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22nd plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 67 (continued)

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1)

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine, as a current Human Rights Council member, believes that one of the main responsibilities of the Council is to react in a timely and appropriate manner to human rights violations that require its urgent attention.

We are pleased to acknowledge that, during the reporting period, the Council quickly adapted to the realities of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and demonstrated its ability to promptly respond to emergency situations in the field of human rights, including by establishing or renewing country mandates. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Council's President for her able and effective management of its activities, in particular her leadership against the backdrop of continued uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

At the same time, we have witnessed attempts to use the COVID-19 crisis to divert the Council's attention away from the human rights violations being committed by States, including in the occupied territories in the heart of Europe. Dire humanitarian situations caused

by the spread of COVID-19 must not be exploited to escape international legal responsibility.

Ukraine was among the first countries that enthusiastically supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council. Regrettably, recent elections to the Council have demonstrated that adherence to the high standards of human rights protection is not always considered a key requirement for candidates. Such attitudes can only weaken the Council, making it complacent in the face of human rights violations. Such elections, by not taking due consideration of States' human rights records, undermine the very credibility of the Council given that its member States are supposed to demonstrate a strong commitment to the highest standards of human rights, including full cooperation with the United Nations mechanisms set forth in resolution 60/251.

Having recently been re-elected to the Human Rights Council for the term 2021-2023, Ukraine will exert every effort to ensure that the Council fulfils its mandates responsibly and effectively. We will continue working with partners to further promote and protect human rights globally. We will strive to increase transparency in the work of the Council, which it sometimes lacks.

Amid tremendous challenges, it is extremely important to ensure that the Council is actively engaged in multilateral endeavours to defend, promote and protect human rights at the global level, prevent their abuses and enhance the international community's

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response to emerging threats against human security and human rights.

In accordance with resolution 65/281, the General Assembly has a mandate to consider the status of the Human Rights Council between 2021 and 2026. Intensive consultations on that issue should be conducted in different formats and with all stakeholders.

Ukraine needs a Council that can become a genuine, uncompromising platform for defending human rights, including the rights of those suffering under the Russian occupation in Crimea and Donbas, who have become political hostages deprived of their freedom by the Kremlin regime. The Government of Ukraine will continue to take further measures to ensure proper protection of the rights and freedoms of all persons living in the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In that respect, we continue to pay special attention to the issue of technical assistance. We appreciate the contribution of the Human Rights Council and the special procedures in addressing the current human rights situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea. Council resolutions on cooperation with, and assistance to, Ukraine in the field of human rights that have been adopted since the Russian aggression began in 2014, coupled with interactive dialogues on Ukraine at each Council session, as well as during its intersessional period, are all important tools to provide the international community with objective information about the real human rights situation in Ukraine.

The comprehensive and timely reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", which were submitted to the Human Rights Council in June (A/HRC/44/21) and to the General Assembly at its current session in September (A/75/334), pursuant to resolution 74/168, represent a valuable yet dramatic account of numerous violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the occupying Power on the Ukrainian peninsula.

The Human Rights Council and the Assembly should continue to work in tandem to address the pressing issue of gross human rights violations by the Russian aggressor in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It is also crucial that the conclusions and recommendations contained in those reports be respected and duly implemented. That is

why Ukraine presented a substantially updated draft resolution on the human rights situation in Crimea, based on the Secretary-General's reports (see A/75/478/Add.3, draft resolution III). We would appreciate Member States' support and co-sponsorship of the draft resolution, and I look forward to its consideration in the Third Committee later this month and in the plenary.

Mr. Butt (Pakistan): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her detailed briefing and the presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1). My delegation appreciates her efforts and leadership to ensure that the Human Rights Council continues its essential work during these challenging times. We also commend her for the consensus adoption of the presidential statement on the coronavirus disease earlier this year.

Since its establishment in 2006, the Human Rights Council has contributed to the promotion and protection of human rights globally. Pakistan's engagement with the Council, as well as with its precursor, the Human Rights Commission, has always been guided by our commitment to advance universal respect for all human rights. Having recently been re-elected for the fifth time as a member of the Human Rights Council, Pakistan remains firmly committed to upholding, promoting and safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms for all during its term over the next three years.

Pakistan will make sustained efforts towards ensuring that the Human Rights Council's work is guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, non-selectivity, dialogue and cooperation. In line with that vision, Pakistan will prioritize the advancement of tolerance, respect and constructive engagement in the Human Rights Council.

Over the past 14 years, the Human Rights Council has strengthened its consensus on a wide range of thematic issues. As the primary human rights body within the United Nations system, it has a central role to play in addressing the contemporary challenges that continue to undermine and threaten the protection and promotion of human rights. My delegation remains concerned by the global resurgence in intolerance, discrimination, racism, hate speech and violence against minorities and other vulnerable groups in many countries, accompanied by extreme nationalism, xenophobia and aggression.

Prejudice, discrimination and violence against Muslims, including Islamophobia, is one of the manifestations of that extremist trend. Today Islamophobia is unmistakable in the political manifestos of certain political parties and Governments that call for the expulsion of Muslims, the politicization and censorship of the hijab, the burning of the Holy Qur'an, the deliberate vandalization of Islamic symbols and holy sites and incitement and provocation in the name of free speech through hurtful caricatures and competitions. Stoking such Islamophobic hysteria not only undermines the freedom of religion but also poses serious challenges to the societal cohesion and democratic credentials of our societies.

In view of those recent disturbing developments, the Human Rights Council should urgently reinvigorate the Istanbul process for the full and effective realization of Council resolution 16/18, which will instil a better understanding of the perils of incitement to hatred and discrimination based on religion or belief, such as Islamophobia.

While we fully support the Human Rights Council's core mandate to protect and promote human rights, we remain concerned by instances of politicization, double standards and selectivity. The recently adopted Council resolution 45/31, on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations, is a case in point. Unfortunately, the proponents of the Council's prevention mandate conveniently overlook the relevance and applicability of that mandate to situations of foreign occupation and alien domination, which are rife with pressing human rights emergencies. Those situations, which are recognized in resolutions of the Security Council, are clear examples that meet the objective criteria articulated by those championing the cause of the Council's prevention mandate.

However, we continue to witness, with great disappointment, that human rights matters in situations of foreign occupation on which the Council should take action remain subservient to narrow political agendas. We therefore call upon the countries supporting the Human Rights Council's prevention agenda to demonstrate impartiality and, for the sake of credibility, to come forward to activate the Council's preventive actions on human rights matters on the basis of objective criteria, particularly in situations of foreign occupation and alien domination.

In conclusion, Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to continue to engage constructively in efforts to make the Human Rights Council more effective, efficient and responsive.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her intervention (see A/75/PV.21). We greatly appreciate her commitment and congratulate her on the work she has done over the past year, despite the special circumstances arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

We welcome the fact that the Human Rights Council has been able to ensure the continuity of its work in the current context. It has therefore once again maintained and demonstrated its capacity to respond swiftly to new developments. On the one hand, the Council has helped to identify and address the impact of the pandemic on human rights and, on the other, it has continued to play a central role in promoting respect for human rights and combating human rights violations around the world.

Switzerland reiterates that only human rights-based approaches can bring about sustainable solutions. That applies not only to the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development but also to the measures undertaken to combat the pandemic and rebuild a post-COVID-19 world.

The roles of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights Council in the current time of crisis are therefore absolutely essential and must be resolutely promoted and supported. Switzerland remains convinced that it is essential to mainstream human rights across the work of the entire United Nations system.

Switzerland also remains committed to providing adequate funding for the human rights pillar, both in the Fifth Committee and through voluntary contributions to OHCHR, for example. We call on all States to do the same. Furthermore, Switzerland supports efforts to strengthen the Human Rights Council, in particular by improving the effectiveness of its functioning and increasing its visibility within the United Nations system.

Switzerland would like to once again stress the importance of States cooperating with all Human Rights Council bodies and other mechanisms, including its commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions.

In particular, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council play a key role in the fulfilment of the Council's mandate.

By providing expertise and independent analysis, the special procedures contribute to the development of international human rights standards and promote a better understanding of human rights-related themes. In addition, they provide advice on technical cooperation and are one of the main sources of information on human rights situations around the world. Switzerland strongly supports their work and calls on all States to cooperate fully with them.

Finally, Switzerland wishes to reiterate the crucial role of civil society in respecting, promoting and protecting human rights. We recall that the work of civil society represents an indispensable complement to the work of the Human Rights Council. In that context, Switzerland is alarmed at the practices of intimidation and repression to which members of civil society working in defence of human rights are exposed. Switzerland urges Member States to take all the necessary measures to ensure that such unacceptable practices are eliminated.

Ms. Charikhi (Algeria): I would like to thank Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council, for her presentation (see A/75/PV.21) and her leadership throughout the pandemic in order to preserve the important work of the Human Rights Council.

Today's debate provides us with an opportunity to make the following points.

First, Algeria is fully committed to enhancing the work of the Human Rights Council as the principal United Nations body responsible for the protection and promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, in a fair and equal manner, as enshrined in the founding resolution 60/251.

Secondly, cognizant of the importance of upholding human rights, Algeria cooperates fully and engages constructively with the organs of the Human Rights Council, its special procedures and its mandate holders. The invitations addressed to 13 mandate holders to visit Algeria are a testimony to our consistent engagement and readiness to establish a transparent and constructive dialogue with the Special Rapporteurs in order to strengthen the protection of human rights in Algeria.

Thirdly, my country, as a State party to the majority of human rights conventions, has made tangible steps towards the protection and promotion of human rights. In addition to the adoption of a new law in May related to the prevention of, and the fight against, discrimination and hate speech, Algeria has just adopted a new Constitution, which includes a series of measures to strengthen the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, guarantee the independence of justice and ensure balance between the various branches of our Government.

Fourthly, my delegation remains convinced that the status of the Human Rights Council should be maintained as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, as enshrined in resolution 65/281, on the review of the Council, which reaffirms that status. The mandate of the Human Rights Council can be implemented effectively only if it is applied on the principle of international cooperation and within the context of genuine intergovernmental dialogue, non-politicization and objectivity in order to address human rights issues.

Fifthly, the prevention of human rights violations can be attained only through resilience-building within society. We believe that cooperation, solidarity and the provision of capacity-building and technical assistance, in particular to developing countries, as well as addressing the root causes of conflict and displacement, are the most effective ways to attain that common goal. In that connection, we call for caution regarding the creation of artificial linkages between the Human Rights Council and any other United Nations bodies, as we believe that the mandate of the Human Rights Council, as it already exists, provides the appropriate and constructive mandate to prevent human rights violations everywhere.

Sixthly, the process of strengthening the efficiency of the Human Rights Council should be guided by the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and non-discrimination, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the institution-building package of the Human Rights Council. Any measures in that regard should be adopted by a consensual decision of the General Assembly.

Finally, my delegation notes the increasingly non-consensual adoption of Human Rights Council resolutions. We hope that the Council will be able to

revert to promoting and protecting human rights on a more consensual basis.

Mr. Almoslechner (Austria): Austria thanks the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger, for her comprehensive presentation (see A/75/PV.21) of the report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) of the Human Rights Council to the General Assembly, as well as last week's interactive dialogue in the Third Committee.

Such forums provide an important opportunity to discuss how to further enhance human rights deliberations among Member States within the United Nations, including the interlinkages between the promotion and respect for human rights, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. It remains a fundamental principle of our rules-based order that every State has to abide by its human rights obligations. Addressing human rights situations and ensuring respect for human rights obligations is a matter of legitimate interest for all States, not merely a domestic affair.

We value the variety of relevant and current topics on which the members of the Council have focused this year, particularly in the urgent debates on human rights in Belarus and on racism and police brutality. In the light of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we welcome the substantial work of the Council on the promotion and protection of all women's rights.

Austria strongly supports an inclusive and secure environment for members of civil society in their work with the Council. We condemn all forms intimidation and violence directed against members of civil society organizations who seek to cooperate, or have cooperated with, the Council and other United Nations bodies. Such reprisals need to be addressed.

We commend Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger, as well as all members of the Bureau, for ensuring a smooth continuation of the work of the Council and that the Council remains a forum for open, inclusive and sometimes critical debates with all relevant stakeholders, despite the challenging conditions owing to the coronavirus disease and lockdown measures. All planned sessions were concluded, and a substantial number of resolutions and decisions were adopted. We convey our best wishes for the continuation of the important work of the Council.

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to the President of the Human Rights Council for her presentation (see A/75/PV.21) of the annual report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) of that subsidiary body

As long as selectivity, punitive practices, double standards and political manipulation continue, particularly against countries of the South, the international community will not be able to make meaningful progress in promoting and protecting all human rights for all people. Such harmful practices have already led to the disappearance of the Commission on Human Rights. However, it appears that nothing was learned from that lesson, since those practices are becoming increasingly common in the work of the Human Rights Council and threaten to delegitimize it.

It is regrettable that some countries seek to use the Human Rights Council and its special procedures for hegemonic purposes that are outside its mandate. The focus is on the situations in developing countries, several of which are suffering from the imposition of unilateral coercive measures, while there is a complicit silence about the daily human rights abuses occurring in developed countries.

In that regard, we reiterate the need to adhere to the principles of universality, objectivity and non-discrimination in addressing the issue of human rights. We recall that special procedures mandate holders must observe the code of conduct adopted during the Human Rights Council's institution-building process. Selectivity leads to confrontation and does not improve the human rights situation on the ground. Dialogue makes it possible to define common challenges and to understand and respect differences.

That is why the Universal Periodic Review is extremely relevant, as it is the only mechanism that allows for a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in all countries on an equal footing. Human rights are based on universal and shared values, and therefore do not belong exclusively to a single political, economic, social or cultural system or to a single form of civilization. Therefore, there should be an end to attempts by some to impose their views on others.

Strengthening the Human Rights Council based on its mandate and character as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly is a goal that we share and that must be pursued in strict compliance with what is known as the institution-building package. The Council can and

must work better, including by avoiding the practice of double standards.

The Council could do much more to promote the rights to development, peace, a healthy environment and international solidarity — rights that are paradoxically denied by some of the countries that use this body against the nations of the South. The Council could also do much more to promote a democratic and equitable international order. As long as the current order persists, which is unjust by its very nature, then hegemonic interests, underdevelopment and exclusion will prevail and human rights will remain a fantasy for millions of people.

Despite the fierce campaign to discredit Cuba organized and financed by the United States and the genocidal blockade that its Government has imposed on us for six decades, which has been intensified during the pandemic, my country has continued to make progress in the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, with verifiable results. Based on that experience, we will work as members of the Human Rights Council during the period from 2021 to 2023.

As part of the Council, Cuba will continue to defend in its own voice the right of peoples to self-determination, peace and development, which are indispensable, and to oppose manipulation, selectivity and double standards in the consideration of human rights.

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her comprehensive presentation (see A/75/PV.21) of the report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) on the work of the Council.

We commend the Council for continuing its important work despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Bangladesh attaches high importance to the work of the Human Rights Council in its role as the principal United Nations body for the promotion and protection of human rights globally and for ensuring the progressive implementation of human rights obligations by Member States and their accountability. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Bangladesh remains actively engaged and committed to the Council's mandate and work.

We recognize that the Council needs to strengthen its efforts to bring coherence to its work in Geneva and to the facilitation of that work here in New York. To that end, we appreciate the recently held review of the human rights treaty body system and hope that that will

help address some of the concerns that have continued to impact the full and effective implementation of the human rights instruments.

Bangladesh's engagement with the Human Rights Council emanates from its deep-rooted commitment to the principles of human rights and fundamental freedom. We are party to eight of the nine core human rights treaties. We have also enacted national legislation for the implementation of those instruments. Over the past decade, we have made it a priority to strengthen compliance with human rights standards. To that end, national institutions and watchdogs, including the National Human Rights Commission, have been strengthened.

We have also intensified our engagement with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, including through the Universal Periodic Review and reporting to the treaty bodies. For the timely implementation of the recommendations received during the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, we are currently developing a national implementation plan in consultation with various stakeholders, including civil society.

It is our unwavering commitment to human rights and respect for human dignity that led us to continue to provide shelter and protection to more than 1 million forcibly displaced Rohingya, who fled Myanmar in the face of the worst human rights violations. We believe it is our duty, as a member of the international community, to ensure the realization of the basic human rights of the Rohingya, including their right to return to their homeland, Myanmar. The Rohingya must be able to return home and live safe and dignified lives, free from discrimination and persecution.

In that regard, we appreciate the regular adoption by the Council of the resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. We also recognize and appreciate the establishment and work of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar and its successor, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. Bangladesh also commends the former Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Ms. Yanghee Lee, for fulfilling her mandate despite the many challenges that she faced.

We welcome the appointment of her successor, Mr. Thomas Andrews, and assure him of our full support and cooperation. We also hope that his efforts and engagement will help Myanmar overcome its legal,

political, social and institutional limitations in building an inclusive society.

As host of the unfortunate displaced Rohingya victims, we have provided all United Nations mechanisms with full access to the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. We shall continue to do so for as long as the Rohingya are not afforded the basic human rights in their homes in Myanmar, and will continue to enable them to return in safety and dignity. We call upon Myanmar to cooperate fully with all the Council's mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur, in order to fulfil that condition.

We echo the call of many countries for the constructive engagement of the Council. We also endorse the idea of promoting mutual trust and confidence between the Council's mechanisms and its member States. In that regard, Bangladesh would like to add that the responsibility is mutual. The Council is as effective as we, the Member States, want it to be. Without the cooperation of Member States, the human rights mechanisms cannot be expected to deliver. We believe that it is only through a collaborative approach that Member States can empower the Council and help it fulfil its mandate.

As a current member of the Council, Bangladesh will continue to support the work of the President and the Council for the full promotion and protection of human rights everywhere in the world.

Ms. Sorto Rosales (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country would like to acknowledge the work done by the President of the Human Rights Council in 2020.

My delegation would like to make the following comments on the report of the Human Rights Council on its forty-third and forty-fourth sessions (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1).

First, El Salvador welcomes the diversity of issues considered during the Council's sessions. The initiatives put forward by Member States accurately reflect the central role the Council plays in ensuring an open, transparent and inclusive debate among States and other actors in the continual promotion and respect of the inalienable rights of all persons, at all times and in all places.

At the sessions covered by the report, El Salvador co-sponsored several draft resolutions on priority issues, including on the rights of the child, the rights of migrants, the elimination of all forms of discrimination

against women and girls, the right to food, cultural rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

We also highlight the joint statement on migrant children and adolescents presented by El Salvador at the forty-fifth session of the Council, which was endorsed by 24 countries. The statement reaffirms the principles of family unity and the best interest of the child, which must be preserved at all times and in all circumstances in the countries of origin, transit and destination.

I would also like to inform the Assembly that, on 4 November 2019, El Salvador gave an oral presentation on its third Universal Periodic Review, which was subsequently adopted on 12 March, during the forty-third session of the Council. My country commends countries on the adoption of their respective Universal Periodic Review reports.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has significantly affected all of our countries. The unprecedented global public health emergency calls for an organized global response predicated upon the protection of people's human rights and long-term economic, social and political solutions. That is why today, more than ever, El Salvador reiterates its firm commitment to the work of the Human Rights Council and confirms its support for the adoption of the Council's report in its entirety by the General Assembly.

Mr. Othman (Malaysia): Malaysia is pleased that the Human Rights Council was able deliver its mandate despite the unprecedented global pandemic and the United Nations liquidity crisis, which have created enormous challenges for States and Council mechanisms alike. In that regard, we value the good work of the 2020 Bureau of the Human Rights Council led by Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger.

We note that several scheduled meetings have been postponed until next year. We hope that those postponements will be adequately addressed to ensure that mandated activities will be able to continue. In particular, we hope that the activities of the Working Group on the Right to Development — especially those relating to the preparation of a draft legally binding instrument — will be duly undertaken next year. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should prioritize resources for that purpose and, if challenges persist, a pragmatic approach should be explored.

Malaysia is also cognizant of the efficiency measures that have been put in place on a trial basis for one year to address financial and time constraints, owing to the increased workload of the Council. In that regard, we look forward to the convening of the planned informal stocktaking meeting to assess the impact of those measures on the Council's work. We emphasize that the way forward concerning the efficiency measures must be considered in an inclusive, transparent and consensual manner.

Malaysia will remain steadfast in fulfilling its commitments and obligations as a member of the international community, including by contributing actively in the Council's deliberations. We will also sustain and strengthen our engagement with the Council's mechanisms and continue supporting the work of the OHCHR. A clear indication of that commitment is Malaysia's hosting of four special procedure mandate holder visits in the past three years. Malaysia also hosted the first-ever visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights last year. We have also been voluntarily contributing to the OHCHR on a yearly basis. Our active participation is a manifestation of Malaysia's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights both at home and globally.

While there remain substantive differences between developing and developed countries on the review of the Council, we hope that all parties will be able to arrive at a certain degree of agreement on the need to rationalize and streamline the Council's work programme. There is also a need to further improve coordination between the Council and its subsidiary mechanisms and bodies.

Malaysia believes that the continued exchange of views and consultations on the work of the Council would benefit all countries, taking into account each country's unique domestic situation. Veering away from politicizing the issue of human rights is also important, as it would allow more focus on achieving the goals of the Council in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Before concluding, Malaysia wishes to emphasize that it is important for the Human Rights Council to ensure universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, including the elimination of double standards and the politicization of issues. Malaysia firmly believes that, in the interest of the promotion and protection of human rights, Member

States should ensure genuine dialogue and cooperation with a view to strengthening their capacity to comply with their human rights obligations.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Elisabeth Tichy Fisslbeger, for the presentation (see A/75/PV.21) of the report of the Human Rights Council on its forty-fifth session (A/75/53/Add.1). We are grateful for and appreciate the efforts of the Council to ensure the continuity of its work. In particular, we recognize the leadership of the Council presidency in conducting the forty-fifth session in the adverse conditions created by the pandemic.

Mexico has had the honour of serving as Vice-President of the Council for 2020. During this time, we have worked with the members of the Bureau on organizational and procedural issues, efficiency and improving the impact of the Council's work, as well as accountability. As a member of the Council, Mexico has been seen as an active promoter of international cooperation.

Cooperation must be exercised in accordance with the principles of good faith and the shared responsibility of States and the Council so as to create synergies to enable compliance with international law. In that way, we will be able to implement the best practices and international standards in the area of human rights. We are doing all of this in the interests of gender equality and intersectionality. That vision will continue to guide Mexico as a recently re-elected member of the Human Rights Council for the period from 2021 to 2023.

More than ever, the work of the Council is crucial to addressing the major human rights challenges facing the world. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges to realizing the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly for people in vulnerable situations. We therefore regret the existence of political attitudes that seek to undermine the international human rights scaffolding that we have built together. It is time to focus on what unites us, not on what divides us. To that end, we call for openness to international scrutiny, active participation in multilateral agreements and placing cooperation before confrontation.

We recognize the valuable work done by the special procedures mandate holders. Their work has been instrumental in defining challenges, opportunities and best practices. In the context of the pandemic, they play a key role in providing Governments with best

practices with a human rights perspective. Similarly, the Government of Mexico welcomes the role played by civil society in its support for the activities of the Council in fostering human rights.

More than ever, we need multilateralism as a means to address global challenges. It is therefore essential that we continue to strengthen the capacity of the Human Rights Council in order for it to effectively fulfil its mandate. Mexico will continue to be a reliable partner in that effort, as a believer in the positive and transforming power of multilateralism and an active promoter of the human rights of all people.

Mrs. Azucena (Philippines): The Philippine Government is committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights. Human rights underpin the development of Philippine laws and policies. Human rights and development are interdependent. The United Nations declared that in 2015, when we adopted the Sustainable Development Goals. That is echoed in my country's *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, translated as "Our Ambition 2040" — the national plan that embodies the collective vision and aspirations of the Filipino people.

The Philippines reaffirms that all human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Human rights issues must be addressed in a global context, through a constructive, non-confrontational, non-politicized and dialogue-based approach, in a fair and equal manner, with the guiding principles of objectivity, respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, impartiality and transparency — while taking into account the political, historical, social and cultural particularities of each country.

The Philippines considers the Human Rights Council as a venue for genuine cooperation, open dialogue and constructive engagement. The Philippines will continue to engage with the Council and international partners in a constructive manner. The multi-year joint programme that the Philippines is pursuing with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Manila attests to my country's commitment to that approach.

The Philippines is concerned about the practice of the selective adoption of country-specific resolutions that do not have the support of the country concerned. In our view, such resolutions fail to have any meaningful benefit on the ground and amount to an unproductive use of the United Nations finite resources. The Universal Periodic Review is the main intergovernmental

cooperative mechanism to review human rights issues at the national level in all countries without distinction, with the full involvement of the country concerned and with due consideration for its capacity-building needs.

In this vein, we acknowledge the consensual adoption of Council resolution 45/33, on technical cooperation capacity-building for the promotion and protection human rights in the Philippines, which the Philippines co-sponsored, and we are hopeful that the resolution and the projects and activities to be undertaken pursuant to it will have a positive benefit on the ground and in the lives of Filipinos.

Mr. Kashaev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council and thanks her for the presentation (see A/75/PV.21) of its report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) on its activities in 2020.

Despite the restrictions owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Human Rights Council (HRC) has continued to work effectively. The HRC was able to hold all three of its planned sessions. At the same time, we would like to point out a number of problems and trends that we are seeing in the Council's work. We are seriously concerned about the now common and open use by Western States members of the Human Rights Council as an instrument to exert pressure on sovereign States, including to effect regime change, by focusing on electoral issues during elections and at various levels of Government.

Since when has the Human Rights Council taken upon itself to decide which elections are legitimate or fair? Those are obvious examples of clear interference in the internal affairs of States and gross violations not only of resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council, but also of the Council's own resolutions 5/1 and 5/2. Most important, they are a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Furthermore, we are extremely concerned about attempts to reorganize the work of the Human Rights Council outside of the authority of the General Assembly, given that the Human Rights Council is a subsidiary body of the Assembly. That is especially the case when decisions made by the Human Rights Council are not consensual. The Council's recently adopted resolution 45/31 is an excellent example.

The substance of that resolution violates the internal accountability mechanisms of United Nations

subsidiary bodies and makes it possible for the reports of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms to be sent within the United Nations system. We consider that resolution as well as Council resolutions 44/14, 44/23 and 45/28 as attempts to breach all rules and regulations and establish direct lines of communication with other bodies of the United Nations system. In that connection, we again call for respect for the existing division of labour within the various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, including the Security Council.

The Russian Federation welcomed the transition from the Human Rights Commission to the Human Rights Council. We expected that the new body would become a platform for an equal and honest dialogue. Regrettably, today the Council is merely a useful and effective instrument for Western countries to achieve their short-term economic and political goals. The reputation of the Human Rights Council is increasingly being challenged. It is obvious that, if we do not put an end to that trend, the Human Rights Council will lose the trust of those who truly suffer from human rights abuses and violations.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we intend to do our utmost to restore faith in the Council and ensure that it resume the constructive tone of its work.

Mr. Tozik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Human Rights Council is an important body in the United Nations human rights architecture. At the same time, we believe that the Council's priorities do not always reflect current challenges in the area of human rights. Politically motivated initiatives and confrontational topics and concepts on which there is no consensus overshadow the work of the Human Rights Council. The Council focuses primarily on civilian and political rights. We believe that it must seek to strike a balance by examining all categories of rights — including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development.

The Human Rights Council must take decisive steps to review the paradigm of its operations. That body requires a unifying agenda and a more balanced programme of work. Currently, it is overburdened with political and selective discussions on country-specific situations. We reject the practice of creating country-specific mandates and the adoption of selective country-specific resolutions. Using the Human Rights

Council as an instrument to exert pressure on sovereign Governments is unacceptable.

We support strengthening the role of the Universal Periodic Review, which is a mechanism for the comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in all Member States of the United Nations — it is very important to note that it applies to all Member States, without exception. Belarus welcomes effective cooperation in the area of human rights, based on constructive cooperation, dialogue and respect for the norms and principles of international law.

In conclusion, we note that the report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) is unacceptable for Belarus, due to the politicized decisions it contains regarding our country.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica welcomes the briefing (see A/75/PV.21) on the report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) by the President of the Council, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger of Austria. Costa Rica thanks her for her work as President of the Council. We assure her of our full support.

The work of the Human Rights Council was disrupted by the social, economic, environmental and health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We applaud the efforts of the Council to adapt its working methods quite successfully to the new normal imposed by the pandemic, including in its work with non-governmental actors, such as civil society and human rights defenders.

Seventy-five years after the establishment of the United Nations, we are facing a global systemic crisis similar to the one that led to the creation of the Organization. What makes today's crisis different from the previous one is that, together with the regrettable suffering and loss of life, it exposes and exacerbates four major threats to humankind — the economic crisis, the crisis of inequality, the crisis of confidence and the climate and environmental crisis.

Costa Rica welcomes the successive reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the human rights situation around the world. We share the High Commissioner's view that, without a coordinated global response based on sustained political determination, renewed international cooperation efforts, multilateralism and, above all, a solidarity

that recognizes the central role of human rights in the recovery process, we will be unable to build back better with the aim of leaving no one behind.

The members of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples and people of African descent were the first to be affected and those hardest hit by COVID-19. They are also the most affected by the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. Those consequences have also had a disproportionate effect on children, young people, women, older persons, persons with disabilities and migrants. It is not a coincidence; it is instead the reflection of accelerated systemic and structural discrimination and violence, as underscored by the High Commissioner.

We welcome the fact that, during the forty-third session of the Council, there was a debate on human rights violations based on systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests, as well as high-level thematic round tables on the rights of the child, the rights of persons with disabilities and the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Costa Rica continues to closely follow the human rights situation in our neighbouring and sister country of Nicaragua, as well as in other countries, while bearing in mind that the principal responsibility of States is to ensure respect for, the protection of and compliance with human rights for all, in particular in the context of peaceful protests, freedom of assembly and freedom of association and expression. To that end, our country co-sponsored Council resolution 43/2, which requests the High Commissioner to enhance monitoring by her Office and to continue to report on the situation of human rights in Nicaragua, including by preparing a comprehensive written report that assesses progress and challenges regarding that situation.

During that session, Costa Rica, together with Switzerland, promoted resolution 44/20, entitled “The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests”, focused on the impact of new technologies on peaceful protests. Furthermore, together with Liechtenstein, Morocco, Peru, Qatar and Switzerland, we co-sponsored Human Rights Council resolution 44/14, entitled “Fifteenth anniversary of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as enshrined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome” — the

first thematic resolution on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide.

Lastly, we welcome the high-level round table on the linkages between the rights of persons with disabilities and climate change. We reiterate our full support for the holding of a panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by older persons. My country is committed to universal recognition of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

In conclusion, Costa Rica reiterates its commitment to human rights and the international architecture for the promotion and protection of those rights. We will make every effort to ensure the continued strengthening of the Council, as well as its linkages with the General Assembly and the Third Committee, in particular with regard to rebuilding trust among people, institutions and leaders.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): My delegation thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for her briefing and takes note of her report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1).

The report of the Human Rights Council includes resolution 43/26 on “Situation of human rights in Myanmar”, adopted during the forty-third session of the Human Rights Council in March this year. The resolution did not reach consensus when it was adopted. Myanmar categorically rejected the one-sided resolution, as it exposed politicization, lack of impartiality and ignorance in assessing in a fair and equal manner several valid facts, including the issue of development. The resolution will not contribute to finding sustainable solutions to overcome the complex challenges Myanmar addresses on the ground. However, it imposes serious impediments to Myanmar’s efforts to bring about sustained peace, social harmony and development for all people living in the country, particularly in Rakhine state.

My delegation is of the view that, if we want to see meaningful progress on the human rights situation in countries, the international community should constructively extend assistance to the primary duty-bearer and its domestic mechanism to address the issue of human rights. Therefore, we encourage the Council and its mechanisms to support countries in strengthening capacity and domestic mechanisms for human rights and to contribute to their efforts by enhancing technical support, through constructive

engagement to ensure the effective enjoyment of all human rights by everyone.

As the United Nations faces a liquidity crisis and the countries impacted by the coronavirus disease pandemic grapple with resources limitations, the scarce budget of the United Nations should be used effectively and efficiently for practical objectives — not shaped by politicization — as financial requirements arising from the resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council are considered.

We fully share the concerns of the international community about the violence affecting communities in Rakhine state. In fact, the Government's efforts to bring about peace and stability predate the violent attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army terrorist group in 2016 and 2017, which triggered the humanitarian crisis. Bangladesh has always said that the present humanitarian issue is Myanmar's problem to solve. We are indeed well aware of the problem in Rakhine state. The present Government took the initiative to find a sustainable solution to the deep-rooted issue. We established bilateral mechanisms to implement the signed repatriation agreements. We believe that we will be able to successfully implement those agreements if the two countries work together in good faith, specifically if Bangladesh works in good faith.

However, Bangladesh has chosen a different path. Instead of solving the problem bilaterally, in an amicable manner as neighbours, Bangladesh consistently seeks international punitive action against Myanmar, including its leaders' constant calls on countries and regional groups to exert political and economic sanctions against Myanmar. The ongoing hostile behaviour and attitude displayed by Bangladesh towards Myanmar will not contribute to our agreed objective of solving the issue of displaced persons in a peaceful and sustainable manner. It will serve only to exacerbate existing problems and prolong the plight of displaced persons and communities in Rakhine. Now is the time for Bangladesh to stop demonizing and pointing the finger at Myanmar. Seeking international coercive pressure on Myanmar will not be beneficial to anyone. Such pressure tactics are futile and counterproductive.

Mr. Sharma (India): We thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, for her comprehensive briefing and convey our deep appreciation for the smooth and effective

manner in which she has conducted the deliberations of the Council.

The strength of the Human Rights Council lies in its emphasis on dialogue, cooperation, transparency and non-selectivity in the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone. India has always favoured an inclusive and constructive approach. The promotion and protection of human rights should be addressed in a fair and equal manner, with objectivity, non-selectivity, transparency and, just as important, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as the guiding principle.

The Universal Periodic Review mechanism counts as a significant success in the working of the Human Rights Council, due to its constructive and participatory nature, as opposed to the selective naming-and-shaming approach. India has presented its Universal Periodic Review in each of the three cycles. While special procedures are an important mechanism for fostering genuine dialogue for strengthening the capacity of Member States, it is important that special procedures mandate holders remain independent and impartial. Country-specific special procedures have largely been counterproductive.

The right to life — the basic human right — has been constantly under threat from terrorism. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, irrespective of the motivation or excuse. The linkages between terrorist and violent extremist groups and cross-border operations, including terror-financing networks propagating ideologies of hatred and misinformation campaigns, have left no country free from the impact of terrorism. These linkages with human rights have to be better appreciated by the Council.

The Council has recognized access to medicines as a fundamental component of realizing the right to the highest attainable standard of health. At a time of the coronavirus disease pandemic, as the largest vaccine producer, India has committed to providing vaccine production and delivery capacity to help the world fight the pandemic.

The Council has a role in building consensus on emerging issues, such as the protection of human rights in cyberspace and the impact of artificial intelligence, genetics and other emerging technologies on human rights. More balanced geographical representation in

all Human Rights Council bodies and mechanisms is necessary to promote objectivity and effectiveness.

India's approach to human rights continues to evolve through the process of legislation and the progressive interpretation of laws by the judiciary. Our experience demonstrates that a democratic society with a secular polity, an impartial and independent judiciary, a vibrant civil society, a free media and independent human rights institutions provides for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the President of the Human Rights Council for her briefing to the General Assembly on the Council's report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1).

As underscored by the President of Argentina, Alberto Fernández, at the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.5), the defence of human rights is not the responsibility of the Government alone, but rather of the Republic of Argentina as a whole. That State policy is demonstrated through our active participation in the universal and regional system to promote and protect human rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Argentina cooperates with all special procedures. We support the Universal Periodic Review because we deem it to be a significant and objective tool of the system. Activities related to the universalization of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance are a core focus of our foreign policy, as are the efforts of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to strengthen the protection of the rights of older persons and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

Turning now to the recent sessions of the Human Rights Council, we wish to underscore their essential role in forging the consensus required to continue the sessions that were interrupted because of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We further note that we welcome the important agreement on the renewal of mandates during the forty-third session, which was interrupted.

We welcome the adoption in the Council of resolutions related to the following matters: the central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human

rights (resolution 44/2); enforced or involuntary disappearances (resolution 45/3); the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on truth, justice and reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (resolution 45/10); the rights of the child: realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment (resolution 45/30) and the fifteenth anniversary of the responsibility to protect (resolution 44/14).

We particularly welcome the adoption during the forty-fifth session of resolution 45/23, on the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We reiterate our commitment to the promotion of the rights of persons of African descent. In that context, we wish to underscore the fact that in 2005, as a direct consequence of the Durban Conference, Argentina adopted a document outlining our national plan against discrimination. It was a landmark document as Argentina, together with other pioneering countries, was one of the first nations to comply with the outcomes of that global conference, analyse its domestic situation and make proposals for future action. Fifteen years after the adoption of the document, the national agenda still needs to be adapted to address structural issues and reflected in a State action plan that meets the needs of all citizens, in particular those who face multiple forms of discrimination.

For that reason, our National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, with the cooperation of other key stakeholders, is working on a new national plan against discrimination, which will include commitments for measures to be implemented by the State between 2022 and 2025 so as to build on legal and institutional progress made on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

In the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, I reiterate Argentina's unwavering commitment to the promotion of multilateralism as an effective tool for upholding human rights.

Mr. Varli (Turkey): At the outset, we would like to thank Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council, for her presentation of the Council's report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1), which gives information on the diverse range of themes addressed in the Council's three sessions this past year, as well as the many successfully concluded Universal Periodic Reviews.

We are pleased to see that the Council and its mechanisms found creative ways to continue delivering on their mandates in the face of the extraordinary challenges presented by the coronavirus disease pandemic. Now more than ever, the work of the Council to promote and protect human rights around the world is needed.

In the 14 years since its creation, the Human Rights Council has proved to be the key human rights body of the United Nations system. Turkey recognizes that the Council has brought about important progress in the area of human rights, which is one of the three fundamental pillars of the United Nations. We firmly believe that there is a strong interlinkage between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. While we acknowledge the Council's accomplishments, we also recognize that there is always room for development. In that context, we support efforts aimed at increasing efficiency and improving the methods of work.

The Universal Periodic Review is a unique process of the Council that places all countries on an equal footing in reviewing their human rights situations on the basis of the principles of cooperation and constructive dialogue. It allows not only for a review of countries' compliance with their obligations but also for the improvement of practices and approaches in all countries. Turkey submitted its third periodic review to the Human Rights Council in January. We highlighted our efforts over the past five years, including developments within our legislative and legal framework.

Turkey has a long-standing commitment to cooperating with the relevant international mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights. In that regard, we have extended a standing invitation to all special procedures mandate holders and have already hosted several of their visits.

Turkey also attaches particular importance to the implementation of treaty obligations and to the role treaty bodies play to that end. We welcome the review process of the United Nations human rights treaty body system and appreciate the efforts shown by the co-facilitators to ensure the successful conclusion of the process.

As we highlighted in our contribution, Turkey supports the simplified reporting procedure, which helps to ensure that the process focuses on the most relevant and important issues. We also underlined the

importance of strengthening the independence and impartiality of treaty body members, as well as the non-politicization of their duties.

Let me conclude by saying that it is only by respecting and promoting human rights that we can have sustainable, diverse and peaceful societies, which can then thrive to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With that understanding, I would like to reiterate the commitment of Turkey to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national, regional and international levels and to working closely with the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Zareian (Islamic Republic of Iran): While rejecting country-specific mandates as being politicized and manipulative in nature, the Islamic Republic of Iran insists on the promotion of mutual respect and dialogue as the right way to address genuine concerns about human rights. We have considered the designation of a Special Rapporteur on our country to be unjustified, meaningless and destructive. However, to correct the Rapporteur's approach, Iran has continued its efforts to promote dialogue and engagement with the Special Rapporteur. Iran has demonstrated resolute and real determination to establish a constructive human rights dialogue with United Nations agencies, including special procedures mandate holders.

We reiterate that the work of the Human Rights Council should be conducted in an objective, transparent, non-selective, non-confrontational and non-politicized manner. We express our strong opposition to the practice of politicizing human rights issues, including naming and shaming and pressuring other countries.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider proposing human rights issues in the Security Council to be constructive or useful. Due to their specific characteristics, human rights issues require technical attention and expertise. In addition, the securitization of human rights by the Security Council has proven to be unsuccessful, with its efforts in that particular area sometimes failing to promote and protect human rights.

The international community and development partners have a responsibility to support national affairs, or at least avoid practicing harmful measures that constitute a barrier to achieving social development goals. The imposition of illegal and inhumane unilateral sanctions is a clear instance of such disruptive and harmful practices. They openly and indiscriminately

target the daily life of ordinary citizens and are designed to undermine any achievements in social development. The imposition of unilateral coercive measures continues to substantially violate the human rights of all nations. Such sanctions, due to their extraterritorial nature and unlawful assertion of jurisdiction beyond national borders, are also targeting human rights, including the right to development of third parties.

Iran earnestly believes in the freedom of expression when it does not incite hatred against others. The increasing incidence of hate speech by politicians poses a serious threat to the human rights of citizens. Muslims, migrant communities and Afro descendants in particular have been the target of such dangerous remarks, supposedly in the name of the freedom of expression. We also express our serious concern regarding the increasing number of insults against the sensitivities of Muslims in Western countries.

We are committed to the Universal Periodic Review and stand ready to welcome further cooperation and dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Iran is constructively engaged with the mechanisms of human rights treaty bodies.

Iran continues to call for dialogue based on understanding, cooperation and mutual respect. To enhance the credibility of human rights discourse, Iran seeks respectful dialogue without recrimination or blame games. Iran welcomes meaningful engagement with all serious partners in that context. The ongoing bilateral human rights dialogue and technical cooperation with several countries are also noteworthy.

Mr. Mutua (Kenya): My delegation takes note of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) and acknowledges the resolutions contained in the report of the Council, including those pertaining to the rights of women and children, migrants, cultural rights, foreign debt relief for developing countries and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and people of African descent.

Kenya reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights as inalienable, fundamental and universally recognized. We strongly believe that human rights must be continually and robustly strengthened by adhering to the principles of universality, transparency, impartiality and objectivity, in accordance with the 1993 Vienna Declaration and

Programme of Action, in order to build collective and lasting peace and prosperity in the world.

Riding on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, predictability, consensus and non-selectivity, the Human Rights Council, guided by the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolutions 60/251, of 15 March 2006, and 65/281 of 17 June 2011, and within its obligations to the General Assembly, should work closely with States Members of the United Nations to promote and protect human rights through universally accepted mechanisms. That is best conducted through the Universal Periodic Review.

Kenya strongly supports measures to encourage peacebuilding in order to maintain long-lasting peace and the enforcement of human rights. We believe that is best done through inclusive intergovernmental processes.

Kenya takes a firm stance on the principle of human rights, as reflected in our Constitution and legislation. Kenya has established a national commission on human rights to prioritize and champion the rights of the most vulnerable and to ensure a rights-based approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The enjoyment of human rights should be accompanied by access to prosperity for all, and therefore foreign debt and other related international obligations of States that hinder the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic social and cultural rights, should be overlooked during the coronavirus disease pandemic for the good of humankind.

Kenya stands ready to engage with Member States in order to discuss the best ways to address the many issues that affect the enjoyment of human rights and to strengthen the current framework of international human rights standards and mechanisms to fill in the gaps. We also strive to further develop instruments and measures to enhance and strengthen the protection of human rights and call upon all Member States to do the same in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

In conclusion, Kenya would like to reaffirm its support for the Arusha Peace Agreement and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. We are dedicated to peace on the continent and globally. We also reaffirm our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to peaceful coexistence, the right to civil liberties and the right to development. We call for a spirit of unity to foster regional and people-centred multilateralism

to address many of the global challenges facing the enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, her team, the Bureau and the Secretariat for their outstanding work in steering the Council through the session despite the unprecedented challenges imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic this year.

The pandemic crisis has served as a reminder of the fragile nature of our societies and how interconnected and interdependent human rights are. Moreover, the measures taken during the pandemic have seen a significant increase in threats to human rights and fundamental freedoms. In that regard, we believe that, despite the challenges and disruptions faced by the HRC and its mechanisms throughout 2020, their role in building our societies back better is immense.

Georgia enjoys fruitful cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). I would like to stress the important role of the High Commissioner and her Office in providing technical assistance to countries, including Georgia, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We uphold the universality of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), one of the key mechanisms of the United Nations human rights machinery. The Georgian Government has already submitted its national report to the HRC for consideration and adoption of the outcome of our third-cycle UPR, at its thirty-seventh session, which has been postponed due to COVID-19 until January 2021.

I would like to reiterate our full support for the special procedures, which represent another efficient tool to address specific situations. Georgia has extended a standing invitation to all special procedures mandate holders and has already hosted several visits. The report of the most recent visit of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (see A/HRC/44/43/Add.1) was submitted and discussed by the HRC at its forty-fourth session in July.

We remain deeply convinced that the work of the HRC cannot be efficient without civil society involvement. We greatly value the vital role of human rights defenders and regret that they continue to be subject to reprisals. Alarming, in our digital era,

while COVID-19 has boosted digital cooperation with the United Nations, we are witnessing the misuse of online spaces through hate speech and cyberbullying. We condemn any act of intimidation or reprisal, whether online or offline, against individuals or groups who cooperate with the HRC and its mechanisms.

We also believe that the effective work of the Council highly depends on the universal participation of all Member States. To that end, we have contributed to supporting the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the work of the HRC in previous years.

During the reporting period, the Council adopted various significant thematic and country-specific resolutions.

Let me highlight the resolution on cooperation with Georgia (resolution 43/37), which was adopted by the Council at its forty-fourth session. It calls for immediate access for the OHCHR and other international and regional human rights mechanisms to the occupied regions of Georgia. Regrettably, despite repeated efforts by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, that access has not been granted.

The population living there and in areas adjacent to the occupation line, even amid the COVID-19 crisis, continues to suffer from illegal militarization, the installation of artificial barriers and violations of human rights, including kidnappings, shootings, arbitrary detentions, torture and killings, infringements of the right to property and the right to health, restrictions on education in their native language and ethnic discrimination.

The Russian Federation, the Power exercising effective control over the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, is preventing the OHCHR and other international human rights monitoring mechanisms from entering both occupied regions of Georgia. We believe that the Council's strong leadership and engagement on this matter is the only way to prevent the situation on the ground from deteriorating further.

As 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution on women and peace and security (resolution 1325 (2000)), we welcome thematic resolutions on gender equality, the rights of women and girls and gender-based and domestic violence. In that

regard, as a member of the core group, we welcome the adoption of the first-ever resolution on promoting, protecting and respecting women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights in humanitarian situations (resolution 45/29).

In conclusion, as a candidate for membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2023-2025, let me once again reiterate Georgia's readiness to join the international community to build back better from the COVID-19 crisis and strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights across the world.

Mr. Poveda Brito (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the report containing the resolutions adopted during the sessions of the Human Rights Council held in 2020 (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1). We are aware of the challenges resulting from the pandemic and the urgent need to address critical issues in the field of human rights against that backdrop. We are further aware of the increasing importance of the Council in the formulation of policies and the democratization of such a sensitive and crucial sphere of society, which is a pillar of the United Nations.

As a State member of the Council, Venezuela's contribution has been aimed at raising the quality of the outcomes of its sessions and its contributions throughout the year, in conjunction with the other mechanisms of the universal system to promote and protect human rights. We are also aware of the multiple threats and interests surrounding the universal system, and stress the need for the Council to work in a truly balanced, democratic and impartial manner. To that end, our contribution has been documented and constructive: a commitment that will be maintained throughout the remainder of our term as a full member.

In addition, Venezuela reiterates its steadfast commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, without any generational distinction and pursuant to the principles of universality, objectivity, non-politicization and non-selectivity. We have a responsibility to continue promoting dialogue and cooperation as the sole means of making headway in the field of human rights, without any imposition or interference that would only heighten confrontation. We are also aware of the effects of the criminal imposition of unilateral coercive measures that affect entire peoples.

Human Rights Council resolution 45/2, on strengthening cooperation and technical assistance in the field of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is the most concrete and firm demonstration of the will and disposition of the Venezuelan State and Government to make effective progress, together with all United Nations bodies tasked with the matter, towards preserving our advanced public policies at all levels.

We reiterate our rejection of the imposition of instruments and mechanisms established without the consent of the Venezuelan State and their political use, creating inconsistent documents, without any methodological rigour and from third-party sources, in order to fuel an agenda of internal destabilization that has been rejected by the international community.

Finally, Venezuela will continue to work towards a robust, unified and progressive human rights system at the United Nations. Human beings must be at the centre of that system, above corporations and belligerent interests, in line with the noble ideal that has governed our Organization since its foundation 75 years ago. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the Council is not instrumentalized to advance petty political interests and obscure national agendas. That is why today our country renews its determination to work resolutely to strengthen the Council and put an end to double standards so as to prevent that body from suffering the same fate as the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Shahin (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we wish to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her presentation of the report of Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) today.

The creation of the Human Rights Council reflects the aspiration of Member States to overcome the stalemate that had seized its predecessor, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, as a result of politicization, polarization and selectivity due to the pursuit of narrow interests by some States. Egypt therefore stresses the need to focus efforts on our shared goals to improve human rights conditions around the world rather than arrogant attempts to impose controversial concepts that reflect a system of values specific to a certain number of countries and that have no basis in international human rights law.

There is no country in the world that is free from violations of human rights, whereas no country is

perfect in that regard. We must therefore continue to strive to enhance respect for human dignity by adopting an approach based on cooperation, the exchange of experiences and capacity-building as the best way to promote and protect human rights around the world. That in turn requires highlighting the value of dialogue over confrontation.

In that context, Egypt commends the pivotal role entrusted to the Human Rights Council in accordance with its mandate. We believe that it can make a positive contribution to enriching international dialogue on ways to advance the human rights situation worldwide in a disciplined context. That will require preserving the existing mechanisms of the Council, especially the Universal Periodic Review and special procedures. We must avoid the unnecessary creation of new, unjustified mandates that are promoted outside the regular budget allocated to the Council and at the expense of other mandates that may be more important and urgent but do not receive adequate funding.¹ Given that it was agreed to streamline the resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council, in the light of the coronavirus disease pandemic, we should consider limiting those to technical extensions or postponing their adoption to future sessions as much as possible.

We have noted that the same countries that initially called for streamlining took advantage of the reduced ability of developing countries to participate effectively in the consultations on draft resolutions due to pandemic-related precautionary measures and adopted highly contentious ones.

In that context, we stress the importance of working in good faith to prevent selectivity and double standards, and likewise to avoid issuing decisions targeting human rights situations in specific countries without consulting or obtaining the approval of the State concerned. At the same time, if a State requests technical assistance, the Council should make decisions accordingly.

We also highlight the importance of adhering to the spirit and the letter of the General Assembly resolutions establishing the mandate of the Human Rights Council. We emphasize the supervisory role of the General Assembly as the main organ for all States Members of the United Nations, whereas the membership of the Human Rights Council is limited. If the Council were to stray from its mandate and from achieving the goals hoped for, that would perhaps increase States' apathy

towards participating in its work and lead to clashes among the organs of the international system.

Therefore, care must be taken to avoid the consequences of burdening the Council with excessive responsibility. It is essential to preserve States' confidence in the international human rights system at such an important time. In that connection, we condemn Human Rights Council resolution 45/31, which represents an insult to the authority of the General Assembly and a unilateral change to the mandate of the Human Rights Council by overriding the relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolutions 60/251 and 65/281.

In conclusion, Egypt wishes to express its concern regarding attacks on decisions related to economic, social and cultural rights this year at the Human Rights Council. Human rights and fundamental freedoms complement each other, and we warn against the consequences of fabricated attempts to create division and uphold political and civil rights at the expense of social, economic and cultural ones. The corona virus pandemic has led to insufficient attention being paid to certain rights, therefore potentially representing a serious threat to our human societies and international stability.

Mr. Sylvester (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for her comments today (see A/75/PV.22). Her presentation and her interactive dialogue at the Third Committee are part of the important process of strengthening the links between the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

We reiterate our strong support for the Human Rights Council and the vitally important work that it does. We further appreciate the efforts President Tichy-Fisslberger has made alongside the Human Rights Council secretariat to ensure that the Council has been able to function despite the extraordinary challenges of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

At the Council, shining a spotlight on situations in specific countries is crucial to bringing the worst human rights violations and abuses to light, wherever they occur. Only through honest and open scrutiny can States be properly held to account. Equally valuable is the Council's work in ensuring that those States seeking to improve their human rights performance are able to access the technical assistance and capacity-building support that they require.

As the President set out, we should also recall the important role of civil society and human rights defenders in supporting our work at the United Nations and in the healthy functioning of democracies. We must be open to their views and experiences. They should have the access that they need, here and at the Human Rights Council, to do their jobs effectively and should never face reprisals for cooperating with the United Nations.

Mrs. Hussain (Maldives): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council during its thirteenth cycle and her Bureau, and extend my appreciation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office for their admirable work, particularly in the challenging context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In the mere 14 years since the Human Rights Council was formed, the body has made remarkable progress, weaving a human rights perspective into the fabric of the United Nations system. The Council has spotlighted the darkest violations of human rights, spurring on the collective action of the international community.

At the forty-third session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights submitted her report on the country visit she conducted to the Maldives (A/HRC/43/50/Add.2). We anticipate more visits from the special procedures mandate holders, owing to the standing invitation extended to them by the Government of the Maldives. The Maldives was reviewed yesterday at the thirty-sixth Universal Periodic Review session, where we presented the substantial progress we have made under the leadership of President Solih.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inadequacy of our international safety net and the fragility of our progress towards critical human rights targets. As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action this year, we do so in the sobering reality of an unprecedented pandemic that has prevented or rolled back progress achieved over decades of hard work, bringing the inadequacies in social protection into sharp focus. In many instances, those inadequacies have disproportionately impacted women. The barriers to the empowerment of women and girls are systemic and persistent, requiring targeted investments in the root societal causes of gender-based discrimination. That means prioritizing the financial inclusion of

women and gender parity in education and leadership positions, both to achieve progress and to provide a stronger safety net for their future.

Women have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response in the Maldives, providing health care and mental health support and leading our emergency operations centre. Under the leadership of President Solih, the Maldives has amended its Decentralization Act to allocate one third of all council seats to women, and has appointed its first two female Supreme Court Justices. One of those Justices, Aisha Shujune Muhammad, was elected just last week to the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment for the 2021-2024 term. Her election constitutes another chapter in a broader story of the Maldivian Government's prioritization of engaging with international treaty bodies to promote and protect human rights.

To further enhance the rights of women and children, the Maldives recently withdrew several of our reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in addition to ratifying the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signing the declaration in relation to article 22 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. On 1 October, the Maldivian judiciary passed the first conviction for marital rape in a historic verdict — a progressive step in the State's efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

In pursuit of further aligning our domestic policy with international instruments, the Maldives has also ambitiously pursued a transformative legislative agenda. Our child-protection regime has been overhauled by the new Child Rights Protection Act and Juvenile Justice Act. Various legislative amendments have also been introduced in order to enhance the efficacy of the Judicial Service Commission and the Department of Judicial Administration.

Our commitment to the Council's work is rooted in the conviction that unilateralism undermines the assurance of human rights for the most vulnerable. Global threats require multilateral collaboration and solidarity, and no threat is felt by small island developing States such as the Maldives as acutely as the climate emergency. Climate change infringes on the full

enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including people's right to health, water and housing — all of which are further challenged by the compounding impact of COVID-19. A gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must recognize that women and girls are disproportionately susceptible to climate change and that development gains must be distributed equitably.

Climate-vulnerable countries such as the Maldives simply cannot afford to cease investments in climate-resilient infrastructure and biodiversity protection. As the pandemic has shifted from a health crisis to a fiscal crisis, in countries such as the Maldives, where tourism directly and indirectly accounts for 75 per cent of gross domestic product, the shocks of border closures and disruptions to supply chains have been devastating.

Now more than ever we must be resolute in our commitment to avoid reversing hard-won development gains as resources are diverted away from key climate investments and the broader foundations of human-rights-based societies.

Across the globe, there are many people living in dire conditions, experiencing a lack of human rights and in humanitarian crises. The State of Palestine continues to be denied statehood. We reiterate our call for a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, where the people of both States can live side by side in peace, security and harmony.

The Maldives calls upon the Government of Myanmar to put an end to all forms of systematic violence against the Rohingya people and to comply strictly with Myanmar's obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to take all required measures to ensure protection for the Rohingya people, including the measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.

The principles of human rights are foundational to the Maldives' foreign policy and development vision. We remain committed to the task before us of strengthening the Council and its capacity to work with Member States to promote and uphold human rights globally.

Mr. Al Khalil (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation took note of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53) and would like

to reiterate its position with regard to item 4 of the Council's agenda, entitled "Human rights situations that require the Council's attention", which shows a confrontational approach within the work of the Council. The resolutions adopted under that item reflect a discriminatory approach and lack integrity, as in the case with the resolution entitled "The situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic" (S-17/1), because the submitting countries used it to disseminate their version of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, promote concepts on which there is no consensus and involve the Council in issues that are not within its purview.

In that context, we have expressed on many occasions our rejection of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, its mandate, periodic and special reports as well as all its conclusions and recommendations, because it has always been a politicized mechanism that lacks professionalism and integrity. Consequently, the Syrian Arab Republic distances itself from what is mentioned in the report on both the aforementioned resolution and the Commission, and reiterates its rejection of them.

We stress the importance of the Universal Periodic Review, as it reflects a spirit of dialogue and cooperation that could promote the human rights situation worldwide, based on equal treatment among all States and the full involvement of the State in question.

We renew our support for item 7 of the agenda, on the "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories", along with the related mandates and reports. That item is closely and organically linked to the continued and escalating Israeli occupation and violations that need to be monitored and highlighted.

My delegation deplors the way in which the President of the Human Rights Council conducted the dialogue regarding her presidential statement pertaining to the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on human rights. The President of the Council conducted the dialogue in a non-transparent and selective way. In her statement, she ignored the main concerns of and the proposals made by broad-based political groups on the effects of foreign occupation and unilateral coercive measures on human rights. She also ignored the appeals made by the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in addition to a number of special procedures, to abolish, mitigate or suspend certain measures in order

to enable the countries targeted to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and address its challenges for human rights.

We would like to stress that the Council should be managed in a transparent manner based on resolution 5/1, which deals with the structure, mechanisms and work of the Council. Consensus is the only way to consider any amendment of the Council's procedures, including time management and the scheduling of sessions. Consequently, it is important to hold general debates that include all States Members of the United Nations on any proposals to review working procedures, without exclusions or exceptions, which are not in conformity with the Council's mandate as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. Otherwise, the methods of work and the very foundations of the Council would be undermined.

We reject the measures taken by the President of the Human Rights Council during her mandate in terms of opening informal channels for dialogue with the Security Council or its presidency, including her July letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, which goes beyond her prerogatives under Council resolution 5/1 and General Assembly resolution 62/219, which stipulate that the mandate of the President of the Human Rights Council is limited to managing its work.

We believe that it is important to shed light through the Council's work on the effect of terrorism and unilateral coercive measures on human rights. Hate speech and racism against foreigners have been escalating around the world and should make us continue our discussion on ways of addressing this threat, which undermines the principle of non-discrimination as one of the pillars of international human rights law.

Lastly, the Syrian Arab Republic would like once again to confirm our readiness to cooperate collectively within the framework of the Human Rights Council. That would strengthen its role as an international mechanism that seeks to promote respect for human rights worldwide on the basis of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the

second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): I am taking the floor to respond to the statement made by the representative of Myanmar. It has, unfortunately, become routine that whenever Bangladesh presents facts, Myanmar takes the floor and wastes the Assembly's time with concocted stories and assertions that have neither basis nor relevance. Myanmar's only objective is to deflect the attention of the international community from the inhuman realities in that country. However, those stories do not change a single thing. Facts remain facts, and stories remain stories.

We would like to stress that it is Myanmar's responsibility to effectively contain all the security elements that originate on its territory without creating a humanitarian crisis or spillover effects on its neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, the actions of Myanmar, especially the clearance operations of 2017, have had severe impacts on Bangladesh. We are currently hosting over a million Rohingya, 60 per cent of whom are minors.

Myanmar questions Bangladesh's good faith. It is Bangladesh that provided shelter and protection to those people when they were driven away from their homes. It is Bangladesh that went to Naypyidaw and signed a bilateral arrangement of return. It is Bangladesh that has signed memorandums of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the voluntary return of Rohingyas.

Bangladesh has developed a joint database of all Rohingya with their biometrics and so far has handed over information of more than 600,000 Rohingyas to Myanmar for verification.

We have also arranged for physical repatriation on two occasions. However, not a single Rohingya volunteered to go to Myanmar owing to the fear of continued persecution. Myanmar has even failed to relocate the internally displaced persons to their homes inside Myanmar.

Now let me tell the Assembly what Myanmar has done. Since the signing of the agreement of return, Myanmar has only been avoiding its responsibility on trivial pretexts. Myanmar has completed verification of only 30,000 people in the past three years, out of the list of 600,000. Myanmar continues to deny go-and-see visits by Rohingya volunteers. That makes clear

whether it is Bangladesh or Myanmar that is lacking good faith.

Bangladesh has been calling Myanmar to create a conducive environment in that country so that the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh are able to return home and lead safe, sustainable and dignified lives. Myanmar has failed to take any action that could assure the Rohingya of their safety and of a dignified life in Myanmar. Myanmar must take concrete steps to assure the international community of its genuine intentions.

Bangladesh is not interested in the internal affairs of Myanmar. It is, rather, the victims of their atrocities who are calling for accountability, with support and assurance from the international community. After the 2017 clearance operations, there have been multiple reports and actions on the part of the United Nations mandate-holders concerned, who overwhelmingly verified the claims of human rights violations in Myanmar.

The Rohingya minorities have been taking shelter in Bangladesh since 1978. There have been influxes at regular intervals, in the late 1970s, the early 1990s and since the current exodus, in 2016 and 2017. Does Myanmar want to deny those facts? Every time the Rohingyas have come to Bangladesh, they have done so to save their lives. The painful experience of the victims has reached the top judicial organ of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, which has termed the Rohingyas a protected community. What else does Myanmar need to accept the fact that the Rohingyas were subjected to human rights violations?

It is regrettable that Myanmar remains in denial. However, thankfully, the international community is not, and neither is the Human Rights Council. The steps taken by the Council so far have raised hopes among the victims of those horrendous human rights violations in Myanmar that one day Myanmar might realize its responsibilities as a State and learn to protect and promote the human rights of all its people. We asked Myanmar to accept the facts and refrain from vilifying Bangladesh, which has been shouldering the burdens of its misdeeds for decades.

Mr. Tun Lin Swai (Myanmar): My delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise the right of reply to the statement just made by the representative of Bangladesh. It is most regrettable that Bangladesh is deliberately seeking attention in order to put more political pressure on Myanmar instead of helping to find

a solution. The statement just made is misleading and contains false accusations and fabricated information.

It was the National League for Democracy Government that took the initiative of finding a lasting solution to the protracted problems in Rakhine state. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State was but one of many other initiatives. Despite our genuine efforts to resolve the long-standing complex issues in Rakhine state, the terrorist attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in October 2016, immediately following the submission of the Commission's reports in August 2017, the attacks triggered counter-terrorism operations and caused the present cross-border humanitarian problem.

Despite repeated calls by my delegation on the existential threat posed by ARSA, some have chosen to turn a blind eye. There is clear and ample evidence of the presence of ARSA terrorists and their supporters in the camps of Cox's Bazaar, in Bangladesh. They have been trying to hamper the repatriation process by means of threats, intimidation, violence and harassment against those who wish to return to Myanmar.

There has also been extensive media coverage on this matter. Bangladesh must acknowledge that the terrorist presence in the camps poses a threat to both Myanmar and Bangladesh. Mere rhetoric will not provide an answer. Bangladesh must admit the reality and prevent such destructive terrorist activities, in order to pave the way for the repatriation process.

Of the first list of more than 7,000 persons verified for repatriation, 68 were found to be terrorists; similarly, in the second batch of verifications, 112 persons were found to be terrorists out of a list of 22,000.

Bangladesh has repeatedly said that the Rakhine issue is an internal issue of Myanmar. We have never denied that fact. The Rakhine issue is neither a bilateral nor a regional issue; it is a domestic issue. The repatriation process needs bilateral cooperation, since cross-border illegal migration is part of the issue. Hence it becomes a bilateral matter. This is a vivid reflection of the importance of good processes between good-neighbour countries. Hostile attitudes, hate narratives and demonization will not bring any positive results.

Two repatriation attempts, in November 2018 and August 2019, failed due to alleged demands for a guarantee of citizenship, third-party protection and the addressing of accountability issues before such

repatriation by the so-called representative of displaced persons. The media had reported that although many people were willing to go back, the majority of the persons displaced were not informed or aware of the repatriation and resettlement process, and were not contacted.

Moreover, there are disturbing reports that displaced persons living in camps in Cox's Bazar have been facing death threats, attacks and intimidation by ARSA for having expressed their desire to return to Myanmar.

Myanmar is always ready to work with Bangladesh in a frank, transparent and practical manner to address the needs of the innocent refugees who are living under the influence of terrorists and other politically motivated groups. It is crucial to know that the agreed format for repatriation and the formulation, based on past experience, is intended to ensure a speedy verification and smooth repatriation process.

Turning a blind eye to the facts that need to be addressed will only prolong the suffering of the innocent victims. Moreover, amplifying the hate narratives will adversely affect peace, harmony, reconciliation and social cohesion in Rakhine state. It is deplorable that Bangladesh has been incessantly spreading this false information and invented narratives. Such acts will undermine the positive steps taken by the relevant stakeholders in creating a conducive environment in Rakhine state.

Finally, let me conclude my response by categorically rejecting the accusations contained in the statement made by the representative of Bangladesh. Bangladesh must stop its global campaign of demonizing Myanmar and immediately begin constructive cooperation with

Myanmar to resolve this very unfortunate humanitarian problem facing Muslims in Rakhine state.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): Bangladesh is taking the floor once again in exercise of the right of reply in respect of the statement just made by the representative of Myanmar. Bangladesh strongly rejects the allegations made by Myanmar regarding the presence of terrorists inside the territory of Bangladesh. Such claims are totally baseless, false and fabricated, intended solely to divert attention from Myanmar's own failures to fulfil its obligations as a State.

Myanmar has been repeatedly claiming that ARSA is operating with support from Bangladesh. There is no basis for such a statement. Our security agencies are vigilant in this respect and do not allow any such activities on Bangladesh's territory, including in the camps.

Bangladesh would like to reiterate that we maintain a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and do not allow any terrorists or foreign dissident groups to use our soil for subversive activities against any neighbouring countries, including Myanmar.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 67.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would also like to call the attention of members to the letter circulated on 3 November 2020, which contains information regarding the occupational safety and health plan for this meeting, including the possibility of follow-up in the unfortunate, and hopefully, unlikely event of a case of the coronavirus disease.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.