



General Assembly

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59th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 67 (continued)

The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

Mr. Kulháněk (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58). I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Czech Republic is gravely worried about Russia's continued aggressive actions and threats against Ukraine, including its unprecedented and large-scale military build-up near its border with Ukraine.

I cannot think of a more fitting setting than the General Assembly to reiterate loud and clear that the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. It is a fundamental principle of international law, by which all States must abide and that we should all strive to uphold. Moreover, we fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's stern words of concern about the perversion of the concept of peacekeeping and his clear assertion that the principles of the Charter are not an à la carte menu.

We strongly condemn Russia's decision to recognize the independence of the so-called Donetsk

and Luhansk People's Republics, after which Russian troops entered into Ukrainian territory. The violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty by acts of aggression constitutes a grave violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. In line with resolution 68/262, we are committed to a policy of non-recognition with regard to illegally annexed Crimea. We reiterate our full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's actions constitute a direct attack on the European security architecture, while also undermining the rules-based international order. Today, many of the speakers who preceded me, including the Secretary-General, have stated in no uncertain terms that the only way forward is through de-escalation, negotiations and dialogue instead of massive military build-ups and the use of force. Indeed, that is the only acceptable approach. That is why the Czech Republic supports the renewed Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe dialogue on European security and calls on the Russian Federation to engage constructively.

In the non-Government-controlled areas of the Donbas region, as well as in illegally annexed Crimea, there are systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law, which remain of the gravest concern to us. In particular, we are deeply concerned by the health conditions of the following Crimean political prisoners: Halyna Dovhopola, Dzhemil Gafarov, Server Gaziev, Zekirja Muratov, Amet Suleymanov and Enver Omerov.

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In conclusion, the Czech Republic believes the situation needs to stay high on the United Nations agenda and deserves the full attention of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other relevant bodies. I would like to repeat what the Secretary-General said last week — there is no alternative to diplomacy. All issues can and must be addressed and resolved through diplomatic frameworks.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): Australia condemns unequivocally Russia's threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic as independent States is an attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and a blatant violation of international law. We condemn absolutely Putin's decision to order troops into those parts of eastern Ukraine.

Australia stands with Ukraine and calls again on Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately. Channels remain open for Russia to engage in diplomatic dialogue and it should do so without delay. We remind Russia of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. We call upon Russia to uphold the core Charter principles, including to refrain from the threat or use of force against another State.

Australia welcomes the significant efforts undertaken by our close partners, including the United States, the European Union and NATO, in urging Russia to find a diplomatic solution. Australia stands for openness, the rule of law and the right of all countries, large and small, to pursue their own interests, free from coercion. That is why we work with partners and allies to defend the international rules-based order.

Australia has been and will always be a steadfast supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity continues to convey its strong support to Ukraine at the highest levels. The Foreign Ministers of our countries met in Munich just a few days ago and our Prime Minister spoke with his counterpart yesterday.

The Australian Government is taking action to sanction Russian individuals and organizations as part of the international effort to impose an acute cost on Russia for its unprovoked and unacceptable aggression against Ukraine. If Russia takes any further action against Ukraine, Australia stands ready to take additional steps, working with our close partners.

Mr. Leucă (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, the Republic of Moldova reaffirms its strong and unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Moldova did not recognize the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. We voted in favour of resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", and subsequent resolutions.

The recent worrisome developments in and around Ukraine constitute both a matter of legitimate concern for the international community and a major source of tensions in Europe and beyond.

Over the past few weeks, against the backdrop of the unprecedented deployment of Russian troops in proximity to Ukraine's borders, we have been intensely discussing in various international forums the importance of safeguarding the fundamental instruments and core principles on which international peace and security are based.

Those instruments include the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. The core principles are also well known and universally accepted: sovereign equality; territorial integrity; the inviolability of borders; refraining from the threat or use of force; non-interference in internal affairs; cooperation among States; and fulfilment by States of their obligations under international law.

In those discussions, it has been stressed that the only way to proceed is for all States to uphold and respect those key instruments and principles and by no means to reinterpret or violate them.

Regretfully, despite all political-diplomatic efforts, two days ago we witnessed a step that called into question all the efforts undertaken and openly undermined the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, a founding member of the United Nations that is also a neighbouring and friendly country to Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova strongly condemns the Russian Federation's decision on the so-called recognition of the independence of the separatist entities of Luhansk and Donetsk. That act is a serious breach of international law and yet another blatant and unacceptable violation of its core norms and principles. That so-called recognition calls into question all

prospects for a political and negotiated solution to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine and will have deep and lasting negative consequences for the entire continent.

We are particularly concerned about the fact that Russian military forces will be now openly deployed to the non-Government-controlled areas of Ukraine. It creates a very high risk for military confrontation on Ukrainian soil. In that context, we reiterate our strong support for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, whose presence on the ground is now even more important.

We join the call on the Russian authorities to reverse their unilateral decision to recognize the two separatist territories situated in the territory of Ukraine and to de-escalate and return to the path on which diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation are the only tools for ensuring peace and stability on our continent. We express our solidarity with Ukraine and its people, as well as our deep appreciation for the restraint that Ukraine shown, and we welcome the readiness of the Ukrainian authorities to continue the search for a diplomatic solution through existing formats.

The future is not about political-military coercion, spheres of influence and the violation of the territorial integrity of sovereign States. The future is about cooperation, respecting human rights and achieving economic development for all, principles in which my country firmly believes. Similarly, in a region fraught with insecurity and instability, in which the norms of behaviour are collapsing like dominoes, States must follow a set of fundamental rules that guide relations among them and underpin a regional order.

Today it is more important than ever to reaffirm the principles of international law, order, justice and the peaceful resolution of disputes. We cannot allow historical grievances, revisionist policies, the blatant use of force and disregard for human rights to become the new normal. We need to counter threats to regional security and intolerable breaches of international law in a concerted manner. We all need to chart a different path — one that is constructive and sustainable.

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the light of the grave developments in recent weeks in Ukraine and the recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as independent entities, Chile supports the statement made on 21 February by the Spokesperson

of the Secretary-General, in which he called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in accordance with the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015). The Spokesperson further stated that

“The Secretary-General considers the decision of the Russian Federation to be a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”.

We also note that last week the Secretary-General indicated that he had made his good offices available and would leave no stone unturned in the search for a peaceful solution. We therefore thank the Secretary-General for reiterating his commitment to peace and for sharing with us earlier this morning his views on the tense situation in Ukraine (see A/76/PV.58).

My country's foreign policy is based on the fundamental principles enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which govern international coexistence: to refrain from the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State; to settle disputes by peaceful means; and for Members to fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by them. In that regard, the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each of the States Members of the United Nations — including, of course, Ukraine — must be respected and protected.

Chile is here today to strongly urge for the continuation of efforts for dialogue and understanding so that the Minsk agreements signed seven years ago can be implemented. We highlight the work on the ground carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to ensure peace and security for the entire population. We also emphasize that the diplomatic efforts being undertaken by friendly countries to achieve a peaceful solution through dialogue between the parties involved should be successfully concluded.

Whatever the concerns may be with respect to perceived threats to the security of a State, nothing justifies the violation of the principles contained in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Such concerns need to be addressed through dialogue and negotiations among the various parties concerned.

Mr. Jinga (Romania): Romania fully subscribes to the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58). I would now like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

Romania strongly condemns the decision by the Russian Federation to recognize the so-called independence of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, which are integral parts of Ukraine, as well as the illegal decision to send troops into those areas.

Those actions flagrantly violate Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as international law and international agreements, particularly the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. Romania recalls its firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The international community must provide a firm and unequivocal response. We call on the Russian Federation to abide by international law and immediately reverse its action; de-escalate and refrain from taking any further steps; and engage constructively in dialogue. We also call on other States not to recognize that so-called independence.

The Russian Federation's decision is a clear violation of its obligations as a signatory to the Minsk agreements, which it has rendered void. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation has a distinct responsibility to promote international peace and security. Instead, its actions threaten global peace and security and deliberately violate the principles of international law, as well as Security Council resolution 2202 (2015).

Romania strongly supports a peaceful resolution of the conflict in and around Ukraine, in line with the principles and commitments of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The full implementation of the Minsk agreements is the only way forward and dialogue remains vital. Romania underlines the role of the OSCE as the appropriate forum for addressing the security concerns of the parties involved.

Romania also expresses its support for the valuable engagement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. The Special Monitoring Mission should continue unobstructed in playing its vital role of monitoring and reporting on the security situation on

the ground, including in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, in accordance with its mandate. In the current circumstances, the work of the monitors on the ground is much needed and their safety and security must be ensured.

Romania has repeatedly expressed its concerns about Russia's unprecedented and threatening massive military build-up and troop movements near the border with Ukraine, as well as its increased military presence in Belarus, the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We have strongly condemned the dramatic increase over the past few days in ceasefire violations along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine, as well as the use of heavy weaponry and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. Since taking its unilateral actions on 21 February, the Russian Federation has continued on the path of escalation.

Romania stands in full solidarity with Ukraine and praises its restraint over the past weeks, which has demonstrated its strong commitment to using dialogue to overcome the current situation. Romania reaffirms its commitment to supporting Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58). I would now like to make a few points in my national capacity.

I reiterate Bulgaria's unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including within its territorial waters.

We strongly condemn the decision of President Putin to recognize the sovereign territories of Ukraine — Donetsk and Luhansk — as independent states and to send Russian troops into those regions. That decision not only blatantly undermines Ukraine's sovereignty and independence but also represents an illegal and dangerous attempt to redraw Europe's post-Cold War borders and challenge the existing international rules-based order. With that act, the Russian Federation has denounced the Minsk agreements, its own international commitment for finding a peaceful settlement to the conflict, and officially confirmed that it is a party to the conflict.

Non-compliance with the Charter of the United Nations should be of concern to all of us. To say "we are too far away to get involved" is not a valid argument, as

it is our common responsibility to uphold the Charter in its entirety. As the Secretary-General said, the principles of the United Nations Charter are not an à la carte menu — they cannot be applied selectively — and Member States have accepted them all and must apply them all. It is therefore our duty to join our efforts and reject that illegal action by the Kremlin.

We call on the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition, abide by international law, immediately reverse its massive military build-up in and around Ukraine, withdraw its forces from Ukraine, in accordance with its international obligations and commitments, and choose the path of diplomacy by returning to discussions within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. It is not yet too late to do so.

As the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine continues to deteriorate, the full, free and unhindered access of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission and other international human rights observers and monitoring mechanisms to the entire territory of Ukraine continues to be of the utmost importance.

Turning to the issue of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, we reaffirm our policy of non-recognition of their illegal annexation by the Russian Federation, including through restrictive measures. There must be an end to any attempts to legitimize or normalize it, including by issuing Russian passports, forcibly moving populations, conscripting residents into the Russian Federation's armed forces or illegally holding Russian elections. We are also deeply concerned about the ongoing human rights violations and abuses in Crimea and call for the immediate release of all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens, including Crimean Tatar activists imprisoned in Russia and illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol.

As a Black Sea littoral State, Bulgaria shares the concerns about the ongoing Russian militarization of the Crimean peninsula, which has had a severely negative impact on the security situation in the wider Black Sea region. We call on the Russian Federation to refrain from any actions that impede the freedom of passage and navigation, in contravention of international law, and that could lead to further escalation in areas of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Ukraine for its resilience and to once again call for de-escalation,

dialogue and diplomacy in order to overcome the current security crisis. We want Ukraine to know that it is not alone.

Ms. Šćepanović (Montenegro): Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58).

The deterioration of the security situation in and around Ukraine is deeply worrying. We are gravely concerned about the Russian Federation's military build-up on Ukraine's borders, including in illegally annexed Crimea and in Belarus and the Black Sea. The reported indiscriminate shelling of civilian infrastructure and the ceasefire violations along the line of contact in the past few days are alarming.

The top priority should therefore be for Russia to reverse its military build-up and withdraw its forces from Ukraine, in accordance with its international obligations and commitments, while remaining constructively engaged in dialogue within the established international mechanisms. The current rhetoric of threats must stop, and a solution must be sought through diplomatic channels. As the Secretary-General has said, there is no alternative to diplomacy. It is incumbent on all Member States to fully respect the key principles of the Charter of the United Nations — that is, settling disputes by peaceful means and refraining from the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

We support diplomatic efforts, including between Heads of State and in negotiations within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, aimed at a peaceful settlement of the conflict in accordance with the Minsk agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015). Montenegro calls on the parties to uphold their commitments and engage constructively. The de-escalation of tensions, backed by tangible, verifiable steps on the ground, should be a priority.

The already dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine, where nearly 2.9 million people are in need of assistance, will be exacerbated in the event of an escalation. We are deeply concerned about Russia's decision to recognize the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics. That does not contribute to easing the tensions but rather constitutes a further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and directly contradicts the Minsk agreements. We call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral measures that

may further undermine the Minsk agreements or their implementation and result in further escalation of the dangerous situation.

The alarming developments in and around Ukraine are endangering the European security architecture and pose a clear and present threat to peace and security in Europe and beyond. Montenegro upholds a European security order based on the core principles of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every country, acknowledging the inherent right of every country to freely choose its own security arrangements and refraining from the threat or use of force. Those principles are not a matter for negotiation, nor are they subject to reinterpretation. In that regard, I want to reaffirm Montenegro's resolute support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic has always emphasized the importance of resolving regional and international disputes through diplomacy and dialogue. We have supported all efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security in any part of the world where tensions are high, based on our belief in the importance of respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

However, we still believe that the inclusion of the item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly is an irresponsible, unilateral, politicized action that reflects the desire of certain Western Governments to aggravate the situation in that region so as to put pressure on Russia, at the expense of regional and international security and stability and to the detriment of the established historical relations between the peoples of the two countries. The Assembly's continued consideration of the item represents an attack on the Security Council's mandate and a violation of Article 12 of the Charter. The Council's adoption of resolution 2202 (2015) is proof that it is addressing the matter, and that requires the Assembly to refrain from action unless the Security Council requests it, which it has not done.

A lack of political will on the part of Ukraine — as well as the interference on a pretext of concern for Ukraine by Western Governments and NATO, which are simultaneously seeking to escalate tensions by creating

a hostile environment and deploying heavy weaponry and missiles — has prevented the implementation of the Minsk agreements of 2015, tarnished the historical relationship between Russia and its neighbour Ukraine and created tensions between them. The fact that some Western States have rushed to send large numbers of weapons and missiles to Ukraine without considering the consequences of their actions is the reason for the escalation in the region. We believe that NATO and the various Western States could have given the Russian Federation's repeated proposals the serious consideration that they deserved before taking or threatening to take action. We believe that the decision of the United States and certain Western States to impose unilateral coercive measures will only further complicate the situation, especially since such illegal measures have been shown to fail in dealing with sensitive issues in international relations.

The position of the Syrian Arab Republic on the situation in Crimea is based on the results of the referendum of 16 March 2014, in which more than 82 per cent of voters expressed their desire, in accordance with international law and democratic practice, to remain part of the Russian Federation. The Western States that champion democracy and human rights must respect the free will of the people of Crimea.

The positions and hostile campaigns targeting the Russian Federation and inciting hostility to it, which have intensified recently and have had repercussions in various contexts, are proof that the Ukrainian crisis was created by the Western States, led by the United States, in order to divide the people and undermine Russian national security. My country therefore condemns those practices and the attempts to offend the Russian Federation. At the same time, we applaud the high level of restraint that Russia has shown in the face of the escalation and the repeated provocations. We also applaud it for refraining from being dragged into the attempts to manufacture a crisis between Russia and Ukraine by the United States and its Western allies, together with the staff of NATO — an organization that no longer has a reason to exist — while creating a flood of instability and insecurity by promoting a military confrontation between the two parties. It is deplorable that from the States purporting to seek stability and security in this region we have heard no condemnation of the military aggression in Donbas, which has led to the death of innocent civilians, including women and children, and has displaced large numbers of people

across the borders into Russian territory in search of security and safety.

In conclusion, Syria stresses that resistance by all possible means to the hostile policies of Western Powers is in the common interests of all who oppose their domination and tyranny over the world. We also stress that it will be impossible to achieve peace and security in Europe without taking into consideration the legitimate security concerns of the Russian Federation and without providing the necessary security safeguards for the Russian people, especially since Western States have defaulted on the promises they made to the Russian Federation three decades ago.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Paraguay is following the events surrounding Ukraine with great concern, keeping in mind that both the Russian Federation and Ukraine are brother countries with whom Paraguay collaborates closely in a variety of areas. In fact, the development of vast areas of Paraguay is the result of the efforts and contribution of people from both countries. That closeness makes us wish the best for both countries and their peoples.

The founding countries of our Organization agreed 76 years ago to prohibit the use or threat of use of force in the settlement of international disputes. We now have the means and multilateral structure that our leaders lacked in the past. A breach of that commitment will be a severe blow to multilateralism and to the Organization and will create an unprecedented threat to humankind. We are only just recovering from the worst pandemic in history, and the international community is facing serious challenges that we should all be working to solve right now, such as poverty, climate change, the full observance of human rights, transnational crimes and food insecurity, among many other things. And for all that, trusting in the collective commitment, we thought, perhaps too optimistically, that we would learn how to live together better.

Today, once again, the threat of conflict and confrontation challenges us as human beings, as a global society and as leaders. This is a crucial moment in which intelligence, expertise and desire for the common good — not for ambition, power or strength — must prevail. We urge all the parties, especially those that are directly involved and those that have the greatest influence on the international scene, with their leaders, to continue their efforts to achieve a peaceful and negotiated solution. Today in the General Assembly

our call is clear and direct. It is imperative and urgent that the negotiating processes under the current and internationally recognized mechanisms be resumed. That is the only possible way. There is no other. In that regard, the Security Council must assume its role and carry out its mission. It has all the tools it needs for that.

Paraguay recognizes the efforts of various Governments in the ongoing search for dialogue and reaffirms its adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the principles established in our Constitution — international solidarity and cooperation, national independence, non-intervention and the self-determination of peoples. I thank the President for giving me the floor and my colleagues for listening.

Ms. Seid (Palau): The creation of the United Nations in the closing days of the Second World War was an expression of hope for the possibilities of the new global security arrangement, one that would foster the social and economic conditions that could enable peace to prevail. The Charter of the United Nations and the international law treaties that followed have been sacred to Palau, first because we became a sovereign nation through the procedures of the Trusteeship Council in 1994, a mere three years after the independence of Ukraine. Indeed, many of us here are former colonies and should bristle at the thought that our hard-won independence and the sweet taste of our self-determination and individual rights might be jeopardized at the whim of any one nation.

Secondly, Palau experienced the horrors of the Second World War first-hand when the bloodiest battle of the Pacific theatre was fought on our shores, on the island of Peleliu. Should we forget the carnage of war when if the borders of Europe are redrawn by force it will mean bloodshed and lost lives, voiceless and vulnerable people who go hungry, tens of thousands of the displaced exacerbating the refugee crisis, and children — innocent children — who are robbed of an education and a childhood, who instead grow up in a pervasive state of fear and helplessness?

Few countries should understand the wounds of war more than Russia, which is among those that lost the most lives in the Second World War. Yet Putin is beginning to act as if the lives at stake are fair currency in his ambitions for the re-establishment of a larger empire. Palau therefore strongly condemns Russia and its actions declaring eastern Donetsk and

Luhansk independent States and deploying Russian troops into Ukraine. We view them as violations of the principles of the Charter and of international law and the Minsk agreements. We pledge our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Palau also asks that all of us, Russia included, hold firm in our commitment to honour the Charter and encourage a stable peace through de-escalation, dialogue and the rule of law. All of us have ideals that are often challenged by reality. But let us not forget that the United Nations Charter is not self-executing. It depends on all of us as Member States to constantly and consistently reaffirm its ideals. That is our purpose. And let us not forget that our work is never done.

Ms. Bartolini (San Marino): The Republic of San Marino is deeply worried about the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine, the militarization of its borders, the recent escalation of events and the current risk of a military conflict in Europe, which would be disastrous for all. Any war, of any size or nature, must absolutely be avoided, as it would cause intolerable human suffering, violence, destruction and instability, both in Europe and the world. For that reason, we consider all the ongoing negotiations to be necessary and urgent, and we expect no interruption to the path of dialogue until a peaceful result is reached. Furthermore, San Marino calls on all parties to fully respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the principles of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of States.

San Marino firmly supports the efforts of the international community to promote political solutions for a complete de-escalation of tensions between the parties. In that regard, we appreciate and fully support the ongoing work of the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group, led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to ensure the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We would like to emphasize the words of the Secretary-General, who reiterated that there is no alternative to diplomacy. All issues, including the most intractable, can and must be addressed and resolved through diplomatic approaches.

Regrettably, the tension has been escalating and civilians continue to bear the brunt of this crisis, which has already caused death and displacement. Civilian infrastructures, including schools, health facilities and electricity and water systems have been damaged, leaving civilians, including children, disabled people and the elderly, without vital services. Furthermore, the

use of landmines poses a serious risk to civilians' safety and to their daily activities. San Marino is concerned about the large number of civilians who are in need of humanitarian assistance. We call on all the parties to respect international humanitarian law and guarantee safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors. Civilians must be protected. An escalation of hostilities would definitely have a devastating impact on the already precarious life of civilians in this area, but also on peace, justice and stability beyond the region.

San Marino is concerned about the Russian Federation's decision on the status of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine and by the possible implications that the latest developments may have on existing negotiation frameworks. We call on all the parties to respect the ceasefire and to avoid provocative acts, with a view to easing tensions. San Marino commends the diplomatic engagement undertaken so far and asks all the actors involved to intensify their efforts to reach a diplomatic solution. There can be no alternative to diplomacy. In the interests of all, the path of political mediation should not be abandoned until a peaceful solution is achieved. Lasting and mutually acceptable arrangements are critical if we are to safeguard regional and international peace and security for all.

Mr. Lam Padilla (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala is closely following the situation in Ukraine, and as a founding member of the United Nations, we attach enormous importance to the Charter of the United Nations, the foundation of our Organization. It expresses the highest ideals of multilateralism and promotes the fundamental principles of international law — respect for States' sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence, and non-interference in States' internal affairs.

We have a responsibility and an obligation to speak for peace. The Government of Guatemala strongly condemns Russia's unilateral recognition of the so-called separatist republics of Ukraine, which violates the principles of international law and Ukraine's integrity. As a faithful promoter of peace in multilateral forums and of the peaceful, negotiated and civilized resolution of conflicts, my country would like to reiterate its commitment, and we call urgently on the parties involved to reach a solution through diplomatic dialogue and negotiation, in accordance with the principles of the Charter. As a peaceful nation that respects international law, Guatemala

calls for prioritizing diplomacy in order to prevent an escalation of conflict that endangers the safeguarding and maintenance of international peace and security, particularly for the benefit and protection of the peoples involved. Guatemala reiterates the importance of finding a peaceful solution to this crisis through respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and security of all of the countries concerned.

Mr. Amorín (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is following with great concern the increase in tensions on the borders between Ukraine and Russia, where there has been a dizzying escalation after Russia's recognition of the separatist regions in Ukraine and movement of military units, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which could jeopardize regional stability. We members of the United Nations are responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security and for respect for the principles established in the Charter.

Rejecting the use or threat of use of force and ensuring the peaceful settlement of disputes are guiding principles of Uruguay's foreign policy. We therefore call on the parties involved to continue diplomatic negotiations and to seek political agreements, as the only way to settle their conflicting interests. Uruguay also supports all the efforts being undertaken in that regard. Like a majority of members of the international community, we understand that Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), which outlines the path for implementation of the Minsk agreements, is the main framework by which a lasting and peaceful resolution may be reached. The Security Council has a primary responsibility for implementing that resolution, and any settlement should respect the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The territorial integrity of States is a principle of the Charter, and it is an essential norm of international law in general that should be respected by all States, given its importance for peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the members of the international community.

In order to reach a solution that can halt the escalation of tensions and the bellicose talk, it will be crucial to restore confidence among all the parties involved. That calls for firm political will on the part of all parties. We therefore welcome the diplomatic initiatives that began last Sunday and that are based on a proposal to hold meetings at the highest level. Dialogue and diplomacy are the only ways to reach a solution to the situation. This is a war that was lost before it began.

There can be no winners. It leaves behind it a bitter and painful trail in addition to unprecedented setbacks for our civilization. We call once again on all the parties involved to acknowledge the gravity of the escalation between the opposing sides and to take every measure possible to reduce tensions and intensify the diplomatic negotiations aimed at reaching a political agreement on the current situation on the border between Ukraine and Russia.

Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like the entire international community, the Government of Peru is deeply concerned about the evolving situation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, as well as on the eastern borders of Ukraine and Russia. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's statement that recognition of the independence of the separatist territories and the positioning of military forces within them are incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and constitute a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It is imperative that all hostilities and ceasefire violations in the area cease, as laid down in the Minsk agreements. It is also vital that the parties involved commit fully to de-escalating the conflict, decreasing tensions, starting a de-escalation process, building trust and finding the most appropriate means to start consultations and negotiations that can make a negotiated solution possible, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Peru reaffirms its belief that ensuring international peace and security in accordance with the provisions of Article 1 of the Charter entails a mandatory obligation on the part of all States to use peaceful means to resolve conflicts and any situation likely to undermine peace and security, through the strict application of the principles of respect for obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law, of refraining from the use or threat of use of force, of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and of ensuring the protection of people's human rights. In this difficult and complex situation, the Government of Peru considers it essential and critical to make use of the tools offered by diplomacy to ensure consultations and negotiations that can enable a peaceful and sustainable solution that takes into account the legitimate interests of the parties concerned, in strict compliance with the principles of the Charter and the norms of international law.

Mrs. Horváth (Hungary): We align ourselves with the statement delivered this morning on behalf of the

European Union (see A/76/PV.58), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Hungary reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We are deeply concerned about the destabilizing security situation in and around eastern Ukraine. The Charter of the United Nations is clear. It unequivocally prohibits the use or threat of use of force against a State's territorial integrity and political independence and demands that States settle their international disputes by peaceful means. We once again emphasize the importance of fully respecting international law and international agreements, as well as basic principles that are enshrined not only in the Charter but also in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the Budapest Memorandum. There were and still are multiple diplomatic tracks available and under way that had and still have the ability to offer peaceful and diplomatic solutions.

As a central European country, Hungary is genuinely invested in East-West dialogue. Our region has always suffered as a consequence of conflict between the two sides. We have not forgotten the experience of the Cold War, and a return to such practices must therefore be avoided. Despite the dramatic escalation of tensions in eastern Ukraine, it therefore continues to be in our interests to see that all the relevant actors focus on ensuring an immediate cessation of hostilities, protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, refraining from any actions or statements that could further escalate the dangerous situation in and around Ukraine and prioritizing diplomacy to address all issues in a peaceful manner.

We reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Ukraine and our support to Ukraine. Hungary would like to point to the numerous forms of support that it has provided to Ukraine bilaterally, including economic development assistance; a voluntary contribution of €100,000 and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) antigen tests for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; 120 respirators to hospitals in Ukraine; COVID-19-related assistance amounting to approximately \$12 million; medical treatment and rehabilitation for wounded Ukrainian soldiers and camps for children whose parents have been affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine; renovation of the crisis centre in Kherson; and an outpatient station in the village of Volynska. In the most recent form of our assistance, on

1 February we began the transfer of reverse-flow gas to Ukraine from Hungary. We continue to contribute to strengthening Ukraine's resilience in close coordination with the Ukrainian authorities.

Mrs. Mc Gill (Liberia): Pursuant to resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", and subsequent resolutions on the human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, and the problem of the militarization of those areas, as well as of parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, Liberia maintains the position it articulated in the General Assembly in 2014 during the debate on Ukraine, when we urged Russia to defuse tensions and respect the rights of Ukraine (see A/68/PV.80). Liberia calls on Russia to refrain from attacking Ukraine. We further urge Russia to use diplomacy and dialogue to resolve its stated security concerns, and to reverse its military build-up along the borders of Ukraine and in occupied Crimea. Liberia hereby reaffirms its commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, since Ukraine currently poses no threat to Russia.

In this twenty-first century, when our world body, the United Nations, is promoting peace and security, war is certainly not the answer. The most prudent path is that of dialogue and peace. We therefore believe that adherence to the tenants of democracy is critical and should prevail so that the individual rights of nations are not infringed. The sovereignty of Ukraine must be respected.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will not limit my statement to General Assembly agenda item 67, the reason that we are meeting today. Considering the tensions at the border between Ukraine and Russia, I would like to discuss the maintenance of international peace and security as a higher goal to which this meeting should contribute.

I followed closely and with interest the Security Council briefing on the situation in the region held on 31 January under the agenda item of "Threats to international peace and security" during the Norwegian presidency of the Council (see S/PV.8960). I did the same during the briefing on 17 February (see S/PV.8968) and the open meeting on 21 February (see S/PV.8970) held under the Russian Federation's current presidency of the Council. I want to stress that I find value in the statements of all the members of the Security Council, without exception, as well as the statements of those

who participated under rules 37 and 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. However, it is continued dialogue and direct negotiations between the parties that have the most value in the efforts to overcome this escalation in tensions.

Based on Ecuador's traditional vocation of peace, I respectfully call on the States involved and the rest of the international community, including the many stakeholders and parties, to avoid narratives that exacerbate tensions, which could make the difference between peace and conflict. In that regard, I reiterate Ecuador's unwavering support for the defence of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, particularly Article 2. I urge all the parties to comply with their international obligations, including those contracted to under the Minsk agreements. I believe firmly that the militarization of the areas of tension and the build-up of arms in these regions do not support a diplomatic solution.

Lastly, I support the views of Secretary-General António Guterres. I am grateful to him for his frank words and express my country's trust that if good faith and the will of the parties to make their best efforts in all the talks under way prevail, we can achieve greater peace for Europe and for the world.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made this morning on behalf of the European Union (see S/PV.58), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

I would like to start by thanking the President for convening this important debate on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which we consider very timely and urgent, unfortunately. I intentionally used the word "unfortunately" as we are once again seeing massive pressure put on Ukrainian sovereignty. Slovakia fully rejects the decision by the Russian Federation to recognize the independence of the separatist entities of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, which is a blatant violation of international law, to say the least. In that regard, we would particularly like to welcome the statement of the Secretary-General, who considers the Russian Federation's decision to be a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, whose important anniversary we recently celebrated, all of us reaffirming and reconfirming our belief in its relevance and validity. We collectively signed

the poster that is displayed right next to where I am standing and that reaffirms the important nature of this basic document. We also recently celebrated Mr. Jan Papanek, who was the first Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia to the United Nations and one of the 14 experts who drafted the Charter.

With all that in mind, we have to express our serious concern about the situation in which we find ourselves. We also fully agree with the Secretary-General that the principles of the Charter are not an à la carte menu and cannot be applied selectively. The decision of the Russian Federation is a breach of its obligations under the Budapest Memorandum and the Minsk agreements, to which the Russian Federation is a party, and which remain the only basis for a settlement of the conflict in Donbas. That decision is likewise an unacceptable step that is in direct contradiction to the declared interest in seeking a constructive solution in diplomatic dialogue in the relevant international formats as well as to the principle of the indivisibility of security, which the Russian Federation itself emphasizes, calling for its respect by both NATO and the European Union.

Slovakia is firm in its non-recognition of the self-proclaimed independence of the separatist entities. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to separatists and to withdraw Russian troops and materiel from the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

Slovakia's principled position is based on unwavering support for the political sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of our neighbour Ukraine and the universal validity of and respect for the principles of international law.

We do not recognize and continue to condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Since the illegal annexation of Crimea, the human rights situation on the peninsula has significantly deteriorated. We are particularly concerned at the fact that residents of the peninsula face systematic restrictions on their human rights, such as the freedoms of expression, religion and belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly. We likewise remained concerned over the increasing militarization of the Crimean peninsula.

I would also like to reconfirm our strong support for the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in

finding a peaceful political solution to the conflict in Donbas. Almost eight years after the beginning of the crisis, we continue to emphasize that in order to achieve a lasting peace and the resolution of the conflict, all sides need to engage constructively and in good faith.

We urge the Russian Federation to return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue. Ukraine is Slovakia's friend and largest neighbour, and it is in our strategic vital interest to have a stable, secure and prosperous Ukraine. We seize this opportunity once again to reiterate our firm belief that it is in the interest of the international community as a whole as well.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the European Union (EU) statement that we heard this morning (see A/76/PV.58). Permit me to add these short reflections in our national capacity.

This Hall has seen its share of debates — all kinds of debates, on all kinds of issues. Today, as we heard in many interventions, the debate is about peace and war; it is about the fundamental purpose of the Organization. We are here to discuss the extremely dangerous situation evolving in and around Ukraine owing to Russia's illegal acts.

At the very outset, let me state the key message today for Austria: Austria confirms its unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have witnessed a worrying escalation in the situation that the Ukrainians have had to endure for years. That has to stop. We commend the Ukrainian side for its posture of restraint in the face of continued provocations and efforts at destabilization.

As Austria is a neutral State not party to any military alliance, its security relies on respect for international law. Austria therefore cannot stand by idly when a country's territorial integrity and political independence are under threat. We cannot accept borders being moved through force in the twenty-first century.

Austria considers international law, with the Charter of the United Nations at its core, as the indispensable basis for our international system and for international cooperation. That includes the core principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as refraining from the threat or use of force. Every State Member of

the United Nations signed up to those principles. Those principles keep us safe.

The recognition of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics by the Russian Federation represents a grave violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, which we condemn categorically. With that unilateral step, Russia is violating international law and threatening to make the Minsk agreements, aimed at peacefully resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine, null and void. It is also contrary to Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), which calls for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Together with our partners in the EU and beyond, we call on Russia to de-escalate, reverse its military buildup and abide by international law. It is not too late to change course: to engage constructively in dialogue through the established international mechanisms, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Normandy format and, of course, the United Nations here in New York.

Recently, and again this morning here in this Hall, Secretary-General Guterres recalled the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the prohibition of the use of force and offered his good offices. We encourage all sides to take that offer seriously.

Let me be clear: this crisis is not only of regional concern; it is of global concern. Violations of international law, including of the Charter, do not affect only a few. They affect all States Members of the United Nations. They are dangerous precedents that can determine our future.

If United Nations principles have any relevance, then the non-use of force and sovereignty should protect each State from intervention by others; territorial integrity should prevent other States from annexing one's territory; and political independence should give people the right to choose their own leaders and the right to determine their own security policy.

Over the past weeks we have been presented with arguments possibly seeking to justify violations of those principles. We are absolutely not convinced.

In the Security Council meeting held on Monday (see S/PV.8970), Kenya made a strong statement — probably some here heard it — refuting arguments based on historic ties or past territorial possessions. Indeed,

many States Members of the United Nations have historically been parts or colonies of others. But does that give former possessors, former colonial empires the right to dictate policies, intervene and even claim parts of their former territories? No, clearly it does not.

Let us take a moment and imagine: what if we were in Ukraine's shoes? And if we were, what would we expect from the international community, from the United Nations, from the General Assembly? For Austria, the answer is clear: we would expect a clear condemnation of all violations of international law and a call on Russia to return to complying fully with our jointly agreed principles and commitments.

Many speakers here today stressed that all things considered, our job here at the United Nations is to prevent human suffering, avert human tragedies and help make people feel safe and secure. We agree. To achieve that, let me reiterate that abiding by international law is the best security policy for all.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): My delegation expresses its grave concern over the recent escalation of tensions regarding Ukraine. We condemn any act that seriously undermines the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of any Member State.

In that regard, we are seriously concerned at Russia's decision to recognize the independence of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. That undermines the fundamental principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected. We urge Russia to de-escalate tensions and reverse its military build-up in the region.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In that vein, we are aligned with the Secretary-General's recent statements. All relevant international and bilateral agreements, including the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), must be fully observed.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States shall settle disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered. It also requires that all States refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

The Republic of Korea believes that where there is political will, there is a peaceful political solution. We urge all parties concerned to seek ways to peacefully resolve the situation. The peace and stability of Ukraine is important to peace not only in Europe but also beyond.

The humanitarian impact of the current crisis is worrying. The Republic of Korea will triple its aid to Ukraine this year. We will stand by the efforts of the international community to address humanitarian needs in Ukraine.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): The situation in and around Ukraine has escalated and become critical. Brazil is following the latest developments with deep concern. Geopolitical tensions and threats to international peace and security require the United Nations to engage in a prompt and timely manner. In the present circumstances, the international community must express its steadfast commitment to promoting political and diplomatic efforts to bring a peaceful and lasting solution to this crisis.

Our primary objective must be to prevent war. There is an urgent need to de-escalate tensions and resort to meaningful dialogue between the parties involved. We urge those parties to exercise maximum restraint and to engage constructively in talks aimed at resolving their differences. We firmly believe that there is still room to restore confidence and find a negotiated and acceptable outcome.

Brazil calls on all parties to strictly observe international law. It is imperative to fully respect the principles enshrined in the Charter in a non-selective manner. The prohibition of the use of force, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-intervention and the protection of human rights are pillars of our collective security system.

We believe that a permanent solution to the crisis in Ukraine must take into account the legitimate concerns of all parties within the framework of diplomatic talks and according to the parameters established by the relevant Security Council resolutions, such as resolution 2202 (2015), and in the spirit of the Minsk agreements.

We urge an immediate ceasefire with the comprehensive disengagement of troops and military equipment on the ground. We believe that military

disengagement is key to building trust among the parties and to achieving a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Diplomatic means have not yet been exhausted. We reiterate our plea to all concerned parties to maintain the dialogue with openness, flexibility and a sense of urgency so as to find ways to achieve a lasting peace in Ukraine and in the wider region.

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Head of Delegation of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58). I should like furthermore to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

I wish to reaffirm Belgium's full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. What is at stake today is respect for the core principles that undergird the Organization and the entire structure of the international order, which is based on rules; respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of States; and the prohibition of the use of force. That was set out in the statement made by the Secretary-General (*ibid.*), whose good offices Belgium supports.

President Putin's decision to recognize the independence of the separatist Ukrainian territories of Donetsk and Luhansk and to deploy troops to those areas flies in the face of that international order, which is based on the rule of law. In particular, it constitutes a breach of the Charter of the United Nations; the Helsinki Final Act; the Minsk agreements, which were endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015); and the Budapest Memorandum.

Those actions by Russia cannot be left without a response from the European Union and its allies. We should like to see sanctions that are both proportionate and targeted. It is in the spirit of respect for international law that Belgium has advocated for weeks for a diplomatic end to the crisis in the framework of the agreements reached.

We call on Russia to respect international law and its commitments and to reverse its decision recognizing the independence of the separatist territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. We also wish to call for full respect for international humanitarian law, including with guarantees for safe, secure and unhindered unfettered humanitarian access and respect for human rights.

With respect to Crimea, Belgium condemns the illegal annexation of the peninsula, which also constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and of the core principles of the international order. We will remain firm in our policy of non-recognition of this illegal annexation by Russia, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/262. What is happening today in Ukraine concerns not only Europeans, but every State Member of the United Nations. Let us work together for the respect of the rules-based international order that is the foundation of the Organization.

Mr. Fernandez De Soto Valderrama (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins all those who have expressed their concern over the rise in tensions and most recent developments in Ukraine now undermining the foundations of the international order. Colombia calls on Russia to act in strict accordance with the principles of international law set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the prohibition of the threat or use of force against and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine. Disregarding these principles implies a breach of the three pillars on which the actions of the United Nations are based, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security, the enjoyment of human rights and the promotion of development.

We support the diplomatic initiatives undertaken so far, and, as requested by the Secretary-General, we urge the immediate return to the path of dialogue and negotiations as the only mechanism for finding formulas that allow for the maintenance of peaceful coexistence among States, stability and world peace. In this context, we express our solidarity with the people of Ukraine and welcome all efforts being made by world leaders to de-escalate the situation. Resolution 68/262 of 2014 and the Minsk agreements are an indispensable basis for focusing such efforts, as they contain solutions suitable for the parties involved.

We cannot remain impassive when a situation arises that could destabilize not only a region, but the international system as a whole, with serious consequences that would affect everyone without exception, such as the breakdown of peace, human suffering, the massive violation of the human rights of the affected populations, the refugee crisis and other impacts that are already beginning to become evident and could seriously affect the recovery of the world economy. The multilateral system's mechanisms and

institutions can curb this kind of crisis, provided that there is political will and commitment from everyone to find solutions. Colombia wishes to raise its voice to warn that the path of dialogue is the only way to save the most precious asset of all: human life and dignity.

At this time when humankind is still going through a pandemic that has not ended and which has had devastating effects in terms of loss of life and the destruction of wealth, businesses and jobs that will take us no less than a decade to recover from, it is necessary to act with a sense of global responsibility and without the opportunism that would lead to a confrontation from which no nation would emerge unscathed.

In war, we all lose, and all humankind loses. Solving this serious crisis must be achieved by peaceful means based on the full application of the principles set forth in Article 2 of the Charter, principally by guaranteeing Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ms. Kinyungu (Kenya): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's debate on such an urgent matter.

Since 2014, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions reiterating its support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The imperative to respect and uphold the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States no matter their size, population, wealth or military might is what stands between a peaceful global order and escalating, widening crises. Accordingly, Kenya registers its strong concern and opposition to the recognition by the Russian Federation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as independent States. We call for de-escalation to ensure that there are no military confrontations and for a return to diplomatic negotiations whose outcome would respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Further, we strongly condemn the trend in the last few decades of powerful States breaching international law with indifference.

Any chances of realizing our common agenda and the other ambitious goals we have set to raise the hopes of our citizens depend on multilateralism. Today, we are discussing the latest in a series of unilateral actions by States that sit in the Security Council with unique responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to stand behind the Secretary-General as he rallies us

behind the standard defending multilateralism. There are existing initiatives that we must energize with our shared conviction that the United Nations is off track and needs our collective determination in order to rescue the Organization.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer (see A/76/PV.58). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Slovenia welcomes today's very timely debate on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. At the outset, I have to highlight that we strongly condemn the decision by President Putin to recognize the non-Government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine as independent entities and the ensuing decision to send Russian troops into these areas. These illegal acts further undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and independence and represent a serious breach of international law and international agreements, among them the United Nations Charter and its main principles, as well as the Budapest Memorandum and the Minsk agreements.

We fully share the assessment of the situation by the Secretary-General on Monday and again yesterday when he clearly stated that

"the decision of the Russian Federation is a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations".

We also join the Secretary-General in highlighting that the principles of the United Nations Charter cannot be applied selectively. States Members of the United Nations have accepted them all, and they must apply them all.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were illegally incorporated into the Russian Federation eight years ago. It is with great concern that we are again witnessing Russian aggression that undermines the rules-based world order. The heavy Russian military build-up along the border with Ukraine and the continuous militarization of the Crimean peninsula continues to represent a danger of further escalation. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders must be respected and preserved.

One of the clearest principles of international law is the United Nations Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Slovenia strongly condemns any violations of the United Nations Charter and defends its key principles. We call on Russia to respect the principles of the Charter, reverse the recent decisions and de-escalate the situation, ensure full transparency over its military activities, withdraw its military forces from the areas currently not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. Last but not least, we strongly urge Russia to engage constructively in dialogue through established diplomatic mechanisms.

We commend the restraint of Ukraine's leadership in the face of continued provocations and violations of international law, and its efforts to preserve the stability of the country in these extremely challenging times. We welcome all efforts to find a diplomatic solution and to revive the Normandy format. Constructive engagement and dialogue through the established international mechanisms, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), must be pursued.

Slovenia deplores the continued restrictions of the freedom of movement faced by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission representatives as well as civilians across the contact line. Free and safe access of the Special Monitoring Mission to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, must be ensured.

The overall humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine remains dire, and we call upon all parties to allow for safe, timely and unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance to all people in need. We are also highly concerned about the persistent and numerous civilian casualties of landmines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices on both sides of the contact line. The disengagement activities along the contact line and withdrawal of heavy weapons are crucial for the continuation of humanitarian mine clearance and protection of civilians.

Slovenia remains deeply concerned by the human rights violations and abuses in the Crimean peninsula, primarily targeted at Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic minorities. Since the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation, the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula has severely deteriorated. We recall the responsibility of States to comply with international human rights standards and call on Russia to uphold its international commitments and provide

international human rights observers full, free and unrestricted access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

Slovenia will continue to contribute to the efforts aimed at alleviating severe consequences, particularly in the humanitarian field, through projects of medical and psychosocial rehabilitation of children from the conflict areas. Since December 2020, Slovenia has been supporting the ongoing reform process in Ukraine by providing assistance and sharing expertise on decentralization.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Mr. Janez Janša, is visiting Ukraine tomorrow as a demonstration of our political support for Ukraine, reconfirming Slovenia's unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his very clear statement this morning (see A/76/PV.58).

Singapore is gravely concerned by the escalation of tensions at the Ukraine-Russia border and the Russian decision to recognize two breakaway Ukrainian regions. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. The situation is a test of our collective commitment to the multilateral system based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on international law.

As a small country, Singapore is deeply committed to multilateralism and has always emphasized that all countries, large or small, must respect and adhere to international law. Singapore reaffirms the principles of respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign States and respect for sovereignty and the rule of law. We call on all parties concerned to continue to pursue dialogue, including through diplomatic means, towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute, in accordance with international law, and avoid action that will further raise tensions in the region.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): I want to begin by expressing Ireland's full support for the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer (see A/76/PV.58).

We meet today at a critical moment for Ukraine and its people. This is also a challenging time for peace and security in Europe, for the United Nations and the rules-based international order on which the Organization was founded.

Ireland believes in and is fully committed to the core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the cornerstone of the United Nations. This includes the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States, the obligation of all States to refrain from threatening or using force against another State, and the obligation to resolve disputes by peaceful means to ensure international peace and security.

Ireland's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its right to choose its own foreign and security policy path is unwavering. The decision on Monday by the Russian Federation to proceed with the recognition as independent entities of the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine not controlled by the Government of Ukraine contravenes international law. It is a blatant violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and marks a clear and unilateral breach of the Minsk agreements. We urge the Russian Federation to immediately reverse this recognition decision and refrain from further escalatory unilateral actions that serve only to raise greater tensions.

The world is watching, and what is needed now is calm de-escalation and the pursuit of diplomacy.

We call for constructive and determined engagement on all dialogue tracks, including the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). All signatories of the Minsk agreements agreed on the need for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine. The mandate of the SMM was agreed by all 57 OSCE participating States. At this sensitive time, it is imperative that the SMM be given the full access agreed in its mandate.

As we respond to the alarming developments of recent weeks in eastern Ukraine, we also recall that we meet today to discuss the wider situation pertaining to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which has been violated by the Russian Federation this week for the second time in 10 years. In line with our respect for the fundamental principles of international law, Ireland does not recognize the illegal annexation of

the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, nor any political structure created on the basis of this attempted annexation.

Eastern Ukraine has already endured eight years of conflict, resulting in humanitarian disaster and serious human rights violations and abuses, as reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. We recall the responsibility of all States to fully abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Ireland echoes the Secretary-General's call for dialogue, in which he stated clearly,

"There is no alternative to diplomacy. All issues, including the most intractable, must be addressed through diplomatic frameworks."

Wherever conflict occurs, it is civilians who pay the terrible price. The people of Ukraine deserve to live their lives in peace, free of the misery and destruction that eight years of conflict have already wrought. Ireland calls on all sides to work urgently for a peaceful resolution of this conflict.

Mr. Kuymizakis (Malta): Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer and would like to highlight a number of elements in its national capacity.

Malta reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Malta condemns the decision by the Russian Federation to formally recognize the independence of the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk not controlled by the Government of Ukraine. This decision is illegal and unacceptable. It is a violation of international law and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It violates Russia's own international commitments and further escalates the crisis.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that these recent events are inconsistent with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The foundations of the United Nations rest on the sovereignty and independence of States. Threats to the territorial integrity of States and international law are not confined to one region but have ramifications for the whole world.

Furthermore, we are also troubled by the ceasefire violations and the shelling reported at the contact line. We recall that the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine is having an immense impact on the civilian population. This is also reflected in the ongoing deterioration in respect of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Malta remains of the view that diplomacy and dialogue must prevail. We call for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in accordance with the Minsk agreements as endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015). We also call on all parties to uphold their commitments, abide by international law and return to the discussions within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. In this regard, Malta fully supports the work done by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and its impartial monitoring. It is important that the Mission's role is safeguarded to be able to carry on with its duties.

We urge all parties to return to the negotiation table and avoid a dangerous escalation in Europe. It is never too late for diplomacy. We underline once again that serious breaches of the United Nations Charter are a matter of global concern.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg fully subscribes to the statement made by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer. Allow me to supplement that statement with some national considerations.

This is a serious time. Our debate comes at a time of great tension that concerns us all because it threatens Ukraine and its people and because it puts the entire multilateral system to the test. I would like to start by reaffirming Luxembourg's unwavering support for and commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Luxembourg strongly condemns the decision taken on 21 February by the President of the Russian Federation to recognize as independent entities the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine not controlled by the Ukrainian Government. As the Secretary-General stressed again this morning (see A/76/PV.58), this decision is a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The decision of the President of the Russian Federation is a flagrant violation of international law and agreements, including the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Budapest Memorandum. The recognition by the Russian authorities of the self-proclaimed "republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk also runs counter to diplomatic efforts, including in the Normandy format, to resolve the situation in eastern Ukraine by peaceful means, through the implementation of the Minsk agreements, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), which approved measures for the implementation of these agreements.

We are very concerned about the growing threat posed by the Russian authorities to Ukraine by concentrating military forces on an unprecedented scale near Ukraine's borders with Russia and Belarus. Like our European partners, we condemn the decision to deploy Russian armed forces in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It is a further blatant violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and contributes to the escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The decision of the Russian President on 21 February and the subsequent actions not only undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but they also call into question the very principles of the United Nations, multilateralism and the international order based on the rule of law and the sovereign equality of States. As others have done before me, I would like to recall here the principle set out in Article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter:

"[All] Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any [S]tate, or in any other manner inconsistent with the [p]urposes of the United Nations."

We are at a critical moment for security and stability in Europe and for the multilateral system as a whole. We want to believe that it is still possible to avoid a major conflict. We urge Russia to abide by international law and choose the path of diplomacy by resuming discussions in the Normandy format and in the Trilateral Contact Group in order to achieve a de-escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Luxembourg shares the concern expressed yesterday by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: military escalation carries the risk of increasing violations of human rights and

international humanitarian law, while the situation in this regard has continued to deteriorate in recent years in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories, including Crimea. The destabilization of eastern Ukraine is having a considerable impact on civilians, especially the most vulnerable. It is civilians, the elderly, women and children who are paying the highest price. In that regard, the priority should be an immediate ceasefire on the ground. We call on the parties to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. We welcome the restraint shown by Ukraine in these difficult circumstances.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Luxembourg's solidarity with the people and the Government of Ukraine. Together with our European partners, we will continue to support Ukraine on the basis of our shared values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain fully supports the statement made this morning by the delegation of the European Union on behalf of its member States (see A/76/PV.58).

This week there was a new attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine following the decision by the Russian Federation to recognize the independence of areas that are not controlled by the Ukrainian Government in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Spain has been consistent in its defence of international law and its most basic principles, among them the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We therefore condemn the steps that Russia has taken in contravention of those principles, which are essential pillars of our international community that the General Assembly represents. Spain recalls and reaffirms its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, documents to which Russia is a signatory, which are essential to ensuring peace, security and stability in Europe and which are currently being ignored.

The recent events in the Donbas region have raised tensions. Ceasefire violations by armed groups have grown exponentially in the areas not controlled by the Government of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk and many lives have been lost. Spain condemns the deteriorating respect for human rights resulting from the extremely sensitive situation in these regions. As Secretary-General Guterres pointed out, almost

3.5 million Ukrainians are in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the conflict. The decision by the Russian authorities to recognize the independence of areas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government in Donetsk and Luhansk is a manifest violation of the Minsk agreements, to which the Russian Federation is itself a signatory and which the Security Council recognized as essential to the diplomatic settlement of this conflict in its resolution 2202 (2015). We call on Russia to reverse that decision and fulfil its obligations in the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

Spain endorses the statements of Secretary-General Guterres and his repeated offers of good offices. We have advocated dialogue and diplomacy as the main way to achieve de-escalation in the region from the beginning and will continue to do so. In that context, it is vital to ensure that Russia substantially reduces its military presence along the border with Ukraine and takes the necessary steps to restore transparency and confidence measures. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is an essential forum in that regard. Spain will continue to support its efforts to achieve a solution based on dialogue.

At this time of high tension, we should not forget the situation in Crimea. This week marks eight years since the start of the events that resulted in the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, which Spain does not recognize, in accordance with resolution 68/262. Spain would also like to point to its commitment to the international Crimea Platform, in line with the joint declaration adopted by its participants during its inaugural summit, in August 2021. We are deeply concerned about the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula, and we call on Russia to allow unrestricted access for those responsible for the various mechanisms monitoring compliance with international obligations in the area. We also call for unrestricted navigation in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

Spain continues to defend and promote international law, in particular respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which itself is a principle of its foreign policy. The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is calling into question a number of the purposes and principles of the Charter. That is why we are calling for de-escalation and a reduction of tensions in the Assembly today. Spain will continue to work to ensure that dialogue and diplomacy prevail.

Mr. Kaddouh (Lebanon): We meet today as the world is looking into the abyss. We are concerned about the tension and escalation in Europe and about what Secretary-General Guterres has described as the biggest peace and security crisis in recent years. Humankind is still being battered by a cruel pandemic, and the last thing we need is an additional threat of war.

Lebanon, a small country that has lived through occupation, wars and interventions, is very familiar with the meaning of devastation, injustice and conflict, and calls on all sides to cease both words and actions contributing to this alarming slide towards conflict. We call on all the parties to choose the path of peace, which must prevail over the sound of guns.

As one of the founding Members of the United Nations, Lebanon believes in the purposes and principles of the United Nations as stipulated in its Charter, the document that represents the protection that small countries have to preserve their sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace. We strongly believe in Article 2 of the Charter, which calls on all members to settle their international disputes by peaceful means so that justice and international peace and security are not endangered. We believe in the prohibition of the use of force. The Charter stipulates that all members shall refrain in their international relations from the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

We call for prioritizing diplomacy and for a political solution to the conflict in Ukraine based on international law. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is high time for de-escalation. It is also high time to return to dialogue and negotiation. We appeal to all sides of the conflict to choose a path of peace over a painful and costly path similar to the one that Europe and the world experienced 76 years ago and vowed never to repeat. This very Organization was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. As we speak today, innocent people on the ground, especially children and women, are living under an imminent threat of conflict. Let us save our generation and succeeding ones from the scourge of war. A war anywhere has the potential to become a war everywhere. That is a major concern for all countries, especially those that are already facing multiple challenges.

Finally, the world today needs to heal, to recover, to eradicate poverty and hunger, to help millions of refugees return home and to build a better future. The world today needs more peace, not a new war.

Mr. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia): I am honoured to make these brief remarks on behalf of the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia. The brevity of these remarks does not in any way indicate any diminishment of concern that my delegation ascribes to the situation in Ukraine.

To some, especially those of us from countries that are in more geographically distant locations, the dangers faced by the Ukrainian people may seem remote. To those who live in Ukraine, the dangers are all too real and quickly encroaching. But we all joined this great Organization because we strongly believe in the purposes and principles enshrined in its Charter. To protect and preserve its integrity, Member States—large and small, powerful and weak alike—must abide by its tenets.

It is in the light of that fact that the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia shares the growing concern among many of us in this Hall today over the deteriorating situation in eastern Ukraine. Hardly a speaker in this Hall has failed to voice a profound concern with regard to the recent escalation by the Russian Federation aimed at violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Micronesia strongly condemns the acts of aggression against a State Member of the United Nations and calls for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops and the cessation of hostilities. In so doing, we reaffirm our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

We know the dangers and risks well enough. I respectfully plead that we seize the opportunity now to de-escalate the situation and call for continued dialogue to settle this conflict through diplomatic and political means.

Mrs. Theofili (Greece): Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (EU), in its capacity as observer, and wishes to add the following.

The tensions in Eastern Europe have lasted for too long, with serious repercussions first and foremost for Ukraine, but also for the entire security architecture, European and global. Since the beginning of the crisis,

Greece, together with our EU partners and NATO allies, has stood by the side of Ukraine, condemning violations of its sovereignty and insisting on the need to respect its territorial integrity.

The current situation in Ukraine requires our urgent attention. The Charter of the United Nations is clear: all States must refrain from the threat or use of force. This is the guiding principle underpinning the United Nations Charter, and all States should abide by it.

For Greece, Russia's decision to recognize the illegal and unilateral declaration of independence of Ukraine's separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk constitutes a blatant violation of fundamental principles of international law. Greece remains steadfast in her sound support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We fully subscribe to the idea that violations of international law, no matter who they target, are threats for us all. That is why we can make no exceptions and must maintain a consistent stance across the board. Greece will always stand for respecting the international integrity, sovereignty and independence of all States, as clearly defined by international law, and shall condemn any decision contravening these principles.

At the same time, we call on all parties involved in this conflict to abstain from any military action that may lead to bloodshed. Averting further military escalation must remain a priority. At the same time we prepare to react, we should not abandon our efforts for a diplomatic solution to this crisis. Our immediate priority must remain a credible de-escalation. All channels of communication should remain open. As the Secretary-General stated, there is no alternative to diplomacy.

Furthermore, as members of the Assembly know, Greece has an additional particular interest with regard to the Greek community of Ukraine, which resides on both sides of the contact line, and which has been present in this region for centuries. We are deeply concerned over the security situation that may seriously affect the region's population, among which is the long-established Greek community.

Protecting the region's inhabitants and meeting their urgent needs is of utmost importance. Accordingly, our embassy in Kyiv and consulate general in Odessa remain fully operational, and our consulate general in

Mariupol has even been reinforced, which shows our resolve to remain present and engaged in the country.

The international community has a chance to resist the use of force and to resist calling into question borders and international treaties. The civilization that we have achieved in the twenty-first century should not allow our world to return to violence, destruction and havoc as a means to play out our disputes. Now is the time for all Governments and peoples to show responsibility.

Mr. Elghffa (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting on the situation in Ukraine, especially in the light of the latest dangerous developments.

My country attaches great importance to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is one of the most important purposes and principles for which the United Nations was established, as it has a major impact on the life and prosperity of people. Accordingly, I would like to quote Article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter:

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any [S]tate, or in any other manner inconsistent with the [p]urposes of the United Nations.”

The Government of National Unity aligns itself with the position of the international community, which calls for de-escalation and rejects any military action by the Russian Federation against the Republic of Ukraine.

My country's Government reiterates its respect for and commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Ukraine. We call upon the Russian Federation to de-escalate and resort to dialogue and diplomatic solutions, while refraining from any further military build-up on Ukraine's borders and withdrawing from the occupied Crimean peninsula. My Government also stresses its unequivocal rejection of any illegal presence of Wagner Group forces in Libya or Ukraine.

In conclusion, we are facing a difficult test at the United Nations to prove the purpose of its establishment and its fundamental role in maintaining international peace and security. In that vein, we underline the importance of continuing peaceful dialogue and using diplomatic means to settle disputes among States.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): South Africa welcomes the opportunity to participate in the debate on agenda item 67 in this important, inclusive forum.

South Africa is concerned by the ongoing tensions on the border between Russia and Ukraine — a situation that, if allowed to further deteriorate, could have regional and global ramifications.

Later this year, the United Nations will celebrate 77 years since its founding, reminding us that, when we created the Organization, humankind arrived at the decision that war is not the only alternative. Therefore, that aspiration to live in harmony should continue to guide our conduct towards each other as members of the international community, mindful of the devastation caused by war and its impact on regional and local security.

We recall that the Charter of the United Nations enjoins all Members States to settle international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not individual. In line with the Charter, South Africa also respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, remaining mindful that the concerns of parties regarding their security also need to be taken into account.

As a nation birthed through diplomatic engagement and negotiation, South Africa is always appreciative of the potential that dialogue has in averting crises and de-escalating conflicts. In line with our strong commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict, South Africa urges all parties to devote increased efforts to diplomacy and to find a solution that will help avert armed conflict.

The door of diplomacy should never be closed. All parties have much to gain from a negotiated outcome and much to lose from an unnecessary and violent conflict. We also urge all parties to approach the situation in a spirit of compromise, with all sides respecting international law consistently.

South Africa calls on the Security Council to play its role in the search for peace. The Security Council remains the primary structure with the mandate to secure international peace and it must exercise its role fully in that regard. We also believe that the good offices of the Secretary-General could also make a positive contribution in addressing areas of concern.

We continue to support and encourage regional initiatives, such as the Minsk agreements, and we welcome the work of the Normandy format and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

As the Secretary-General has stated, the price of human suffering, destruction and damage to European and global security is too high to contemplate if an urgent solution is not found. The world does not need another war, as it will result only in death and destruction — hence our call for enhanced diplomacy.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Jordan has been following with concern the developments and escalating tensions in Ukraine. We reiterate the need for the international community and all parties concerned to spare no effort to exercise self-restraint, achieve de-escalation and resolve the conflict through peaceful means, so as to restore security and stability in the region through dialogue and negotiations at this critical time. We also highlight the positive and effective role to be played by the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders in achieving that goal.

Jordan would like to emphasize our steadfast positions regarding the need to respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States along with the principle of good-neighbourly relations.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): The Republic of the Marshall Islands joins the overwhelming chorus of voices today that have condemned the intentions of the Russian Federation to invade Ukraine, violate its sovereignty and disrupt fragile efforts at diplomacy.

The Russian military forces massed at Ukraine's borders are not peacekeepers in any sense of the word. No other nation recognizes those areas of Ukraine as some other sovereign — that is a complete farce used to justify an invasion.

The Marshall Islands has a proud legacy of joining support for and sponsoring General Assembly resolutions that recognize human rights in and the political independence of Ukraine, including those resolutions submitted under this agenda item.

Through Crimea, and now the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, Ukraine is being dismantled piece by piece due to the threat and use of force. That has got to stop. Whatever historical legacies of empire-building may be claimed or intended, the international community has long since moved on to recognize, under the Charter

of the United Nations, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, as well as to safeguard the essential human rights of vulnerable peoples. We cannot slip back a century.

Halfway around the world, the Marshall Islands expresses its grave concern about the present military threat posed to Ukraine, but not because of our associations, relationships or alliances. We express our concern because of the vital principle that smaller nations must have a fair voice in the face of threats and intimidation from larger Powers. Like many others, we know this because of our own history and because we are now coming to understand the true threats of democratic independence — not only on a global scale, but also in our own wider neighbourhood. If we do not speak up, collectively, then who will? What precedent do we all set if such expansionist agendas visit our own nations, unchecked by multilateral institutions? Speaking out against forceful threats is not convenient, but it is very necessary at this very dangerous time. What will silence win any of us in the long term?

It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to stand up to the spectre of tyranny. At the foundation of this Organization, the Charter of the United Nations was not by imbued with moral neutrality or ambiguity, but a clear commitment to fundamental human rights and against global strife. Today, we seem to be headed to the edge of the very type of international conflict that our predecessors swore would never again arise when they forged the United Nations Charter.

As an institution, the United Nations risks irrelevance if we cannot take clear and meaningful action on this issue. I support the Secretary-General's recent statement *cite*, defining this escalation as an attack on Ukraine's territorial integrity and calling for an urgent and immediate cessation of hostilities and diplomatic dialogue. As the General Assembly it is incumbent upon us to follow his lead and to condemn this attempt for what it is — a severe threat to Ukraine that is contrary to international law. It is unfolding right before our eyes in real time, and our collective response today and beyond will speak volumes for the future integrity of the General Assembly as being truly "fit for purpose".

I can only implore other Member States — far and near, large and small alike — to please speak up and speak out against those threats.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is with great concern that we bear witness to the recent developments in Ukraine. This carries risks of greater escalation. We wish to emphasize the following in that regard.

First, we stress the need to achieve de-escalation and to embrace the diplomatic path, to step up diplomatic efforts and for all parties to the conflict to demonstrate flexibility in order to achieve a peaceful political settlement to the crisis that reflects the interests of all parties.

Secondly, we must put an end to this crisis at the economic and social level given that the entire global economy continues to endure the economic and social fallout from the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In conclusion, we urge all the parties, with which we have close relations, to demonstrate wisdom and far-sightedness in order to set the stage for a resolution to this crisis.

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58).

We reiterate our unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and express our full solidarity with Ukraine. We therefore strongly condemn the decision by Russia to recognize the non-Government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine as independent entities and the ensuing decision to send Russian troops into those areas.

The Secretary-General deemed that decision to be a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We also note that this step is a severe breach of international law and of the Minsk agreements, which stipulate the return of those areas to the control of the Ukrainian Government, and Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed those agreements. We therefore urge the Russian Federation to reverse that recognition, uphold its commitments, abide by international law and engage constructively in dialogue within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group.

We also condemn the continuous deterioration of respect for human rights and humanitarian law in the non-Government controlled areas of the Donetsk

and Luhansk regions. The current military escalation increases the risk of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We also share a profound concern for the suffering of the 3.4 million Ukrainians that are in need of humanitarian assistance.

We reiterate our condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, which was a blatant breach of international law.

The situation is indeed dire, but we believe that a political and diplomatic solution is still possible. We encourage all actors to bear in mind the potential consequences that the current path of escalation will bring to all of us. As emphasized by the Secretary-General:

“All issues can and must be addressed and resolved through diplomatic frameworks”.

Let us keep on working actively in that sense.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Today’s plenary meeting of the General Assembly, under agenda item 67, reflects the serious concerns of the international community and calls for continued international and regional efforts towards de-escalation.

The Charter of the United Nations constitutes the foundational framework of international relations and cooperation, continues to be critically important in the context of the stability and predictability of the international legal system and is as relevant as ever in settling international disputes by peaceful means and preventing and resolving conflicts.

All States are bound by the generally accepted norms and principles of international law, particularly those relating to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of their internationally recognized borders and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Azerbaijan voted in favour of resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014, entitled “Territorial integrity of Ukraine”, and our position on support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders remains unchanged.

Strict compliance with the norms and principles of international law concerning friendly relations and cooperation among States and the fulfilment in good faith of the obligations assumed by States are of the

greatest importance to the maintenance of international and regional peace and security.

Mr. Oddone (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina expresses its concern at the development of the overall situation in Ukraine. We are alarmed by the current crisis, as well as the possibility that it will continue to worsen. Substantive steps must be taken to encourage a constructive dialogue in good faith in order to find a peaceful and agreed way out. It is essential for all countries to adhere to the principles to which we committed as Members of the United Nations.

In that regard, efforts towards diplomatic rapprochement must be redoubled in order to ease tensions and, at the same time, strengthen the space for dialogue. There is no military solution in this matter. On the contrary, diplomacy and dialogue should be used as way of defusing tensions.

Argentina reiterates its firm commitment to the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes and maintains that only in that way can fair and lasting solutions be ensured. In that context, we call on all the parties involved to resolve their differences through dialogue, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, with respect for the sovereignty of States, the non-use of force and full respect for human rights.

We join the call of the Secretary-General for all of us to refrain from actions and statements that could lead to this dangerous situation spiralling out of control. Argentina does not believe in a path of confrontation that takes us back to the past thinking of a world sharply divided between East and West. Such dichotomies are outdated. It is up to all of us to refrain from fomenting dissent and escalating into confrontations that breach international peace and security. The international community must actively contribute to creating a climate conducive to international negotiation and ensuring that the parties engage in a constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the situation.

Ms. Ioannou (Cyprus): My delegation fully subscribes to the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/76/PV.58) and would like to make the following additional remarks.

Cyprus has always insisted on the necessity of upholding the most cardinal principles of international law that are enshrined in the Charter of the United

Nations and, as such, are binding on all of us and must be applied universally and consistently vis-à-vis all Member States: the prohibition of the threat or use of force; respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States; and the peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with the principles of justice and international law.

We condemn any violations of those fundamental principles and underline that no legal effects can be created by acts that are not in conformity with the United Nations Charter and international law. Such acts include unilateral declarations of independence, secession, annexation and any support or recognition of entities that are unlawful as a result of having been established by aggression.

Cyprus reiterates its support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, in line with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Any actions that undermine the territorial integrity of Ukraine violate international law and the Minsk agreements, which have been endorsed by the Security Council and which constitute the only way forward in order to resolve the crisis.

We echo the many calls made here today to avoid further escalation and to refrain from any faits accomplis. Drawing also on the paradigm of the ongoing attempted dismemberment of my own country by a foreign Power, I cannot overstate the importance of the Secretary-General's remarks that the principles of the United Nations Charter cannot be applied selectively and of echoing his urgent call for the re-establishment of the rule of law.

Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a founding State of the United Nations, the Dominican Republic is committed to faithfully respecting the norms of international law, in particular those established by the Charter of the United Nations, to peaceful existence among peoples and to the duties of solidarity among nations.

It is a deep-rooted tradition of my country's foreign policy to work for peaceful solutions that respect the rights of others and our own and to abide by an international legal system that guarantees respect for fundamental rights, peace, justice and the political, social and economic development of our peoples.

The crisis in Eastern Europe presents serious threats to regional and global security, while causing us deep concern. That is why we will not stop raising our voice in the current circumstances.

Today, given the unilateral recognition as independent republics of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, an integral part of the territory of Ukraine, a full State Member of the United Nations, Russia is violating three basic principles of international law: respect for the territorial integrity of States; the commitment to resolving disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the threat or use of force; and respect for the political independence and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States.

That situation has created the conditions for an expansion of the current military confrontation in eastern Ukraine, affecting peace in the region and with the potential to spread to other countries that make up the Organization. The reverberation of the weapons would also affect the economy, politics and social stability of the entire region and generate chaos in global markets, including the energy sector and food supply chains.

It is essential to remember that the United Nations was established precisely to prevent wars and armed conflicts, a founding principle of our constitutive Charter and whereby the States parties solemnly committed to resolving their disputes by peaceful means. It is therefore time to rise to the occasion and circumstances and channel discussions towards the achievement of that noble purpose.

It is in the light of those principles that our country makes a vehement call to prevent a major confrontation. It is time to give urgent priority to dialogue and diplomatic negotiation.

We call on all parties involved not to cross the contact line and to cease all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other States, especially any act of interference that could inflame passions or instigate violence. The Dominican Republic rejects the breach of international law or the rules-based international order. In such situations of violence and acts of force, there can be no winner. We all lose, regardless of whether we are big or small States. We call for a return to diplomatic dialogue within the framework of the Minsk agreements, and we encourage the Normandy Four to move forward in that regard.

In conclusion, we urge the Security Council to proactively play its role as the defender and promoter of international peace and security, while making the necessary efforts to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Luteru (Samoa): Today, we are meeting in this Hall to discuss the unfolding situation in Ukraine amid a global pandemic, which is already wreaking havoc on our people's livelihoods and future prosperity — a battle that we are trying to grapple with and that demands our primary focus and attention, as United Nations Member States.

Samoa is deeply concerned about the decision of the Russian Federation to invade certain parts of Ukraine. That decision is in violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles clearly laid out in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nation.

Samoa strongly advocates for peace and urges all relevant actors to focus their efforts on ensuring an immediate cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, refraining from any action or statement that may further escalate the dangerous situation in and around Ukraine and prioritizing diplomacy to defuse tensions in Eastern Europe.

We join the call by other delegation on Russia to respect the founding principles in the Charter, abide by the principles of international law, State sovereignty and territorial integrity and fully honour the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by Security Council resolution 2202 (2015).

Samoa welcomed the statement of the Secretary-General (see A/76/PV.58), and we stand in solidarity with Ukraine.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): Thailand has been following developments in Ukraine with deep concern, especially the escalation of tensions threatening international peace and security. We support ongoing efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the situation through dialogue in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thailand further supports the Secretary-General's call (see A/76/PV.58) for a peaceful settlement in accordance with the Minsk agreements, as well as efforts by the United Nations and regional mechanisms, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Normandy Format, to de-escalate tensions and find a sustainable solution. Thailand is also concerned about the possible humanitarian consequences for the people in the area. We join the international community in calling on all parties to exercise the utmost restraint, avoid further provocation and refrain from the use of force, as well as ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. Let me thank the interpreters for their patience and hard work overtime. We will hear the remaining speakers on Monday 28 February after the consideration of the item already scheduled for that day.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 67.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.