



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

85th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 4 June 2024, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 32

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/864)

Draft resolution (A/78/L.74)

The President: Today we gather to consider the Secretary-General's latest report on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (A/78/864), an issue that highlights the persisting and growing challenge of forced displacement worldwide. Indeed, globally more than 100 million people have been forced to flee their homes, a record number of people on the move as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order. The majority of them — 62.5 million people — are displaced within their own country. We know that displacement shatters lives, sometimes for generations, creating severe hardship with the breakup of families, disrupted education and raw exposure to a veritable range of human rights abuses. For women and girls, internal displacement only amplifies their pre-existing vulnerabilities to discrimination and gender-based violence. For those reasons, I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of all forcibly displaced persons to their homes, as well as the need to respect their property rights.

It is clear that further steps are needed to address the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation, and to facilitate the freedom of movement and access to rights and services for the ethnic Georgian population in conflict-affected areas. As such, I strongly encourage relevant actors to facilitate unhindered, sustainable humanitarian access to Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, allowing humanitarian and development agencies to assess needs and assist the population, especially the most vulnerable.

I reaffirm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, and I also express support for the peaceful resolution of all conflicts in the GUAM area, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, as well as all relevant General Assembly resolutions, which carry the moral and political weight of this Assembly.

We know that to be meaningful resolutions of the General Assembly must be translated into action on the ground, and I therefore call for the full implementation of resolutions on the subject before the Assembly today, just as with all other resolutions. In these times of heightened tensions, it is crucial that all actors move forward towards genuine dialogue and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.74.

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Mr. Bakradze (Georgia): I am honoured to have the opportunity to once again address the General Assembly on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees forcibly displaced from Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, South Ossetia.

Standing here, I wish to ask for your support for draft resolution A/78/L.74, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia". The main purpose of the draft resolution remains unchanged: to address the humanitarian plight of internally displaced persons and refugees who were forced to flee from their homes as a result of multiple waves of ethnic cleansing starting in the 1990s and culminating in the full-scale military aggression against Georgia in August 2008. To this date, they have been deprived of their fundamental rights to return to the places of their origin in safety and dignity and of their property rights. With an increasing number of supporting votes and encouraging dynamics in every direction, the resolution on this topic has continued to be regularly adopted by the General Assembly since 2008.

The co-sponsors of the draft resolution, which, as a matter of fact, number more than 60 United Nations Member States from every region of the world, remain committed to the universally recognized principles enshrined in the text, first and foremost, the right to return, the respect of property rights, as well as the calls for peaceful conflict resolution, providing assurances to the Member States that the draft resolution is human-centred and aimed at upholding lasting and durable peace in the region.

The text of the draft resolution before the Assembly is based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and represents a country-specific application of the General Assembly biannual consensual resolution, entitled "Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons" (resolution 78/205). The draft resolution aims to reaffirm the right of return, in safety and with dignity, of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, women, children and elderly persons who were forced to abruptly leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, to stress the need to respect the property rights of all internally displaced persons and refugees affected by the conflict, to reaffirm the unacceptability of forced demographic changes and to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian activities

to all internally displaced persons, refugees and other persons residing in all conflict-affected areas throughout Georgia.

Beyond that, the draft resolution reaffirms and supports the key role of the Geneva international discussions, the only international peace negotiations format on the matter, and calls on all participants, including Georgia, to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace, to commit to enhance confidence-building measures, and to take immediate steps to ensure respect for human rights and create favourable security conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of all internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin.

Finally, it calls for the elaboration of a concrete timetable to ensure the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and for the reporting instrument to be maintained in order to keep the international community informed about the text's implementation through the annual reports of the Secretary-General, the last of which repeats the same statement as in previous years under the section entitled "Scope of displacement, return and local integration",

"[n]o major changes were observed during the reporting period with regard to internally displaced persons and refugees exercising their right to return". (*A/78/864, para. 16*)

People living in the occupied regions endure continuous deprivation of their basic human rights, as well as isolation and discrimination. Those facts have been systematically reflected in the annual reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued on the basis of Human Rights Council resolution 52/40, entitled "Cooperation with Georgia", the latest of which speaks about the various forms of discrimination ethnic Georgians continue to endure in both occupied regions, including violations of the right to life, deprivation of liberty, arbitrary detention, infringement of the right to property, violations of the right to health and restrictions on education in one's native language. The High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterates his recommendations to, "promptly and thoroughly investigate all allegations of violations of the right to life, torture and ill treatment and intensify efforts to establish accountability", as well as to "end the practice of arbitrary deprivation of liberty".

Notwithstanding that grim background, the Government of Georgia is continuing the effective implementation of its fully human-centric reconciliation and engagement policy, which is based on depoliticized approaches and efficient instruments in order to reach the goals of peace and confidence-building between war-torn communities and to ensure a decent living for the conflict-affected people, before peaceful conflict resolution. The Government is proceeding with its active implementation of the peace initiative A Step to a Better Future and, over the years, we have been inspired to observe the ever-increasing interest of people in the occupied regions towards the opportunities and State services available and designed for them, which is a major deliverable on the way to achieving our strategic goals of reconciliation and engagement.

Pending final resolution of the conflict, the Government of Georgia will continue its efforts to promote the socioeconomic integration of IDPs and improve their living conditions. Significant efforts have been made to provide internally displaced persons with decent and durable housing and with financial assistance based on guiding principles, criteria and procedures for durable housing solutions.

As stated earlier, the draft resolution emphasizes the importance of the Geneva International Discussions, the only format of negotiations between Georgia and the Russian Federation for addressing the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes. However, we are constantly witnessing Russia's deliberate policy to obstruct meaningful discussion on this purely humanitarian issue, precluding any progress in that regard. Up to 100 resolutions, presidential statements and communiqués have unanimously reaffirmed "the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders". Security Council resolutions between 1993 and 2009 have continuously stressed the necessity "to address seriously the need for a dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees, including their security and human rights concerns".

The draft resolution is not against any party, nor does it aim to point fingers at those responsible for forced displacement. Every year, when introducing this resolution, we leave politics aside and focus exclusively on the humanitarian dimension of the problem. The text of this year's draft resolution remains unchanged because its provisions continue to remain unfulfilled.

The primary focus on the humanitarian aspect of the issue at hand is a deliberate decision of my delegation to avoid any political speculation when the fundamental rights of the displaced persons are at stake. In that light, we ask the Council to continue being principled and unwavering in its resolve and to stand up for people's universally recognized rights until the provisions of this draft resolution are fully implemented.

The draft resolution before you, A/78/L.74, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", under agenda item 32, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", is sponsored by 62 States Members of the United Nations, pending a final number, including Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tonga, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Vanuatu.

By supporting the cause of Georgian IDPs and refugees, the Council will also support the cause of every individual living in displacement, since the hardships that displaced people face and feel remain the same, regardless of their places of origin.

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

Mr. Lambrinidis (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The EU reaffirms its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union remains committed to supporting peacebuilding

and conflict resolution in Georgia, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

The EU expresses its concern about human rights violations in the Georgian occupied breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the persisting humanitarian challenges faced by the conflict-affected population. The EU calls for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to support those populations, in particular in the occupied breakaway region of South Ossetia. In that respect, the EU recalls that humanitarian access is stipulated in the EU-mediated six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

The European Union underlines the importance of the right of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to choose a durable solution, including a voluntary, safe and dignified return, as well as of being able to exercise property rights. The EU regrets that, so far, no progress has been achieved on those issues and recalls that addressing the issues of refugees and internally displaced persons is a core task of the Geneva International Discussions. The EU therefore calls upon the participants in the Geneva International Discussions to engage in a genuine dialogue on the various displacements that took place over the past three decades, as well as partial returns of IDPs, with a view to enhancing their protection and seeking pragmatic approaches and durable solutions, including further returns.

We welcome the efforts of the Government of Georgia to find durable housing solutions for IDPs and to promote their socioeconomic integration, and we encourage the Government to continue IDP inclusion and prioritization in the national development plan and to make further efforts to improve their living conditions and livelihoods.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Baltic and the Nordic States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Lithuania.

Since Russia's war against Georgia in 2008, the territorial integrity of Georgia continues to be violated, displacing thousands of people and negatively affecting their rights under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We reiterate our full support to the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The European Court of Human Rights established that Russia, while having effective control of and exercising decisive influence over Georgian Abkhaz territory, is responsible for multiple human rights violations, including violations of the right to life, the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to liberty and security, the right to respect for private and family life, the protection of property, the right to education and the right to freedom of movement. We support all efforts to ensure full accountability for those violations and crimes. We note the 2022 decision of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for three individuals charged with war crimes in connection with Russia's invasion. However, more needs to be done. The most recent report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 52/40, entitled "Cooperation with Georgia", urges all relevant actors in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to ensure independent, impartial and thorough investigations (see A/HRC/54/80).

We remain concerned with the human rights situation on the ground. Regrettably, no international human rights monitoring mechanisms have been able to gain unrestricted access to assess the situation. We call for humanitarian access to be provided immediately to assess the situation in those regions, as well as full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to the affected population. We reiterate our support to the process of the Geneva International Discussions, established pursuant to the 12 August 2008 six-point agreement, and regret the continuous disengagement by the Russian participants of the Geneva International Discussions.

In that context, we welcome the cooperation of the Government of Georgia with international organizations and the commitment to provide internally displaced persons (IDPs) with necessary assistance and support in terms of housing and the improvement of their socioeconomic conditions. However, we must also note our deep concern with the recent adoption by the Georgian Parliament of the law on transparency of foreign influence, despite the repeated calls to retract such legislation. The adopted legislation, if enforced, would limit the capacity of civil society and media organizations to operate freely, restrict the right to freedom of expression and negatively affect international assistance, including to IDPs. Moreover, violence against peaceful protesters and intimidations

of the opposition and civil society organizations are not acceptable, in particular for a European Union candidate country. Human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and the right to assembly, must be respected and secured.

The situation in Georgia should also be seen in the broader regional context, where, in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, Russia is continuing to pursue its policy of military occupation of the neighbouring countries' territories. According to recent data by the International Organization for Migration, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has caused more than 3,689,000 people to be internally displaced and more than 5,974,800 to be displaced abroad.

Draft resolution A/78/L.74, which we are adopting today, reconfirms the need to continue working for the protection and assistance of those who have been forcibly displaced and have not been able to exercise their right to safe and dignified return home for more than a decade. We underscore the need for continuous engagement by the United Nations. Therefore, as in previous years, our countries will vote in favour of the draft resolution, and we call on all Member States to vote in favour.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ) with regard to draft resolution A/78/L.74, submitted by Georgia, on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

CANZ is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution. We state unequivocally that we support Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial rights within its internationally recognized borders. Globally, CANZ recognizes the right to displaced people to a safe, voluntary, dignified and unhindered return to their homes, in accordance with international law. The draft resolution is important as it addresses a global humanitarian and human rights challenge. We encourage widespread support for the draft resolution.

In Georgia itself, CANZ considers that forced demographic changes are unacceptable. We support the rights of those people displaced from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to return to their homes.

CANZ is concerned that international human rights organizations are denied access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We call on all parties to ensure entry for those organizations and their access to people in need. CANZ is also concerned by reports of deterioration in the observation of human rights in those two regions, including a deterioration in the observation of the right to freedom of expression and the mistreatment of prisoners and impunity for past abuses.

Finally, CANZ calls out Russia for its role in creating instability in Georgia. This is part of a trend of Russia's repeated aggression against its neighbours, including its illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, which CANZ categorically condemns. Canada, Australia and New Zealand are committed to a world in which no country dominates, and no country is dominated.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): Let me begin by expressing our gratitude to Georgia for taking the lead on draft resolution A/78/L.74 on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from and within Georgia. Japan is its proud co-sponsor of the draft resolution.

The protection of internally displaced persons and refugees is an urgent issue, but regrettably, the heart-wrenching situation in Georgia is far from over.

This draft resolution embodies our solidarity with civilians, who are the most affected by the military operations of its neighbouring country, Russia. Georgians have continued to suffer from long-term forced displacement following Russia's military operation in 2008. As we are witnessing in Ukraine today, Russia's policy regarding its neighbouring countries has continued down that horrible path. Japan has consistently supported a peaceful settlement based on the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity.

We once again reiterate Japan's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as the other GUAM countries, namely Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Japan opposes any attempt to change the internationally recognized borders of Georgia. We have not recognized the statehood of regions within Georgia that have declared so-called independence. Any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is unacceptable and must not occur in any corner of the globe. Japan emphasizes its iron-clad commitment to international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. We continue to stand with the Georgian people and support their aspirations

for a safe and dignified life and a future within the European Union.

Ms. Alldridge (United Kingdom): In 2008, almost 16 years ago, the Russian military invaded the sovereign State of Georgia. Russian troops and border guards remain present to this day in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, some of which are barely half an hour from the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. The human rights situation in those regions and Russia's continuous hybrid attacks are deeply concerning. The United Kingdom urges Russia to end its illegal presence in parts of Georgia immediately and to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of those breakaway regions. We fully support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and we underscore the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, based on full respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and international law.

As a long-standing supporter of this annual resolution, the United Kingdom stands solidly behind the Georgian people and all internally displaced people worldwide. Any inhabitant of Georgia forcefully displaced has an inalienable right to a safe and dignified return to their home. The text provides a vital mechanism for reporting to the Secretary-General about developments on this issue, helping to protect the most vulnerable. We therefore urge all Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/78/L.74.

Ms. Hayovyshyn (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union delegation, and we would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

It has been 16 years already since the Russian Federation launched its full-scale military aggression against Georgia, occupying Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. Despite the calls from an overwhelming number of United Nations Member States for Russia to return to the tenets of international law, Russia continues to ignore them, refusing to withdraw its military forces from Georgia's sovereign territories. The Secretary-General's report (A/78/864) indicates that borderization measures along the administrative boundary lines with South Ossetia and Abkhazia have continued throughout the reporting period. The report also highlights increased surveillance by Russian border guards and strict detention practices. Georgian

residents along the South Ossetian administrative line continue to face threats to their lives from so-called Russian border guards. Ukraine strongly condemns the continued detention of civilians residing along the Abkhazia and South Ossetia administrative boundary lines for so-called illegal crossings.

Draft resolution A/78/L.74, to be adopted today, addresses the issue of protracted displacement, with hundreds of thousands of men, women and children deprived of their right to return to their homes. It is an opportunity for United Nations Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the fundamental right of internally displaced persons and refugees to a safe and dignified return home. Therefore, Ukraine, as a main co-sponsor, will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

The international community must put an end to Russia's imperialistic attempts to conquer and occupy its neighbours. All Russian-occupied territories, including those in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, must be liberated, allowing internally displaced persons and refugees to safely return home. Only by stopping and holding the aggressor State accountable will we bring a just and lasting peace to the region.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.74.

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

Ms. Sharma (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/78/L.74: Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kiribati, Malawi, Mexico, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu.

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

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation, as in previous years, will vote against this year's draft resolution, A/78/L.74, which has been submitted by the Georgian delegation. We note that the draft resolution was submitted

immediately following the attack by the Saakashvili regime on South Ossetia. The purpose of the draft resolution was to shift attention from that indisputable fact by covering it with humanistic decorative wrap, a putative concern for refugees and displaced persons. The draft resolution seeks to conceal that important fact.

We heard today from the delegation of Georgia that this is a humanitarian draft resolution. But we then heard a litany of political statements which contain blatant lies about the Russian Federation. In that connection, we also wish to register our protest against your political statement on this issue, Mr. President.

We would like to recall exactly what occurred in 2008. This is not some kind of a conclusion from the Russian Federation. This is a conclusion of the report of the European Union on the war in Georgia. I would like to quote some of the points from the report.

The first point:

“Open hostilities began with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas, launched in the night of 7 to 8 August 2008. Operations started with a massive Georgian artillery attack.”

Therefore, this was an attack by the Saakashvili regime targeting the civilian city of Tskhinvali.

The second point:

“The Commission is not in a position to consider as sufficiently substantiated the Georgian claim concerning a large-scale Russian military incursion into South Ossetia before 8 August 2008.”

Furthermore, the Commission raised the question of whether or not Georgia’s use of force in South Ossetia was justified from the standpoint of international law. The response of the Commission was the following: “the answer is negative”. That is what occurred in 2008.

The war resulted in the situation in which part of the population of South Ossetia had to flee and move within this territory. We are not talking about only Georgians; we are talking about Ossetians as well. That was a consequence of the war, but that is something which, of course, one cannot know by reading the draft resolution.

Furthermore, the representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, who were attacked by Georgia, do not have an opportunity to come to this Hall and tell us

about what actually happened. They are being denied access here and the representative of Georgia is making it seem as if they simply do not exist. However, I would like to read the statements of the representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia regarding the draft resolution that has been submitted for our consideration.

“For several years in a row, Georgia has been submitting for consideration by the General Assembly a draft resolution on refugees and displaced persons from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia, repeating the text of a document year after year, is attempting to impose on the international community a one-sided, politicized and biased view of the issue of refugees in order to reaffirm its illegitimate territorial claims.”

South Ossetia and Abkhazia stress that in the latest iteration of the text of the draft resolution on refugees and displaced persons, which is in no way different from the previous resolutions, there are references reaffirming the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants to their homes throughout Georgia, including in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. However, the sponsors of the draft resolution fail to mention that the existence of those refugees and displaced persons is directly linked to the war unleashed by Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia, nor is there any mention of the fact that there were more than 100,000 Ossetians who fled ethnic cleansing in the Georgian territory and found refuge in South Ossetia in the Russian Federation and they are still unable to return to their homes, which were destroyed as a consequence of the war. Furthermore, the sponsors completely failed to mention the fact that South Ossetia and Abkhazia, at their own initiative, returned tens of thousands of Georgian refugees to their homes. Thus, the draft resolution submitted by Georgia not only fails to take into account the existing political realities, specifically the fact that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are independent States, but also reflects an absence of will to find solutions to complex humanitarian problems. They are only interested in politicizing this issue.

The draft resolution is having a negative impact on the course of the Geneva International Discussions, which are the sole platform through which the representatives of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia have an opportunity to discuss a wide range of existing issues, including the issue of refugees and displaced persons.

The main way to resolve the issue of refugees is not through distractions, such as this draft resolution, which are designed to have the effect of propaganda, but rather to avoid confrontation and to sign a legally binding agreement on the renunciation of the use of force and ultimately a peace treaty between Georgia and the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. That is the draft resolution that we have before us today, and those are the statements that we heard, which are designed to conceal this truth.

For its part, Russia calls on Georgia and its partners to finally end their reckless attacks on Tskhinvali and Sukhumi on the international stage, to demonstrate their commitment to constructively resolving humanitarian issues on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence and to discuss the question of refugees and internally displaced persons in a practical way at the Geneva International Discussions.

The Russian delegation requests that a vote be taken on this draft resolution and that all delegations who advocate genuine, practical solutions to humanitarian issues in South Ossetia and Abkhazia vote against this draft resolution, which is nothing but a propaganda pamphlet.

Mrs. Solorzano Cavalieri (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is firmly committed to the preservation, promotion and defence of the Charter of the United Nations, and as a result, is unwavering in its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, and supports all diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving that end.

With respect to the topic that brings us together today, we believe it is necessary to express our concern about the growing tendency to exploit the General Assembly in order to attack its members and, even more serious, to use it as a platform for adopting draft resolutions that lack consensus, which, far from fostering dialogue and negotiation, has the potential to deepen tensions and divisions and further complicate regional situations and dynamics.

We hope that, in the interest of the peace and the well-being of all our peoples, sooner than later, the General Assembly will correct course and return to the practice of promoting consensus-based decision-making through transparent and inclusive processes in which all views, concerns and contributions are truly taken into account

in order to reach consensual solutions to issues of common interest to the entire international community.

In adhering to the tenets of its Bolivarian diplomacy of peace, Venezuela therefore respectfully calls on the sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.74 to refrain from politicized approaches and instead promote both confidence-building measures and a constructive approach to the issue, including within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability in the South Caucasus, with a view to achieving through political dialogue, diplomatic negotiation and cooperation solutions to the common challenges of the region, including those in the humanitarian arena.

The 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/78/L.74, entitled “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain

and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mali, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Yemen

Draft resolution A/78/L.74 was adopted by 103 votes to 9, with 53 abstentions (resolution 78/283).

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Niger informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against; the delegation of Jordan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations 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. França Danese (Brazil): Brazil once again abstained in the voting on a text concerning internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Georgia, as we believe that the issues conveyed by resolution 78/283 would be better addressed under the Geneva talks between Tbilisi and Moscow, mediated by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union. Brazil's abstention should not be perceived as indifference to the human tragedy of the displaced population or as a lack of support for Georgia's territorial integrity. We would like to recall Security Council resolutions 1716 (2006) and 1808 (2008), which reaffirm the commitment of Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

At this occasion, it is also important to keep in mind international humanitarian law, in particular, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 and its Protocol I, which established the right of displaced persons to voluntarily return to their places of origin in safety and with dignity. Brazil therefore reiterates its recognition of the territorial integrity of Georgia and expects the contention between the Russian Federation and Georgia to be solved peacefully and through dialogue as soon as possible. We encourage all actors to create favourable political conditions for the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees, to seek lasting solutions to dispel fears of a new escalation of tensions and to avoid actions that could aggravate the delicate regional scenario. Brazil calls upon all concerned parties to continue to build trust and cooperation and to adopt confidence-building measures, particularly within the framework of the Geneva process.

Mr. Dibba (Gambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I take the floor in explanation of position of the delegation of Armenia on resolution 78/283, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

Armenia reiterates its long-standing position on the imperative of the peaceful resolution of conflicts on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The protection of the fundamental human rights of all peoples affected by conflict, included forcefully displaced populations, is the cornerstone of a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace. Armenia highlights its full support for the territorial integrity of Georgia in the spirit of the strategic partnership established between our two States in January 2024.

In that regard, Armenia also supports the voluntary, safe and dignified return of all displaced populations to their places of origin in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and stresses the importance of ensuring the protection of the human rights of all peoples affected by conflict. Armenia is of the view that the parties need to seek the resolution of all outstanding issues exclusively through dialogue and

negotiations, with full respect for the principles and norms of international law.

Mr. Kalmar (Israel): Israel welcomes the steps taken by the Government of Georgia to support internally displaced persons, including through the provision of housing and other assistance, as laid down in the successive action plans for the implementation of the State strategy on internally displaced persons, as highlighted in the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/78/864). I will take this opportunity to reiterate the long-standing position of Israel in support and recognition of the sovereign and territorial integrity of Georgia with regard to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali regions. Israel actively supports programmes by the United Nations Development Programme, which foster peacebuilding and an enabling environment through capacity-building. It is our position that the way to resolve long-standing conflicts is through a negotiated, mutually agreed approach.

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

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 64

Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia

Draft resolution (A/78/L.68)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.68.

Mr. Lapasov (Uzbekistan): I am honoured to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.68, entitled “Central Asia’s unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges”, submitted by Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan under agenda item 64, “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”.

At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to all Member States for their valuable input and constructive engagement. Thanks to the flexibility demonstrated by Member States throughout the negotiation process, we achieved a consensual outcome on the text, which successfully passed the silence procedure without reservations.

Allow me to shed light on the genesis of the draft resolution. During his address at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly in September 2021 (see A/76/PV.3), His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan, proposed the development of a joint anti-drug action plan among Central and South Asian countries. In essence, the proposal highlights the trend towards greater unity and concerted collaboration among Central Asian States in addressing sustainable development issues. Indeed, in recent years, a shared vision on pressing regional and global matters has emerged in Central Asia, propelled by the collective political will and commitment of the Member States in the region. This positive momentum has helped the development of mutually beneficial strategic cooperation, while fostering cross-regional partnerships and addressing urgent challenges on the path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As an emerging regional entity, Central Asia has accumulated significant potential to foster dialogues with major global partners through the establishment of the five Central Asian nations and the United States — C5+1 — format.

The draft resolution, crafted through extensive consultations, outlines a comprehensive approach in Central Asia to disrupting regional drug-trafficking networks and preventing the illicit flow of drugs. Central to the draft resolution is the principle of common and shared responsibility in addressing all aspects of the drug problem at the national, regional and international levels through an integrated strategy. It emphasizes a comprehensive evidence-based approach that addresses both the demand and the supply side of the drug equation while upholding human rights. The draft resolution underscores the importance of collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the private sector and international organizations, to amplify the impact of efforts to address the drug problem. The draft resolution also highlights the role of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, a unique regional counter-narcotics centre in Central Asia.

Through unified resolve, cooperation and determination, the Central Asian States are committed to forging effective international cooperation to tackle those serious challenges. Once adopted by the General Assembly, the draft resolution will undoubtedly strengthen global collaboration and have a positive impact on the United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime programmes and activities in the region. We hope it will also serve as a deterrent to drug-related crimes, with the strong support of United Nations Member States.

I urge all Member States to support this draft resolution as a sign of solidarity with our joint efforts to effectively address and counter the drug problem in Central Asia, as a part of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach to the global drug problem.

Ms. Alomair (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would like to extend its thanks to the President for convening this general discussion on peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia. I also would like to thank Uzbekistan for the efforts made in submitting draft resolution A/78/L.68, entitled “Central Asia’s unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges”. We thank it also for facilitating constructive negotiations on this very important topic.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is pleased to join the co-sponsors of the draft resolution. We also stress the importance that we attach to taking necessary national measures to address the drug problem in line with our efforts to implement the commitments enshrined in international treaties and conventions on drug control.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports all efforts aimed at drug control. Our drug control authorities take all necessary measures to implement prevention programmes in our society, including to protect both residents and nationals. We also implement a number of information campaigns to raise awareness among the youth to protect them from the scourge of drugs, alerting them to the many dangers drugs can cause. Our institutions conduct social, economic and medical research and studies and implement teacher training programmes to raise awareness about the dangers of drugs. We also participate in international and local conferences and implement mentorship programmes in various governmental institutions. Furthermore, we have established a number of hospitals for rehabilitation, treatment and follow-up to address drug addiction. We also have made efforts to instil Islamic values in children by raising awareness within schools throughout the country about the drug problem among students.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is combating the spread of drugs at the international and regional levels. We are also keen to bolster international

cooperation and coordination with various drug control authorities in many countries. We have stepped up our participation in the meetings and activities of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to leverage best practices in prevention, treatment, training and medical research on the abuse of psychotropic substances and drugs. We have also signed an array of conventions, including the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

In conclusion, we affirm our commitment to strengthening multilateral action aimed at increasing international cooperation to address common challenges and to making the necessary contributions in order to build a more peaceful, equitable and promising world for our peoples and future generations.

Mr. Wang Zixu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since the adoption of resolution 76/299 declaring Central Asia a zone of peace, trust and cooperation, Central Asian countries have strengthened their communication and cooperation with neighbouring countries and the United Nations system and have made unremitting efforts to prevent conflicts and instability, enhance mutual trust and cooperation, and address common challenges, fully demonstrating their firm determination and solemn commitment to maintaining peace and stability and achieving common development. China fully supports the establishment of a zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia and stands ready to work with all parties to contribute to the promotion of peace, development and cooperation in the region.

For a long time, drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime have continued to undermine peace and stability in Central Asia and have posed a serious obstacle to the health and well-being of the people of Central Asia and to the achievement of sustainable development. Draft resolution A/78/L.68 on Central Asia’s unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges, submitted by Central Asian countries, represents a zero-tolerance approach to the drug problem and the determination to vigorously counter drug-related challenges. It will help the international community to enhance its understanding of the drug problem in Central Asia and provide an opportunity for all parties to work together, based on the principle

of shared responsibility, to jointly address the global drug problem.

China fully supports and has co-sponsored the draft resolution. China is ready to continue to strengthen counter-drug cooperation with Central Asian countries within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia so as to contribute to achieving a drug-free Central Asia.

At a time when international peace, security and development are facing multiple challenges, a stable, developing and prosperous Central Asia is in the common interests of the world. China is ready to work with Central Asian countries to expand comprehensive cooperation, including on counter-narcotics; to foster a closer community of common future between China and Central Asia; to promote a zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia; and to make new contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region and the world.

Ms. Rajandran (Singapore): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate.

Singapore is vulnerable to the scourge of drugs. We are a small and densely populated city-State near major drug production centres. In 2022 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported that East and Southeast Asia are literally swimming in methamphetamine. In 2022 alone, 151 tons of methamphetamine were seized in the region. We are also a target country for the drugs flooding this region. We therefore take the world drug problem seriously and remain firmly committed to tackling this threat in close partnership with the international community. That is why we intend to join the consensus on this new draft resolution, entitled “Central Asia’s unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges”, and are proud co-sponsors of it. We support the intention of the Central Asian countries to draw attention to the world drug problem that has destroyed the lives of so many people globally.

Singapore strongly believes that any resolution on effectively addressing and countering drug-related challenges should focus, first and foremost, on dealing with the harms that drug abuse and trafficking inflict on individuals, families and societies. We therefore support the references to the determination of Central Asian countries to promote a society free of drug abuse so as to ensure that all people can live

in health, dignity, peace, security and prosperity. This echoes the long-standing commitment by the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to achieve a vision of a drug-free ASEAN. We also support the explicit recognition in the text that misperceptions of drug-related risks could lead to increased or more harmful illicit drug use. We appreciate the delicate balance struck by the facilitator, Uzbekistan, in highlighting the importance of public safety, criminal justice and law enforcement cooperation when addressing and countering drug-related challenges, alongside other important elements, such as public health.

This draft resolution is an opportunity for the international community to recognize that the world drug problem is not unique to any one region alone. At the same time, we are acutely aware that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to effectively countering the world drug problem. We must acknowledge and respect the unique circumstances of each country and region, even as we work collectively to address common drug-related challenges. As we look ahead to the submission of the omnibus resolution on addressing and countering the world drug problem in the Third Committee this year, Singapore would like to place on record its position that any discussion on this issue should focus on areas of agreement between States, rather than the narrow interests of some. We sincerely hope that all discussions on international drug control will return to the goal of achieving consensus.

Ms. Ahangari (Azerbaijan): The Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes the convening of today’s debate on the agenda item entitled “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”, which once again demonstrates continued interest to deliberate on the topics of maintaining peace and strengthening security in the region. The countries of Central Asia, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan play an important role in ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the region, as well as in promoting regional and international cooperation in all areas, such as science, technology, education, the environment, trade, transport and culture. We commend the increasing bilateral and regional cooperation among the countries of the region towards creating a prosperous Central Asia. The submission of draft resolution A/78/L.68 by Uzbekistan, on behalf of the regional countries, is a vivid example to that end. We applaud the concerted and sustained determination

of the Central Asian countries to respond to drug-related challenges and to create a society free of drug abuse, as well as contribute to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem.

The Republic of Azerbaijan enjoys friendly relations and constructive cooperation with all five countries of Central Asia. We have close engagement in many areas, including transport, logistics, energy, agriculture and tourism, and we attach great importance to further enhancing our cooperation. Azerbaijan proudly co-sponsors the draft resolution and firmly believes that it will advance regional collaboration to tackle the world drug problem.

Mr. Madinger (United States of America): The United States congratulates the sponsor for the consensus adoption of draft resolution A/78/L.68. We echo the concerns raised in the fifteenth preambular paragraph about the serious challenges to the States of Central Asia posed by illicit trafficking of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamines. As stated in operative paragraph 4, regional and international cooperation and the development of strategic initiatives and action plans are important components of addressing synthetic drugs and their precursors. In line with operative paragraph 8, the United States encourages Member States to promote cooperation with, and technical assistance to, States in the region in order to respond to the rising threat of synthetic drugs. We believe, and evidence shows, that the most effective approach is a balanced one that prioritizes treatment, prevention, harm reduction and recovery support, as well as law enforcement responses, and that respects human rights. One avenue to expand cooperation on this issue is through the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, which now includes participation from 152 Governments and 15 international organizations. We encourage all interested countries to join the United States in this global effort.

The United States reiterates its full support for Vienna's role as the locus for international drug policy discussion. New York must remain respectful of Vienna's leading role and ensure its policies do not get ahead of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. We urge all Member States to take full advantage of the convening power and expertise of the Commission to address all aspects of the world drug problem.

Mr. Tanriöver (Türkiye): We would like to thank Uzbekistan for introducing this timely draft resolution and facilitating its negotiations in a much appreciated, constructive and cooperative manner.

Türkiye reaffirms its strong commitment to our common efforts and to international cooperation in countering the world drug problem. The world drug problem is a priority issue that needs to be addressed comprehensively. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is the leading entity for international drug policies and should continue to play its independent and impartial role and steer our endeavours. We are fully committed to the three international drug control conventions and would like to see their full and universal implementation. In that way, Türkiye supports the commitment of Central Asian States to fully comply with their obligations, achieve their goals and objectives, and implement the provisions of the three international drug control conventions.

Türkiye occupies a vital position on the Balkan route, which has historically been the most heavily used transit route for opiate trafficking originating in Central Asia. Türkiye has also been one of the leading countries for seizing opiates and methamphetamine.

Although there was a significant drop in the cultivation and production of opiates in the region recently, the drug problem in Central Asia persists, and new threats are emerging. Due to our geographical position, Türkiye attaches particular importance to the commitments of the Central Asian Republics to improve national, regional and international cooperation on drug control.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Türkiye fully supports the aspirations of the Central Asian Republics to actively promote a society free of drug abuse and is happy to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Bulgaru (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank the coordinators of negotiations on draft resolution A/78/L.68, on countering narcotics in Central Asia — namely, the representatives of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. We thank them for their efforts to seek and find mutually acceptable compromises and solutions.

The Russian delegation also welcomes the constructive approach of the participants in consultations. Our hope is that this approach will

also be a good foundation for reaching consensus on other counter-narcotics initiatives. Our support for the draft resolution reflects Russia's solidarity with the aspiration of Central Asian States to build a society free of narcotics, and that remains relevant not just for that region, but also for other countries.

The draft resolution encompasses a broad range of areas of cooperation on the issue of narcotics at the regional level. We welcome the decisiveness of Central Asian States to respect the demands of the three international drug control conventions. They remain the bedrock of the modern-day international system for drug control. We attach great importance to strengthening cooperation in the region, including with regard to law enforcement. We believe that maintaining focus on and providing support for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on that issue is of critical importance.

In the light of current threats and challenges, it is particularly important to counter the illicit flow of narcotics entering the region from abroad. We wish colleagues every success in countering this serious threat, and we hope to continue our fruitful counter-narcotics cooperation.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.68.

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

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

Ms. Sharma (Secretariat): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/78/L.68, and in addition to the delegations listed on the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution: Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, China, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Morocco, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/78/L.68, entitled "Central

Asia's unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft resolution A/78/L.68?

Draft resolution A/78/L.68 was adopted (resolution 78/284).

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

Mr. Reza Bautista (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico would like to thank the Central Asian delegations for introducing resolution 78/284, entitled "Central Asia's unified resolve and cooperation to effectively address and counter drug-related challenges".

My delegation acknowledges and values the efforts of the facilitators to incorporate the different positions of the Member States. In that respect, we also welcome the inclusion of significant elements, such as acknowledging the importance of strategies based on scientific evidence, as well as the integration of a gender perspective, public health and human rights in order to tackle drug-related challenges. Those actions are crucial to creating an environment in which everyone can live healthy lives with dignity and security.

While we appreciate the importance of cooperation and regional initiatives in addressing and countering drug-related challenges, we are concerned by the possible fragmentation that could result from the regionalization of those discussions in the General Assembly. We believe that our commitments in this forum should be directed towards comprehensive and coordinated efforts in this area. That is why, when we speak of collective efforts within the General Assembly, we advocate moving beyond the narrative of a drug-free society to comprehensive strategies that reflect the complexity and reality of the global drug issue — strategies with a gender perspective, as mentioned in the resolution, and a human rights perspective, based on evidence, that address the root causes of the problem and lead to sustainable development, always from a perspective that places the individual at the centre of policies and that includes prevention and treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration as central pillars.

We also recognize that the different contexts around the world require different strategies and methods in

order to address drug-related challenges. In that respect, we support comprehensive strategies that acknowledge the diverse contexts and needs of the Member States, thus promoting sustainable and equitable solutions that respect the dignity and rights of all people involved.

I would like to conclude by once again thanking the delegations of Central Asia for their dedication to this very important effort, while reaffirming Mexico's commitment to addressing and countering the global drug problem through a comprehensive and complementary approach, which harmonizes crime prevention and policies on criminal justice with those directed towards achieving sustainable development and promoting human rights and public health.

Mr. Lagatie (Belgium): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, as well as San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The EU attaches great importance to a human rights-based approach to the world drug situation. We regret that this aspect is not fully reflected in resolution 78/284, as the Human Rights Council and its relevant resolutions are not acknowledged at all. Furthermore, the European Union expresses its unwavering commitment and support to the comprehensive mandate of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is closely linked to human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms and international drug conventions. We acknowledge the principal role of UNODC in monitoring the situation, developing strategies on international drug control and recommending measures to address the problem. That is complemented by the important work of other relevant United Nations entities such as UN-Women, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization, as well as civil society, including affected communities. We regret that not all relevant bodies, such as UN-Women and OHCHR, were mentioned in the resolution at hand.

That concern should be shared by all United Nations Member States. The most recent political declaration by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the 2024 midterm review, adopted at the sixty-seventh session just this March, was agreed by all of

us as a way forward for cooperation at all levels. It shows a clear commitment to fostering comprehensive, balanced, integrated, multidisciplinary and scientific evidence-based policies and initiatives to promote better implementation of all international drug policy commitments, placing the health, well-being, human rights, public security and safety of all members of society, in particular those most affected by, or at risk of, illicit drug-related activities, at the centre of our efforts.

The reference to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs outcome document links to concerns of a more procedural nature, as we insist that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, with its mandate to review and analyse the global drug situation, considering supply and demand reduction, must remain the main forum for drug-related resolutions.

We regret that this resolution was not submitted at the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, the forum where this text should have been addressed. Although the principal role of the Commission is mentioned in the resolution, which we appreciate, we view the shift of relevant processes away from the Commission to the plenary of the General Assembly as problematic. It results in a potential undermining of the Commission through undesired duplications and an increased risk of diverging wording and approaches. The latter concern is further exacerbated by the regional approach taken by the resolution at hand. Nevertheless, we thank facilitator Uzbekistan for their efforts during the negotiations and for accommodating a number of our main concerns, which allowed the European Union to join the consensus on the text.

Ms. Solano Ramírez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia reiterates its support for the regional efforts made in Central Asia in order to tackle the various drug-related challenges. Likewise, we would like to thank the sponsors for accommodating a few of the concerns expressed within the framework of the negotiations.

My delegation points out the importance of strengthening international cooperation, given the global drug situation, with the premise that it is not possible, timely or effective to address the issue through a security-based, isolated or fragmented approach. Colombia's experience shows that in order to tackle drug-related issues, it is important to take measures which consider the broadly documented failures of the

past in order to overcome the harmful effects of the drug war.

Furthermore, Colombia believes that is important to recognize the progress made in the General Assembly and in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, including through resolutions adopted through a vote. We note that the text could have been further enhanced on the topics of human rights, gender and environmental protection, as well as through the recognition of the needs and aspirations of social groups in vulnerable situations. That only reaffirms the need to move forward with a critical review of the international drug control system from a non-punitive perspective based on scientific evidence.

Colombia will continue to play an active and constructive role in the multilateral discussions on this issue, with a view to placing people at the centre of any drug-related policy and enhancing the perspective of public health and rehabilitation, respect for human rights, alternative development, access to controlled substances, as well as harm and risk reduction.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland wishes to thank Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for having facilitated the negotiations on this resolution. We are grateful for the willingness and commitment of Central Asian countries to jointly overcome drug-related challenges in the region. We appreciate the efforts of the principal group, under the stewardship of Uzbekistan, to finding compromise in order to finally reach an agreement on the text. Switzerland was proactively engaged during the negotiations and, in a spirit of compromise, joined the consensus.

Nonetheless, we note that the resolution concerns a specific region and its scope cannot be global. We also wish to clarify our position on certain aspects of the text. Specifically, we continue to disassociate ourselves from the concept of a society free of drug abuse, which is mentioned in the seventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 1. In our view, that concept is outdated, unrealistic and counterproductive. It is

also liable, whether intentionally or not, to continue to fuel the social stigma often faced by people who suffer from issues related to the consumption of drugs. Furthermore, at times this concept is used to justify abuses and to violate the rights of certain individuals and groups.

Switzerland remains firmly committed to pragmatic, evidence-based anti-drug policies focused on human rights and public health that address not only drug consumption, but also the social, economic and health factors that underlie drug-related issues. We will continue to promote policies such as prevention, treatment, risk reduction, law enforcement and international cooperation.

Mr. Mead (Canada): At the outset, Canada would like to thank Uzbekistan and the countries of Central Asia for their efforts on this important issue.

Canada would like to highlight its concerns, at the same time, regarding the context in which the resolution was developed. Developing stand-alone regional resolutions in the General Assembly raises a number of questions and risks related to global efforts to address drug-related discussions underway in other United Nations bodies, particularly the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In order to ensure appropriate expertise and avoid fragmentation and divergence, discussions and resolutions related to international drug policy are best proposed and negotiated in Vienna.

We firmly advocate for drug policy that is evidence-based, rooted in human rights and gender-responsive. We reaffirm the necessity to more prominently highlight both gender and human rights perspectives, including harm-reduction approaches, recognizing their crucial importance in shaping effective drug policies.

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

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 64.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.