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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8233rd meeting
Saturday, 14 April 2018, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

The situation in the Middle East

18-10891 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I have been following closely the reports of air strikes in Syria conducted by the United States, France and United Kingdom. Last night at 10 p.m. New York time, the United States President announced the beginning of air strikes with the participation of France and the United Kingdom, indicating they were targeting the chemical-weapons capabilities of the Syrian Government to deter their future use. The statement was followed by announcements from Prime Minister May and President Macron.

The air strikes were reportedly limited to three military locations inside Syria. The first targets included the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre at Al-Mazzah airport in Damascus, the second an alleged chemical-weapons storage facility west of Homs and the third an alleged chemical-weapons equipment storage site and command post, also near Homs. The Syrian Government announced surface-to-air missile responsive activity. Both United States and Russian sources indicated there were no civilian casualties. However, the United Nations is unable to independently verify the details of all those reports.

As Secretary-General of the United Nations, it is my duty to remind Member States that there is an obligation, particularly when dealing with matters of peace and security, to act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations, and with international law in general. The Charter is very clear on these issues.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. I call on the members of the Security Council to unite and exercise that responsibility, and I urge all members to show restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any act that could escalate matters and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people. As I did yesterday (see S/PV.8231), I stress the importance of preventing the situation from spiralling out of control.

Any use of chemical weapons is abhorrent, and the suffering it causes is horrendous. I have repeatedly expressed my deep disappointment that the Security Council has failed to agree on a dedicated mechanism for ensuring effective accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. I urge the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and fill that gap, and I will continue to engage with Member States to help to achieve that objective. A lack of accountability emboldens those who use such weapons by providing them with the reassurance of impunity, and that in turn further weakens the norm proscribing the use of chemical weapons, as well as undermining the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as a whole.

The seriousness of the recent allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma requires a thorough investigation using impartial, independent and professional expertise. I reaffirm my full support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in undertaking the required investigation. The team is already in Syria. I am informed that its operations plan for visiting the site is complete and that the Mission is ready to go. I am confident it will have full access, without any restrictions or impediments to its performance of its activities.

To repeat what I said yesterday, Syria represents the most serious threat to international peace and security in the world today. In Syria we see confrontations and proxy wars involving several national armies, a number of armed opposition groups, many national and international militias, foreign fighters from all over the world and various terrorist organizations. From the beginning, we have witnessed systematic violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international law in general, in utter disregard of the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. For eight long years, the people of Syria have endured suffering upon suffering. They have lived

through a litany of horrors, atrocity crimes, sieges, starvation, indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, the use of chemical weapons, forced displacement, sexual violence, torture, detention and enforced disappearances. The list goes on.

At this critical juncture, I call on all States Members to act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including the norms against chemical weapons. If the law is ignored, it is undermined. There can be no military solution to the crisis. The solution must be political, and we must find ways to make real progress towards a genuine and credible political solution that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity and freedom, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). I have asked my Special Envoy to come to New York as soon as possible to consult with me on the most effective way to accelerate the political process.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his valuable briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia has called this emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss the aggressive actions of the United States and its allies against Syria. This is now our fifth meeting on the subject in a week.

President Putin of the Russian Federation made a special statement today.

> "On 14 April, the United States, with the support of its allies, launched an air strike on military and civilian infrastructure targets in the Syrian Arab Republic. An act of aggression against a sovereign State on the front lines in the fight against terrorism was committed without permission from the Security Council and in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law. Just as it did a year ago, when it attacked Syria's Al-Shayrat airbase in Syria, the United States took a staged use of toxic substances against civilians as a pretext, this time in Douma, outside Damascus. Having visited the site of the alleged incident, Russian military experts found no traces of chlorine or any other toxic agent. Not a single local resident could confirm that such an attack had occurred.
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> "The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has sent experts to Syria to investigate all the circumstances. However, a group of Western countries cynically ignored this and took military action without waiting for the results of the investigation.
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> "Russia vehemently condemns this attack on Syria, where Russian military personnel are helping the legitimate Government to combat terrorism.
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> "The actions of the United States are making the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Syria even worse, inflicting suffering on civilians, for all intents and purposes enabling the terrorists who have been tormenting the Syrian people for seven years, and producing yet another wave of refugees fleeing the country and the region in general. The current escalation of the Syrian situation is having a destructive effect on the entire system of international relations. History will have the last word, and it has already revealed the heavy responsibility that Washington bears for the carnage in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya."

Russia has done everything it could to persuade the United States and its allies to abandon their militaristic plans threatening a new round of violence in Syria and destabilization in the Middle East. Today, and at the Council meeting we called yesterday (see S/PV.8231), the Secretary-General expressed his concern about how events are developing. Washington, London and Paris, however, preferred to let the calls for sanity go unheard.

The United States and its allies continue to demonstrate a flagrant disregard for international law, although as permanent members of the Security Council they have a special duty to uphold the provisions of the Charter. It was a disgrace to hear an article of the United States Constitution cited as justification of this aggression. We respect the right of every State to honour its own fundamental law. But it is high time that Washington learned that it is the Charter of the United Nations that governs the international code of conduct on the use of force. It will be interesting to see how the peoples of Great Britain and France react to the fact that their leaders are participating in unlawful military ventures that invoke the United States Constitution.

These three countries constantly lean towards neocolonialism. They scorn the Charter and the Security Council, which they attempt, shamelessly, to use for their own unscrupulous purposes. They do no serious

work in the Council. They refuse to consult with us, while falsely assuring everyone of the opposite. They are undermining the Council's authority.

The alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian city of Douma has been cited as the excuse for this aggression. After an inspection by our specialists, Russia's representatives stated unequivocally that no such incident took place. Moreover, people were found to have taken part in staging the incident, which was inspired and organized by foreign intelligence services.

After the matter emerged, the Syrian authorities immediately invited experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to try to establish all the circumstances through a field mission to Douma. The visa formalities were dealt with quickly and security guarantees given. As the air strikes began, the specialists were already in Syria and preparing to begin their work.

I would like to remind Council members and everyone else that on 10 April (see S/PV.8228), when our draft resolution (S/2018/322) on ensuring the security of the work of the OPCW's special mission was blocked, we were assured that there was no need for such a document. They said that no additional effort on the part of the Security Council was necessary to ensure that the mission could reach Douma and conduct an investigation of the chemical incident. Now, however, we can see that we were absolutely right.

Yesterday, some of our colleagues — some out of naivety and others out of cynicism — told us that this situation had allegedly arisen owing to the lack of an independent investigative mechanism. The aggression today has shown, as we said, that this had nothing whatever to do with it. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mission (JIM) was in place during last year's attack on the Al-Shayrat airbase, but that did not stop the United States from launching a missile attack. After that, the JIM spent six months tailoring its conclusions to justify the strike. We have said over and over again that they do not need any investigations. They did not need them then and they do not need them now. The organizers of the aggression did not even wait for the international organization that is authorized to establish the basic facts to do so. Apparently they had established and instantly identified the perpetrators, after disseminating rumours about them through social networks with the help of the militias they sponsor and the non-governmental organizations that are their clients. This was backed up by mythical secret intelligence. Their masks — or rather the White Helmets — have come off once again.

We have become accustomed to the fact that their efforts to achieve their dubious geopolitical aims, the aggressor countries deliberately blame the so-called Assad regime for every evil. There has been a trend recently to shift the blame onto Russia, which, as they tell it, has been unable to restrain Syria's so-called dictator. All of this goes according to a tried-and-true formula, whereby a provocation results in a false accusation, which results in a false verdict, which results in punishment. Is that how these people want to conduct international affairs? This is hooliganism in international relations, and not on a petty scale, given that we are talking about the actions of key nuclear Powers.

Several missiles were aimed at the research centre facilities in Barzeh and Jamraya. There have been two recent OPCW inspections there with unrestricted access to their entire premises. The specialists found no trace of activities that would contravene the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria's scientific research institutions are used for strictly peaceful activities aimed at improving the efficiency of the national economy. Do they want Syria to have no national economy left at all? Do they want to kick this country — only a few years ago one of the most developed in the Middle East — back into the Stone Age? Do they want to finish whatever their sanctions have not yet accomplished? And yet they still contrive false breast-beating about the sufferings of ordinary Syrians. But they have no interest in ordinary Syrians, who are sick of war and glad about the restoration of the legitimate authorities in the liberated territories. Their aggressive actions merely worsen the humanitarian situation that they claim to care about so deeply. They could end the conflict in Syria in the space of 24 hours. All that is needed is for Washington, London and Paris to give the order to their tame terrorists to stop fighting the legitimate authorities and their own people.

The attacks were aimed at Syrian military airfields that are used for operations against terrorist organizations, a highly original contribution to the fight against international terrorism, which, as Washington never tires of saying, is the sole reason for its military presence in Syria, something that we are extremely doubtful about. Rather, it is becoming increasingly clear that those in the West who hide

behind humanitarian rhetoric and try to justify their military presence in Syria based on the need to defeat the jihadists are in fact acting in concert with them to dismember the country, a design confirmed by the categorical refusal of the United States and its allies to assist in the restoration of the areas of Syria that have been liberated by Government forces.

Their aggression is a powerful blow and a threat to the prospects for continuing the political process under the auspices of the United Nations, which, despite the real difficulties, is moving forward, albeit at varying speed. Why do they bother endlessly pinning all their hopes on the Geneva process when they themselves are driving it straight towards yet another crisis? We urge the United States and its allies to immediately halt their acts of aggression against Syria and refrain from them going forward.

We have proposed a brief draft resolution for the Council's attention on which we request that a vote be held at the end of this meeting. We appeal to the members of the Security Council. Now is not the time to evade responsibility. The world is watching. Stand up for our principles.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today.

This is the fifth Security Council meeting in the past week in which we have addressed the situation in Syria. A week has gone by in which we have talked. We have talked about the victims in Douma. We have talked about the Al-Assad regime and its patrons, Russia and Iran. We have spent a week talking about the unique horror of chemical weapons. The time for talk ended last night. We are here today because three permanent members of the Security Council acted. The United Kingdom, France, and the United States acted not in revenge, not in punishment and not in a symbolic show of force. We acted to deter the future use of chemical weapons by holding the Syrian regime responsible for its crimes against humanity.

We can all see that a Russian disinformation campaign is in full force this morning, but Russia's desperate attempts at deflection cannot change the facts. A large body of information indicates that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April. There is clear information demonstrating Al-Assad's culpability. The pictures of dead children were not fake news; they were the result of the Syrian regime's barbaric inhumanity. And they were the result of the regime's and Russia's failure to live up to their international commitments to remove all chemical weapons from Syria. The United States, France and the United Kingdom acted after careful evaluation of those facts. The targets we selected were at the heart of the Syrian regime's illegal chemical-weapon programme. The strikes were carefully planned to minimize civilian casualties. The responses were justified, legitimate and proportionate. The United States and its allies did everything they could to use the tools of diplomacy to get rid of Al-Assad's arsenal of chemical weapons.

We did not give diplomacy just one chance. We gave it chance after chance. Six times. That is how many times Russia vetoed Security Council resolutions to address chemical weapons in Syria. Our efforts go back even further. In 2013, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013), requiring the Al-Assad regime to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons. Syria committed to abiding by the Chemical Weapons Convention, meaning that it could no longer have chemical weapons on its soil. President Putin said that Russia would guarantee that Syria complied. We hoped that this diplomacy would succeed in putting an end to the horror of chemical attacks in Syria, but as we have seen from the past year, that did not happen.

While Russia was busy protecting the regime, Al-Assad took notice. The regime knew that it could act with impunity, and it did. In November, Russia used its veto to kill the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, the main tool we had to figure out who used chemical weapons in Syria. Just as Russia was using its veto (see S/PV.8107), the Al-Assad regime used sarin, leading to dozens of injuries and deaths. Russia's veto was the green light for the Al-Assad regime to use these most barbaric weapons against the Syrian people, in complete violation of international law. The United States and our allies were not going to let that stand. Chemical weapons are a threat to us all. They are a unique threat — a type of weapon so evil that the international community agreed that they must be banned.

We cannot stand by and let Russia trash every international norm that we stand for, and allow the use of chemical weapons to go unanswered. Just as the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons last weekend was not an isolated incident, our response is part of a new course charted last year to deter future use of chemical weapons. Our Syrian strategy has not changed.

However, the Syrian regime has forced us to take action based on its repeated use of chemical weapons.

Since the April 2017 chemical attack at Khan Shaykhoun, the United States has imposed hundreds of sanctions on individuals and entities involved in chemical-weapons use in Syria and North Korea. We have designated entities in Asia, the Middle East and Africa that have facilitated chemical-weapons proliferation. We have revoked the visas of Russian intelligence officers in response to the chemical attack in Salisbury. We will continue to seek out and call out anyone who uses and anyone who aids in the use of chemical weapons.

With yesterday's military action, our message was crystal clear. The United States of America will not allow the Al-Assad regime to continue to use chemical weapons. Last night, we obliterated the major research facility that it used to assemble weapons of mass murder. I spoke to the President this morning, and he said that if the Syrian regime should use this poison gas again, the United States is locked and loaded. When our President draws a red line, our President enforces the red line.

The United States is deeply grateful to the United Kingdom and France for their part in the coalition to defend the prohibition of chemical weapons. We worked in lock step; we were in complete agreement. Last night, our great friends and indispensable allies shouldered a burden that benefits all of us. The civilized world owes them its thanks. In the weeks and months to come, the Security Council should take time to reflect on its role in defending the international rule of law. The Security Council has failed in its duty to hold those who use chemical weapons to account. That failure is largely due to Russian obstruction. We call on Russia to take a hard look at the company it keeps, live up to its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Council, and defend the actual principles the United Nations was meant to promote.

Last night, we successfully hit the heart of Syria's chemical weapons enterprise, and because of these actions we are confident that we have crippled Syria's chemical weapons programme. We are prepared to sustain this pressure if the Syrian regime is foolish enough to test our will.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): These are uncertain times and today we deal with exceptional circumstance. Acting with our American and French allies, in the early hours of this morning the United Kingdom conducted coordinated, targeted and precise strikes to degrade Al-Assad's chemical weapons capability and deter their future use. The British Royal Air Force launched Storm Shadow missiles at a military facility some 15 miles west of Homs, where the regime is assessed to keep chemical weapons in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. A full assessment has not yet been completed, but we believe that the strikes to have been successful. Furthermore, none of the British, United States or French aircraft or missiles involved in this operation were successfully engaged by Syrian air defences, and there is also no indication that Russian air defence systems were employed.

Our action was a limited, targeted and effective strike. There were clear boundaries that expressly sought to avoid escalation, and we did everything possible, including rigorous planning, before any action was undertaken to ensure that we mitigated and minimized the impact on civilians. Together, our action will significantly degrade the Syrian regime's ability to research, develop and deploy chemical weapons and deter their future use.

The United Kingdom Prime Minister has said that we are clear about who is responsible for the atrocity of the use of chemical weapons. A significant body of information, including intelligence, indicates that the Syrian regime is responsible for the attack we saw last Saturday. Some of the evidence that leads us to this conclusion is as follows.

There are open source accounts alleging that a barrel bomb was used to deliver the chemicals. Multiple open source reports claim that a regime helicopter was observed above the city of Douma on the evening of 7 April. The opposition does not operate helicopters or use barrel bombs. And reliable intelligence indicates that Syrian military officials coordinated what appears to be the use of chlorine in Douma on 7 April. No other group could have carried out this attack. Indeed, Da'esh, for example, does not even have a presence in Douma.

The Syrian regime has been killing its own people for seven years. Its use of chemical weapons, which has exacerbated the human suffering, is a serious crime of international concern as a breach of the customary international law prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and that amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity. Any State is permitted under international law, on an exceptional basis, to

take measures in order to alleviate overwhelming humanitarian suffering. The legal basis for the use of force for the United Kingdom is humanitarian intervention, which requires that three conditions to be met.

First, there must be convincing evidence, generally accepted by the international community as a whole, of extreme humanitarian distress on a large scale, requiring immediate and urgent relief. I think that the debates in the Council and the briefings we have had from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and others have proved that. Secondly, it must be objectively clear that there is no practicable alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved. I think that the vetoes have shown us that. Thirdly, the proposed use of force must be necessary and proportionate to the aim of relief of humanitarian suffering. It must be strictly limited in time and in scope to this aim. I think we have heard both in my intervention in Ambassador Haley's how that has also been met.

The history of the Syrian conflict is a litany of threats to peace and violations of international law. The Security Council has met 113 times since the Syrian war started. It was therefore not for want of international diplomatic effort that we find ourselves in this position today.

After a pattern of chemical-weapons use since the outbreak of the conflict, Al-Assad defied the international community in 2013 by launching a sarin gas attack on eastern Ghouta, which left more than 800 people dead. Despite the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) and despite four years of patient engagement, Syria continues to use chemical weapons against its people and has failed to answer a long list of serious questions. The only conclusion we can reach is that Syria has not declared or destroyed all of its chemical weapons, despite its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is not assertion on our part but a matter of record, and I draw the Russian Ambassador's attention to his points about Barazan and Jimrya. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) still has unanswered questions and discrepancies. He knows this. We all know this. The Council was briefed by the OPCW Director-General.

Resolution 2118 (2013) decides in the event of non-compliance to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter. Yet on 28 February 2017, when the United Kingdom together with France, proposed a draft resolution (S/2017/172) taking measures under Chapter VII short of the use of force, Russia vetoed (see S/PV.7893). The very least the Security Council should have been able to do was to follow up on the findings of the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism by extending its mandate. Yet four times Russia vetoed different proposals from different Council Members to do just that.

The Syrian regime and it supporters are responsible for the gravest violations of international humanitarian law in modern history. They have used indiscriminate weapons, notably barrel bombs and cluster munitions, against civilians, and they have deliberately targeted medical facilities and schools, as well as humanitarian personnel and civilian objects. They have used sieges and starvation as methods of warfare, accompanied by attacks on opposition-held civilian areas. The regime has persistently obstructed humanitarian aid and medical evacuations. Tens of thousands of people have been illegally detained, tortured and executed by the regime. This is one of the most serious challenges to the international non-proliferation regime we have ever faced. A State party has violated the Chemical Weapons Convention, it has defied the Security Council, and it has broken international law.

Repeated attempts over several years to hold them to account have been met with Russian obstruction and resistance. In the Security Council, we have repeatedly attempted to overcome this obstruction without success. We are faced with a litany of violations, no sense of guilt, no sense of regret, no sense of responsibility, a shameful record, wrapped in a mix of denial, deceit and disinformation.

I would invite those like the Russian Ambassador who speak about the Charter to consider the following. It is hard to believe that it is in line with the principles and purposes of the Charter to use or condone the use of chemical weapons, and in the United Kingdom's view it cannot be illegal to use force to prevent the killing of such numbers of innocent people. I will take no lessons in international law from Russia.

Despite all the foregoing, we would like to look forward. The United Kingdom, together with France and the United States, will continue to pursue a diplomatic resolution to the Syrian crisis. My French colleague will say more about our work in a few moments. We believe that it must comprise four elements.

First, Syria's chemical weapons programme must be ended and the chemical weapons stockpiles destroyed once and for all. Secondly, there must be an immediate cessation of hostilities and compliance with all Security Council resolutions, including those that mandate humanitarian access. Thirdly, the regime must return to the Geneva talks and agree to engage on the substantial agenda put forward by the United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. Fourthly and finally, there must be accountability for the use of chemical weapons and other war crimes in Syria.

The Secretary-General rightly highlighted the political process. We propose that, as we members of the Security Council will all be together next weekend in the retreat with the Secretary-General very kindly hosted by Sweden, we use that opportunity to reflect on next steps and the way back to the political process. And with our allies, we stand ready to work with all members of the Security Council towards this end.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): A week after the chemical massacre in Douma and a day after last night's strikes, I want to say again straight away to those who pretend to wonder that France has no doubt whatsoever about the responsibility of the Al-Assad regime in this attack. This morning we made public a notice comprising information collected by our intelligence services. We dismiss those who try once again to challenge what is obvious and to disguise the facts before the world.

For years now, Bashar Al-Assad, with the active support of his allies, has been devising a strategy of destruction designed to crush any opposition with contempt for the most basic principles of humanity and at the cost of the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Syria. We saw it in Aleppo, in Homs, in eastern Ghouta. For years, the Syrian regime has used the most terrifying weapons of destruction — chemical weapons — to massacre and terrorize its civilian population. We had another demonstration of this in Douma, as we had seen before in Khan Shaykhun, Sarmin, Telemens and Qaminas, where its responsibility was clearly established by the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). No one can say he or she did not know.

For years, the Syrian regime has systematically and repeatedly violated all its international obligations. The list of such violations is long; it is overwhelming. We all know them: violations of all international chemical-weapons obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Syria has been a party since 2013, and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits the use of such weapons against civilians; violations of the very foundations of international humanitarian law, namely, the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality; violations of successive Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015) and, by the same token, of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations; finally, the use of chemical weapons against civilian populations constitutes a war crime within the meaning of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. In August 2013, the Secretary-General even described the use of chemical weapons as a crime against humanity.

In view of the repeated and proven violations by the Damascus regime of all the rules on which our security is based, France has consistently called for strong action by the international community. We have made every effort to ensure that these horrors do not remain without consequences at the United Nations and the OPCW and that they are stopped. The Security Council had undertaken by successive resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015) to impose coercive measures within the meaning of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in the event of new violations. It has been prevented from acting in conformity with its commitments because of the vetoes systematically used by Russia. By making such systematic use of its veto in the Security Council, Russia has betrayed the commitment it made to the Council in 2013 to ensure the destruction of the Syrian chemical arsenal. The Security Council's blockade of the mass atrocities committed in Syria is a deadly and dangerous trap from which we must escape.

When it ordered the 7 April chemical attack, the Syrian regime knew exactly to what it was exposing itself. It wanted to once again test the international community's threshold of tolerance and it found it. In the face of this attack on the principles, values and rights that are the basis of United Nations action, silence is no longer a solution. We cannot tolerate the downplaying of the use of chemical weapons, which is an immediate danger to the Syrian people and to our collective security. We cannot let the deadly genie of proliferation out of its bottle. We had clearly warned Al-Assad's regime and its supporters that such a transgression would not remain without reaction. We have acted in

accordance with our role and responsibility. We have done so in a controlled, transparent framework, taking care to avoid any escalation with the actors present on the ground. The President of the Republic and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France have spoken on this subject.

Some who for years have flouted the most elementary rules of international law now assert that our action is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations. I would remind them that the Charter was not designed to protect criminals. Our action is fully in line with the objectives and values proclaimed from the outset by the Charter of the United Nations. The Organization's mission is "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained". This action was indeed necessary in order to address the repeated violations by the Syrian regime of its obligations — obligations stemming from the law, treaties and its own commitments.

Finally, our response was conceived within an proportionate framework, with precise objectives. The main research centre of the chemical weapons programme and two major production sites were hit. Through those objectives, Syria's capacity to develop, perfect and produce chemical weapons has been put out of commission. That was the only objective, and it has been achieved.

My country, which knew at first hand the devastating effects of chemical weapons during the First World War, will never again allow impunity for their use. We will never stop identifying those responsible, who must be brought to justice. That is the purpose of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched last January.

Allow me to stress this point: last night's strikes are a necessary response to the chemical massacres in Syria. They are a response in the service of law and our political strategy to put an end to the Syrian tragedy. To be more specific, we have four imperatives on the Syrian issue that are in the immediate interest of Syrians, but also in the interest of the entire international community, as the Secretary-General reminded us, and I want to thank him for his briefing. Let me recall those four imperatives.

First, the Syrian chemical-weapons programme must be dismantled in a verifiable and irreversible way. We must spare no effort to establish an international mechanism for establishing responsibility, to prevent impunity and to prevent any repeat attempts to the Syrian regime to use chemical.

Secondly, terrorism must be eradicated by permanently defeating Da'esh. That is a long-standing commitment that still requires genuine effort to ensure a definitive victory.

Thirdly, there must be a ceasefire throughout the Syrian territory and humanitarian access to the civilian populations, as required by Security Council resolutions. We need full and unhindered humanitarian access in order to help people in need, in accordance with resolution 2401 (2018). In particular, it is essential and urgent that humanitarian convoys safely reach eastern Ghouta on a daily basis.

Fourthly, we need a crisis-exit strategy, with a lasting political solution. We can sustainably resolve the Syrian crisis only through an inclusive political solution on the basis of the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). We have been calling for that for seven years. It has never been so urgent to implement it and to relaunch genuine negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to achieving a political transition in Syria.

Only that road map will allow us to finally emerge from the Syrian impasse. France is ready to tackle it, as of today, with all those who are ready to put all their efforts to that end. In that spirit, at the initiative of France and in line with President Emmanuel Macron's statement tonight, we will submit as soon as possible a draft resolution on those different aspects with our British and American partners.

Today I ask Russia, first and foremost, to call on the Damascus regime to enter into a plan for a negotiated solution so that the long-lasting suffering of Syrian civilians can finally be brought to an end.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Just yesterday we were gathered in this Chamber for a meeting on the situation in Syria, during which China made clear its position on the issue of Syria, expressed profound concern about the further escalation of the tensions in Syria and made a clarion call for a political solution to the issue of Syria (see S/PV.8231). I would like to restate the following.

China has consistently stood for the peaceful settlement of disputes and against the use of force in international relations. We advocate respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of all countries. Any unilateral military actions that circumvent the Security Council contravene the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, violate the basic norms enshrined in international law and those governing international relations, and would hamper the settlement of the Syrian issue with new compounding factors. We urge all the parties concerned to refrain from any actions that may lead to a further escalation of the situation, to return to the framework of international law and to resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation.

China believes a comprehensive, impartial and objective investigation of the suspected chemical-weapons attack in Syria is necessary in order to arrive at a reliable conclusion that can withstand the test of history. Until that happens, no party must prejudge the outcome.

There is no alternative to a political settlement in resolving the Syrian issue. The parties concerned in the international community should continue to support the role of the United Nations as the main mediator and should work together unremittingly towards a political settlement of the Syrian issue.

I would like to restate that China stands ready to continue its positive and constructive role in the efforts to achieve a political settlement of the Syrian issue in the interests of peace and stability in the Middle East and in the world at large.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan expresses its serious concern about the sharp escalation of the situation in Syria. We call on all parties to prevent further military escalation and take effective steps aimed at restoring confidence and establishing peace and ensuring security in the long-suffering land of Syria on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

We called yesterday and the day before yesterday, and every time when we have observed increasing tensions, in this Chamber for responsible action in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Who else, if not Council members, should show the world an example of compliance with the principles and provisions of the Charter?

We are telling others to strictly follow international law and order, but sadly, yesterday we witnessed a different example. Whatever action taken under whatever good pretext cannot and will not justify the military use of force. Violence carried out against violence will never bring about peace and stability. Kazakhstan's position has always been, and continues to be, that military action is the last resort, to be used only in cases approved by the Security Council. There was no approval by the Council of the military strikes that took place yesterday.

> "Humanity hoped that the twenty-first century would herald a new era of global cooperation. This, however, may turn out to be a mirage. Our world is once again in danger and the risks cannot be underestimated... The threat is a deadly war on a global scale... Our planet is now on the edge of a new cold war that could have devastating consequences for all humankind." (*S/2016/317, annex, p.2*)

That is an exact quote from the manifesto of my President, entitled "The World. The Twenty-First Century", of 31 March 2016. Just yesterday Secretary-General António Guterres confirmed, to our regret, that the Cold War is back with a vengeance (see S/PV.8231).

Kazakhstan appeals to the parties to adhere to both the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We think that the time has come for serious talks encouraging the United States and the Russian Federation, given their standing as the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group and their respective influence on the parties, to move actively in the direction of finding middle ground and a political settlement to the conflict in Syria. The United Nations has a vital role to play in convening those negotiations and helping the parties resolve their disputes.

My delegation is also extremely concerned about recent developments and the lack of unity among Security Council members with regard to the chemical attack in Syria. From its early days of independence, through a series of practical steps, Kazakhstan has consistently promoted peace initiatives in the international arena to achieve disarmament, non-proliferation and the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and strongly condemns their development, testing and use. I repeat: Kazakhstan strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons.

It is important to conduct a thorough, objective and impartial investigation into all aspects of the alleged chemical attack in Douma so as to enable the international community to render a fair verdict against the perpetrators, in full compliance with international law. The Government and other parties must thoroughly execute their obligations to comply with the relevant recommendations made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations by accepting designated personnel, while providing for and ensuring the security of the activities undertaken by such personnel.

We would like to remind the members of the Council that Kazakhstan's principled position is not only to condemn in the strongest terms the use of weapons of mass destruction by anyone, in particular against the civilian population, but also to resolve conflicts exclusively by peaceful means. President Nazarbayev stressed in his manifesto that the main tools for resolving disputes among States should be peaceful dialogue and constructive negotiations on the basis of equal responsibility for peace and security, mutual respect and non-inference in the domestic affairs of other States. Preventing the escalation of conflict and ending wars are the most challenging tasks; there are no other reasonable options. World leaders must treat such tasks as the highest priority on the global agenda. We must also respect the sovereignty of States Members of the United Nations and the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter.

We urgently need a political solution. Only a political, diplomatic approach, dialogue and confidence-building measures in the spirit of the Charter and Security Council documents on preventive diplomacy and sustaining peace can bring about proper results. We therefore call upon the international community to show political will to overcome differences and resume negotiations, in the belief that only a United Nations-led political transition in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) can end the Syrian conflict, which, in turn, can advance only if the Council is united.

There is great need to continue to support the aims of the Astana talks and further the Geneva negotiations in order to see positive results. All parties at the international, regional and Syrian levels should support an immediate ceasefire and seriously and objectively move forward without any preconditions within the framework of the International Syria Support Group, under the auspices of the United Nations Office in Geneva.

We believe that the Syrian people are capable of determining their own future. However, achieving their aspirations for democracy, reconstruction and stability is impossible without genuine international support to contain the negative impact of spoilers and to help Syrians combat terrorism and build their State on a firm and stable foundation. Kazakhstan has always stood for dialogue and the resolution of international conflicts. All parties must ensure that the situation does not further deteriorate. Military means will not work; only political solutions will succeed. My President warned that there will be no winners in any modern war, as everyone will be on the losing side. He proposed to work towards the total elimination of war and a world without conflict.

Finally, we again call upon all relevant parties to persist in diplomatic efforts, seek political solutions, engage in dialogue and support the United Nations as the main mediation channel. Kazakhstan is ready to work with all colleagues to preserve peace and security on the basis of mutual understanding, goodwill and determination to make the world a safer place.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Poland views the recent events in the context of repeated chemical-weapons attacks against Syria's civilian population as a consequence of the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators so far. The lack of an appropriate response encourages a greater number of attacks with the use of weapons that are both banned under international law and blatantly inhumane. In such circumstances the international community cannot remain passive. It should take all the necessary measures to prevent such attacks from being repeated in the future, in particular against a defenceless civilian population. At the same time, the competent international bodies should take decisions that will enable the perpetrators to be identified and brought to justice.

We fully understand the reasons behind the action taken last night by the United States, the United Kingdom and France against Syrian chemical-weapons capabilities. We support that action, as it is intended to deter chemical-weapons attacks against the people of Syria. Let me underline that it is the primary responsibility of the Security Council to set up an

investigative mechanism to examine the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In that context, we reiterate our disappointment with the politically motivated Russian veto on the proposal for establishing an independent, impartial investigative mechanism on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Poland will continue its international efforts aimed at the complete elimination of chemical weapons. The use of such weapons is unacceptable and should be prosecuted vigorously in every instance and location in which they are used. Poland calls for refraining from actions that could escalate the situation.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's important meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

The conflict in Syria is now in its eighth year. That is longer than the Second World War. President Al-Assad is responsible for one of the worst and most enduring humanitarian disasters of our time. From the beginning of the crisis, we have witnessed terrible violations and violence and a flagrant lack of respect for international law, in particular by Syrian Government forces. We must also never forget the atrocities committed by Da'esh. As the Secretary-General stated yesterday, we have witnessed

> "systematic violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international law tout court — in utter disregard for the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter".

Indeed, there are numerous and flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions, international protocols and conventions

Chemical weapons have been used repeatedly in Syria. The Joint Investigative Mechanism concluded that the Syrian authorities were responsible for four chemical-weapons attacks, and Da'esh for two. The use of such weapons is abhorrent, intolerable, a war crime and a crime against humanity. That is why, as has been noted here before, the international community banned their use in the international armed conflict more than a century ago. Subsequent developments have confirmed the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons as a norm of customary international law. We will spare no effort to end the use and proliferation of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors anywhere in the world. Those responsible for such crimes must be held accountable; there can be no further impunity.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility to act in response to threats to international peace and security. It is our joint responsibility to uphold the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons in armed conflict. It is our common legal and moral duty to defend the non-proliferation regimes that we have established and confirmed. That is best done through true multilateralism and broad international consensus. In that regard, we welcome the deployment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon's Fact-finding Mission to Syria and we look forward to its findings.

It is regrettable that the Council was unable to come together and agree on a timely, clear and unified response to the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria. We regret that Russia, again this week, blocked the Council from setting up a truly impartial and independent attribution mechanism. That has contributed to the situation in which we find ourselves now. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law and it constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Deterrence and prevention of their use is the concern of the entire international community. We therefore share the rage and anger and are appalled by the repeated use of such weapons in Syria. It is necessary to rid Syria of chemical weapons once and for all, and hold those responsible accountable. At the same time, as the Secretary-General said in his statement yesterday, there is an obligation, particularly when dealing with matters of peace and security, to act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations, and international law in general.

We are at a dangerous moment. We call for restraint and for avoiding any acts that could escalate, or further fuel, tensions. We need to avoid the situation spiralling out of control. Over the past few days, we have tried to ensure that all peaceful means to respond are exhausted. We worked tirelessly so that no stone was left unturned in efforts to find a way for the Council to shoulder its responsibility in accordance with the Charter. We have shared a proposal with Council members to achieve that objective by inviting the Secretary-General to come back to the Council with a proposal. In order to be successful, diplomacy needs to be backed by clear demands. The Secretary-General called on the Council to take action, but regrettably the Council could not unite. It was indeed a missed opportunity, but we stand ready to continue those efforts.

In the light of all that has now happened, it is more critical than ever to avoid an escalation and revert to the track of diplomacy for a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We reiterate our total support for the United Nations-led political process, which urgently needs to be reinvigorated, as well as the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and the full implementation of resolution 2401 (2018) for the cessation of hostilities. Humanitarian access can wait no longer. A sustainable political solution is the only way to end the suffering of the Syrian people. Let us all then rally around that objective. Let us redouble our efforts and put an end to the long, brutal and meaningless conflict once and for all.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing today. Both yesterday and today, he spoke of the litany horrors that the Syrian population has experienced in the past seven years, of which the chemical-weapons attacks are among the most gruesome. The world hardly needs reminding of the unspeakable suffering that countless Syrian men, women and children have endured. It is a suffering that comes at the hands of Al-Assad and his allies. The Syrian regime has left the world no doubt as to its willingness to unleash terror on its own population. The repeated use of chemical weapons counts as the most cynical expression of that campaign. Just a week ago, the world was yet again confronted with reports of chemical-weapons use — that time in Douma.

All the while, the Russian Federation has made clear to the world its readiness to stand by Al-Assad every step of the way. It has blocked draft resolutions in the Council that could have stopped the violence. I call upon all members of the Security Council to support a collective, meaningful response to the use of chemical weapons. But even if the Council fails to act, it should be clear to the world that the use of chemical weapons is never permissible. Against the background of past horrors and the unabated risk of recurrence, the response by France, the United Kingdom and the United States is understandable. The response was measured in targeting a limited number of military facilities that were used by the Syrian regime in the context of its illegal chemical-weapons arsenal. The action taken by those three countries made clear that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

Last night's response was aimed at reducing the capabilities to execute future chemical attacks. But do not let the Syrian regime and the Russian Federation think for a moment that we will waver in our pursuit of full accountability for the perpetrators of past chemical attacks. We will not settle for anything less than an independent, impartial attribution mechanism, so that the culprits of those heinous attacks can be identified and held accountable. We call on the Russian Federation to stop opposing that. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law and may constitute a war crime or crime against humanity. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly believes that the international community must fully uphold the standard that the use of chemical weapons is never permissible. Impunity cannot, and will not, prevail.

However, should the Council continue to suffer from the paralysis inflicted by a single permanent member, we must not forget that the United Nations is bigger than the Council alone. We have strong leadership at the top of the United Nations Organization, and we have a powerful General Assembly. Both have to consider all instruments to advance accountability for the use of chemical weapons. The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes every option to establish an independent and impartial mechanism, whether within the framework of the United Nations framework or of other relevant international organizations, as long as it results in a mechanism that can establish who is responsible, so that the perpetrators can subsequently be held to account. Any new mechanism should build upon the important work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the ongoing Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission. It is therefore crucial that the Mission have complete and unhindered access to all information and sites it deems necessary to conduct its investigations with regard to the attack with chemical weapons in Douma last weekend.

The international norms against the use of chemical weapons must be respected, and the Syrian people must be relieved from the violence, hardship and injustice that has haunted them for so long. To that end, we call for a political solution and an immediate cessation of violence, as agreed upon earlier by the Council, as well as full, unhindered and immediate humanitarian access. We reiterate our determination to achieve justice for the victims. The need to collectively stand up for the fate of the Syrian people is now more apparent than ever.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence and participation

in this meeting. Bolivia would also like to thank the Russian Federation for its initiative in convening this emergency meeting of the Security Council. Today is a dark day in the history of the Council. Three permanent members have made the decision, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, to take unilateral action against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another State Member of the Organization.

Bolivia would like to clearly and categorically express its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons or the use of chemical substances as weapons, as it is unjustifiable and criminal wherever and whenever it happens, by whomever, given it constitutes a serious crime against international law and international peace and security. Those responsible for committing such terrible and criminal acts must be identified, investigated, prosecuted and punished with the utmost rigour. Bolivia continues to demand a transparent and impartial investigation to determine who the culprits are.

Aside from that topic, the purpose of this meeting is linked to the fact that, as I stated, three permanent members of the Council have used force in breach of the Charter. It is impossible to combat the alleged violation of international law by violating international law. Bolivia is surprised by the fact that, given that, they have a greater a greater responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the permanent Council members bypass the United Nations when it suits them. They advocate for multilateralism as long as it serves their purposes and then simply discard it. When multilateralism is no longer in their interest, it no longer concerns them.

This is not the only case in which, sadly, unilateral action has been used. We recall, and will not tire in recalling, such use in Iraq in 2003 and in Libya in 2011. Any such action must be authorized by the Security Council under the Charter of the United Nations. All unilateral actions run counter to international law, as well as to the values and principles of the Charter. Bolivia rejects the use and the threat of the use of force. Unilateral actions not only respond to the specific interests of those who carry them out, but are also measures that are — allow me to use the word — imperialist. It so happens that the empires that we mentioned earlier consider themselves morally superior to the rest of the world. They consider themselves exceptional and indispensable, and therefore believe that they are above the law and international law, but in reality the interest of those who unilaterally use force and violate the Charter is not to advance democracy or freedom or to combat the use of chemical weapons. Their goal is to expand their power and domination.

What we have witnessed over the past few hours is an attack on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has not begun the work that was scheduled to begin today. A unilateral attack is an attack on multilateral organizations, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It is an attack on the Council and its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. It is an attack on the Charter, and it is an attack on the entire international community. I wonder, with regard to the permanent members that used force just a few hours ago, how much money have they invested in arming and training the armed groups in Syria? What natural resources are they after? With what moral authority will they be able invoke the Charter in the future?

Sadly, the history of violating the purposes and principles of the Charter is a long one. We mentioned Libya and Iraq, which were recent cases. The unilateral decision concerning Jerusalem also sent another absolutely clear signal of the lack of respect for international law. Who are the ones selling weapons to those who are bombing civilians in Yemen? Who are the ones who rejected the Paris Agreement on climate change? Who are the ones who stepped away from the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration? Who are the ones who build walls?

We nevertheless believe that it is also important to talk about history over the long term. Above all, we have been experiencing the consequences of the havoc wreaked by some of the colonialist Powers and of their disdain for international law in the Middle East that dates back over 100 years. We are currently reliving the same scenario in Syria, characterized by total disregard for international law. To a certain extent, we relived it, for example, when the United Kingdom refused to return the sovereignty of the Malvinas islands to Argentina or when the Chagos Archipelago issue was not resolved. I hope that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning that matter will be respected. In other words, we are talking about a whole range of policies that are detrimental to international peace and security.

The Permanent Representative of the United States said that the United States, her country, has its finger on the trigger — "locked and loaded". Of course, we clearly heard her words with a great deal of concern and sadness. We know that the United States has aircraft carriers, satellites, smart bombs and an arsenal of nuclear weapons, and we also know that it has nothing but scorn for international law. But we have this — we have the purposes and principles of the Charter, and ultimately, as history has shown time and again, those principles will prevail.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing at the beginning of this meeting.

The State of Kuwait believes in and is committed to the Charter and principles of the United Nations, respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations confers upon the Security Council the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, whereby it can act on behalf of Member States to carry out that mandate. Article 25 stipulates that the Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

What we have witnessed in the Syrian crisis is an impasse concerning the international community's efforts and the flagrant violation of its resolutions. We have followed very closely and with great concern the dangerous developments in Syria relating to recent military operations in response to the use by the Syrian authorities of chemical weapons prohibited by international law. We underscore that those developments are the result of the impasse in the international community's efforts embodied by the Security Council to reach a political settlement to the bloody conflict in Syria, which has gone on for more than seven years. It has led to hundreds of thousands of casualties and millions of displaced Syrians and resulted in the major destruction of civilian infrastructure in several cities.

The chemical weapons issue long enjoyed a unified approach in the Council, which condemned the use of all chemical weapons in Syria regardless of who uses such weapons. Moreover, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013) unanimously, imposing measures under Chapter VII of the Charter in case of the non-compliance of various parties with its provisions or the continued use in Syria of chemical weapons, which, as we have said, are internationally banned weapons. In order to ensure the implementation of that resolution, in August 2015 the Security Council adopted resolution 2235 (2015), established the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to determine those responsible for any crime involving the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In fact, the Mechanism identified the perpetrators of such crimes on several incidents.

The unfortunate divide in the positions of the Council encouraged the parties to the crisis to continue their violations of resolutions of international legitimacy, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions. The most recent resolution 2401 (2018), adopted unanimously, is another example of resolutions being violated. It calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities in order to allow for humanitarian access to the besieged areas. Unfortunately, that humanitarian resolution was not implemented, as we know. The State of Kuwait regrets this escalation and calls on members to overcome their differences within the Security Council and to restore the unity of the Council so that it can shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We also call on members to bridge the existing gap by establishing a new, independent, impartial and professional mechanism to investigate the use of any chemical weapons in Syria and to determine who is accountable for such crimes. We reiterate our full readiness to participate in any effort aimed at achieving a compromise among the positions of members of the Council so as to ensure that those who are responsible for these crimes will be held accountable and punished, and to preserve the non-proliferation regime.

It is certain that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Intensive efforts must be made to spare the Syrian people further suffering. We reiterate our principled and firm position regarding the Syrian crisis, which is in line with the position of the League of Arab States calling for the preservation of the unity, sovereignty and independence of Syria; putting an end to acts of violence and the killing; avoiding bloodshed; saving Syrian lives; and reaching a peaceful settlement under the auspices of the United Nations on the basis of the 2012 Geneva First Communique, and resolution 2254 (2015), through a process of political transition

with the involvement of all Syrian parties so that the Syrian people can achieve their legitimate aspirations.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank the Peruvian presidency for responding quickly to the request for the holding of this meeting, and we would like to express our appreciation to Russia for making the request. It would have been a serious dereliction of duty on the part of the Council if it had failed to meet in the light of what transpired yesterday.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and his presence today. For those of us who are elected members of the Security Council, the responsibility is indeed extremely heavy, to the point of being unbearable. Let us not forget that we are here representing 193 countries, to which, like permanent members, we have made solemn promises that are generally encapsulated in the Charter of the United Nations. For those of us who are members of the African Union, an organization that for obvious historical reasons attaches huge importance to scrupulous adherence to the principles of the Charter, the obligation that we have to tell the truth and to stand up and be counted for peace is also enormously heavy — all the more so when the parties involved, from our own national perspective, are friends.

It was only yesterday that the Secretary-General urged Member States to act responsibility in these dangerous circumstances and stressed the need to avoid the serious situation from spiralling out of control (see S/PV.8231); indeed, he repeated the same sentiment today. We have also been repeatedly expressing our concern that the dynamic in Syria could lead to devastating consequences not only nationally, but regionally and internationally. No doubt, the strike undertaken by the three countries yesterday appears not to have led to the situation spiralling out of control. We do not take that lightly, even though it might be difficult to be consoled by that fact in the light of the potential danger we still face.

That is why we call for maximum restraint, the exercise of wisdom and a quick return to dialogue among the major powers that have enormous influence on the current situation in Syria. As we stressed yesterday and previously, it is absolutely vital to resume the path of diplomacy. The alternative is without a doubt catastrophic beyond our imagination. We hope that no one wants to see that happen, but it could if we do not act together with a huge sense of urgency to defuse the current tension and reduce further military escalation.

By no means do we overlook the genesis of this tragedy we are facing. It has to do with the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma. At least, that is what ratcheted up the tension, leading to what took place yesterday, which is difficult to defend as being consistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. But there is also one point that makes it difficult for us to understand what took place yesterday. The Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is arriving, or, as just said by the Secretary-General, has already arrived in Syria to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons, which is the cause of all this tension.

In the light of that, you must excuse us, Mr. President, if we were a little perplexed. While the priority of the time is clearly to avert the further escalation of the latest development, we are not underestimating the importance of ensuring accountability for any confirmed use of chemical weapons in Syria. In that regard, the OPCW Fact-finding Mission should be allowed to conduct a thorough investigation to establish the facts related to the alleged chemical weapons attack in Douma. The sustainable way to end impunity, which we believe is extremely important, to deter and stop the use of chemicals as weapons is through united and concerted action, including through an attribution mechanism that the Council could and must set up.

That has become all the more critical now, when, as we all know, truth is becoming very difficult to establish. An opportunity has been created for parties and even individuals to claim the veracity of their own facts. We know that we are all disappointed by the current deadlock, but that should not justify overlooking the obligation to adhere to the principles of the Charter.

Let me conclude by referring to what the Secretary-General said yesterday. I wanted to refer to it again because it reflects the truth and is, therefore, worth repeating:

> "[T]he Cold War is back with a vengeance — but with a difference. The mechanisms and the safeguards to manage the risks of escalation that existed in the past no longer seem to be present." (*S/PV.8231, p. 2*)

That is why we must appeal to the members of the Security Council, especially the Permanent Five, to help create a situation where diplomacy would have the upper hand and the primacy of politics will be our guide for coming out of what is a troubled moment in our

recent history. The Geneva process and Special Envoy de Mistura need the unqualified support of the Council.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his statement, which clearly illustrates the perspective of the United Nations on this issue. What took place last night was clearly not a surprise to any member of the Security Council. It remained to establish only the day and the time. In fact, as we said in our statement yesterday (see S/PV.8232), we are concerned about the rhetoric that we are hearing and where it will lead us. It has now led us to where we feared and did not want to go — military attacks against Syria. Yesterday in this Chamber, Secretary-General António Guterres spoke about the memory of the Cold War, which in fact returned with a vengeance in the early hours of the morning, reminding the peoples of the world of the conflict of interests that still exists between two blocs.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has followed with great concern the reports on the attacks carried out by the United States, with the support of the armed forces of France and the United Kingdom. According to estimates, the coalition fired more than 100 cruise missiles and air-to-ground missiles from two United States naval ships stationed in the Red Sea, as well as from tactical warplanes that overflew the Mediterranean and B-1B bombers from another area. The coalition launched a coordinated attack on three targets, which included a scientific research centre in an area of Damascus, a facility to the west of Homs and a command post near that facility.

While surgical and very selective, last night's strikes are a violation of Chapter V of the Charter of the United Nations and of the principles and norms of international law. It is important to recall that, according to Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Members of the Council must therefore refrain from creating situations of insecurity and instability.

The Security Council should not highlight or disregard the fact that those strikes may have unpredictable and potentially tragic consequences for the Middle East by encouraging or justifying the development of nuclear programmes in order to prevent any further aggression. Experts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are already in Douma to carry out investigations. Until we have reliable and irrefutable proof of the alleged chemical attack in Douma last week, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is of the view that no aggression can be justified. Our delegation also reiterates that, in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter, in the case of any dispute that is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, it is imperative to seek a solution first and foremost through negotiation, mediation or other peaceful means.

History continues to show us that military interventions never resolves conflicts but, instead, cause them to proliferate and to continue, causing devastation and destruction. We must ensure that that does not happen again in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic. We again point out that the military intervention in Libya in 2011 and its consequences today should be a clear lesson to the international community. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea opposes the use of force in international relations. We accept its use only when it is in line with the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. As we have already said, in the case of Syria, it would not bring about any substantial change in the overall situation in the country.

We reiterate that political agreement is the only viable way to find a lasting solution to the Syrian problem. All the parties involved must resolve their differences through dialogue, agreement and consultation. That process requires the support of the international community. The failure of diplomacy only exacerbates the suffering of the Syrian people and is the highest expression of the Security Council's failure.

Equatorial Guinea continues to believe that, in order to fully clarify the 7 April events in Douma, a thorough, impartial and objective investigation must be carried out in order to reach a reliable conclusion. We urge the OPCW Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to promptly carry out an investigation and to report to the Security Council on its conclusions as soon as possible. We also again reiterate the urgent need to establish, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, a professional, independent and transparent investigative body to attribute responsibility for and identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons so that those responsible, whoever they are, are brought to international justice. Only in that way can that thorny issue achieve consensus and unity among the members of the Security Council.

I conclude my statement by reiterating the unequivocal position of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which is that we wholeheartedly condemned the use of chemical weapons by whomever.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Cote d'Ivoire would like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence and for his briefing on the latest developments in Syria following the air strikes carried out by certain members of the Security Council during the night of Friday, 13 April. Côte d'Ivoire requests all the actors involved in the Syrian conflict at the various levels to show restraint and not to further complicate the disastrous situation in which the Syrian people find themselves. Weapons and bombs have struck Syria too often in disregard for our collective action towards peace.

Is it necessary to recall that, by signing the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, the founding Members sought to establish a new world order based on multilateralism and its resolve to make peace a universal common good, the maintenance of which was entrusted to the United Nations and the Security Council as its primary responsibility? The Secretary-General has just reminded us of that. In every situation in which the Charter of the United Nations has guided the action of the international community, respect for its principles has always enabled us to overcome the most inextricable challenges, thereby preventing many disasters for humanity.

Based on its strong conviction in the virtues of multilateralism, my country therefore believes that resorting to force in order to maintain international peace and security must be authorized by the Security Council in order to preserve its essential legal authority and to thereby prevent any deviation or abuse. Only a Security Council that is strong and representative of our time will be able to mobilize all Member States of the United Nations in support of its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Côte d'Ivoire would therefore like to express its deep concern over the inability of the Council to relaunch the dialogue in Syria and to sideline the supporters of a military solution.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, no matter who is responsible, and we call for the establishment of a multilateral mechanism to attribute responsibility and to bring those responsible for the use of chemical weapons to justice in the appropriate international tribunals. In that context, my delegation reiterates its support for the investigation to be conducted by the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order to shed light on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma in eastern Ghouta. Côte d'Ivoire once again urges the members of the Security Council to unite with a view to putting an end to their differences and to effect the establishment of this mechanism to establish responsibility, which all the members of the Council would like to see set up.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to reassert its conviction and its position of principle that the response to the crisis in Syria cannot be a military response. Quite to the contrary; it must be sought in the framework of dialogue and an inclusive political process, as envisioned in the road map set out in resolution 2254 (2015). The time has come to decisively give every opportunity for dialogue a chance and to make sure that the Council is in step with history.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Peru.

Peru notes with great concern the developments in Syria. In the face of military action, as a response to information on the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population in the country, we reiterate the need to keep the situation from spiralling out of control and causing a greater threat to stability in the region and to international peace and security.

Peru condemns any use of chemical weapons as an atrocity crime. For that reason, we have supported the urgent deployment to Syria of an Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission, as well as the establishment of a dedicated, independent, objective and impartial attribution mechanism. We regret the stalemate in the Security Council and our inability to take a decision on the issue. In that regard, Peru encourages the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts in accordance with the prerogatives entrusted to him in the Charter of the United Nations with a view to helping to resolve the stalemate in the Council and to establish the attribution mechanism. Peru believes that any response to the crimes committed in Syria, as well as a solution to the conflict in Syria overall, must be consistent with the Charter, with international law and with the Council's resolutions.

As the Secretary-General has reminded us, the Council is the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is up to its members to act in unity and to uphold that responsibility. Peru joins the Secretary-General's urgent appeal to all Member States to act with restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any act that could escalate the situation and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people. My delegation reaffirms its commitment to continue working in order to achieve sustainable peace in Syria, to guarantee protection for the civilian population, to ensure that there is no impunity for atrocious crimes, as well as to help defuse the situation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I should like to respond to the remarks made by the Ambassador of Bolivia about the United Kingdom.

We have no doubt about the sovereignty of the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas. Successive British Governments have made clear that sovereignty will not be transferred against the wishes of the Falkland Islands. The Falkland Islanders voted overwhelmingly to maintain their current constitutional arrangements with the United Kingdom.

Turning to the Chagos archipelago, the United Kingdom is participating in the proceedings before the International Court of Justice, even as we disagree with jurisdiction in that case.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief and limit myself to reading out what it says in the special declaration on the question of the Malvinas Islands, signed by all the Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Heads of State and Government:

> "Reiterate their strongest support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas and the permanent interest of the countries of the region in the Governments of the Argentine Republic and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland resuming negotiations in order to find — as soon as possible — a peaceful and definitive solution to such dispute, pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations ...".

That would include in particular General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General at this very important moment in the history and the work of the Security Council. In his important statement yesterday, the Secretary-General warned that the Cold War had returned (see S/PV.8231). That is exactly right. We all agree with the relevance of this remark.

I take this opportunity to recall those who relaunched the logic of the Cold War. Of course, we all remember, following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, that a number of philosophical books were published here in this country, including *The End of History and the Last Man*, by Francis Fukuyama. Another author, American thinker Samuel Huntington, wrote an essay entitled *The Clash of Civilizations*. Those two works marked the return of the Cold War logic. Indeed, the message of those two books was as follows: To the people of the world, you must take the American approach and surrender to the American will or we will attack you. "My way or the highway", as the American saying goes. That marked the return of the Cold War philosophy.

Lies serve no purpose. They serve the person who lies once and only once. Lies deceive only once. When a lie is repeated it becomes exposed and exposes the person who is lying.

My colleague the Ambassador of France announced that the aggression of his country, along with the United States and the United Kingdom, was carried out on behalf of the international community. If that is the case, I wonder which international community my colleague the French Ambassador is speaking of. Is he speaking of a real international community that

actually exists? Has the international community that he represents authorized this tripartite aggression against my country? Did their Governments obtain a mandate from this international community to attack my country?

My American, French and British colleagues claimed that they have bombarded centres for the production of chemical weapons in Syria. If the Governments of these three countries knew the actual location of these production centres that they claim to have bombarded, why did they not share that information with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)? Why did they not share this information with the Fact-finding Mission in Damascus before attacking my country? It is just a question I am putting to the Security Council.

Furthermore, I would like to assure Council members that the OPCW investigation team arrived today at noon. Obviously, the team was delayed for a full day getting from Beirut to Damascus before the attack, for reasons that we do not know, as though the team was asked not to go to Damascus until after the bombing took place. But the team did reach Damascus today at noon and will hold a meeting in two hours, at 7 p.m., Damascus time, with the local authorities. My Government will, of course, provide every support to the team so that it may carry out its mission successfully.

The facility of the Barzah Research and Development Centre, the building that was targeted by the tripartite aggression, was visited twice last year by experts from the OPCW. They inspected it, after which they gave us an official document stating that Syria had complied with its obligations under the OPCW and that no chemical activities had taken place in the inspected building. If the OPCW experts gave us an official document confirming that the Barzah Centre was not used for any type of chemical activity in contravention to our obligations with respect to the OPCW, how do Council members reconcile that with what we have heard this morning? How do they reconcile that with all the accusations and claims that the aggression targeted a chemical-weapons production centre?

My American colleague said that the time for discussion is over — that it was over yesterday (see S/PV.8231). If that is so, then what are we doing today as diplomats an ambassadors at the Security Council? Our mission here is to speak, to explain what happened, to shed light on all the issues. We are not here in the Security Council simply to justify an aggression. How can we state that the discussion is over? No, the discussion is continuing in this Chamber, if the idea is to put an end to aggressions or to implement the provisions of the Charter and international law. That is why we are here.

My British and French colleagues spoke of a plan of action and have invited the Secretary-General to implement it before the Council and the Syrian Government have agreed to it. Their plan of action is in fact a very strange one. But I would like to present on behalf of my Government a counter plan of action, which, I assume, should have been presented today.

First, we should read the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and define and recall the responsibilities of the three States in maintaining international peace and security, rather than threatening it. I happen to have three versions of the Charter, two in English and one in French. Perhaps these three States should read what the Charter actually states. Secondly, these three States must immediately stop supporting the armed terrorist groups that are active in my country. Thirdly, they should put an end to the lies and fabrications being used to justify their aggression against my country. Fourthly, these three States should realize that, after seven years of a terrorist war that was imposed on my country, Syria, a war carried out by these three countries and their agents in the region, their missiles, airplanes and bombs will not weaken our determination to defeat and destroy their terrorists. This will not prevent the Syrian people from deciding their own political future without foreign intervention.

I will repeat this for the thousandth time — the Syrian people will not allow any foreign intervention to define our future. I promised yesterday that we will not remain inactive in the face of any aggression, and we have kept our promise. I will explain how we have kept our promise.

Allow me now to address those States that remain committed to international law. I would tell them that the Syrian Arab Republic and its many friends and allies are perfectly capable of dealing with the brutal aggression that my country has had to face. But what we are asking the diplomats and ambassadors today who are committed to international legitimacy and the Charter to call on the United States, Britain and France to read the provisions of the United Nations Charter, in particular those pertaining to respect for

the sovereignty of States and to the non-use of force in international relations. Perhaps the Governments of these three countries will realize, if only once, that their role in the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security rather than to undermine it. As I just said, I have three copies of the Charter, and I would ask the Council's secretariat to distribute them to the three delegations so that they might enlighten or awaken themselves from their ignorance and their tyranny.

In flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, the United States, Britain and France, at 3:55 a.m. on Saturday, 14 April, Damascus time, attacked the Syrian Arab Republic by launching some 110 missiles against Damascus and other Syrian cities and areas. In response to this terrible aggression, the Syrian Arab Republic has exercised its legitimate right in line with Article 51 of the Charter to defend itself, and we have defended ourselves against this evil attack. Syrian air defences were able to intercept a number of rockets launched by the tripartite aggression, while some of them reached the Barzah Centre in — not outside — the capital Damascus. The Centre in that location that includes laboratories and classrooms. Fortunately, the damage was only material. Some of those modern, charming and smart rockets were intercepted, while others targeted a military site near Homs, wounding three civilians.

The Governments of these three States prepared for this evil attack by issuing aggressive statements through their senior officials, saying that their only excuse for preventing the advance of the Syrian Arab Army against armed groups was these allegations of the use of chemical weapons. Indeed, in a race against time, the armed terrorist groups did receive instructions from those aggressors to fabricate this charade of the use of chemical weapons in Douma. They found false witnesses and manipulated the alleged crime scene as they did before, which served as the pretext for this scandalous aggression. This can only be explained by the fact that the original aggressors — the United States of America, Britain and France — decided to interfere directly in order to avenge the defeat of their proxies in Ghouta. In fact, those who fabricated the charade of the chemical attack in Ghouta were arrested and admitted on television that it was a fabricated attack. We have a video of that if the presidency wishes to see it.

I would like to draw the attention of those who align themselves with the Charter of the United Nations and international legitimacy to the fact that this evil aggression sends another message from those three aggressors to the terrorist groups that they can continue using chemical weapons in the future and committing their terrorist crimes, not against Syrian civilians only but in other countries. There is no doubt about that.

In 146 letters we have drawn the Council's attention to the plans of the terrorist groups to use chemical weapons in Syria. There are 146 letters that have been sent to the Council and the Secretariat. Today, some Council members are suddenly reinventing the wheel. The Council knows that this aggression took place just as a fact-finding team from the OPCW was supposed to arrive in Syria at the request of the Syrian Government to examine the allegations of a chemical attack in Douma. Obviously, the main message that these aggressors are sending to the Council and to the world is that they are not actually interested in the Council's mandate and that they do not want a transparent and independent investigation. They are trying to undermine the work of the investigative mission and anticipating the results. They are trying to put pressure on that mission to conceal their lies and fabrications, just as happened six years ago, in 2013, when Mr. Sellström went to Khan Al-Assal from Damascus, as I have explained in a previous statement to the Council.

This morning's attack was not just an attack on Syria, as my dear friend, the representative of Bolivia said; rather, it was an attack against the Charter, the Council, international law and 193 members of this Organization. The attempt by Washington, D.C., London and Paris to ensure the failure of the United Nations working groups and fact-finding missions is systematic. While those three States boast of their support for these bodies, behind the closed doors of the Organization they pressure and blackmail them not to carry out the mandates for which they were established. We recall what took place with the investigative missions in Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia and Africa. No investigative mission can be successful if it is subjected to political blackmailing. It cannot succeed.

Of the three aggressors, I say they are liars. They are compulsive liars. They are hypocrites. They are attempting to ensure the failure of any action of the Organization that does not serve their interests. Ever since the Organization was established, they have tried to undermine the efforts of international investigative bodies. They have tried to exploit them. I need only mention Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, and Africa. The aggressors exhausted the Council agendas for decades

with their attempts to divert its attention from its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. They used the Council to pursue their aggressive policy of interference and colonialism.

Yesterday, in the press of the United States and of the West, the main theme was lying in the context of a campaign that was claiming success, but they know it was a lie. While these three Governments were launching their evil aggression against my country, Syria, and while my country's air defence system was countering the attacks with a great deal of bravery — one hundred missiles were destroyed and did not reach their target — the American Secretary of Defense and the Army Chief of Staff were before the American and international press in an outrageous surrealist scenario. They were not actually able to answer objective questions. Millions of television viewers must have pitied those two men because they were like dunces, repeating phrases without any meaning, and were unable to respond to the legitimate questions of a journalist about their attempts to target chemical weapons facilities and the danger that posed to civilians if the alleged chemical weapons were to spread. They did not respond. They were also unable to respond to a journalist who asked the Secretary of Defense, "You said yesterday that you had no proof that the Syrian Government was responsible for the attack in Douma. What happened in the past few hours? What made you change your mind?" His answer was that he received confirmation from intelligence services.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest terms this tripartite attack, which once again shows undeniably that those three countries pay no heed to international legitimacy, even though they repeatedly say they do. Those countries have revealed their belief in the law of the jungle and the law of the most powerful even as they are permanent members of the Security Council, an organ entrusted with maintaining international peace and security and with stopping any aggression, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

The Syrian Arab Republic is disgusted by the scandalous position of the rulers in Sheikhdom of Qatar, who supported this Western colonial tripartite aggression by allowing planes to take off from the American Al Udeid air base in Qatar. It is not surprising that the little boys of the Sheikhdom of Qatar took that position. They have supported terrorist gangs, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and others, in a variety of ways in order to destabilize Arab countries, including Syria.

The Syrian Arab Republic is asking the international community, if it exists — we have heard a new definition of the international community today — and the Security Council to firmly condemn this aggression, which will exacerbate the tensions in the region and which is a threat to international peace and security throughout the world.

I call upon those who are committed to international legitimacy to imagine with me the meeting in which the United States National Security Council decided to carry out this attack. I cannot help wondering what was said.

> "We have no legal basis for attacking Syria. We have no proof that a toxic chemical weapons attack took place in Douma, but let us set that aside. We did not need international legitimacy or any legal argument to conduct military interventions in the past."

I am just imagining the discussion that might have taken place among them yesterday.

> "This military action is necessary for us and for our allies in order to distract public attention in our countries from the scandals involving our own political elite and ensure that the corrupt system in some Gulf States pays the price of such aggression. Most important is how to protect the terrorism that we have sponsored in Syria for years."

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/355, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the delegation of the Russian Federation.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Russian Federation

Against:
Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Peru

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 3 votes in favour, 8 against and 4 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We voted against the draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation (S/2018/355) because we believe that its language was unbalanced. It was not comprehensive and failed to address all of our concerns about the current situation. At the same time, we agree with the Secretary-General that actions must be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law in general.

In our national statement delivered earlier today, we explained our view on the current situation in Syria and condemned the use of chemical weapons and the many other flagrant violations of international law in Syria. We also underscore the importance of a sustainable political solution. As members of the Security Council, we reiterate that we must unite and exercise our responsibility with regard to the situation in Syria.

If there is any encouragement today, it is that it appears that everyone around the table insists on a sustainable political solution as the only way to end the suffering of the Syrian population. We therefore reiterate our full support for the United Nations political process, which must now be urgently reinvigorated, including through strong support for the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We would like to explain why we abstained in the voting on the draft resolution proposed by Russia (S/2018/355). We abstained not because the text does not contain a great deal of truth — indeed it does — or because it does not adhere to principles to which we should all adhere; it does. We abstained on the grounds of pragmatism. We know that even if it had received nine votes, it would have been vetoed. Therefore it would have had only symbolic value. Nonetheless, that is not unimportant. However, for us, it is critical to defuse tensions and prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. We would like to play a constructive role in that regard.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan abstained in the voting today on draft resolution S/2018/355 because we believe that all disputes among States should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and constructive negotiations on the basis of equal responsibility for peace and security. As I mentioned in my statement earlier today, we call for all parties to refrain from actions that could aggravate tensions and cause the situation to spiral out of control.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our abstention reflects the frustration of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea with regard to the failure to adopt a resolution to establish an attribution and accountability mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. We reiterate our call for a consensus-based resolution that would establish that mechanism and prevent a repeat of the action we witnessed yesterday.

In that regard, we recall that the Swedish initiative was endorsed by the 10 elected members of the Council. We could introduce the required changes into the draft resolution to enable its adoption by consensus, which would allow the mechanism to be established under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution submitted by Russia (S/2018/355) has just been categorically rejected. The result of the voting sends a clear message that the members of the Council understand the circumstances, reason for and objectives of the military action taken yesterday. The Council understands why such action, which has been acknowledged as proportional and targeted, was required. No one has refuted the fact that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated and must be deterred. That is the key point.

It is important that we now look towards the future. As I have just said, the air strikes were necessary and served to uphold international law and our political strategy to end the tragic situation in Syria. It is for that reason that, together with our American and British partners, France will work with all members of the Security Council to submit a draft resolution on the political, chemical and humanitarian aspects of the Syrian conflict with a view to devising a lasting political solution to the conflict.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands voted against the draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation

(S/2018/355) because the text does not provide for the urgent action that the Security Council must take in response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It ignores the very essence of the action that must be taken by the Council. It should condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria, protect its people and hold accountable those responsible. Today's draft resolution does none of the above.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Kuwait voted against draft resolution S/2018/355. At the time when the State of Kuwait reiterates its adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits the threat or use of force as a means to settle disputes and requires them to be settled by peaceful means, yesterday's use of force was the result of efforts to disrupt the will of the international community, specifically by hindering the Security Council in its determination to take measures at its disposal to end the ongoing use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons in Syria. That is a flagrant violation of resolution 2118 (2013), which unequivocally expresses the Security Council's intention to act under Chapter VII of the Charter when one party or several parties fail to comply with its provisions or in the case of the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Council must once again show its unity and bear its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter. It must agree on a new independent, impartial and professional mechanism for investigating any use of chemical weapons, bring those responsible for such crimes to account, and ensure that they do not enjoy impunity. We call for intensified efforts and a return to the political track, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the aim of reaching a peaceful settlement to the crisis based on the first Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has always opposed the use of force in the context of international relations. We advocate for respecting the sovereignty, independence, unity, and the territorial integrity of all countries. Any unilateral military action bypassing the Security Council runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, violates the principles of international law and the basic norms governing international relations and, in the present case, will further complicate the Syrian issue.

Based on that principled position, China voted in favour of draft resolution S/2018/355, proposed by the Russian Federation. I would like to emphasize here that a political settlement is the only viable pathway to solving the Syrian issue. China urges the parties involved to remain calm, exercise restraint, return to the framework of international law and resolve issues through dialogue and negotiations We support the role of the United Nations as the main channel for mediation, and we will spare no effort to reach a political settlement of the situation in Syria together with the international community.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today is the day when the Security Council and the world community should raise their voices in the defence of peace, security, the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Every delegation in this Chamber is a sovereign country, and no one should attempt to pressure or dictate to any of us how to interpret international law and the Charter of the United Nations, or how to consult our own consciences.

We have never hesitated to vote in accordance with the dictates of international law, the Charter, our conscience and truth. Today's meeting confirms that the United States, Britain and France, all permanent members of the Security Council, continue to plunge world politics and diplomacy into a realm of myths, myths that have been created in Washington, London and Paris. That is dangerous work, representing a kind of diplomacy that traffics in myths, hypocrisy, deceit and counterfeit ideas. Soon we will arrive at the diplomacy of the absurd. These three countries create these myths and try to force everyone to believe in them. We counter their myths with facts and a true picture of what is going on. But they do not want to see or hear. They simply ignore what they are told. They have come up with a legend about Russia as a constant wielder of the Security Council veto whom they purposely provoke into using the veto so as to then present themselves in a favourable light, especially right now.

They are distorting international law and replacing its concepts with counterfeits. They are unabashedly hypocritical. They demand an investigation, and before the investigation has even started they name and punish the guilty parties. Why did they not wait for the result of the investigation that they themselves all called for?

The Security Council is paralysed because of these countries' persistent deceptions both of us

and the international community. They are not only putting themselves above international law, they are trying to rewrite it. They violate international law and try to convince everyone that their actions are legal. The representative of the United Kingdom gave three reasons justifying the missile strikes based on the concept of humanitarian intervention. They are trying to substitute them for the Charter. That is why we and other countries did not support it then and do not support it now, because we do not want it to become the justification for their crimes. We demand once again that that they halt this aggression immediately and refrain from the illegal use of force in the future.

Today we once again showed the whole world how we play our underhanded games. In Soviet times there was a pamphlet entitled Where Does the Threat to Peace Come From? that described Washington and the NATO countries' military preparations. Nothing has changed. The threat to peace comes from exactly the same place. Look at what they say and listen to the war drums that they are beating in Washington today in the guise of hypocritical concern for democracy, human rights and people in general. The five-minute rule in the latest presidential note's rules of procedure (S/2017/507) will not allow me to list them, because the list is too long. I could cite other examples, as for example how the President of France showed interest in a conversation with President Putin in an investigation in Douma and was ready to send French experts there when that idea suddenly disappeared. Because a different algorithm was put forward. That is obvious.

Today is a sad day. It is a sad day for the world, the United Nations and its Charter, which has been blatantly violated, and the Security Council, which has shirked its responsibilities. I should like to believe that will not see another day as bad as today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make another statement in my national capacity.

Peru abstained in the voting because we believe that the draft resolution did not adequately reflect the need to guarantee due accountability for the use of chemical weapons throughout Syrian terrority and because its language is imbalanced and would not help to restore the Council's unity, which is critical to addressing the events in Syria in a comprehensive manner.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of the United Kingdom has asked to make another statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I think it is obvious why we voted against the draft resolution. We support completely what the French representative laid out about next steps and we will work tirelessly to that objective, along with partners on the Council.

The Russian Ambassador referred to myths. These are not our myths. The way forward in the Council has been blocked. The second of our own criteria for taking this action on an exceptional basis must be objectively clear. There is no practicable alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved. In the 113 meetings of the Council on Syria, I think that has been demonstrated absolutely crystally clear. The United Kingdom believes that it cannot be illegal to prevent the use of force to save lives in such numbers as we have seen in Syria. The reason we took this action — our legal basis — was that of humanitarian intervention. We believe that that is wholly within the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has ask for the floor to make a new statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for requesting the floor once again.

The scene that we have just witnessed is quite sad. There are those in the Council who prefer to overlook an enormous elephant that we have spoken of before. The elephant is the direct American military occupation of one-third of my country's territory — a direct American military occupation of one-third of the Syrian Arab Republic territory. However, there are those who speak of minor details which they believe to be pivotal. No, the political scene is far more dangerous than that.

We are a State whose sovereignty has been facing a direct military violation by a permanent member of the Council. That is the true scene, and not the allegations and the film prepared by the terrorist organization known as the White Helmets established by British intelligence. We need to focus on the main scene here. Some would claim that they are fighting Da'esh in Syria and Iraq. However they have given air cover to Da'esh. Whenever the Syrian Arab Army makes advances against Da'esh, United States, British and French war planes bombard our military sites. Why? To prevent our decisive victory against that entity. However, they failed

and we were able to achieve victory against Da'esh with our brothers in Iraq in three years and not in thirty, as former President Obama predicted.

We understand that the capitals of the three countries that launched the aggression against my country are frustrated. Some colleagues who voted against the Russian draft resolution (S/2018/355) claim to support a political settlement. We tell them now, after their shameful vote against the draft resolution, that those who voted against it are no longer partners of the Syrian Government in any political process.

The British Ambassador explained things about the Malvinas Islands. That testimony reveals the facts about the imperialistic policies of Britain. I am actually the Rapporteur of the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24) and I work under the agenda of the United Nations and the Secretary-General. My task and that of my colleagues in the C-24 is to end colonialism throught the world. The Malvinas are on the list of territories that do not enjoy self-governance. We are working in accordance with the United Nations agenda to end the British occupation of the Malvinas.

As for my colleague the Ambassador of Kuwait, I remind him — although he and his Government are well aware of it — that when my country participated in the liberation of Kuwait, we did not justify our principled position to the people of Kuwait. Our position was a principled one. We did not need draft resolutions, meetings or any tripartite aggression. We did not look into the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations or undermine our national obligations to our brothers in Kuwait, nor did we join any bloc that was hostile to Kuwait. We fulfilled our national duty towards our brothers in Kuwait. The Ambassador of Kuwait will also recall that my country could have played a different role at the time and could have negatively impacted the peace, safety and security of Kuwait, but we chose not to do so. We acted pursuant to a national principled position that was not subject to negotiation or discussion.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.