



General Assembly

Eleventh Emergency Special session

10th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gastorn (United Republic of Tanzania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

Draft resolutions (A/ES-11/L.4)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, in paragraph 14 of resolution ES-11/2, of 24 March 2022, the General Assembly decided

“to adjourn the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly temporarily and to authorize the President of the General Assembly to resume its meetings upon request from Member States.”

In that regard, I should like to draw the attention of the delegations to document A/ES-11/6, which contains the text of a joint letter dated 5 April 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Japan, Liberia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, addressed to the President of the General Assembly, requesting the resumption of the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly.

I intend to conduct the proceedings of this meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the past practices of emergency special sessions.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): One early morning of April 1993, United Nations country representatives had coffee, kissed their loved ones and went to the quiet and comfortable United Nations Headquarters to do business as usual — perhaps as many of us did this very morning. That same morning in early April 1993, Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent a Special Rapporteur to report on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions in Rwanda. He reported that a more robust United Nations response was needed. Critically, it found that the abuses could be precursors to genocide.

Unfortunately, that report was largely ignored by an over-stretched Secretariat.

In early April 1994, in the comfort of the United Nations Headquarters, the Security Council received letters in which the Rwandan Patriotic Front reminded Member States that,

“When the institution of the United Nations was created after the Second World War, one of its fundamental objectives was to see to it that what happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany would never happen again.”

In 1994, Rwanda itself was a non-permanent member of the Security Council. That allowed the

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genocidal regime to influence other members' view of the situation, just as Russia's presence in the Security Council today allows it to spread lies almost daily. In April 2006, in New York harbour, by the Hudson River, an ocean-sized state-of-the-art liner was launched. That magnificent liner then docked on the shores of Lake Geneva. Beautiful as it was, it was far from being an ocean.

We named that liner "Human Rights Council". The adoption of resolution 60/251 was a culmination of five months of consultations and negotiations facilitated by President of the Assembly Jan Eliasson and Ambassadors Arias of Panama and Kumalo of South Africa. Let me remind the Assembly of the words of Mr. Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, before the adoption of the resolution. He said:

"But we have now reached a decisive moment, both for the promotion and protection of human rights and for effective multilateralism and the standing of the United Nations as a whole. As our leaders acknowledged in September 2005, the three pillars of the United Nations — development, peace and security and human rights — are interlinked and mutually reinforcing." (*A/60/PV.72, p. 2*)

Now the world has come to a critical juncture. We witness that our liner is going through treacherous fog towards deadly icebergs. It might seem that we should have named it the Titanic instead of the Human Rights Council. If not, we need to take action today to save the Human Rights Council from sinking.

The composition of the Human Rights Council is as diverse as the world map and the General Assembly. But, unlike the Assembly, the Human Rights Council was established for a specific purpose — to promote and protect human rights around the world. We are in a unique situation now, when, on the territory of a sovereign State, a member of the Human Rights Council commits horrific human rights violations and abuses that are tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Bucha and dozens of other Ukrainian cities and villages, where thousands of peaceful residents have been killed, tortured, raped, abducted and robbed by the Russian army, serve as an example of how dramatically far the Russian Federation has gone from its initial declarations in the human rights domain. That is why

this case is unique and today's response is obvious and self-explanatory. Let me read a quote:

"Our top priority is to guarantee all human rights and freedoms in their entirety, including political and civil rights and decent socioeconomic and environmental living standards;

"I believe that these questions are not an internal matter of States, but rather their obligations under the United Nations Charter, international covenants and conventions. We want to see this approach become a universal norm." (*S/PV.3046, p. 46*)

It is hard to believe that those were the words of the President of the Russian Federation. It was another President, however, and different times. It was said by President Yeltsin in 1992 in his statement at the Security Council. We can only regret that the democratic aspirations of the peoples of Russia in the early 1990s have been incrementally transformed into the opposite by Putin's regime. They have now become aggression, hatred and Soviet-style thinking and reflection, including in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Now we hear completely different statements from the Russian Federation in the United Nations. This week we heard from the Russian Ambassador that there is warfare in Ukraine and that civilians are being killed in war. It was said as a matter of fact on Monday, in cold blood, and as an absolutely normal course of action, also known as a "special operation".

Shall we agree with the description of killings as something normal? The only healthy answer should be "no", if we are to contribute to the maintenance of the Organization's health and that of its human rights mechanism. All of us received the Russian diplomatic note yesterday in which our collective effort to preserve the credibility of the Human Rights Council was considered as an approach to preserve the "domination and total control in the world" and the "human rights neo-colonial policy in international affairs".

We have heard many times the same perverted logic of the aggressor attempting to present itself as a victim, while in fact doing exactly what it decries in its note — killing citizens of a neighbouring country while trying to dominate it, if not colonize it. In response, when Russia's membership rights in the Human Rights Council are suspended, we call on it to return to responsible behaviour by implementing the decisions of

the Assembly and the Human Rights Council. If Russia voluntarily expels itself from the Council, that is by its own choice and there is no need to blame others.

Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council is not an option but a prescribed duty. Let me quote how that duty is formulated in paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251:

“the General Assembly ... may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights”.

We view voting to suspend a State's rights in the Human Rights Council as a rare and extraordinary action. However, Russia's actions are beyond the pale. Russia is not only committing human rights violations, but is also shaking the underpinnings of international peace and security. The draft resolution on the matter (A/ES-11/L.4) is a result of the collective efforts by a cross-regional group of two dozen States that represent all regions. So far, it has been co-sponsored by more than 50 Member States. I call upon all responsible Member States to support the draft resolution.

Let me now once again refer to the commemoration of the one of the darkest pages in recent history — the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. On this day of grievances, and bearing its own tragedy of thousands of Ukrainians killed by the Russian invaders, Ukraine stands with Rwanda and reaffirms our pledge to never forget and to never allow the recurrence of genocide, which was a result of the international community's indifference.

To those who for this or another reason opt today to continue being a bystander, to abstain, let me quote Elie Wiesel addressing President Clinton in 1999 when talking about the perils of indifference.

“Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. Indifference therefore is always the friend of the enemy for it benefits the aggressor — never the victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees — not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own.”

The genocide in Rwanda was largely due to the indifference of the global community, when the United Nations did not respond to warnings in the Security Council and the General Assembly a year before the tragedy that we commemorate exactly on this day, 7 April. In the case of Ukraine today, not even a year has elapsed — because the tragedy is unfolding right now before our eyes.

In a couple of minutes, everyone will have a chance to prove that he or she is not an indifferent bystander. All that is needed is to press the “yes” button and to save the Human Rights Council and many lives around the world and in Ukraine.

On the other hand, pressing “no” means pulling a trigger. It means a red dot on the screen — red as the blood of the innocent lives lost. That image of the red dots of blood on the screen will stay with all of us for as long as our memory does not fail us. Members should think about that.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4.

Before giving the floor for to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This is not the right time or place for being theatrically pathetic in the manner of the Ukrainian representative. I will therefore speak to the point.

Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, which is before us today, has nothing to do with the human rights situation. I will cite our note verbale to which Ambassador Kyslytsa referred:

“What we see today is an attempt of the United States to preserve its position of dominance and total control and continue its stance towards rights colonialism in international relations. Some States have already received a subordinate status. As for those that pursue an independent foreign policy, there are attempts to have them relegated to the periphery of global affairs.”

The human rights architecture took decades of scrupulous work to evolve, but today we see how a small group of States made it crack. I recall that the Secretary-General's Spokesperson characterized

Russia's possible suspension from the Human Rights Council as a dangerous precedent.

As experience shows, Western approaches to addressing urgent human rights issues in specific States were unsuccessful. Not a single conflict was resolved, but was instead exacerbated. That is largely due to Western States actively using their favoured toolkit, consisting of coercion, sanctions and military intervention.

Throughout its membership of the Human Rights Commission and, formerly, the Human Rights Council, Russia has consistently upheld the principle of equal and mutually respectful cooperation among States as the basic foundation for the functioning of the human rights architecture. Our priority has always been to strengthen constructive dialogue and to engage all stakeholders in the collective drafting and adoption of decisions on the promotion and protection of human rights.

We reject spurious insinuations against us based on fabricated materials, staged footage and replicated fakes.

With that in mind, we call for a vote on the draft resolution. We call on all those present to once again consider their decision carefully and vote against the attempt by Western countries and their allies to undermine the existing human rights architecture.

Mr. Ilyassov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan is closely following the situation in Ukraine with particular concern, and it expresses its condolences to the families of those who were killed and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured during the hostilities.

We call on all the parties to speedily terminate hostilities and to seek compromises aimed at establishing peace. We also adhere to the position that there is no alternative to a peaceful solution to the issue based on the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is dire and needs constant attention. Kazakhstan has already provided Ukraine with humanitarian aid, sending three aeroplanes with more than 50 tons of medicines and essential goods.

Regarding draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, on the suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council, we would like to note the following.

First of all, in our opinion, the adoption of the draft resolution will not contribute to the settlement of the conflict. At the moment, it is extremely important not to undermine the negotiation process. In the current situation, it is necessary that we all use diplomatic efforts in all international forums, including the Human Rights Council, in order to find ways to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Secondly, according to paragraph 8 of draft resolution 60/251, on the establishment of the Human Rights Council, membership of the Human Rights Council can be suspended in case of gross and systematic violation of human rights. To establish that case, we also need a transparent, unbiased professional investigation. In that regard, we believe that the consideration of today's draft resolution in the General Assembly must be preceded by a comprehensive investigation into human rights violations in Ukraine, carried out within the framework of the relevant international mechanisms. We believe that only after receiving concrete conclusions and reliable information, the General Assembly may consider this issue.

In the light of that, we will have to vote against the draft resolution today.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of our Organization, as well as the norms of international law.

We believe that the promotion and protection of human rights must be approached in a fair and constructive manner, based on dialogue and cooperation, in accordance with the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation. Human rights must not be exploited to attack sovereign States, as such an approach undermines the very essence of the universal human rights system, which is meant to ensure the universality, enjoyment and exercise of those fundamental rights and freedoms for all, without distinction or discrimination.

In this Assembly a month ago (see A/ES-11/PV.4), we emphasized the need for the United Nations to play a pivotal role in facilitating peaceful solutions to conflicts through dialogue and political negotiation. Today we regret that the path of escalating tensions has been chosen and that divisions between the two

sides have deepened divisions among United Nations Members. That is the wrong path.

We warn the world of the real and clear danger that the current situation in the Eastern European region will be prolonged over time, leading to consequences that will take generations to overcome. We warn of the spillover effects around the world, particularly for the living conditions of the most vulnerable sectors in each country, where hundreds of millions of people are now suffering the effects of rising food, electricity and transport costs, as well as shortages of essential goods, caused by the disruption of international supply chains. We also warn of the start of a new arms race, threatening to divert resources for warfare that should be used for development and combating poverty. The outlook is dire, but the world faces an even greater danger. We are alarmed by forces fomenting a clash of blocs, with the false delusion of an ultimate one-sided victory, that will provoke a global conflict between nuclear Powers, destroying humankind as we know it today. It is our duty to reduce tensions and explore all options for the settlement of conflicts and for their peaceful resolution.

Unfortunately, draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, before us today, is an example of the politicization of human rights in order to advance national agendas and geopolitical interests. The draft resolution seeks to expel from the human rights system the Russian Federation, a country that is an indispensable part of the solution to the crisis in the Eastern European region. Without the Russian Federation, there can be no peace agreement in Europe. Peace without Russia is an ideological mirage, a delusion of those who believe that the time has come to achieve the ultimate victory of a one-sided Power. That ideology runs counter to international peace. If this draft resolution were to be adopted, it would affect the current negotiations taking place between the parties and would purposely push us into a more acute phase of the conflict, which would be longer and more difficult to resolve.

Another immediate consequence of adopting the draft resolution would be the historic rupture of the best instrument created to defend human rights in the world, namely, the Human Rights Council. Once the existing balances are lost, its credibility, its role and its mandate will be affected. We would be creating a systemic crisis of confidence, which would ultimately affect the United Nations as a universal Organization capable of managing regional and international crises and of working as a true instrument for peace.

For all of reasons mentioned, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically rejects the attempts to suspend the Russian Federation as an elected member of the Human Rights Council, and calls on the relevant members of the international community to vote against the draft resolution.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation expresses its deep concern over the current developments in the political situation in Ukraine. We are also very concerned that some countries continue to push confrontation and distrust among Member States instead of giving priority to easing tensions and seeking a political and peaceful solution to resolve the current crisis in Ukraine.

We reject any politically motivated initiative and lack of objectivity, impartiality and transparency. The initial observation of the atrocities against the civilian population in Ukraine, including a relevant reported image of the civilian deaths in Bucha, have not been verified or proved based on real facts and objective evidence.

Prior to considering draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, which is before us, an independent investigation must be carried out. For that, substantive time and effort are required. However, some Member States are acting and moving very recklessly for their political goals by submitting such a draft resolution. Such political and unilateral actions do not help to solve the problem at all.

We take note of the efforts by the Russian Federation to address the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine. The draft resolution is nothing but another example of the product of political confrontation aimed at tarnishing one Member State on the United Nations stage.

For that reason, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-11/L.4

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran, on a number of occasions, has expressed its principled position with regard to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, including during the adoption of the two previous resolutions of the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly (resolutions ES-11/1 and ES-11/2).

My delegation would like to once again underline the need for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law and for full respect by all parties for the well-established provisions of

the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law. We emphasize that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States must be fully respected, and the safety and security of all civilians must be guaranteed.

Iran remains deeply concerned about the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine, which has sparked significant alarm in the international community. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and emphasize the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties. We repeat our call for unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas of the armed conflict in Ukraine. The humanitarian needs of the affected population must be addressed immediately, and the delivery of food, medicine and other essential services to those in need must be facilitated.

The international community should encourage and support continued direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine until peace is restored. The Islamic Republic of Iran once again calls for the de-escalation of tensions in the current conflict and an urgent and lasting solution to this crisis through dialogue.

We consider the text of the draft resolution before the General Assembly (A/ES-11/L.4) as politically driven, which undermines the impartiality of our Organization. My Government attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights. However, we are against the exploitation of the United Nations human rights machinery for political ends, which contravenes the principles of universality, non-selectivity and objectivity in addressing human rights issues.

We have always maintained that human rights should not be undermined by short-sighted political considerations. We stress that the work of the Human Rights Council should be performed in a non-confrontational and non-politicized manner and that membership of that body should not be politicized.

We would like to reiterate our position on the centrality of the principles of objectivity, dialogue and cooperation towards the protection and promotion of all human rights, based on a non-selective and non-politized approach. We are of the view that the exploitation of paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251 deepens confrontation and attenuates constructive dialogue between countries.

For those reasons, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-11/L.4.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again, this important international forum is witnessing the exploitation of human rights issues serving the narrow political interests of some countries and creating a state of polarization and politicization in order to target the Russian Federation on the pretext of dealing with humanitarian issues in Ukraine.

My delegation stresses its commitment to ensuring respect for human rights and the importance of providing the necessary humanitarian assistance to all crisis areas. Nevertheless, at the same time, we reject any politicization of humanitarian issues and stress the importance of adhering to the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-discrimination in human rights issues.

That coordinated Western move to defame the Russian Federation has no relation to human rights in Ukraine or anywhere else. Rather, it is an effort by Western countries to impose their hegemony and control over the world by besieging Russia and punishing it for its independent foreign policy.

When the United States of America and its allies destroyed the Syrian city of Al-Raqqa and killed thousands of innocent people there, we did not see such international media and political mobilization to uncover the perpetrators of human rights violations.

Resolution 60/251, by which the General Assembly established the Human Rights Council, stressed that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interlinked and intertwined and that all persons should be treated in a just and equitable manner, on the same footing and with the same degree of concern.

However, the practices that we have seen since the Council's establishment proves the adoption by certain Western countries of policies of politicization, selectivity and double standards in dealing with human rights issues. They focus on the situations of certain countries in a manner that serves their own political purposes. At the same time, they disregard other situations in which systemic and grave human rights violations have been perpetrated in full view of the world. What the Palestinian people have been exposed to for decades at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces is the clearest proof of that.

Another example of the hypocrisy of those States is their disregard for the rights, security and safety of civilians, including women and children, in Donbas, who were subjected to a systematic hostile campaign and continuous shelling for many years. Why did we not see such a western move to protect them and defend their rights?

The pretext for that move in paragraph 8 of the resolution establishing the Human Rights Council is a major source of concern, since we have not seen any evidence on which to base the perpetration of such grave and systematic violations of human rights. What is the credibility of the sources of such information? What are the impartial international mechanisms that confirmed those violations and identified their perpetrators?

The levelling of accusations by certain States, their dissemination through misleading media, photographs and videos whose sources and places are unknown and their spreading through open sources cannot be a solid basis for adopting a General Assembly resolution on the issue.

As in the Syrian situation, the Security Council and General Assembly meetings must always be preceded by theatrical provocations such as what we are witnessing now in Ukraine to justify the decisions taken by Western and hostile countries in the name of their alleged international legitimacy.

Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, before us today, involves a serious case of hostility and a clear example of the adoption of an exclusion policy, which my country has always warned about. We have warned that suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council will have an adverse effect on the Council's balance and universality and the effectiveness of its role. Such suspension will enhance the hegemony of a group of Western States with respect to that important organ. They will impose their vision and their criteria for human rights, which will be used as a tool of political pressure and for the targeting of certain countries. To be more frank and transparent, we believe that such practices represent a threat to the existence of the United Nations system itself.

Therefore, proceeding from our firm and established position in rejecting all attempts to politicize and manipulate human rights, my delegation will vote against draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4. We urge other delegations to beware of the dangers of embracing such efforts leading to confrontation, isolation and hostility.

We call for the rejection of double standards and for keeping human rights issues separate from all political considerations. If our States want the United Nations to continue and survive, we should all say no to such draft resolutions.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba has always advocated for and worked towards a Human Rights Council capable of overcoming the challenges faced by the international community in that area, of which no country is exempt. We defend the need for objectivity, impartiality and transparency in the work of that body and believe that its procedures and mechanisms should work on the basis of proven, accurate information.

The use of the clause on the suspension of membership in the Council will not promote the reaching of a peaceful, lasting and negotiated solution to the conflict in Ukraine. It will not promote the climate of cooperation, dialogue and understanding that should be prevalent in addressing human rights issues. In addition, it is disrespectful that only a few days after concluding a regular session of the Human Rights Council, that body was not even given the opportunity to state its position.

From the start of the negotiating process on the building of the new Council that would follow the Human Rights Commission, Cuba opposed the clause on the suspension of membership, given the serious risk of its being used by specific countries that apply policies of double standards, selectivity and politicization to human rights issues.

That clause can be activated with the support of only two thirds of those present and voting; therefore, abstentions do not count, and there is not even a minimum established number of votes required for the suspension to be approved.

To be elected a member of the Human Rights Council, a country needs to obtain, as a minimum in a secret ballot, the endorsement of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, that is to say, at least 97 votes. Thus the rights of a member of the Council can be suspended by the will of fewer States than granted it those rights.

The Russian Federation, which was elected as a member of the Human Rights Council in 2020 by 158 votes, could today be suspended by a lower number of votes. That suspension mechanism, which has no

parallel in any other body of the United Nations, could be easily used in a selective manner. Today it is Russia, but tomorrow it could be any of our countries, particularly nations of the South that do not bow to the interests of domination and staunchly defend their independence.

It was no coincidence that in negotiations on the new Human Rights Council, the most enthusiastic promoters of the suspension clause were developed nations with a proven tendency to level accusations against countries of the South that do not follow their alleged models of democracy, while remaining silently complicit in the face of flagrant violations of human rights in Western countries.

Of course, not everyone in this Hall shares our concerns about the suspension mechanism, as they know that the victims of its selective use will always be others.

Could the Assembly one day adopt a resolution suspending the membership of the United States in the Human Rights Council, just to give one example? We are all aware that this has not happened nor will it ever, despite that country's flagrant and massive violations of human rights as a result of invasions and wars of plunder against sovereign States based on its geopolitical interests. It has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, whom they term "collateral damage", millions of displaced persons and destruction throughout our planet, but the Assembly has never suspended any of its rights.

We all know also that the suspension clause will not be used against the State that has for more than 60 years imposed against Cuba a criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade that without a doubt constitutes the most protracted, flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of an entire people and a genuine example of genocide against an entire country.

It is ironic to see that the country that opposed the establishment of the Human Rights Council and requested, in this same Hall, a vote against the resolution establishing it is the same one that has conveniently now activated, as it did in 2011, one of the most controversial clauses.

Cuba will remain consistent with its reservations concerning the membership-suspension mechanism in the context of the adoption in 2006 of resolutions 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council,

and 65/265, of 2011, on the suspension of the rights of Libya. The adoption of draft resolution ES-11/L.4, which we are considering today, would set a dangerous additional precedent, especially for the South.

It is not sufficient for them to impose country-specific resolutions and selective mandates; now they want to take a new step towards legitimizing selectivity and establishing a Human Rights Council that is increasingly at the service of certain countries, as was the case with the now-defunct, discredited Commission on Human Rights.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Cuban delegation will vote against the draft resolution contained in document ES-11/L.4.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Like the rest of the international community, Senegal remains deeply concerned about the heavy toll of the war in Ukraine, which has already led to many deaths as well as millions of refugees and displaced persons.

Added to that bleak picture are allegations of grave human rights violations. At all times and in all places, war represents a failure for humankind. Senegal is for peace in Ukraine in the name of a humankind without borders. Senegal is also for peace in Ukraine because our countries are collateral victims of this global crisis owing to its particularly serious consequences for our economies and our peoples.

Senegal is for de-escalation, an immediate cessation of hostilities in Ukraine and continued negotiations aimed at reaching a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis. That is stated in the press release published on 24 February by His Excellency President Macky Sall, in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union, together with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and calling on all parties to

"imperatively respect international law and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine".

That is also the basis for Senegal's support for resolution ES-11/2, of the special session of the General Assembly of 24 March 2022, on the humanitarian consequences of the war in Ukraine. That is also the basis for our vote in favour of Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/49/1, of 4 March 2022, on the situation of human rights in Ukraine and covering in particular the establishment of an international commission of inquiry on allegations of violations of human rights in the country as a result of the war.

We believe that it is the publication of that commission's conclusions that will give us a comprehensive view of the nature and extent of the alleged violations. Such a complete view will therefore provide us with the exact scope of the sanctions to be considered.

However, draft resolution ES-11/L.4 decides on sanctions measures before the commission of inquiry that we have put in place has drawn its conclusions, thus anticipating the work expected from it.

Taking all those considerations into account, Senegal will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution so as to remain consistent with the Human Rights Council resolution of 4 March 2022 establishing an international commission of inquiry into allegations of human rights violations in Ukraine.

Mr. Mabhongo (South Africa): South Africa is deeply concerned about the continuing conflict in Ukraine, the loss of life and the deteriorating humanitarian situation. We reiterate our view that as a matter of urgency there must be a cessation of hostilities, which would be the first step in a comprehensive response to the humanitarian crisis.

South Africa stresses once again that dialogue, mediation and diplomacy is the only path to ending the current conflict. Wars end when dialogues begin, and wars endure when there is no dialogue.

In that regard, we welcome the efforts by Ukraine and Russia to hold talks without preconditions. South Africa expresses the hope that both parties will use diplomacy to de-escalate the situation in Ukraine, leading to a durable political and security situation. We maintain that all parties have much to gain from a negotiated outcome and much to lose from unnecessary and violent conflict.

The General Assembly must therefore encourage mediation and dialogue and adopt constructive outcomes leading to that end.

South Africa is deeply concerned at the reports of civilian casualties in Ukraine. As the international community, we cannot be indifferent to the killing and suffering of civilians. The humanitarian crisis that has resulted from the ongoing military operations must be addressed, and there must be an urgent opening of humanitarian corridors and the provision of aid to the civilian population, which, as usual, bears the brunt of the suffering when violent confrontation breaks out.

All parties to the conflict must comply with international human rights and humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, and must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Member States, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations.

On 4 March 2022, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution A/HRC/49/1, authorizing the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international law, and related crimes in Ukraine. The Commission has not yet commenced its work, and we await its findings on the allegations of gross violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.

South Africa is of the firm belief that the submission of draft resolution ES-11/L.4, which we will consider today, is premature and prejudices the outcomes of the commission of inquiry. We must allow the commission to urgently undertake its mandate and report to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on its outcomes.

It is also imperative that all parties to the conflict allow the commission to perform its duties without any hindrance or interference.

We recall that resolution 60/251, which is the basis of the draft resolution before us and which established the Human Rights Council, also recognizes, *inter alia*,

“the importance of ensuring universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, and the elimination of double standards and politicization”.

Unfortunately, the draft resolution that we are considering today will further divide and polarize States — and the General Assembly itself — on this matter, without following due process. South Africa maintains that in considering the suspension of a member of the Human Rights Council, we must be consistent and not selective, as this would undermine the credibility of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. For these reasons, South Africa will abstain on draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt does not view the draft resolution before us (A/ES-11/L.4) as related to the crisis in Ukraine, the principle of non-use of military force among nations or infringing on the sovereignty of States. Instead, we consider it related to politicizing United Nations

organs and specialized agencies. The principled and steadfast Egyptian position rejects that approach, as it undermines the purposes for which the Organization, its agencies and organs were established, and undermines its credibility and that of international multilateralism.

Egypt considers that what we are doing today in taking up draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 puts the United Nations at one of the most serious crossroads it has ever encountered. Respect for the United Nations Charter, rules of procedure and methods of work have led the international community to rely on the Organization in consolidating a functioning international system based on rules and mechanisms for good management of multilateral relations and for maintaining international peace and security. This system is currently at risk.

The draft resolution before us undermines the United Nations processes and systems that have long enjoyed the international community's trust. It threatens to undermine the credibility of the Organization and its mechanisms, leading to further negative repercussions for its ability to shoulder its responsibility pursuant to the Charter and 75 years of work.

Egypt is deeply uncomfortable with continued double standards that are tantamount to measuring with more than one yardstick. Many times before and not so long ago, less decisive and more lenient resolutions pertaining to human rights violations were adopted. Egypt stresses its total rejection of any serious violations of human rights or breaches of the legal obligations of States in this regard. We believe in the need to face such grave breaches in a decisive manner pursuant to international mechanisms that ensure addressing unacceptable actions and taking the adequate decisions to deal with them.

Based on the foregoing, Egypt does not see any merit in putting forward the draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 and warns of its consequences.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): We are deeply concerned about allegations of gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine, including recent reports coming from the region of Bucha. The images of extreme violence committed against civilians and the high number of deaths, many of them with signs of torture and ill treatment, are profoundly disturbing. Our deep sympathy goes to all victims and their families.

Last month, the Human Rights Council created a commission of inquiry with a mandate to establish the

facts and circumstances that may amount to violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine. We call on all parties to cooperate with this commission so that it can fulfil its mandate and provide us with unbiased and precise information on the situation on the ground.

Brazil has decided to abstain in the voting on draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 today, as it believes the commission of inquiry should be allowed to complete its independent investigation so that responsibilities can be ascertained. Only then would the General Assembly be in a position to better assess the situation and take a responsible and informed decision on the status of Russia in the Human Rights Council.

We must at all costs avoid repeating the mistakes of the old Commission on Human Rights, particularly concerning politicization, double standards and selectivity, which had been the main flaw of the previous human rights system and the object of well-founded criticism of its work. The Human Rights Council should be guided by the imperative of inclusive dialogue as the main instrument for cooperation, sustainable solutions and peace.

Brazil is fully committed to finding ways to achieve an immediate cessation of hostilities, promoting a real dialogue conducive to a peaceful and sustainable solution, ensuring respect for human rights and humanitarian law, protecting civilians and calling for peace. These are objectives that should unite rather than divide us. There is no alternative to a negotiated solution and a constructive and balanced approach aimed at preserving spaces of dialogue.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On the Ukraine issue, China has always believed that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, including Ukraine, should be respected, that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter should be upheld, that the legitimate security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and that all efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the crisis should be supported. Putting an early end to the fighting is the urgent expectation of the international community. It is also what China is striving for.

China supports all initiatives and measures that will help ease the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. We call on the parties concerned to respect international humanitarian law, take concrete actions to ensure the safety of civilians and protect the basic rights and

humanitarian needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups.

The reports and images of civilian deaths in Bucha are disturbing. The relevant circumstances and specific causes of the incidents must be verified and established. Any accusations should be based on facts. Before a full picture is made clear, all sides should exercise restraint and avoid unfounded accusations.

Dialogue and negotiation are the only way out of the Ukraine crisis. China has always believed that the international community should remain rational, strengthen unity and do more to facilitate dialogue and negotiation and a political settlement. It should not set up obstacles or increase resistance, let alone add fuel to the fire to aggravate confrontations.

We regret to see that the conflict has caused civilian casualties and massive displacements and that the all-dimensional indiscriminate sanctions without a bottom line have brought serious negative impacts on the post-pandemic recovery, creating new and complex problems, reversing hard-won development gains and making the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development even more difficult. People around the world, especially those in developing countries, have to bear the burden of soaring oil and food prices. Life amid the pandemic has become even more difficult, especially for women and children, whose rights have become increasingly hard to protect. Developing countries are not parties to the conflict, yet they are forced to get involved in this geopolitical competition and great rivalry between Powers, which is unfair.

Some individual countries, while talking loudly about peace, are obsessed with creating bloc confrontations, including provoking tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. This self-destructive yet self-serving practice is very dangerous and worrying, and it should be resolutely rejected.

China has always called for promoting human rights through constructive dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect. At the same time, we firmly oppose the politicization or instrumentalization of human rights issues, reject selective and confrontational approaches and double standards in relation to human rights issues, and oppose exerting pressure on other countries in the name of human rights. These are also important principles set

forth in General Assembly resolution 60/251, which created the Human Rights Council.

The draft resolution before us today (A/ES-11/L.4) will deprive a country of its legitimate membership in the Human Rights Council. Such an important matter must be handled with utmost delicacy, calmness, objectivity and reason, based on facts and truth. Nevertheless, this draft resolution was not drafted in an open and transparent manner, nor did it follow the tradition of holding consultations with the entire membership to heed the broadest range of opinions. Under such circumstances, this hasty move by the General Assembly, which forces countries to choose sides, will aggravate the division among Member States and intensify the confrontation between the parties concerned. It is like adding fuel to the fire, which is not conducive to the de-escalation of conflicts and even less to advancing peace talks.

Dealing with the membership of the Human Rights Council in this manner will set new dangerous precedent, further intensify confrontation in the field of human rights, have greater negative impact on the United Nations governance system and produce serious consequences. China is therefore obligated to vote against draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4.

China calls on all parties to pull together in the same direction so as to create opportunities for peace and openings for negotiation. China will continue to maintain an objective and impartial position and play its responsible and constructive role in this regard.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico has been clear and forceful in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a violation of international law, the United Nations Charter and the constitutional principles of its foreign policy. We have also condemned the attacks against the civilian population and its infrastructure. We have pushed for everything that facilitates access to humanitarian assistance and joined the voices calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Recent reports on the situation in Ukraine have revealed to us that we are facing the probable commission of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Mexico has therefore unequivocally supported the Secretary-General's call for impartial investigations to identify those responsible and for effective accountability.

My country also supported the adoption of resolution 49/1 of the Human Rights Council to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged abuses and violations of human rights and everything that might infringe upon international humanitarian law as a result of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Similarly, Mexico is closely following the investigation process of the International Criminal Court for alleged international crimes committed in Ukraine and strongly supports the work being carried out by the Prosecutor of the Court to try to clarify the facts. We are also paying close attention to the development of the case before the International Court of Justice and reiterate that Court's call to comply with its recent provisional order for an immediate cessation of hostilities. While these are judicial and quasi-judicial processes that are under way, they have not yet legally ruled upon the situations under consideration. We must be consistent and support them until they reach their final determinations, and we must rigorously examine their conclusions.

Russia's membership or non-membership in the Human Rights Council is not a factor that imposes or exempts it from obligations under international law. The focus should be on bringing to justice those who are responsible — not on suspending a State from membership in a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, to which all Member States without exception are accountable under the same rules and according to the same criteria.

Mexico is in favour of regular accountability throughout the United Nations system. We need more transparency, yes, but for that we also need more cooperation, more dialogue and better practices. Multilateral structures are strengthened through inclusion, not exclusion. Exclusion or suspension is not the solution. Multilateralism will be strengthened to the extent that it is able to maintain its vocation for inclusiveness.

Previous resolutions of the General Assembly that we have signed onto with full conviction condemn the Russian invasion, call for an unequivocal cessation of hostilities, urge unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance and advocate a diplomatic solution to the conflict (resolutions ES-11/1 and ES-11/2). Since the beginning of the conflict, Mexico has explicitly stated its position on Russia's military aggression against Ukraine through its statements in the Security Council

and the General Assembly, as well as in its votes in both bodies.

In the light of the foregoing, Mexico will abstain from supporting draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, which seeks to suspend Russia from its rights as a member of the Human Rights Council. Mexico is convinced that even while war remains ongoing, all channels of dialogue with the authorities of the Russian Federation should be maintained, not only so that they will cooperate with the set of mechanisms that comprise the universal system for the protection of human rights, but also to insist on the urgent need to find a diplomatic solution through dialogue that will restore peace in Ukraine.

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to start by paying tribute to the victims of the brutal war that is taking place in Ukraine caused by an invasion that has violated norms of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. We were moved by the tragic images from Bucha that we saw in our homes this past weekend. Chile once again condemns the invasion of Ukraine.

The decision we will take today is one that my country wishes it never had to take. My country, a resolved proponent of multilateralism, believes that disputes between States should be resolved within the competent bodies and in accordance with existing norms. The multilateral system is a home for everyone. However, being a member of the Human Rights Council involves certain requirements, namely, the commitment to conduct consistent with the promotion and protection of human rights everywhere and at all times. That was the decision of Member States through their adoption of resolution 60/251, which, in paragraph 9, states that members of the Human Rights Council must uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. The same resolution, in paragraph 8, entrusts the General Assembly with the responsibility of suspending the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that does not comply with those strict standards of protecting and promoting human rights.

Our responsibility is to human rights, not to a particular country — not to Russia or Ukraine. In the case we are talking about today, concerning the suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council, we are talking about a State that is violating human rights on the sovereign

territory of a third State — Ukraine — and that is the result of unacceptable aggression and occupation that violates international law. Our delegation therefore will vote in favour of draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, which suspends Russia's membership in the Human Rights Council.

Chile reiterates its call on all parties to continue negotiations and urges an immediate and peaceful resolution of the conflict between Russian and Ukraine through political dialogue, negotiations, mediation and other peaceful means in conformity with international law.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus is categorically opposed to draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, which is under consideration.

The introduction of this draft resolution is motivated by narrow political interests aimed at demonizing the Russian Federation and attempting to isolate it from international organizations. Such ideas lead to upsetting the equilibrium of the entire system of international cooperation, which is based on the Charter of the United Nations, and could have long-term negative consequences and even lead to the collapse of the United Nations.

In essence, today's proposal to exclude Russia is a direct contribution to destroying the Human Rights Council itself and consolidating the breakdown of the human rights system under the auspices of the United Nations, which was already reflected in the colossal rise in recent weeks of racist attitudes, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination based on language, culture, religion or other characteristics, which we are seeing in Western countries. It is important not to focus on short-term emotionally driven tasks, but rather to think about the long-term prospects for resolving conflicts and the post-conflict world order.

The draft resolution being proposed, similar to other attempts to restrict Russia's participation in international organizations, will not only not contribute to resolving the situation in Ukraine, but rather will increase the risks for potential peaceful negotiations, which I would like to note were initiated a month ago by the Republic of Belarus and personally by its President, Aleksandr Lukashenko.

We call on the Assembly to reflect on that and to a vote against the draft resolution under consideration.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4, entitled "Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council".

Pursuant to resolution 60/251, of 15 March 2006, the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights.

For members' information the draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Myanmar, San Marino and Tonga.

The Acting President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia,

Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Egypt, El Salvador, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen

Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 was adopted by 93 votes to 24, with 58 abstentions (resolution ES-11/3).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): India abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/3, adopted in the General Assembly today. We did so for reasons of both substance and process.

Since the inception of the Ukrainian conflict, India has stood for peace, dialogue and diplomacy. We believe that no solution can be arrived at by the shedding of blood and at the cost of innocent lives. If India has chosen any side, it is the side of peace and an immediate end to violence.

We continue to remain deeply concerned about the worsening situation and reiterate our call for an end to all hostilities. When innocent human lives are at stake, diplomacy must prevail as the only viable option. Recent reports of civilian killings in Bucha are deeply disturbing. We have unequivocally condemned those killings and support the call for an independent investigation. The impact of the crisis has also been felt beyond the region, with increasing food and energy costs, especially for many developing countries. It is in our collective interests to work constructively, both inside the United Nations and outside, to seek an early resolution to the conflict.

India has been at the forefront of protecting human rights, right from the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We firmly believe that all decisions should be taken while fully respecting due process, as all our democratic policies and structures enjoin us to do so. That also applies to international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

Mr. Nunes (Timor-Leste): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting.

The position we took today to vote in favour of resolution ES-11/3 before all of us is a manifestation of our strong solidarity with the people of Ukraine, especially the victims of this war, who have been forced to seek shelter and have fled across the country's borders, as well as those who have lost their homes, their livelihoods and family members and those who have lost their lives. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of them and to their families and friends.

Our vote today shows our clear position to uphold human rights values in all circumstances and in all cases, as the dark period of our own history taught us enough about the high cost of being victims of war. We call for an effective ceasefire in Ukraine and urge the parties to the conflict to continue the dialogue and negotiations to stop the war and avoid further potentially catastrophic escalation. We commend the efforts of those who have facilitated peace talks between the parties to the conflict and call for more diplomatic initiatives to help find a peaceful solution for all.

All parties must ensure the safety and protection of all civilians. It is our hope that peace will be re-established immediately, and that the important work for a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future will be resumed for all.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/3, which was adopted at today's meeting of the emergency special session. I would like to make the following statement to explain the position of the State of Qatar.

The State of Qatar has expressed its position on the situation in Ukraine, which is based on its firm commitment to the established principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the inadmissibility of the use or threat of use of force in international relations, settling international conflicts peacefully, refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of other States and upholding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States.

The State of Qatar has repeatedly asserted that ensuring the safety of civilians must be a top priority. We also stress the need for upholding international humanitarian law, protecting civilian facilities and infrastructure and protecting civilians working in the medical and humanitarian domains, as well as journalists. We also uphold facilitating the evacuation of civilians and the rapid and safe access of those in need to humanitarian aid, according to the international principles of humanitarian aid delivery.

The State of Qatar commends the tireless efforts of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations in responding to emergency humanitarian needs. We also commend the efforts made by the host countries. The State of Qatar continues to communicate with international partners to assess the humanitarian situation and deliver the necessary aid to the Ukrainian people.

We reiterate the call by the Secretary-General to return to the path of dialogue and negotiations and establish an immediate ceasefire for humanitarian purposes. We also reiterate the State of Qatar's call for all parties to the conflict to demonstrate self-restraint and resolve disagreements through dialogue and diplomatic means, while settling international disputes peacefully and avoiding further escalation. The State of Qatar will continue to make diplomatic efforts to help reach a solution to the crisis pursuant to the United Nations Charter and international law. The State of Qatar welcomes the mediation by the Republic of Turkey between Russia and Ukraine. We hope that

negotiations will lead to a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement between both countries.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The Lao People's Democratic Republic again reiterates its call for a peaceful, political and diplomatic solution to the conflict and supports all ongoing efforts and peace negotiations between the parties concerned. Likewise, we urge the international community to refrain from any action that could fuel the escalation of tensions.

As party to seven of the nine core human rights treaties, the Lao People's Democratic Republic opposes all gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights. We are gravely concerned about recent reports and accusations of human rights and international human rights law violations and abuses. We are of the view that such serious allegations must not be taken lightly. They must be backed up by solid evidence and verified by an independent investigation mechanism of the United Nations, such as a Human Rights Council independent international commission of inquiry.

My delegation voted against resolution ES-11/3 because we believe that the reports of violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law must be verified by a credible, neutral, impartial and independent assessment mechanism before any action is taken. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is concerned about the notion that any Member State of the Human Rights Council can be subject to suspension and other punitive measures without due process of investigation or verification. As this issue is of paramount importance to all United Nations Members, we also believe that all General Assembly draft resolutions should be adopted by consensus, thereby reflecting the spirit of equality and solidarity among the States Members of the United Nations.

In conclusion, my delegation believes there is a dire need for more clarification, through an independent mechanism that should be accepted and supported by all Member States, before drawing conclusions and passing judgment. We remain hopeful that the most urgent task now is to create an environment conducive to a peaceful resolution to the conflict and an immediate ceasefire agreement that will eventually lead to the total cessation of hostilities.

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): It is distressing to see the hostilities in Ukraine persist and the number of civilian casualties continue to rise. We share the international

community's deep concerns regarding the devastating human rights and humanitarian situation in Ukraine. We do not take lightly reports of gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights, including the recent reports from Bucha.

For those reasons, we believe the Human Rights Council must remain seized of the matter, and we support the Secretary-General's call for a thorough and independent investigation. We also fully support the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council.

There is no question that those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights in Ukraine must be held accountable and brought to justice. The commission of inquiry must therefore receive full support and the access needed to effectively carry out its mandate. In the meantime, we must give the commission the chance to work in an objective and transparent manner and to present its findings and reports. We must allow due diligence and must not prejudge the work of the commission.

The General Assembly must also be prudent. It is important to receive all the facts before taking action that revokes the legitimate rights of its members. Moreover, the General Assembly's action must not create a negative precedent, which can undermine the credibility of this organ.

It is for those reasons that we abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/3.

Indonesia remains steadfast in its commitment to respecting and protecting human rights for all. Our priority now must be to save lives and protect civilians in Ukraine. We reaffirm our call to all parties to stop the hostilities and to spare no effort to achieve peace through dialogue and diplomacy. That is the only way in which we can end the suffering and senseless loss of lives in Ukraine and prevent the increasing negative impact of the war beyond the region. We must therefore stop the war. I repeat: we must stop the war now; otherwise, we will all suffer.

Ms. Concepción Jaramillo (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama decided to vote in favour of resolution ES-11/3, on the suspension of the Russian Federation's membership in the Human Rights Council, due to its support for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the human rights pillar and, in particular, because Member States should fulfil

their commitments in the area of human rights in being elected to that major United Nations body.

Panama, true to its commitment to multilateralism and its defence of human rights, supports the participation of Member States in international bodies. In general, we therefore do not support the separation of a Member State from membership in multilateral forums.

Such a decision is taken in a context of evident gravity. Given the clear gross and systematic human rights violations of civilians in Ukraine, and concerned by the serious situation, Panama feels that it is essential to support this initiative, which has led the General Assembly to consider the temporary suspension of a Member State from this leading human rights body.

We already experienced such a situation in 2011, when a State, Libya, was suspended from the Human Rights Council for a period of eight months. At the time, Panama supported that temporary initiative, and we later co-sponsored the subsequent resolution that allowed Libya's readmission (resolution 66/11).

Panama cast its vote today in the hope that the decision will be of a temporary nature, placing priority on the fact that Member States maintain their adherence to the principles of respect for the highest human rights standards.

We therefore highlight the need to ensure universality in the consideration of human rights issues, including the application of paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251, in order to avoid sending contradictory signals in assessing cases of human rights violations.

I would like to conclude my country's statement by again urging a call for dialogue and diplomacy for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We are fully convinced that it will be through dialogue and understanding that this devastating conflict will come to an end, and we will return to the path of peace and cooperation.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): Thailand abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/3 because of the overriding importance that we attach to a transparent, impartial and inclusive approach in the multilateral regime. A decision to suspend the membership of a Member State in any United Nations body cannot be taken lightly. The process must be done through careful consultations, based on principles and verified facts and taking into account constructive opinions as well as foreseeable consequences.

We express our deepest condolences to the people of Ukraine and the bereaved families who lost loved ones due to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian crises in Ukraine. While believing that prompt action must be taken in response to all alleged human rights atrocities against civilians, including in Bucha, we are of the view that any action taken should be impartial, transparent and comprehensive.

To objectively consider the situation, it would require well-rounded established facts and additional concrete evidence, proved by reliable sources, including those presented to international courts. We therefore support the Secretary-General's call for an independent investigation to ensure accountability, and we hope that the independent international commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council will be able to commence its work at the soonest time to investigate the serious allegations in an impartial, transparent and comprehensive manner.

We strongly urge all parties to fully comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to protect civilians and civilian objects, as well as ensure the unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance without discrimination. Another life lost is another life too many.

For its part, Thailand continues to provide humanitarian assistance to support those suffering from the conflict in Ukraine. In line with the Human Rights Council's principles of non-selectivity and constructive dialogue, we reiterate our strong support for the continuation of political dialogue, as the only way to end a humanitarian crisis is to end the dispute. Thailand therefore once again calls for the utmost efforts by all parties and the international community to cease and desist the aggravation of fighting and continue our maximum endeavour to end the conflict.

Thailand reiterates its call for the continuation of political dialogue between the parties concerned to find peaceful and sustainable solutions.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has maintained a principled and steadfast position in support of resolving conflicts by peaceful means and with respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including the principles of sovereign equality, respect

for the independence and territorial integrity of States and refraining from the threat or use of force.

We have closely followed with great concern the situation in Ukraine, with severe consequences for the people. It is with extreme concern that we learn of recent reports of great loss of life among innocent civilians.

Viet Nam opposes and condemns all forms of attacks against civilians in violation of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Recent information in that regard should be examined based on objective and transparent verification, with the cooperation of the parties concerned.

We have time and again reiterated that it is imperative to immediately cease the use of force to avoid further civilian casualties and losses, as well as damage to civilian infrastructure. If not resolved peacefully and expeditiously, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine will continue to affect the entire world, given the spillover effects now seen across regions. We are therefore convinced that the only way forward is to de-escalate tension and resume dialogue and negotiation through all channels, with a view to achieving long-term solutions that take into consideration the interests and concerns of all parties, in accordance with international law. There is no viable alternative.

International efforts should be carried out in a prudent manner in order to be conducive to reaching a final solution. Discussion and decisions undertaken by international organizations and agencies should follow their established procedures and working methods. In this vein, we are of the view that deliberation and decisions taken by the General Assembly should be based on impartial information and broad consultations with Member States. Dialogue and negotiations among relevant parties is the most feasible way forward to a peaceful, comprehensive solution. It is our hope that the United Nations and Member States will work together towards this end.

Mr. Ke (Cambodia): I take the floor today to explain our vote after the vote on resolution ES-11/3, on the suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council.

The spectre of isolation of a State Member of the United Nations through the suspension of its rights in a United Nations body will not help resolve the conflict, but only trigger further consequences and intensify the

situation. At a fragile time for world peace, security and stability, the engagement among the Member States in all relevant United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council, is very important. Resolving the conflict in Ukraine based on the United Nations Charter and international law through creating an environment conducive to diplomatic engagement and negotiation by the concerned parties should be the right path forward towards achieving a peaceful solution in the Ukraine and ending the tremendous human suffering there.

At this critical juncture, we must strive to work in solidarity to address the conflict in Ukraine and avoid creating a trust deficit among the membership. Building trust and confidence is absolutely crucial to dealing with the current situation. Accordingly, Cambodia abstained in the voting on the resolution.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): Uzbekistan adheres to a balanced neutral position on the current situation in Ukraine and hopes that the parties will find a mutually acceptable way to resolve the situation pursuant to a solely political and diplomatic path based on universally recognized principles and international law. At the same time, the delegation of Uzbekistan voted against resolution ES-11/3 on the suspension of the rights to membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council, given our strong conviction that any decision based on paragraph 8 of the resolution 60/251 authorizing the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting,

“[to] suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights”

should be based on the outcomes of thorough investigation of the alleged violations.

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): Malaysia remains deeply concerned at the worsening situation in Ukraine and continues to closely monitor developments, including the humanitarian situation on the ground. We are greatly disturbed at reports of alleged human rights abuses and violations.

We firmly believe that those who commit gross violations of human rights must be held accountable. We also firmly believe that it is imperative that such atrocities be verified in an impartial, transparent and credible manner. In this regard, we support the call by the Secretary-General to immediately commence

independent investigations to guarantee effective accountability. Malaysia is therefore of the view that a critical decision, such as the suspension of a member of the Human Rights Council, must not be made in haste and should not prejudice the outcome of such investigations. A decision on such an important matter must be accorded the same equal treatment and due process as in the past in accordance with the full spirit and letter of resolution 60/251. Taking into account all the aforementioned considerations, Malaysia has decided to abstain in the voting on resolution ES-11/3 today.

Malaysia strongly urges all concerned parties to immediately take steps to de-escalate and continue to progress towards dialogue and negotiations, so as to prevent further devastation and loss of life. We reiterate the need to respect and protect civilian life and infrastructure. We also reiterate the call on all parties to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Ms. Tang (Singapore): Singapore abstained in the voting on the resolution that has just been adopted (resolution ES-11/3).

Singapore condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and continuing attacks on Ukrainian cities, civilians and civilian infrastructure. We reiterate our full support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Singapore's position on this has been clear and consistent from the beginning of this war, which is why we co-sponsored and voted in favour of resolutions ES-11/1 and ES-11/2 and co-sponsored Human Rights Council resolution 49/1.

Singapore is gravely concerned and distressed by the latest reports and images of high civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure from Bucha and other Ukrainian towns. We strongly condemn any violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In this regard, we urge the full and urgent implementation of resolutions ES-11/1, ES-11/2 and Human Rights Council resolution 49/1. In particular, we note the establishment of an Independent International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of abuses of human rights in Ukraine and await the completion of its work and its findings.

There must be accountability for any gross and systematic human rights violations that have taken place in the conflict in Ukraine. We urge all parties to cooperate with the Commission and allow full

and unhindered access for the Commission to gather evidence and conduct its work.

We must spare no effort to protect the civilian population in Ukraine, and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to cease its offensive military operations immediately, remain engaged in meaningful negotiations with Ukraine and work towards a peaceful settlement in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): Brunei Darussalam expresses concern over the escalation of tensions and military actions in Ukraine and continues to closely monitor developments in the country. Brunei Darussalam condemns any violation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of any country and reiterates the importance of upholding the principles of a rules-based framework and respect for international law.

Brunei Darussalam strongly believes that constructive dialogue and engagement among all parties concerned is essential to seeking a peaceful solution. We further believe that the suspension of Member States is counterproductive in addressing any concern and may further aggravate the already dire situation.

Brunei Darussalam reiterates the importance of diplomacy and calls on all parties directly involved to de-escalate tensions and settle all differences by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in the interest of maintaining international peace and stability.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Kuwait abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/3, which has just been adopted at this emergency special session of the General Assembly. Our vote is based on being committed to promoting and protecting human rights and preserving the international organs that have been established to that end.

We are against politicization, selectivity and double standards, and we encourage dialogue and objectivity when dealing with human rights issues. While we condemn all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, wherever and by whomsoever committed, we have followed with deep concern all the reports and horrific images provided by the media in recent days. They have revealed the extent of the serious

violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law against unarmed civilians in Ukraine. We support the call of the Secretary-General to conduct an independent, neutral and transparent international investigation into those crimes to determine the perpetrators and make them accountable.

We reiterate our appeal to all parties to the conflict to respect their commitments under international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, as well as international refugee law for the protection of civilians and civilian sites, and to respect and protect humanitarian and medical personnel as well as humanitarian convoys to ensure the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. We commend the efforts made by United Nations and its specialized agencies to alleviate human suffering as a result of continued hostilities and to prevent their escalation.

Ever since the start of the war and military operations in Ukraine, Kuwait has reaffirmed its principled and steadfast position of committing to United Nations principles, which call for respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States as well as non-interference in their internal affairs, in addition to the non-use of force or the threat of force, but to resolve conflicts by peaceful means.

We reiterate our appeal to immediately end the hostilities and continue negotiations among the parties concerned in order to reach a peaceful settlement and spare the region and the world their negative consequences at the economic and humanitarian levels.

Mrs. Kasymalieva (Kyrgyzstan): According to paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251, entitled "Human Rights Council", the General Assembly may suspend the rights of membership in the Human Rights Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights.

That paragraph requires that there should be confirmed facts of gross and systematic violations of human rights. Our position at the moment is that we should wait for the results of impartial investigations into all possible gross and systematic violations of human rights in Ukraine, including the results of the investigation of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry established by Human Rights Council resolution 49/1.

We are following the situation in Ukraine with great concern. It is especially alarming that fraternal peoples are involved in that conflict and that human casualties cannot be avoided. We express our grave concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine. In that regard, it is important to ensure the full protection of civilians, primarily women and children, as well as of medical and humanitarian personnel.

What is happening today is a real tragedy, the occurrence of which, unfortunately, was allowed by the entire world community. Kyrgyzstan holds the view that the text of the resolution adopted today (ES-11/3), on the suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation from the Human Rights Council, is characterized as politically driven. We are in favour of conducting an independent investigation and examining the results and facts provided by both sides.

Our position is clear: any conflict must be resolved exclusively by political and diplomatic means, including through the creation of new formats and mechanisms.

Mr. Larbaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Algeria reiterates its firm commitment to the fundamental rules and principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various international treaties for the protection and promotion of human rights. We express our strong condemnation of any proven violation of international obligations in that regard.

There is no doubt that the images we have seen about certain cities of Ukraine are horrific and strongly condemned. The alleged crimes related to them are extremely serious. However, it is imperative to allow existing United Nations mechanisms to investigate the facts on the ground in an impartial manner so that justice is done for all innocent victims.

Ensuring that the competent United Nations mechanisms discharge their mandates and tasks in accordance with the norms of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, free from any interference or prejudgment, constitutes for Algeria a *sine qua non* to establish the facts about the gross and systematic violations of human rights that have been committed.

In that regard, Algeria calls for respecting the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity, on which the Human Rights Council

is founded, and for preserving it from any political dispute that might affect the mandate or role of that pivotal international body as well as its impartiality concerning human rights issues, in order to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation.

My delegation believes that international multilateral efforts require the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation, without any exclusion, regardless of the ongoing disagreements. Any attempt to suspend any State elected by the international community from any United Nations body is not conducive to promoting the virtues of multilateralism.

While reaffirming its support for direct negotiations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in order to put an end to the military operations and ensure an urgent response to the humanitarian crisis, Algeria reiterates its call for the intensification of international diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the current crisis and preventing the erosion of diplomatic norms and reaching, as soon as possible, a political solution that ensures the sovereignty of States, their territorial integrity and legitimate and vital interests.

My country, which has engaged in good faith in a good-offices effort through an Arab contact group that recently met with the parties concerned, calls on the international community to refrain from any action likely to hamper the ongoing negotiations and prolong the crisis and its global multidimensional consequences, which negatively affect all countries in the world.

In the light of all those reasons and considerations, the delegation of Algeria voted against this draft resolution.

Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru voted in favour of draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 in consideration of the victims and based on the understanding that the adopted text is based on the general powers of the General Assembly, as set out in Article X of the Charter of the United Nations and, specifically, in paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251, which empowers the Assembly, with a two-thirds majority, to suspend the membership of a Member State of the Human Rights Council if said State has committed gross and systematic violations of human rights. The act of aggression and the use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State, in itself, implies a pattern of violation of the human rights of the affected population. The Government of Peru is of the view that this procedure, applied for the second time

in the history of the Human Rights Council, should be exercised without any selectivity or discrimination of any kind. The suspension should be invoked in any situation similar to the present case of the use of force, violations of the territorial integrity of another State and human rights violation.

In the context of this text, adopted within the scope of the responsibilities and mandate of the General Assembly, the Peruvian Government considers that it is not prejudging the monitoring actions that are being carried out or may be carried out by the various mechanisms of the Human Rights Council. Those investigations must be carried out without any political interference, with independence, neutrality and with the sole focus on the rights of the victims, their protection and the fight against impunity.

In particular, the Peruvian delegation considers that the adopted resolution should not prejudge or politically predetermine the work of the international, independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council with the mandate to investigate alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law occurring in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine. These investigations must be conducted independently of the parties responsible for the violations and under the internationally recognized principles of independence, promptness, objectivity and non-discrimination. That is particularly urgent and imperative for the investigation of the massacres in the village of Bucha.

Mr. Alateek (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Saudi Arabia abstained in the voting on resolution ES-11/4, entitled “Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council”, because this measure, in our view, constitutes a serious precedent that threatens multilateral work, runs counter to the principles of international law and affects the conduct of international organizations.

We follow with grave concern the deterioration of the situation in the Ukraine, especially on the humanitarian front. We condemn all violations of international humanitarian law, in all forms and manifestations, whenever they occur. We believe in the importance of protecting civilians and civilian sites in conflict areas. However, my country believes that moving to suspend Russia’s membership in the Human Rights Council is an escalatory step that would exacerbate the already tense situation and that this

step not only politicizes the work of the Council, but it is also a unilateral action that gives certain countries more rights than others.

My country stresses the right of all States elected to the Human Rights Council to exercise their full powers, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 60/251, entitled “Human Rights Council,” which affirms the principles of universality and non-selectivity and stresses the elimination of double standards and politicization when considering human rights issues.

My country’s abstention in the voting is based on our strong belief that aggravating this situation will adversely affect the ongoing dialogue between the parties, with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement that spares the region and the world further negative effects in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): The United Arab Emirates once again reiterates our forceful condemnation of all violations of international humanitarian law committed in Ukraine. Civilians are bearing the brunt of this conflict, which must end. Victims must be spared, and parties must comply with their obligations under international law.

Determining the facts on the ground is important for justice to be rendered to victims, but also, in the longer term, in order to allow communities to heal, reconcile and build sustainable peace. As a member of the Human Rights Council, we voted in favour of Council resolution 49/1, urgently establishing an international, independent commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law in Ukraine.

The members of the commission were appointed on 30 March, and their investigations have only just begun. Due process demands that investigative mechanisms be able to conclude their work. Today we decided to abstain in the voting on this resolution because we need to ensure that any decision we take in the General Assembly is based on due process, in line with resolution 60/251.

The United Nations is based on the premise of dialogue and constructive engagement with each other — even with those who hold opposing views to us. The organizations that make up our international system were not established to be a club for the like-minded. We need to preserve spaces in the multilateral arena to talk to each other and not just at each other. That idea

is in the foundational DNA of this Organization. Our collective strength lies in our inclusivity.

Now is the time to double down on diplomatic outreach in order to reach an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine. We support the ongoing negotiations between Ukraine and Russia and offer our full support to all mediation efforts. Now it is time to find a way through this conflict towards peace.

Mr. Tito (Kiribati): I thank the President for re-convening this emergency session to deliberate on adopted resolution ES-11/4, which has the effect of suspending a member of the Human Rights Council, in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions that allow the Assembly to suspend the rights of a member to sit and participate in the Human Rights Council if that member has committed gross violations of human rights.

Having listened intently to the reasoning advanced from the two sides of this issue, Kiribati decided to vote in favour of resolution ES-11/3 on the following grounds. First, the images of hundreds or thousands of innocent human beings killed in Ukraine in the course of the past 42 days is a heart-and-soul-breaking nightmare for all normal, conscientious and peace-loving human beings, and we join all peace-loving people of the world in their prayers and calls for a speedy ending to the conflict through friendly and diplomatic dialogue between the parties.

Further, as a long-standing member of the Commonwealth of Nations, we believe that it is a wise and civilized practice to encourage all its members to be loyal and faithful to the codes of conduct of the Commonwealth, which require all its members to respect the rule of law, good governance and the rights and freedoms of human persons. We also believe that it is wise and civilized to deter violations of such codes of conduct through suspension of any defaulting member, while allowing time and space for a suspended member to reform its conduct and get back to the agreed code of human conduct.

This practice has worked very well in the Commonwealth for decades, and we believe it can also work well for the United Nations with respect to any member seen by an overwhelming majority of members to have seriously digressed from the codes of conduct for United Nations membership. The suspension of Libya in the Human Rights Council in the past (resolution

65/265) shows that it is not entirely wrong to agree to a suspension decision at this time.

Once again, we join all of humankind in calling on the parties concerned to lay down their arms and come together and become part of one happy global human family.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanations of vote after the voting.

We will now hear statements after the adoption of resolution ES-11/3.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation considers the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council (resolution ES-11/3) as an illegitimate and politically motivated step with the aim of demonstratively punishing a sovereign State Member of the United Nations conducting an independent domestic and foreign policy.

I am authorized to make the following statement.

On 7 April of this year, the Russian Federation made a decision to end of suspend its membership in the Human Rights Council before the end of its term. Russia has always considered the Human Rights Council to be an important component of the universal system of promoting and protecting human rights, whose main role is to contribute to the development of a constructive and maximally depoliticized international, intergovernmental dialogue on key issues on the human rights agenda. Unfortunately, in today's conditions, the Council has in fact been monopolized by a group of States that are using it for their own short-term aims.

Those States, which now claim that they set the standard in the human rights field, have for many years been directly involved in blatant and massive violations of human rights or abetted those violations. Notwithstanding their membership in the Council, they are not ready to sacrifice their short-term political and economic interests in favour of truly contributing to the stabilization of the human rights situation in certain countries. Such actions violate the mandate entrusted to the Human Rights Council by the international community and, overall, undermine trust in this body. The sincere commitment of Russia to promoting and

protecting human rights does not make it possible for us to remain a member of an international mechanism that has become an enabler of the will of the aforementioned group of countries, which, in order to push through their aims and achieve the necessary number of votes to adopt such decisions, have resorted to open blackmail of sovereign States.

Our decision to stop our membership in the Human Rights Council before the end of our term does not mean that we are not going to continue to fulfil our international obligations in the human rights field. The Russian Federation will continue to make its significant contribution in strengthening constructive dialogue on human rights and involving all interested sides in the process of the collective development and adoption of decisions that meet the interests of all groups of States.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Skoog (European Union): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening us in this emergency special session.

I have the privilege to address the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

The scale and gravity of Russia's violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as its violations of the United Nations Charter and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another State, Ukraine, called for a strong united international response. Russia is responsible for a horrific number of casualties, human suffering and forced displacements. Russian armed forces have been relentlessly shelling cities, schools and hospitals for well over a month now.

The Russian authorities are responsible for the crimes committed while they have effective control of many areas inside Ukraine. They are subject to the international law of occupation. The European Union supports all measures to ensure accountability for human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine in which Russian armed forces, the perpetrators of war crimes and other serious

violations, as well as the responsible Government officials and military leaders, will be held accountable.

Today, the Assembly has decided that for now the Russian Federation is suspended from the Human Rights Council. Membership in that Council is and shall remain open to all States Members of the United Nations, but those Members commit to upholding the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. Through its activities in Ukraine, Russia has violated those criteria.

The decision to suspend the Russian Federation, which the EU and its member States supported today (resolution ES-11/3) implements the 2006 General Assembly resolution establishing the Human Rights Council (resolution 60/251), which foresees suspension of members that commit gross and systematic violations of human rights. Suspension is necessary to uphold the integrity of the Human Rights Council, the authority of the General Assembly and the credibility of the United Nations human rights system. The rare decision the General Assembly has taken today sends a strong signal of accountability and hopefully will help to prevent and discourage more violations of human rights.

For the third time in a month, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution on Ukraine by a clear majority. Once again, the international community stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and all other people affected by the war of Russian aggression.

Once again, the international community strongly calls on Russia to cease the destruction of innocent lives across Ukraine and immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops. While the Security Council remains unable to take action because of the Russian use of the veto, the General Assembly has demonstrated the strength of international support towards addressing the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Ms. Brandt (Netherlands): I deliver this statement on behalf of the Benelux countries — Belgium, Luxembourg and my own country, the Netherlands. The Benelux countries align themselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU).

The Benelux countries remain unwavering in their support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its democratic freedom. We condemn in the strongest terms the unprovoked war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

This is the third time that we are meeting at this emergency session in just over a month. Today, like before, the exceptional circumstances caused by the war in Ukraine leave us no other choice. We are meeting because we are horrified by the reports of the atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine, the images from places like Bucha, Staryi Bykiv, Mariupol and Hostomel that show a complete disregard for human rights and the lives of civilians, and the personal testimonies of rapes and sexual violence that are emerging.

Clearly, those actions are unacceptable for any United Nations State Member, but even more so for a member of the Human Rights Council. It is therefore important that the General Assembly just voted to take the exceptional step to suspend the membership of the Russian Federation of the Human Rights Council. It is important because membership of the Council comes with responsibilities and duties. Paragraph 9 of resolution 60/251, which established the Council, clearly states that Council members shall “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights”.

Holding a seat on the Human Rights Council is not a free ride. The Benelux countries, as recent and current members of the Human Rights Council, are strong supporters of its mandate. And we note that members sign up to a heightened level of public scrutiny and commit to engage with the Council in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and self-reflection grounded in a desire to use their membership to strengthen the enjoyment of human rights at home and abroad. It is clear that, with its actions in Ukraine, the Russian Federation is failing its responsibilities as a member of the Human Rights Council.

However, this is not just about the Human Rights Council. What is at stake is the credibility of the United Nations as a whole. In his statement before the Security Council on Tuesday (see S/PV.9011), the Secretary-General clearly stated that the war in Ukraine is one of the greatest challenges ever to the international order and the global peace architecture, which was founded upon the Charter of the United Nations. That is what is at stake if we allow the Russian Federation to commit such crimes without consequences. In resolution ES-11/1, of 2 March, the General Assembly called on the Russian Federation to abide by the principles set forth in the Charter. Yet we are confronted with the opposite — further violations of the same Charter.

My final point concerns accountability. I am repeating the call by the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that all efforts be made to ensure an independent and effective investigation into what happened in Bucha and other places. We therefore fully support the work of the commission of inquiry that was established by the Human Rights Council, as well as the essential role of the International Criminal Court when it comes to investigating possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Those efforts complement the investigations undertaken by the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, which the EU stands ready to support. Let us be clear: The perpetrators of those crimes are being watched, and evidence is being compiled with a view to their prosecution. We owe it to the victims and their families to find the truth and provide justice and accountability.

There is, of course, a solution to stop the atrocities. The Russian Federation chose to start this war of aggression against Ukraine. It can also choose to stop it, immediately cease hostilities, withdraw its troops and fully respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom on a point of order.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): We are very sorry to take the floor and interrupt the flow of statements, but we would like to seek an urgent clarification from the Russian delegation as to what precisely they said in their statement.

The General Assembly voted just a few moments ago to suspend them from the Human Rights Council, and that is now done. However, it seems to us that they were suggesting that they were also withdrawing from the Human Rights Council, which has a different effect.

Setting aside the fact that that sounds like someone who has just been fired and has tendered their resignation, may we just ask the Russian delegation to be precise on this point? Will they send a note verbale to Member States and the relevant authorities indicating their full and formal withdrawal from the Human Rights Council for the remainder of their term? We think that that has a different effect in terms of the next actions that need to be taken and their status.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, should they wish to clarify.

Mr. Vorobiev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to explain that the question that was just asked does not refer to a point of order but, in fact, refers to the substance of part of our statement after the adoption of resolution ES-11/3. I believe that it was very clear.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of France on a point of order.

Mrs. Dime Labille (France) (*spoke in French*): My intervention is not related to a point of order per se,

but perhaps the interpreters could clarify things. We think that there was a divergence between the French and English interpretations and the Russian, as we were also wondering about the actual content of the statement after the adoption of resolution ES-11/3 by the representative of the Russian Federation.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in statements after the adoption of resolution ES-11/3.

We shall hear the remaining speakers here in the Hall this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.