



# Economic and Social Council

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## 2023 session

25 July 2022–26 July 2023

### Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 December 2022, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Ms. Stoeva ..... (Bulgaria)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## **Agenda item 19: Social and human rights questions**

### **(a) Advancement of women (E/2023/L.4)**

*Draft resolution E/2023/L.4: Removal of the Islamic Republic of Iran from membership in the Commission on the Status of Women for the remainder of its 2022-2026 term*

1. **The President** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.
2. **Ms. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America), introducing the draft resolution, said that it answered the call of civil society voices in Iran. Mahsa Amini had wanted to live an ordinary life. Instead, she had been beaten to death by the Iranian “morality police”. Simply put, she had been killed for the crime of being a woman, which, for far too long and far too often, had not been so unusual in Iran. Against all expectations, two brave female reporters had told her story, and Iranian women and men had stood up in protest, demanding their basic human rights. In response, the Iranian Government had thrown the two journalists in prison, where they remained, like many other journalists and activists. Young women and girls had been killed for speaking out, and the security forces had reportedly detained and tortured thousands of people, killed hundreds of peaceful protestors and badly injuring many more. Men supporting the women in the streets were now being sentenced to death.
3. Iranian women and activists had appealed to the United Nations for support, asking it to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission was the premier United Nations body for promoting gender equality and empowering women. It could not do its important work if it was being undermined from within. The membership of Iran was an ugly stain on the Commission’s credibility.
4. The Council had the opportunity to take a decision that was clearly and unequivocally right: to act to support women, in direct response to its constituents, the global community of women. The Iranian Government would use misinformation and procedural tricks to obscure the truth and attempt to avoid accountability. Nevertheless, the Council must do right by the Iranian women and activists in the room and women and girls around the world, by voting to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women.
5. **Ms. Herity** (Secretary of the Council) said that Albania, Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Israel, Liberia, New Zealand, North Macedonia and the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

6. **The President** said that a recorded vote had been requested on draft resolution E/2023/L.4.
7. **Mr. Jalil Iravani** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the draft resolution was yet one more manifestation of the United States policy of hostility towards the Iranian people, particularly Iranian women, which it had pursued under the guise of defending human rights for almost 40 years. The United States and its allies had participated in the toppling of many legitimate Governments. If they were unable to restore their puppet Government to power, they would stage a coup; if they were unable to halt a country’s progress in science, technology and nuclear energy, they would assassinate its scientists; if a country refused to bow to their oppressive policies, they would apply maximum pressure and impose unilateral coercive measures, even on pharmaceutical products; and if they were unable to prevent a country from joining an international body, they would do whatever it took to expel it.
8. The Islamic Republic of Iran had become a member of the Commission on the Status of Women in a transparent and democratic election. The United States proposal to remove it from the Commission was entirely illegal, as there was no precedent in the practice of the Economic and Social Council or support in the Council’s rules of procedure for removing an elected member. A bullying member of the Council, notorious for violating the Charter of the United Nations and international law, had submitted a draft resolution based on unfounded claims and fabricated, demonizing arguments which would unlawfully remove an elected member of the Commission, undermining the rule of law in the United Nations system, damaging the Organization’s integrity and setting a dangerous precedent. By attempting to deny his country meaningful and equal participation in all international forums, the draft resolution contravened the letter and spirit of the Charter, in particular the basic principle of sovereign equality among States, which was recognized as the main pillar of multilateralism and the United Nations system.
9. The United States only paid lip service to human rights. It was the standard practice of the United States Government to misapply human rights principles in order to achieve its illegitimate political goals using United Nations platforms and resources. Furthermore, despite the long-standing Council resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women under

Israeli occupation, the United States remained silent on that issue. It was intolerable for the United States to witness strong, dynamic and self-sufficient Iranian women actively participating in economic, social and political life. Whether or not the Islamic Republic of Iran was a member of the Commission, Iranian women and girls would engage actively and effectively in many international forums.

10. All States should condemn any action that compromised the outcome of a democratic process and established a contentious precedent in order to fulfil the narrow political objectives of a few States. His delegation categorically rejected and strongly condemned the draft resolution, and it urged the member States to vote against it.

11. **Mr. Fifield** (Observer for Australia), making a general statement before the voting, said that the Council could not let the women and girls who had paid with their lives for daring to ask that their human rights be respected die in vain. There was no limit to the Iranian Government's persecution of women and girls and their supporters. Its actions showed that it was willing to use every available tool of oppression against its own people.

12. Australia strongly supported the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, which for 76 years had stood as the preeminent global body dedicated to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It was unacceptable that a country which openly disregarded women and girls' human rights, in flagrant violation of the Commission's mandate, should continue to serve on it. That was why, despite the unprecedented nature of such action in the multilateral system, his delegation supported removing Iran from the Commission.

13. **Ms. Rodríguez Mancía** (Guatemala), making a general statement before the voting, said that the Commission on the Status of Women was the principal global intergovernmental organization for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Thus, it was imperative that members of the Commission demonstrate a commitment to addressing the challenges confronting women and girls anywhere in the world. Gender equality and discrimination against women and girls were embedded in Iranian law. While no State had a perfect record, to sit on the Commission, a State needed acknowledge its deficiencies and take steps to remedy them. At the current time, the Islamic Republic of Iran did not deserve to be a member of the Commission. By adopting the draft resolution, the member States would not only comply with the request of Iranian women and girls, but

would also advance the cause of non-discrimination and empowerment of women and girls in the Commission and the United Nations system as a whole.

14. **Mr. Danailov Frčkoski** (Observer for North Macedonia), making a general statement before the voting, said that, according to credible sources, more than 500 young protesters had been killed, and more than 18,000 people had been arrested during an ongoing women-led revolution that spanned class and ethnic divisions and aimed to tear down patriarchy in its most violent form. The protests marked a watershed moment for Iran and the rest of the world. Abuse of power against women was a litmus test of the character of a political system. Iran had been violating every human and women's right since the start of the protests, and it should be removed from the Commission on the Status of Women. Adopting the draft resolution was the least the member States could do to address such a monumental abuse of power by an authoritarian theocracy.

15. **Ms. Concepción Jaramillo** (Panama), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that her Government shared the concerns expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the human rights special procedures, the human rights treaty bodies and the United Nations specialized agencies regarding the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The actions of the Iranian Government were not compatible with the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, and they violated the human rights principles to which Panama had historically adhered as a party to core human rights treaties, as well as the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. On the basis of the foregoing, having carefully weighed the values, principles and norms of equality which governed her country's internal conduct and should be shared by all members of the international community, Panama had decided to support the draft resolution. It hoped that adoption of the draft resolution would promote women's rights in Iran and encourage all States to comply with international human rights standards.

16. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that it was of utmost importance that the Council adhere to the founding principles of the United Nations, one of which was inclusivity: the equality and meaningful participation of States in all international forums and their equitable geographic representation in all international bodies. Political might must not be allowed to prevail over the rule of law. Arbitrary interpretation

of the Charter and the rules of procedure of its principal organs could set a dangerous precedent, undermining an international order that was already in peril. The clear example of the League of Nations should give pause to all peace-loving countries. The Council's rules of procedure did not provide for the removal of a legitimately elected member of the Council or its functional commissions, and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly referred only to the procedure for electing a new member to a Council if a member ceased of its own accord to belong to the Council before its term of office expired. The proposed action would politicize the work of the Council and would set an unwanted precedent by which other States with different cultures, customs and traditions would be prevented from serving on the Council's functional commissions. In the light of all of the foregoing, the Group urged delegations to vote against the draft resolution.

17. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that adoption of the draft resolution would be one more decision in a long list of actions that were undermining multilateralism and turning the United Nations system into an autocracy, where the circumstantial majority used fallacious arguments, supposedly in defence of democracy and human rights, to impose its will; ignored the basic consensus mechanisms; and claimed false moral supremacy. The submission of the draft resolution was yet another strike against the balance enshrined in the Charter and the institutionality of the United Nations, and its adoption would bode ill for the United Nations and humankind. The draft resolution was anti-democratic, hostile and based on a double standard. It represented an attempt by self-designated supposed defenders of human rights to impose a dictatorship. Venezuela urged all member States to vote against it.

18. **Ms. McGill** (Liberia), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the human rights situation in Iran continued to deteriorate, with women and girls bearing the brunt of horrific human rights violations and abuses. But beyond the current violent crackdown, Iranian women and girls endured a cruel day-to-day reality created by decades-old discriminatory laws, policies and practices that were contrary to the principles and objectives of the Commission on the Status of Women. States could not sit by idly and watch Iran continue its oppression of women while serving as a member of the Commission. The draft resolution before them represented an opportunity to hold Iran accountable for gross and systematic violations of human rights and to stand with the people of Iran, especially its women and girls.

19. **Ms. Pereira Gomes** (Observer for Brazil), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said

that situation of women and girls' human rights in Iran had been the object of the attention of the Human Rights Council, the special procedure system and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which were collectively responsible for monitoring and reporting on the situation of human rights in Iran and issuing recommendations. In contrast, the Commission on the Status of Women was not competent to address issues in specific countries. There was no precedent or provision within the Economic and Social Council system for the current proposal. In crisis situations such as the one in Iran, it was advisable to consider the different perspectives from which they could be approached within the United Nations system as an inherent characteristic, not a deficiency.

20. The situation of human rights in Iran was the subject of annual General Assembly resolutions and had recently been discussed in an informal meeting of the Security Council. However, amongst all of the United Nations forums and mechanisms through which the human rights of women and girls in Iran could be addressed, the Commission on the Status of Women provided the most open context. It encouraged the definition of parameters and the assumption of commitments for which States could be held to account in the follow-up to its agreed conclusions. That work would not be facilitated by the removal of Iran. Despite the current crisis, it would be preferable for Iran to retain its seat on the Commission, in order to preserve a space for dialogue where it might be pressured to close the gap between its role as a member and its respect for women and girls' rights.

21. **Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom), making a general statement before the voting, said that the death of Mahsa Amini had been a shocking reminder of the repression facing women and girls in Iran. Since her death, the Iranian people had made clear that they would no longer tolerate violence and oppression and had demanded that women and girls' rights be respected. The United Kingdom would vote in favour of the draft resolution for three reasons. First, the actions of Iran were inconsistent with the objectives of the Commission on the Status of Women and, thus, incompatible with membership in it. Second, the United Nations could not sit by and allow the violence that had led to the death of Mahsa Amini to continue with impunity. Third, instead of engaging with the international community, the Iranian Government had responded by escalating its violent oppression. The United Kingdom urged every Council member to hold Iran accountable and support Iranian women and girls by voting in favour of the draft resolution.

22. **Mr. Erdan** (Israel), making a general statement before the voting, said that the Council was meeting to address one of the most shameful manifestations of the institutionalized hypocrisy of the United Nations: the fact that one of the world's worst abusers of women's rights could hold a leadership position in human rights in a United Nations body. Thanks to the United States initiative, States had an opportunity to right a wrong.

23. Like Hitler's Nazi regime, the Iranian regime was the embodiment of evil. It had already destroyed four Middle Eastern countries; it supplied suicide drones for the murder of innocent Ukrainians; it had attacked the cyberinfrastructure of Albania; it had murdered innocent Kurds in Iraq; it endangered global maritime trade routes; and it publicly threatened to annihilate another United Nations Member State. There should be no question of not adopting the draft resolution and no talk of diplomatic or tactical considerations.

24. Removing Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women was a small but important step. A much larger and truly crucial step would be to announce that there would be no nuclear deal with a rogue State like Iran. Any State that signed such a deal would only help to pave the regime's path to a weapon of mass destruction and permit hundreds of billions of dollars to flow into Iranian coffers, giving Iran the resources to continue murdering and destroying. Israel called on all signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to announce that it was null and void forthwith.

25. For the past four decades, the radical Iranian regime had brutally trampled on the basic human rights of its citizens, yet, absurdly, it remained a relevant member of the international community. Iran should never have received a seat on the Commission. That was only part of the moral distortion that had made the United Nations so impotent. Israel saluted the Iranian people for taking matters into their own hands in the face of disgraceful international inaction. Just as negotiations had not stopped the regime's dangerous nuclear ambitions, debates would not end its murderous brutality. He urged all delegations to vote in favour of the draft resolution and hoped that its adoption would be only a first step towards the liberation of the Iranian people.

26. **Mr. Dandy** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the draft resolution undermined multilateralism by contravening the basic principle of the equality of States and the right of States to equal participation in all international forums. The Islamic Republic of Iran had been democratically and transparently elected to the Commission on the Status of

Women. The push to unseat it was politically motivated and, if successful, would set a very dangerous precedent. The draft resolution was biased, lacked objectivity and represented an attempt to politicize the work of the Council and divert it from its proper objective of promoting sustainable development. It was United States policy to subvert the collective efforts of the United Nations Member States, singling out certain countries while condoning serious, systemic violence elsewhere, as in occupied Palestine. The Syrian Arab Republic urged the members of the Council not to submit to a politically motivated attempt to undermine multilateralism, which would also create a very dangerous precedent of targeting specific States, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

27. **Mr. Rae** (Canada), making a general statement before the voting, said that Mahsa Amini's death and the Iranian regime's violent response to the ensuing protests must have consequences. Iran had showed the world a face of cruelty and brutality and simply did not belong on the Commission on the Status of Women. Its continued membership would seriously undermine the Commission's credibility.

28. Some delegations had expressed the view that it was inappropriate to remove a duly elected member of the Commission for any reason. With all respect, he wondered if they truly believed that nothing a State could do against its own citizens could have consequences for its membership – that there were no standards of respect for the dignity of women. What was not appropriate was the regime's brutal violations of human rights, including women's human rights, which were incompatible with membership in a body tasked with promoting the status of women. He thought that the great majority of States agreed that there were standards that should be enforced, and he urged them to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

29. **Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the current meeting had been convened because the United States and a group of its ever-loyal accomplices had decided to pressurize and attempt to discredit a political opponent, as well as to "purge" the Commission on the Status of Women of an influential sovereign member. The delegations that had put forward the unpleasant draft resolution showed no compunction in acting in violation of the rules of procedure and methods of work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. After all, Western delegations were no stranger to tearing up an existing system that worked well.

30. His delegation wished to convey its condolences for the death of Mahsa Amini. It remained confident, however, that the Iranian authorities had carefully considered the reasons for her death and would take every measure to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Although the subsequent disorder in that country was regrettable, each State had not only the right but also the obligation to maintain public order through methods and means that were consistent with their obligations under international law. He wondered, however, whether that applied only to “Western democracies”. No meeting had been convened to discuss the membership of the United Kingdom, France, Germany or Poland after law enforcement agencies in those countries had brutally suppressed peaceful protests, including by using water cannons in freezing weather and setting service dogs on protestors. The Council had also not convened a meeting to discuss the membership of the United States following a wave of violence and vandalism in the wake of the killing of George Floyd or the death of the United States Air Force veteran, Ashli Babbitt. The next time that such incidents happened in one of the so-called Western democracies, his delegation might well repeat verbatim the emotional statement made by Canada regarding the situation in Iran. Delegations sponsoring the draft resolution should focus first and foremost on correcting their own human rights violations.

31. If the draft resolution were adopted, it would set an extremely dangerous precedent regarding the exclusion, without justification or the application of rules, of a member of a subsidiary body of the Council that had been democratically elected in accordance with applicable procedures. Iran had been the only candidate from the Group of Asia-Pacific States and its election had been endorsed by all of that Group’s members and by an overwhelming majority of the Council members. A State’s membership of the subsidiary bodies of the Council could be discontinued only if requested by the State in question. The current rules of procedure did not include mechanisms for excluding States and it was therefore not possible to adopt draft resolutions on the matter by consensus. His delegation wished to call a vote on the matter and, since the Council was acting in a grey area and possibly illegally, also to receive the opinion of the Legal Counsel on the conformity of the draft resolution with the rules of procedure.

32. **Ms. Mozgovaya** (Observer for Belarus), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that her delegation had consistently reiterated that equal rights and mutual respect were the most important factors in relations between States in the multilateral system, and that collective decisions on matters on the international agenda should be made through constructive dialogue

involving all stakeholders. As a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, her delegation also believed that multilateral efforts to improve the situation of women and girls should be aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation, not at excluding members, irrespective of the depth of disagreement with them.

33. The draft resolution before the Council was the latest evidence of the fracturing of the multilateral system and of the high degree of animosity in international relations. The document would in no way improve the situation of Iranian women or enhance their rights and opportunities. By proposing to exclude Iran from the Commission, the United States delegation had chosen to exacerbate confrontation and advance accusatory rhetoric rather than to promote cooperation and equal rights. Belarus categorically opposed such politically motivated and one-sided actions. Any attempt to prevent out-of-favour Governments from participating in the work of the United Nations and other international organizations was at odds with the principle of maintaining civilized relations between States. The United Nations should not be used for political purposes and, within international organizations, interactions between States should be non-confrontational and non-politicized. Questions regarding membership, in particular, must not be a matter of politics.

34. **The President** said that the Legal Counsel could give an opinion only at the request of the Council.

35. **Mr. Rae** (Canada), speaking on a point of order, said that the representative of the Russian Federation could ask the Council to vote on requesting a legal opinion.

36. **The President** said that, under rule 54 of the rules of procedure, a request for a legal opinion must be made in the form of a draft decision or resolution containing a clearly formulated question addressed to the Legal Counsel. Unless the Council decided otherwise, the proposal could be put to the vote no earlier than 24 hours after copies had been circulated to all members. The Russian delegation would need to put its request in writing so that it could be circulated to the delegations for their review.

37. **Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation), speaking on a point of order, said that delegations objecting to his proposal were probably afraid of what the legal opinion might state. There was no need to circulate the proposal in writing, as the wording was simple: “Is draft resolution [E/2002/L.4](#) in accordance with the rules of procedure of the United Nations, specifically the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council?”

38. **Mr. Rae** (Canada), speaking on a point of order, said that, regardless of the form in which the proposal was submitted, the Council would still need to vote on it.

39. **Ms. Schwalger** (New Zealand), speaking on a point of order, said that it would be impossible to vote on the Russian proposal at the current meeting since, according to rule 54, the delegations must have received a proposal 24 hours in advance of the vote. However, that should not preclude acting on the current draft resolution before the Council.

40. **The President** said that, under rule 54, the Council could decide to waive the 24-hour requirement. She invited the Council to vote on whether to waive that requirement in order to take an immediate decision on the oral proposal put forward by the Russian delegation.

41. *A recorded vote was taken on the proposal by the Russian Federation to waive the 24-hour requirement in rule 54 of the rules of procedure in order to take an immediate decision on the oral proposal to request a legal opinion.*

*In favour:*

Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, China, Indonesia, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Russian Federation, Zimbabwe.

*Against:*

Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Panama, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

*Abstaining:*

Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, India, Libya, Madagascar, Mexico, Peru, Thailand, Tunisia.

42. *The proposal by the Russian Federation was rejected by 26 votes to 12, with 11 abstentions.*

43. **Mr. Geng Shuang** (China), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that his delegation opposed the adoption of the draft resolution prepared by the United States, which was ill-intentioned and flawed. First, there were no provisions in the Council's rules of procedure or instances of past Council practice that supported removing a democratically elected member State from the Commission on the Status of Women, and doing so would set a dangerous precedent. Second, the sponsor had imposed the content of the draft resolution on the Council's members,

refusing to consider their views while preparing the text, in violation of the principles of fairness, democracy and transparency to which it paid lip service. Third, adopting the draft resolution would solve nothing; it would only intensify grievances, escalate confrontation and further complicate the situation. Fourth, the draft resolution did not even represent a serious attempt address the situation of Iranian women, since the sponsor had omitted its own indiscriminate sanctions against Iran in the long list of human rights violations in the text. In short, the draft resolution was the product of naked bullying, hypocrisy and double standards.

44. In addition, for some time, a certain State had been abusing the multilateral platforms of the United Nations to undermine cooperation, jeopardize consensus and provoke confrontation by instigating extremely destructive country-specific resolutions that forced States to take sides. The real intent of that State and its allies was to subvert the United Nations to serve their own interests and interfere in the internal affairs of other States. In the view of China, the Iranian Government and its people were well able to handle their own domestic affairs.

45. As an active supporter of human rights and the advancement of women, China had always adhered to the norms of international law and to the principle of constructive dialogue and communication among States on an equal footing, based on respect for sovereignty and national conditions. It called on the members of the Council to safeguard multilateralism, oppose unilateral acts, support dialogue and cooperation and reject division and confrontation by voting against the draft resolution.

46. **Mr. Hoxha** (Observer for Albania), making a general statement before the voting, said that the issue at hand was the unacceptable behaviour of a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. For months, the Islamic Republic of Iran had been acting in complete contradiction to the spirit and values of the Commission. Iran had a long record of systematic human rights violations. Just as in 2009 and 2019, the regime was detaining and brutally killing peaceful protesters. Women's bodies had become a crucial political battleground.

47. Albania supported the mobilization of existing tools and the creation of a new independent and impartial investigative mechanism to hold the Iranian regime accountable for its gross violations of human rights. The international community could not remain silent, and it could not contemplate the continued membership of Iran in the Commission. His delegation called on all countries committed to human rights to



stand with the Iranian people by voting in favour of the draft resolution, and it once again urged the Iranian regime to heed the requests of the Secretary-General, the Human Rights Council and other United Nations bodies to end the repression immediately.

48. **Mr. Rashid** (Observer for Pakistan), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that there were no provisions in the Council's rules of procedure for the removal of a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. Removing Iran from the Commission in 2022 would violate the mandate given by the States that had been Council members in 2021.

49. As to whether there was any situation in which the Council could address human rights violations, Iran was currently cooperating with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and removing it from the Commission was likely to make addressing such violations more difficult. Iran was being selectively targeted for political, economic and strategic reasons, in contradiction to the principles of impartiality, transparency, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization that should govern the consideration of human rights issues. Its selective targeting was part of a larger pattern of double standards: all but one of the special sessions of the Human Rights Council had targeted developing countries. In his region, where one State had committed gross human rights violations and refused to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms, there had been no move to censure it, perhaps because it was considered a strategic partner.

50. The best way to address human rights situations was to seek cooperation and engagement, not confrontation and coercion. Removing Iran from the Commission would pave the way for the selective exclusion of other sovereign States from multilateral forums at the whim of a dominant group of States.

51. **Ms. Schwalger** (New Zealand), making a general statement before the voting, said that her Government was gravely concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly women and girls. New Zealand had joined in calling for independent investigations into the death of Mahsa Amini and the Iranian regime's violent responses to subsequent protests, and it looked forward to the results of the upcoming United Nations fact-finding mission. It stood with the Iranian protesters, condemned the imposition of the death penalty on activists and had been deeply shocked by the recent executions. The use of violence against protesters was unacceptable and must end immediately.

52. Member States must do their utmost to protect and promote human rights everywhere. The Commission's

mandate included promoting women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. Members of the Commission should act in accordance with that mandate.

53. Her delegation had not joined in sponsoring the draft resolution lightly. However, given the grave and deteriorating situation in Iran, particularly for women and girls, it was no longer appropriate for Iran to maintain its membership for the current term. Far from an attempt to discredit Iran, as some had suggested, the draft resolution represented a way for the international community to show its support for the fundamental rights of Iranian women and girls.

54. *A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution E/2023/L.4.*

*In favour:*

Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Montenegro, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

*Against:*

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Russian Federation, Zimbabwe.

*Abstaining:*

Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Gabon, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania.

55. *The draft resolution was adopted by 29 votes to 8, with 16 abstentions.*

56. **Mr. Nasir** (Indonesia) said that his country reaffirmed the fundamental human rights of all people, including the equal rights of men and women. The voices and aspirations of women and girls and their meaningful participation in public affairs must always be supported and encouraged. While it was regrettable that the rights to freedom of expression and assembly in Iran had been tainted by acts of vandalism and violence, Indonesia called on the Iranian security forces to exercise restraint and to respect the human rights of all people equally. It was the responsibility of all States to uphold their obligations under domestic and international human rights law.

57. His delegation continued to be concerned by the emergence of a zero-sum, winner-take-all spirit in the



multilateral arena. Even in a smaller body like the Council, delegations had once again been unable to engage on a proposal before it was submitted for action, resulting in a text that would not lead to effective action supported by all. In addition, the resolution prejudged the outcome of the recently established independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Instead of helping to strengthen the United Nations system and enhance synergies, the Council had chosen to further contribute to siloing, increased distrust among Member States and weakened multilateralism.

58. For those reasons, Indonesia had abstained from the voting. It stood ready to engage constructively on the issue of human rights in Iran, and it once again urged all States to safeguard and respect the spirit of multilateralism.

59. **Ms. Narváez Ojeda** (Chile) said that, despite the steadfast support of her country for multilateralism, after weighing the merits of allowing Iran to remain on the Commission on the Status of Women against the disregard that its presence supposed for the rights of Iranian women and girls, her delegation had reached the difficult decision to vote in favour of its removal, in the hope that the human rights situation of women and girls in Iran would improve. In its analysis, it had considered the urgency and magnitude of the demands of Iranian women and girls, as well as the failure of Iran to allow the scrutiny that multilateralism required. However, the step just taken should not set a precedent. It was imperative to avoid the need for exceptional action by agreeing on effective, clear mechanisms to address such situations, alongside standards and conditions that ensured due pluralism in the bodies of the United Nations.

60. **Mr. Kulháněk** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States and expressing their full and unwavering support for the aspirations of the women and girls of Iran, said that they strongly condemned the widespread, brutal and disproportionate use of force by the Iranian authorities against peaceful protesters, including women and girls, and urged Iran to uphold its human rights obligations and commitments under international law, including the treaties to which it was a party. They called for those responsible for the death of Mahsa Amini to be held accountable, and they condemned in the strongest terms the recent executions. The European Union urged the Iranian authorities to immediately cease applying the death penalty, to refrain from any future executions and to take steps to abolish the death penalty altogether. They should also cease the use of arbitrary detention and release all those unjustly detained.

61. While the European Union considered the Council's exceptional decision justified by the seriousness of the human rights situation in Iran, its stance on multilateralism remained unchanged. Global problems required global solutions, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including civil society.

62. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution out of deep concern for the deteriorating situation of human rights in Iran, particularly for women and girls. Colombia stood with the brave Iranian women advocating for the respect of their rights, and it saw the Council's action as a wake-up call for change. Nevertheless, it shared the procedural concerns expressed by other delegations. Ideally, there should be clear rules for addressing such situations, and under normal circumstances, the initiative would have been discussed first in the Commission on the Status of Women. The draft resolution had been adopted under exceptional circumstances, and it could not be considered to set precedent.

63. **Ms. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) said that her delegation had abstained from the voting. In its view, excluding a State from a multilateral forum did not contribute to the dialogue and international cooperation that were essential to strengthen multilateralism and, in the case at hand, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Human rights were a priority for Mexico, which had expressed its concern over the documented deterioration of the human rights situation of women and girls in Iran in numerous forums. It condemned the sexual violence and disproportionate use of force against women and other protesters, and categorically reaffirmed its condemnation of the use of the death penalty under any circumstances, as well as the arbitrary arrest and execution of young men sentenced without due process.

64. Membership in the Commission on the Status of Women implied a commitment to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. If a State was not fulfilling that commitment, the Commission was the ideal forum in which to address the issue. An empty seat on the Commission did nothing to improve the status of women anywhere in the world.

65. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria) said that, as a State that valued dissent and popular protest and believed in gender equality, Nigeria held the repression of women and freedom of expression in utter contempt. It deeply decried the unfortunate killings and violent repression of protesters in Iran and called on the Iranian Government to cease its brutal crackdown. Nevertheless, it had not voted in favour of the draft

resolution, because the latter was procedurally flawed and because removing Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women could be counterproductive. Voting against the draft resolution was not in any way voting for evil, as some had suggested. Such a suggestion was tyrannical, despicable and made in bad faith. It also set a dangerous precedent. For the sake of multilateralism and the future of the United Nations, its Member States must eschew blackmail and polarization and seek consensus.

66. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her delegation categorically rejected the resolution, which was ill-intentioned, illegal and based on fabricated allegations. By manipulating the procedures and practices of the Council, the United States had dealt a blow to the United Nations, its principal organs and democracy. Tragically, the United Nations was hosted by a country whose foreign policy agenda emphasized exclusivity, supremacy, unilateralism and intimidation, and which systematically used the principal organs of the United Nations to promote that agenda. The United States had not even ratified the core international human rights treaties. It provided ongoing support for the Israeli regime, which had a decades' long record of violence against Palestinian women and girls, and it was responsible for the current situation of Afghan women and girls. It had also exacerbated the challenges facing the Iranian people, including Iranian women and girls, by imposing illegal and inhumane unilateral coercive measures. The countries whose interests were tied to the interventionist foreign policy of the United States were likely to go down with a sinking ship. Moreover, the path that the United States had just opened could lead to the targeting of other States for any reason.

67. The restriction by the United States of her country's access to cooperation and sharing of experiences and best practices through the Commission on the Status of Women belied its rhetoric in support of women's rights. Iran had participated and engaged constructively in the Commission as a member and non-member, and it remained committed to the rights and dignity of women and girls. Its efforts were driven by a rich culture and were based on a well-established Constitution. The status and advancement of Iranian women and girls in a wide variety of fields and their increasing economic independence and political participation were proof of a progressive society that listened to their voices and strove towards a better future for and with them.

68. Her delegation condemned any politicization of woman's rights and rejected the falsehoods advanced by the United States and certain European countries about

the recent protests, which were not instances of peaceful assembly. Perhaps it was time for those countries to stop accusing others of human rights violations and deal with their own dark issues. The States in question not only were guilty of systematic and systemic racial discrimination at home; they also interfered in the affairs of sovereign States, including by inciting riots, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, her delegation was astounded that the Israeli apartheid regime, whose raids, intimidation, colonization and unlawful and inhumane siege continued unabated with the support of the United States and other Western countries, would dare to lecture Iran on human rights. Given the lack of concern demonstrated by the United States and its allies for their own human rights violations, the women and girls of Iran might rightly wonder who the real defenders of their rights were.

69. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution. Argentina had followed with utmost concern the escalation of violence against protesters in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the surge in detentions and the recent imposition of death sentences. It remained firmly opposed to the death penalty, and it condemned the regime's disrespect for gender equality, which was inconsistent with membership in the Commission on the Status of Women. The importance of sending the Iranian authorities a clear, firm message outweighed procedural concerns. In the future, the international community should perhaps be more active and eloquent, before human rights situations became human rights crises.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*