the central framework for that process. We encourage the prompt conclusion of arrangements enabling an appropriate presence of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria in Damascus.

Secondly, the A3 believes that humanitarian assistance must remain uninterrupted for as long as the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people persist. At the same time, Syria requires a carefully coordinated shift towards early recovery, reconstruction and long-term development. We call for enhanced financial support for humanitarian operations and closer engagement among the United Nations, international financial institutions, donors and the Syrian Government. The international community should explore practical options to help Syria to reconnect with international financial systems, restore essential infrastructure, revive livelihoods and rebuild its economy. Emergency assistance saves lives today. Recovery efforts give Syrians the means to rebuild for tomorrow.

Thirdly, we welcome Syria's cooperation with international disarmament and verification bodies. The verified destruction of 42 chemical aerial bombs is an important step towards resolving outstanding issues related to the former chemical-weapons programme. We also note Syria's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the access granted to relevant sites. We encourage the Government to maintain that positive momentum through continued transparency and cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Fourthly, we deplore continued military incursions into and violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such actions threaten civilians and risk wider regional escalation. We reaffirm that the occupied Syrian Golan remains an integral part of Syrian territory under international law and in accordance with resolution 497 (1981). We call for withdrawal from all Syrian territories and full respect for the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

Fifthly and lastly, the situation in Suwayda' underscores the importance of dialogue, reconciliation and national cohesion. We support the September 2025 road map to end the crisis in Suwayda' and stabilize southern Syria and encourage the

Government to address cases involving detainees and missing persons, build confidence with Druze communities and promote reconciliation between Bedouin and Druze communities. We also commend the Syrian Government's efforts to confront Da'esh and other terrorist groups, while stressing the importance of accountable security-sector reform and respect for international law in counter-terrorism operations. In that regard, the international community has a responsibility to stand in solidarity with Syria against that shared threat. Defeating extremist violence and securing long-term stability in Syria and the region demand stronger global cooperation and continued support.

To conclude, Syria now has an opportunity that seemed almost impossible only a few years ago. The A3 reaffirms its commitment to Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. The Syrian people have endured immense suffering, displacement and hardship over many years. We urge the Council and the wider international community to remain united in supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people in building a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous future.

Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes (Latvia): I thank Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Mohamed Yahya for their informative briefings. I also thank Mr. George Batah and Mr. Hajir Maalim for sharing their insights.

In his speech at the General Assembly during the high-level week (see A/81/PV.7), President Ahmad Al-Sharaa emphasized that Syria has transformed from a crisis into an opportunity. We acknowledge and welcome this milestone, which is significant first and foremost for Syria but also represents an important turning point for the entire region and beyond. It is important that the Syrian Government, as it continues to advance the country's political transition, international reintegration and economic recovery, keeps the aspirations of its people at the core of its endeavours.

In this regard, the work of the People's Assembly is of immense importance. The drafting of the new constitution and the strengthening of the rule of law and accountable institutions, as well as the adoption of reforms necessary for economic growth, investment and reconstruction need to advance. The involvement of Syrian civil society, the meaningful participation of women in political decision-making and inclusive representation of all ethnic and religious communities are essential to ensure a more stable, inclusive and united Syria.

Over the course of nearly two years, Syria has made significant progress, best demonstrated by the growing number of Syrians returning to their communities across the country. As Syria regains its place on the international stage and further benefits from the lifting of sanctions, its economy is gradually recovering. However, many Syrians have yet to feel tangible economic improvements in their daily lives. Therefore, humanitarian aid and funding remain essential to meet the needs of the 15.6 million people who still require assistance. The forthcoming multisectoral needs assessment for 2027, to be conducted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Syrian Government, will be important in ensuring that the "Syria Without Camps" policy can continue on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of the remaining needs and vulnerabilities and that the return and reintegration of families are supported through adequate access to basic services, a safe environment, housing and livelihoods. Work must continue to bring the approximately 2 million Syrian children back into the education system. Indeed, further investment in education is essential to address the impact of years of war on children and young people and to provide Syria's next generation with the foundation to shape the country's future.

We welcome the increasingly active and broad cooperation developing between Syria and the United Nations and encourage Syria to harness the full potential of this cooperation to implement its transition and reconstruction priorities. We also look forward to strengthening the European Union's partnership with Syria. The recent visit to Damascus by the High Representative and Vice-President Kaja Kallas reconfirmed the European Union's commitment to further contribute towards Syria's sustainable economic recovery, institutional strengthening and the promotion of reconciliation and transitional justice.

Security and peace within Syria and along its borders are essential to foster investment and business activity in the country and the region. The recent attack in Homs reminds us that the internal security situation in Syria remains fragile. The fight against terrorism and preventing the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham are crucial for the country's internal security and require the sustained involvement of the Syrian armed forces. Amid the ongoing turmoil in the wider Middle East, Syria's transitional Government continues to pursue pragmatic engagement with regional countries and its neighbours. We welcome the restraint shown by Syria and its readiness to engage in negotiations aimed at reducing tensions and achieving a mutually acceptable security arrangement with Israel. We call on Israel to engage constructively, abide by the relevant resolutions and respect the terms of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

After decades of devastation and suffering, the Syrian people's efforts to build a stable, dignified and prosperous future deserve the continued support of the international community. Latvia remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and to supporting an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned transition process that addresses the country's security and humanitarian needs, advances its socioeconomic recovery and provides a future for Syria's children and youth.

Mrs. Ríos Serna (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Mr. Mohammed Yahya, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; and Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim for the information they shared with us. I also welcome the delegations joining us here today in this Chamber.

Colombia takes the floor today to express its thanks. The Syrian issue came before the Council as a matter of managing an ongoing conflict, but today it demands something different. It demands that we support a transition that has produced verifiable results. Recognizing these achievements is the prerequisite for continuing the work that remains. At the institutional level, the transitional Government has announced a constitutional process and elections. These are sovereign decisions adopted under adverse conditions, which the Council had been calling for since 2015 and which went unanswered for a decade. Colombia wishes to focus in particular on the efforts made in the fight against terrorism.

The transitional Government assumed responsibility for securing the north-east, including Hawl camp, even as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant remains a threat to the region's stability. These are measures that benefit the region, not just the country. Likewise, Colombia recognizes that the transition has chosen inclusion as a method of prevention and has begun to translate these efforts into its institutional framework. The People's Assembly, with 206 seats, and the Supreme Constitutional Court, with seven justices, now include 22 and 2 women, respectively — a foundation for continuing to strengthen their participation. Colombia welcomes this effort and calls for it to be complemented by increasing the representation of women and all communities in the transitional bodies, so that inclusion remains the means by which that transition prevents violence.

The dynamics of return are shifting the demand from assistance towards sustainable recovery. Between July and August, nearly 39,000 people returned to their places of origin, and their assistance needs also followed them to places where they encounter disrupted services and a lack of employment. Colombia recognizes the work of the United Nations system in supporting this movement on the ground through the rehabilitation of water and electricity networks, hospitals, schools and other basic infrastructure. This response restores existing capacity. Between January and July, an average of 2.5 million people received assistance each month.

In terms of healthcare, the system tasked with receiving returnees is operating at half capacity. About 57 per cent of hospitals and just 30 per cent of primary care centres are currently operational. Maintaining that pace with a $2.9 billion plan that is less than one-third funded is unfeasible. Colombia calls for sustained and flexible funding that allows resources to follow people as they are displaced and supports continued collaboration between the Syrian Government, the United Nations and its partners, guided by national priorities and in accordance with humanitarian principles. Colombia reiterates its support for an inclusive political process led by Syria and facilitated by the United Nations, as well as its willingness to accompany Syria during this phase. The progress outlined today — in institutional capacity, regional security and addressing the needs of the population — all share a common condition: they are sustainable only with consistent international support.

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

I wish to thank Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and Assistant Secretary-General Mohamed Yahya for their briefings. I also wish to thank Mr. George Batah of the Syrian Youth Empowerment Initiative and Mr. Hajir Maalim of Plan International for putting the spotlight of our briefing on education and the protection of children.

Education must lie at the core of Syria’s recovery. As the Greek Prime Minister said in his annual address to the General Assembly last month (see A/81/PV.10), Syria is key to the region, as lasting stability in the Middle East requires a stable and peaceful Syria — a Syria that is inclusive and free from foreign interference and regional rivalries, and where every citizen can and should feel secure. The new Syrian authorities have taken steps in this direction. Yet further concrete progress must be demonstrated, particularly when it comes to protecting the rights and security of all religious and ethnic communities. The recent violence in Suqaylibiyah and Homs is a troubling reminder of the fragility of social cohesion and the continuing security concerns facing Syria’s communities.

In this context, we have also seen reports of renewed violence affecting the Orthodox Christian community, among others, following earlier incidents this year. These developments underscore a point that Greece has consistently made in the Council: all Syrians must feel genuinely represented, protected and included in the transition process.

Syria’s recovery cannot be sustainable unless every community — whether religious or ethnic — has confidence that its security, rights and identity are fully respected. This is particularly important when we consider Syria’s children. After years of conflict, millions of Syrian children have lost precious years of education. Schools and educational infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed. Teachers and families have been displaced. Unexploded ordnance continues to threaten children on their way to school and in their communities. The protection of children must therefore remain at the forefront of our efforts.

We welcome the Syrian authorities' commitment to engaging with the United Nations on a plan to end and prevent grave violations against children, and we call for the plan's swift adoption and implementation. Education is an investment in Syria's social cohesion, resilience and long-term stability. A generation deprived of education risks perpetuating the wounds and divisions of conflict. Syria cannot afford a lost generation of children. Investment in education is therefore an investment in Syria's future and its youth. Syria's recovery will ultimately be measured by the kind of future that it offers to Syrian children, both boys and girls. They must have schools to attend, teachers to guide them, communities in which they feel safe and an opportunity to grow up without inheriting the divisions of the past.

We echo the call of the Deputy Special Envoy for the authorities to review recent guidelines and ensure equal access to higher education, free from discrimination. As a consistent advocate for the protection of children in armed conflict during its Security Council tenure, Greece remains committed to supporting the Syrian people and to working with the United Nations towards a peaceful, prosperous and inclusive Syria, with full respect for its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and with the rights and freedoms of all its citizens fully safeguarded.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Olabi (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I would like to begin by thanking you and your team for steering the work of the Security Council this month, for your country's continued support for the new Syria and for making education the focus of today's meeting, as it is the foundation of peace, security and stability in Syria. I wish to thank the briefers from the United Nations for their valuable briefings and for highlighting, at the start of their briefings, the economic and humanitarian aspects, which are fundamental to stability at this stage. I would like to extend special thanks to Mr. George Batah and Mr. Hajir Maalim for shedding light on the education sector, which suffered immense damage during the years of war. We want to see this sector at the forefront of recovery and as a driving force for revitalization. I also congratulate Mr. Batah on his return to Syria after years of displacement, and I congratulate Syria on the return of other such sons and daughters to help rebuild the country. This is the free Syria, and this is the new Syria.

Before beginning my statement, I wish to extend my sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of all those who fell victim to criminal acts in the recent period. We pledge that no one who has committed crimes against the Syrian people will escape punishment. I further extend my condolences to the family and loved ones of the young civilian killed by the Israeli occupation forces in Qunaytirah a few days ago.

To our brave people in Qunaytirah and the countryside of Dar'a; to those facing near-daily incursions, arrests and assaults; and to the heroic journalists fired upon by the occupation forces while carrying out their duty to document and convey the truth, I say this: the new Syria does not forget its people, compromise on the rights of its citizens or overlook its national causes in the most important international forum. As for those who fire upon civilians and journalists, I say this: anyone claiming to seek security ought not to kill Syrians on their own soil, storm their homes, arrest their children or cause them to disappear. They should clearly understand that there is only one path to security, one defined by international legitimacy and the resolutions of the Council. This was reaffirmed in the press statements issued by the Council just a few days ago.

The paradox inherent in Israel's acts of aggression is evident to the Council. Every time Israel fires upon Syria, it is, as the world has witnessed, simultaneously firing upon itself, both domestically and internationally.

A year ago, Syria came to New York to announce its return to the international community after decades of absence and isolation. However, as the Council has witnessed this year, Syria declared, at the General Assembly's eightieth session, that this return is an indisputable reality. It is now a responsible State, an active player and a partner in regional security and stability.

Last year, Syria's presidential participation marked our return to the international stage. This year, our participation heralds a new era defined by recovery and development. Syria is no longer the complex dossier or intractable crisis it once was. It has become a partner that crafts solutions and contributes to their implementation, just as we succeeded during the eightieth session in conveying Syria's political and diplomatic achievements to the world and consolidating international support for the new Syria. The theme of this session, for us here in New York, will be advancing the process of Syria's recovery and development in cooperation with Member States, the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

During the high-level week, we also presented our vision for transitioning from managing to ending displacement, and from funding camps to funding return and recovery through the "Syria Without Camps" initiative. In this initiative, we emphasized that there is no point in moving a family out of a tent unless they find a home to shelter them, a school for their children, a health centre for their care and work that upholds their dignity. True return is not merely about leaving a camp; it extends to living in safety, dignity and stability. As the Council knows, and as our colleagues at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have mentioned, this vision is beginning to materialize, with new groups of families returning to their homes and ongoing efforts to rehabilitate services and infrastructure in host communities.

Inside the country, State institutions continue to fulfil their duty to protect Syrians — men and women — and safeguard their stability. They have dismantled Da'esh-affiliated cells, thwarted terrorist plots, disrupted drug trafficking and organized crime networks and restored vital facilities targeted by acts of sabotage within days. At the same time, following decades of the absence of the rule of law, the People's Assembly continues to carry out its legislative and oversight functions, so that Syria may become a State of institutions and the rule of law — a State that makes its decisions within its institutions and the law.

Syria has done its part and has become a model to be emulated and held up as an example. The ball is now in the court of the international community, from which Syrian men and women expect a shift from the praise and political support I have heard expressed here to genuine partnership and from declarations of support to its implementation. Now is the time to support economic recovery, inject investment and create job opportunities to underpin the reconstruction and rehabilitation schools, hospitals and water and electricity networks and to provide the materials, equipment and expertise needed to clear mines, unexploded ordnance and the remnants of war. As colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mentioned a short while ago, the number of those killed and injured by remnants of war in Syria since liberation has exceeded 2,500 — a figure that ranks among the highest for victims of landmines and remnants of war worldwide.

This is not merely a matter of numbers. These are lives lost, children injured, families prevented from returning to their homes and agricultural land left unused as people fear death lurking beneath the soil. Mine clearance is not merely a technical

issue. It is the protection of civilians, a prerequisite for return and a gateway to reconstruction and development. Syria's recovery does not serve Syria alone. It is an investment in the region's security and in preventing the return of terrorism, drugs, displacement and instability.

In conclusion, last year we asked the world to believe in Syria's ability to return. Today, Syria presents the results of what it has achieved. Syria is no longer asking for a chance to prove itself, for it has already done so. Nor are we asking for members' political support, for they have already provided it. What we are asking for today is to turn this support into a fair partnership that helps Syrians to complete the reconstruction, protect their return and prevent the legacy of war, terrorism and Israeli aggression from destroying what they have achieved. Syria chose to rise, and Syrian men and women have chosen to rebuild after years of destruction. They expect the international community not merely to stand by and watch this resurgence but to be a genuine partner in it.

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

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Council and to wish you every success during your term. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Yahya, Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Cordone, Mr. Batah and Mr. Maalim for their comprehensive briefings.

The resilience shown by the Syrian people since December 2024 following years of brutal conflict gives us hope for the future. Despite the scale of the challenges, Syria continues to move in the right direction. The gradual development of the People's Assembly into a fully functioning legislative body would help consolidate the country's normalization process. The Assembly's unanimous approval of the bill to abolish the Al-Assad-era terrorism court is a welcome step in this direction. The dissolution of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces has opened a new chapter in the integration process. Remaining arrangements should be finalized and fully implemented without delay in a manner that reinforces Syria's sovereignty, unity and social cohesion. As confirmed in the latest report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the verified destruction of 42 aerial bombs marks an important step in addressing Syria's chemical weapons file. Together with our partners in the Breath of Freedom task force, Türkiye will continue to support Syria's cooperation with the OPCW.

Significant security challenges nevertheless remain. The fight against terrorism is a critical priority. We welcome the Syrian Government's determination, demonstrated through its efforts and cooperation with the international counter-Da'esh coalition to work with international partners for the enduring defeat of the Da'esh terrorist organization. We also welcome the coalition's commitment to supporting Syria's counter-terrorism needs. We will continue to contribute to these efforts. As Da'esh adapts its strategy to new realities on the ground, Syria needs strong professional security institutions capable of countering this evolving threat. Continued international support for strengthening their capacities is therefore essential. The growing threat of drug trafficking and the widespread presence of mines and explosive remnants of war also require sustained international attention. Türkiye stands ready to support Syria in addressing these challenges, including through cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Mine Action Service.

Security and economic recovery must advance hand in hand. Lasting stability is essential for Syria to rebuild its economy, attract investment and participate in regional energy and connectivity projects. The international community should

provide more effective support for economic development. For their part, the Syrian authorities should strengthen the legal framework and create the conditions necessary to facilitate business and attract foreign investment, including from their own diaspora. Progress in these areas would also help address the conditions that terrorists and criminal organizations seek to exploit.

Israel's continued violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity undermine these prospects and show disregard for international law. The situation is particularly alarming in southern Syria, where continued military incursions and expansionist actions and words are getting out of control. The Secretary-General's latest report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force provides a disturbing account of these violations (S/2026/756). Israel's more recent resumption of activities along the so-called Sufa 51 line in Qunaytirah represents a further attempt to undermine the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and create a new fait accompli on the ground.

These reckless acts must stop. Israel must fully comply with the 1974 Agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 497 (1981), and withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan. A stable, sovereign and unified Syria capable of securing its borders, defeating terrorist organizations and contributing to regional peace and economic cooperation serves the interests of all, including Israel. This has been the good-neighbourly approach taken by Türkiye before the start of the conflict, during the conflict and post-conflict. Türkiye remains firmly committed to Syria's sovereignty, political unity and territorial integrity. We will continue to work with regional and international partners towards a stable, secure and prosperous Syria.

Since some delegations touched on displaced persons and returnees, let me briefly inform the Council about this from my country. At one point, Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye reached more than 4 million. Today, it is around 2.2 million. The return is gradual, for understandable reasons, namely economic conditions, security concerns in general and Israeli incursions in particular, as well as families' connections to educational institutions in Türkiye where their children are registered. We hope and we believe that when the conditions develop within Syria, the gradual, voluntary and dignified return of the Syrian people will increase in pace.

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

Mr. El-Sonni (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you every success. I also would like to thank all of the briefers.

It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Arab Group.

We meet at a critical juncture that requires us all to intensify efforts and coordinate our vision of supporting the Syrian Arab Republic on its path towards consolidating the foundations of internal security and stability. As the Syrian Government continues to take serious steps to safeguard the country's security and preserve the resources of its brotherly people in a regional environment rife with challenges, the Arab Group underscores the need for these efforts to be accompanied by a constructive international stance. This stance should support the general recovery process and shield Syria from any attempts to undermine its security or exploit its transitional circumstances. In this connection, the Arab Group wishes to underscore the following four points.

First, the Arab Group reaffirms its principled and steadfast commitment to preserving the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian

Arab Republic and rejects all forms of external interference in Syria's internal affairs or actions aimed at undermining its security. The Group commends the Syrian Government's commitment and the practical steps it is taking to maintain stability, consolidate security and steer the country away from the furnace of spiralling regional escalation. The Group is of the view that Syria's stability and unity constitute the cornerstone of security for the entire region. Accordingly, the Arab Group calls for tangible international support for Syrian State institutions during this critical phase and for the removal of all the remaining economic and political impediments and restrictions, which are hindering its comprehensive recovery and natural integration into its regional and international environment.

Secondly, the Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing military attacks and air strikes carried out by Israeli occupation forces on Syrian territory, foremost among them the targeting of the Abu al-Zuhur military airport and vital infrastructure, the ground incursions and the illegal entry of officials of the occupying Power onto Syrian territory. These hostile practices constitute a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty and a blatant breach of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. They are a clear attempt to stoke strife and undermine efforts to restore recovery and security. The Group calls upon the Council to shoulder its responsibilities and compel Israel to immediately cease all its acts of aggression, fully abide by the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and withdraw completely and unconditionally from all Syrian territories into which it has encroached and from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line. The Group reaffirms its consistently held position that the Golan is occupied Syrian Arab territory and that any decisions or measures taken by the occupier are null and void and without legal effect under international resolutions of legitimacy, foremost among them resolution 497 (1981).

Thirdly, the Arab Group welcomes the tangible and growing cooperation between the Syrian Government and the United Nations and its specialized agencies, exemplified by high-level visits from the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, alongside continuous coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Group likewise renews its support for the Syrian State's efforts to combat terrorism, to eradicate the remnants of Da'esh and other armed terrorist organizations, irrespective of the name under which they operate, and to foster conditions conducive to preventing their resurgence and exploitation of security-related and economic conditions. We underscore the critical importance of ensuring that Syria does not serve as a launchpad for any threat to the security and stability of countries in the region. At the same time, we value the national measures taken in relation to transitional justice, the issue of missing persons and the promotion of national reconciliation and accountability, all of which consolidate civil peace and the rule of law.

Fourthly, the Arab Group emphasizes that a sustainable transition from reliance on emergency humanitarian aid to the recovery and reconstruction phase is an absolute necessity. Given recent indicators showing the return of approximately 1.8 million Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries and more than two million internally displaced persons to their areas of origin, there is an urgent need to attract international investment and direct it towards infrastructure projects, the rehabilitation of basic services, the provision of livelihoods and intensified demining operations to ensure a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return. In this respect, the Arab Group expresses its deep appreciation for the significant humanitarian role played by countries hosting Syrian refugees and stresses that these nations should not be left to shoulder such an immense burden alone. We call upon the international community and donors to boost and expand the scope of the financial and

development support provided to them, in fulfilment of their duty to share responsibility internationally.

Lastly, the Arab Group reaffirms its steadfast and continued support for Syria and its brotherly people at this critical juncture. We call upon the Security Council to adopt a balanced and constructive approach — one that is rooted in respect for national sovereignty, support for economic and humanitarian recovery options and the consolidation of the foundations of a State grounded in institutions and the rule of law, while guaranteeing justice and equality and protecting the rights of all Syrians without exception, thus enhancing security and stability in the region.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.