



General Assembly

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61st plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

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

Agenda items 14 and 119 (continued)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/73/L.66)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, I would like to remind speakers that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is pleased to participate in today's meeting of the General Assembly, following the endorsement of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by members this morning through the adoption of resolution 73/195. We acknowledge the efforts made by the facilitators, the Ambassadors of Mexico and Switzerland, as well as the contribution of Morocco. The Compact is the outcome of an unprecedented, transparent and inclusive process, which reflects in a balanced manner the views and concerns expressed by all the parties concerned during negotiations in which Ecuador actively participated.

The Compact was reaffirmed today as the first agreement negotiated by States, under the auspices

of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration, marking the beginning of a new effort to shape the global migration agenda for the coming decades. Migration is a historical reality that we must address within the framework of multilateralism. All 23 objectives of the Compact seek to maximize the benefits of migration in countries of origin, transit and destination, while dealing with and seeking to mitigate the adverse factors that force people to leave their homes. It is a transnational phenomenon that requires international solutions.

Although we are convinced that there remains much to be done, we believe that the Global Compact on migration represents unprecedented support for multilateral efforts to better manage national, regional and international migration flows, on the basis of full respect for the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migration status. My delegation is pleased to reiterate the commitment that Ecuador made a few days ago in Marrakech to preside over the 2019 Global Forum on Migration and Development, which is of paramount importance for international migration. One challenge is the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the development of initiatives that support its consolidation, while working with the various stakeholders in the area of human mobility. To that end, we are working to ensure that Ecuador's presidency of the Forum will help to ensure that it allows for ongoing dialogue, in which States that did not endorse the Marrakech Compact on Migration can participate.

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It is for all of those reasons that, at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Marrakech, Ecuador supported the Global Compact and voted in favour of the resolution today. My delegation views the text as a defence of the human rights of migrants. My delegation therefore stands ready and willing to continue working constructively to implement the Compact.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): Allow me first to commend the work of the facilitators, Ambassador Gómez Camacho and Ambassador Lauber, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, Ms. Louise Arbour, for their leadership in that process.

Migration is a global phenomenon that requires the cooperation of all countries. Therefore, we appreciate the active engagement of all actors in that inclusive and transparent process. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) will provide an opportunity to improve international cooperation on migration by preventing irregular migration and by combating the trafficking and smuggling of persons. However, our international cooperation is built on national sovereignty. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize Estonia's position on the following.

The Global Compact for Migration is not a legally binding framework and does not create any legal obligations for States, nor does it seek to establish international customary law. All States enjoy their sovereign right to shape and decide their national migration policy and legislation in conformity with international law. Effective border management is key to ensuring the security of States.

By supporting the Global Compact, States do not assume any obligation to broaden the legal channels on migration. The Global Compact recognizes that universal fundamental rights and freedoms apply to all persons, including migrants. However, it does not establish a human right to migrate. Ensuring the possibility of return is a significant part of the Compact. It clearly recognizes the existing obligations of all States to duly receive and readmit all their own nationals. The Global Compact also emphasizes the need to deal with the root causes of irregular migration and to make efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Estonia hopes that the objectives set

out in the Global Compact contribute to, among other things, combating and reducing irregular migration by mitigating the negative consequences for the victims.

Estonia also shares the views contained in the statement made by the representative of Denmark (see A/73/PV.60). Estonia is ready to continue cooperating with the United Nations and other relevant actors to seek ways to better manage the global phenomenon of migration.

Mr. Arrocha Ruíz (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama takes the floor to affirm its full and decisive support for the adoption of resolution 73/195, introduced by you, Madam President, through which the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, also known as the Marrakech Compact on Migration, was endorsed (see A/73/PV.60).

My country opted to be on the right side of history today and is proud of the fact that more than 150 States Members of the United Nations renewed their commitment to diplomacy and multilateralism as the most appropriate way to strengthen their collective efforts to ensure respect for the dignity of persons.

Global problems require global responses. With that vision, Panama participated in the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact at the highest level with the presence of our President, Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez. We reaffirmed our commitment to the Compact's objectives, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

As we have stated, it is the first time that the international community managed to reach consensus on a document that establishes a framework for cooperation and collaboration among countries, with non-legally-binding recommendations, so as to ensure the decent treatment of migrants and guarantee domestic security in our countries. Migration will continue to exist and, without a doubt, no country can manage it on its own. That is why we urgently need an instrument that will enable it to be addressed globally and will achieve a balance between the rights of persons and the sovereignty of States.

As a transit country for migrants, shaped by our geographical location, we believe that the scope of the guidelines, as set out in the Compact, is particularly significant and that it primarily seeks to help to ensure that migration flows are managed in a safe, orderly and

regular manner, since only in that way will it be possible to ensure the security of each State. Panama notes that the Compact is an achievement for the international community. That is why we reiterate our position in favour of the Marrakech Compact on Migration.

Mr. Thein (Myanmar): Myanmar voted in favour of resolution 73/195, which endorses the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, as we recognize the importance of migration. Migration has affected all countries throughout history and continues to affect each one. Today no country can address both the challenges and the opportunities offered by migration alone. The Compact is a non-legally-binding framework. It is hoped that it will benefit us all by calling for an enhanced, concerted global effort to provide cooperation strategies and to help ensure the governance of migration.

We welcome the measures outlined in the Global Compact to prevent and reduce irregular pathways for migration around the world. We expect that the genuine implementation of the framework of the Global Compact could address some of the serious transnational organized crimes, namely, human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants. It is equally important for the protection and empowerment of migrants in a responsible manner, including the development of their various skills to contribute positively to the societies that they hope to call their new homes.

At the same time, Myanmar underscores the importance of State-led approaches to managing the migration issues affecting countries, based on their unique circumstances and security concerns. The Compact is based on an intergovernmental process of negotiation in good faith that specifically reaffirms the principle of State sovereignty. States have sovereign rights with regard to shaping their own national priorities, while taking into account international law, as appropriate. National migration policies, including the management of border control and legal measures, the implementation of bilateral border agreements and other frameworks, such as labour and economic policies, are important priorities of a State to ensure safety, peace and development, respectively, for those living on its territory.

Myanmar has been actively addressing the issue of human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants in the region, using holistic approaches. They include regional initiatives, the establishment of relevant

legal frameworks and action plans, the mainstreaming of human rights and development approaches and cooperation with neighbours and regional and relevant international partners, while encouraging regular and legal migration.

Myanmar will continue working constructively with relevant partners, the United Nations and international organizations with regard to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Mr. Necula (Romania): Managing migration is one of the most topical challenges for international cooperation today. Only by working together can we ensure that migration is safe, orderly and regular.

Romania participated in the high-level conference in Marrakech in order to express support for the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195), in appreciation of the tremendous work that has been done over the past 18 months of intense negotiation. The Compact does not encourage migration. It does not envisage creating new human rights. In our view, the Global Compact represents a menu of policy actions and best practices from which States may draw to implement their national migration policies. The Global Compact also upholds the national sovereignty of States to decide their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law, as well as to distinguish between irregular and regular migration status.

It sets out a non-legally-binding cooperation framework that builds on the commitment agreed upon by Member States in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. It also fosters international cooperation among all relevant actors on migration, while acknowledging that no State can address migration alone, and incurs no obligatory course for Member States. The Global Compact envisages the implementation of border-management policies, with respect for national sovereignty, the rule of law and obligations under international law, and aims to minimize structural factors in connection with irregular migration, while reducing the incidence and negative impact of irregular migration through international cooperation. While we recognize the added value and importance of the Global Compact from a procedural point of view and in the context of diverse views among European Union member States, Romania, as a future President of the Council of the European Union,

believes that it is important to maintain a balanced approach. Against that background, Romania abstained in the voting.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): In Finland's view, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) provides a way for the international community to address an issue that concerns all Member States and needs to be addressed and handled in a safe, sustainable and dignified way. Finland wishes to reiterate that the Compact does not remove the sovereign right of States to decide who can enter their territory, nor does it endorse illegal or irregular migration. While recognizing the universality of human rights, it does not establish the human right to migrate. Finland emphasizes the need to manage borders for the security of both States and communities and migrants. Smuggling and trafficking in human beings must be effectively combated. There is a need for clear rules on how to apply for asylum or to enable work-based migration. At the same time, the Compact clearly recognizes the obligation of all States to duly receive and to readmit all their own nationals who no longer have the right to remain elsewhere.

Finland stresses the need to address the issue of readmission in an effective way. Finland would like to recall that managing migration is, and will remain, a shared responsibility. That requires the trust and cooperation of all States and parties concerned. For its part, Finland remains committed to strengthening efforts to manage both regular and irregular migration.

Ms. Gomariz Pamblanco (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain welcomes the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195). It is a valuable document, which the current Government of Spain supported at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, held in Marrakech, which Morocco organized with such success. The Compact is a clear demonstration of effective multilateralism, which is a hallmark of Spain's foreign policy. In full respect for human rights, the Compact is based on shared responsibility for a phenomenon that affects everyone and on international cooperation to manage it. Migration is not a new or a temporary phenomenon. It is caused by structural and historical factors, without the consideration of which it is impossible to understand the very development of our societies. Well-managed and safe migration that respects human rights benefits everyone.

The Marrakech Compact on Migration proposes a global cooperation framework that encourages the development and implementation of migration policies towards international governance of the migration phenomenon, safer migration for those involved and more orderly and regulated migration for countries of origin, transit and destination. Our determined support is also a commitment to human rights in opposing xenophobia and racism, given our conviction of the importance of unifying humankind and prioritizing the well-being of all. We congratulate the Secretary-General and the entire negotiating team, whose efforts enabled the adoption of the Global Compact.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we congratulate the facilitators, Mexico and Switzerland, and Morocco, which hosted the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Peru believes that the Global Compact represents a historic opportunity to strengthen bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation so as to achieve better management of migration, especially massive migratory flows. We believe that, by its very nature, migration is a phenomenon that can be managed more effectively within a cooperation framework that always respects the sovereignty of States and takes into account the various political realities and priorities of each country. Peru considers the Global Compact not to be legally binding and, in that regard, my country will continue to independently implement all its national rules in accordance with article 2, paragraph 11, of its Political Constitution; the 2017-2025 national migration policy, compliance with which is mandatory; and our internal regulations concerning foreigners. For those reasons, we voted in favour of resolution 73/195.

Mr. Drobnyak (Croatia): Croatia voted in favour of resolution 73/195 today. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following points that frame and further clarify our position regarding the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

The Compact represents the first instance that we, as a world organization, recognized the importance of a global approach to migration, based on international cooperation. It is clear that no State can efficiently tackle migration on its own, precisely owing to its nature, which transcends national and regional boundaries. The solution to the challenge is international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue. The Compact is

based on the fundamental premise that it is the sovereign right of every individual State to manage its borders for its security and to determine its national immigration policy. In that context, it is the prerogative of each individual State to govern immigration according to its national realities and priorities. Decisions on issues related to migrants' right of entry, transit, residence and work, as well as on which legal pathways are provided to migrants at any given time, are strictly within the realm of national sovereignty. In that context, Croatia will continue to apply a proportionate legal response to those who have knowledge and intent of illegal entry and border crossing in line with its national legislation and international law.

Croatia will also continue to legally and practically differentiate between refugees and migrants, as well as between regular and irregular migration, and invest all necessary efforts in combating irregular migration, especially smugglers and traffickers in human beings. In that regard, the obligation of all States under international law to readmit and receive their own nationals who no longer have the right to remain elsewhere — whether they are returning voluntarily or otherwise — as recognized by the Compact, is an essential element of a well-functioning global migration system. The Compact is a non-legally-binding framework. It does not in any way create legal obligations for States or seek to establish international customary law or further interpret existing treaties or national obligations.

In that context, the list of actions under each commitment constitutes examples that may contribute to the implementation of the Compact, and it is up to each State to decide how and whether to draw from those examples. While recognizing the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which belong equally to migrants and all other human beings, the Compact does not create any new legal category or associated benefits, nor does it establish a human right to migrate. At the same time, the Compact in no way restricts or curtails well-established human rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

Finally, Croatia believes that the Compact will provide an incentive to address more efficiently the root causes of large migratory movements on a global scale, including armed conflicts, shortcomings in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the unstoppable consequences of climate change,

as well as the lack of opportunities in the countries of origin of migrants.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): In today's interdependent world, better management of migration at all levels is crucial. The international community should be capable of adequately addressing this complex and often contested global phenomenon in order to harness its benefits, reduce potential challenges and guarantee the protection of fundamental rights of migrants and members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. We therefore consider the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) an expression of the willingness and goodwill of States to prevent irregular migration and reinforce collective actions to achieve the aforementioned objectives through a balanced approach, based on their national interests, capacities and existing needs.

Allow me to underline two main factors that contributed to Georgia joining the Compact. First, a number of the measures envisaged by the Global Compact's cooperative framework and its 23 objectives have already been put in place or implemented by Georgia, aimed at improving migration management in accordance with the contemporary environment. The implementation of those measures is steadily under way, with the assistance of the European Union, the United Nations and other partner organizations and States. At the same time, the non-legally-binding nature of the Compact provides a strong basis to review the text by considering both the national perspective and the global challenges.

Mr. Al-Otoom (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation has requested the floor in explanation of vote after the voting to make the following statement. We voted in favour of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) and would like to present our position with regard to the Compact.

Concerning refugees, Jordan clearly indicated its position throughout all stages of the negotiations, namely, the importance of distinguishing between the phenomenon of migration and that of refugees, since a distinct set of laws applies to each case. Those who flee their countries to escape conflicts and disputes caused by humans are refugees. They cannot, under any circumstances, be considered migrants. The issue of refugees is dealt with through well-known international frameworks and mandates.

My delegation stresses the fact that the text of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration does not redefine the international commitments made by Jordan through its ratification of the relevant instruments. We reiterate that Jordan is not committed to international instruments to which we are not a signatory, and we maintain certain reservations with respect to some of the instruments that have been mentioned in the Compact given that it is not legally binding.

Mr. Favre (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland wishes to present its explanation of vote on resolution 73/195. The Swiss Government voted in favour of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which seeks to strengthen the global governance of migration and to set out shared parameters for regular migration. That would also lead to a reduction in irregular migration.

However, the Swiss Government is waiting for parliamentary debates on this issue to conclude before taking a definitive position. In that way, Switzerland's position reflects the decision of its Government to follow a procedure that enables its Parliament to express its views on the matter. For that reason, Switzerland was not present in Marrakech and abstained in the voting this morning.

Mr. Elmajjerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to underscore the importance of the international community's efforts to address the issue of migration and respect for the human rights of all migrants. We commend all efforts made with a view to alleviating the suffering endured by migrants. Despite the large number of illegal migrants transiting through Libya, a country that has been a victim in that respect, we particularly highlight the efforts undertaken by the Government of National Accord to alleviate their suffering, improve their condition and facilitate their safe return to their countries.

My country abstained in the voting on resolution 73/195 for many reasons. First, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is aimed at legalizing irregular migration by combining concepts without a clear distinction between legal and illegal migration and confusing definitions.

Secondly, the Compact fails to distinguish between refugees and migrants. It considers illegal migrants to be refugees, while refugees are individuals who leave their countries as a result of war, conflict or natural

disaster. It also fails to distinguish between the rights of migrant workers and those of immigrants who have legal contracts, and considers them both as immigrants.

Thirdly, the Compact links countries of origin, transit and destination, with no distinction between their duties and responsibilities. It also calls for the full integration of illegal migrants and for allowing them to settle in the country, resulting in demographic changes that may affect certain countries of transit, such as Libya, which is something that we completely reject.

Fourthly, the Compact does not address the root causes of migration. It encourages individuals to leave their countries of origin in order to find opportunities for a better life and work. In that regard, the Compact does not mention supporting countries of transit affected by migration, while it encourages migration regardless of the weak capacities of transit countries and their circumstances, including the security circumstances of countries suffering conflicts or emerging from conflicts such as Libya. Encouraging migration in that way is a violation of the most basic human right, namely, the right of migrants to life. Moreover, while the Compact considers migration as a right, it is a human choice, and migrants should respect the laws of transit and destination countries with regard to entry, residence and work.

Fifthly, as a transitional Government, the Government of National Accord of my country cannot join any international agreements that would entail obligations on upcoming elected Governments that cannot fulfil them.

Sixthly, irregular migration in my country is completely different to its depiction by the media. We reiterate that this issue needs an accurate and credible reassessment with a different approach.

Owing to instability, my country, Libya, is afflicted by large influxes of illegal migration, organized crime and human trafficking as a transit country owing to its inability to control its borders. We therefore emphasize that it is a multifaceted global problem, not a regional or local issue. Transit countries such as mine cannot shoulder the burden of that problem. In order to resolve it, we should tackle its root causes rather than its symptoms by achieving genuine development in countries of origin with the help of countries of destination and by dealing with the criminal organizations and gangs that target migrants in the origin and destination countries.

We underscore that the Government of National Accord will do its utmost to cooperate with friendly countries of the northern Mediterranean and sisterly countries of the southern Sahara to combat irregular migration, alleviate the suffering of migrants and facilitate their return to their countries. We hope that the border-protection agreement with the neighbouring countries Chad, the Sudan and the Niger will be implemented in order to counter the infiltration of illegal migrants, with a view to putting an end to their suffering both on land and at sea. We hope that the friendly countries in the north will cooperate in fighting the gangs involved with migrants, which are considered the driving force behind illegal migration.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): I have the honour to present New Zealand's explanation of vote. New Zealand supports the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compact meets New Zealand's overall objectives of encouraging the strengthening of international cooperation to address irregular migration and best practices in regular migration. It reaffirms the applicability of basic human rights to everyone, including migrants.

The non-binding Compact will help to improve migration outcomes for both individuals and States, while reaffirming the principle of national sovereignty. We welcome the fact that the Compact encourages further cooperation to dismantle human trafficking and people smuggling syndicates, reduce the social, economic and political drivers that lead to irregular migration, and prevent migrant exploitation.

We are concerned about perceptions that the Compact could restrict a State's right to determine its own migration policies and practices. New Zealand's legal interpretation of the Compact is the following. First, the Compact is legally non-binding and does not create legal obligations for States. Secondly, the Compact does not establish customary international law. Thirdly, paragraph 2 of the Compact should not be taken to give the instruments listed in it any binding effect on States that those instruments do not already have under international law. Fourthly, the Compact reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national immigration policy and laws and the fact that States have the sole authority to distinguish between regular and irregular migratory status. Fifthly, the Compact does not establish any new human rights law, create any new categories of migrants or establish a right to migrate. And, sixthly, the Compact in no way

restricts or curtails established human rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

New Zealand sees the Compact as a useful cooperation framework for States to draw on to improve migration outcomes globally. That is why we voted in favour of resolution 73/195, thereby endorsing the Compact.

Mr. Lee Jooil (Republic of Korea): I have the honour to present this explanation of vote on behalf of the Republic of Korea. The Government of the Republic of Korea hopes that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will lay the foundation for a cooperative framework for the international community to promote safe, orderly and regular migration while reducing irregular migration and its negative impacts. On that understanding, my Government participated in the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration in Marrakech, where the Global Compact was endorsed by consensus on 10 December, and, accordingly, voted in favour of resolution 73/195 today.

The Korean Government takes note of the fact that the Global Compact is a non-legally-binding cooperative framework and reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the two facilitators of the negotiations, the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland and Mexico, for their significant efforts. I also wish to congratulate Morocco on organizing the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Marrakech. Lastly, I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, Ms. Louise Arbour, and the Secretary-General for their personal investment.

France decided to endorse the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration through the adoption of resolution 73/195. While not perfect in terms of its structure, in our view it is balanced and represents progress towards the coordinated management of a lasting and global phenomenon.

Given the widespread misinformation with respect to the Compact, we think that it is important to focus on the text and the facts. The text, as the saying

goes, deserves neither excessive praise nor, a fortiori, vilification. For its part, France wishes to briefly recall, in explanation of vote, the following few points.

The multilateral framework remains the most appropriate to tackle a multifaceted, long-standing global phenomenon effectively and in respect for human rights. The shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination is the only possible way. That is not a value judgment; it is a pragmatic observation that makes good sense. That is precisely the core objective of the Compact. Its usefulness in terms of the preceding point is, in our view, indisputable.

Let us also recall that the Compact is a non-binding instrument that does not seek to increase the magnitude of international migration but, rather, to better manage it. Naturally, France reaffirms its full sovereignty to define, in cooperation with its European partners in particular, the applicable rules with respect to the entry, stay and return of foreign nationals on its territory. At the same time, we wish to reiterate that there is no right to migrate and that the Compact does not create such a right. Those who affirm the contrary either do so in bad faith or have not read the Compact, or both.

My country also wishes to reaffirm its rejection of forced, disorderly and irregular migration, which fuels criminal networks and leads to suffering and terrible situations that we cannot accept. It is clear that States have the primary responsibility for controlling their borders effectively, adopting legal frameworks for the dignified reception of individuals in need of international protection, and effectively combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking. No one can relinquish such a fundamental responsibility. We reaffirm the distinction that should be made between regular and irregular migrants and the full and permanent obligation of countries of origin to readmit their nationals who are in an irregular situation.

Both in its national capacity and as a member of the European Union, France will continue to contribute to international peace and security and to support development and climate-change resilience projects in order to create opportunities in countries of origin for individuals who may be tempted to migrate.

On behalf of France, I also wish to reaffirm the responsibility of States to protect the human rights of all individuals, whether they are nationals or foreigners, and their duty to assist individuals in imminent danger under applicable international law.

Finally, France welcomes the leading role of the International Organization for Migration within the United Nations system in implementing the Compact.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein recognizes the importance of international cooperation in implementing our national policies on migration and in ensuring that migration takes place in a safe, orderly and regular manner. We have repeatedly underscored the need to collectively fight the drivers of irregular migration, such as poverty and human rights violations, as well as human trafficking and modern slavery. Well-managed migration that takes place in a regular and orderly manner is in our national as well as our collective interest and improves the situation of migrants around the globe.

As reflected in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, endorsed in resolution 73/195, the primacy of national sovereignty in regulating migration is a basic principle of Liechtenstein's migration policy. Liechtenstein participated actively in the negotiating process, resulting in the agreement in July of the text that we have before us today. Following that, the Government carefully analysed the text against the background of our key interests, which are reflected in our negotiating positions. As a result of that analysis, we concluded that the majority of the objectives of the Global Compact were already being implemented in Liechtenstein today.

At the same time, there are a number of areas where we wish to place on record our understanding and interpretation of certain provisions of the Global Compact. It is the clear understanding of Liechtenstein that the Global Compact forms a legally non-binding document that does not create any new rights and will not lead to any new legal obligations in the future. In our view, the management and regulation of migration are subject to our national policies and are a matter of our sovereignty. We also wish to state for the record that Liechtenstein would not seek full implementation of all the objectives reflected in the Global Compact.

In particular, we wish to place on record the following clarifications and interpretations related to specific objectives. With regard to objective 5, Liechtenstein has a clear understanding that the text of the Global Compact does not imply and will not lead to any individual right to migration or obligation on the part of Member States to expand legal pathways of migration. With regard to objective 7, we want to clarify

that the Global Compact cannot be interpreted in a way that provides for a universal right to family reunion or a right to the regularization of irregular migration status.

With regard to objective 13, we want to emphasize that child detention in the context of the enforcement of migration regulations, and in any case involving children younger than 15 years old, can be only a measure of last resort to be taken strictly based on the principles of the rule of law and proportionality. Liechtenstein is committed to avoiding child detention as far as possible and remains firmly committed to its international legal obligations, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. With regard to objective 18, Liechtenstein is of the view that its policy concerning the recognition of job qualifications is sufficient, taking into account the needs of its national economy. With regard to objective 22, Liechtenstein wishes to clarify that clear rules exist for the portability of social security entitlements and benefits of migrants. Liechtenstein does not interpret the Global Compact as requiring a revision of those regulations.

While Liechtenstein has abstained in today's voting endorsing the Global Compact, we will continue to engage actively and constructively in discussions on the objectives contained in the Global Compact, both with our international partners as well as domestically, with a view to further considering our position on the Global Compact as a whole.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Namibia and Comoros on behalf of the Group of African States. Egypt voted in favour of resolution 73/195, endorsing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We would like to congratulate the international community on the successful adoption of the Global Compact, also known as the Marrakech Compact on Migration, the first internationally agreed normative and regulatory framework in the field of migration and governance. It represents a historic and crucially important development.

As a member of the African Group and the Group of Arab States, Egypt actively and constructively engaged in the negotiation process, which lasted for almost two years and led to the Compact's successful adoption today. We are of the view that the final text achieves a delicate balance between several competing notions, including the importance of upholding national sovereignty, on the one hand, and complying

with international obligations and standards vis-à-vis migrants, on the other. We welcome the clear way in which the text differentiates between migrants and refugees, as well as between regular and irregular migrants. Those distinctions are in fact crucial to formulating a sound and effective policy response to international migration flows.

Egypt also welcomes the attention that the text accords to the issue of international cooperation, including through the stand-alone objective 23, based on a proposal by the African Group. We further commend the Compact's focus on capacity-building, the expansion of legal and safe pathways for migration, including through seasonal and circular migration, the mutual recognition of qualifications, the facilitation of the transfer of remittances and a commitment to ensuring the enjoyment of human rights by migrants at all stages, including by protecting them against violence and discrimination. We are also encouraged by the robust and ambitious follow-up and review frameworks and processes provided for in the text, as well as the newly created mechanism for capacity-building. The United Nations system, particularly the International Organization for Migration, with the support of and in consultation with Member States, will take on a challenging yet vital responsibility in supporting and servicing this newly established architecture.

However, we have to place on record our disappointment that some other areas of interest to Egypt and Africa have not been addressed. We would have liked to see stronger language on the elimination of the detention of child migrants, on assisted voluntary return, the promotion of freedom of movement, addressing socioeconomic root causes, including through international financial and technical cooperation and technology transfer, and a stronger commitment to protecting migrants from racially motivated hate crimes and incitements to hatred, violence and discrimination, including through the media and in the context of politics and elections. But we understand that this is not the end of the road. It is, rather, just one important step in the right direction, since we have now succeeded in putting migration and migrants at the heart of the work of the United Nations system, based on a globally agreed platform that will guide our cooperation in this area.

In conclusion, Egypt values our successful adoption of the Global Compact today, based on our deep-rooted conviction that it offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

for the international community to establish global governance in the field of international migration. It is in that light that we would like to express our deep regret at the fact that some Member States chose not to support the text, despite its non-legally-binding nature and its full respect for national circumstances, policies, needs and priorities. We hope that those States can revise their position in the near future and join the overwhelming majority of States that have adopted the text.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): I would like to start by thanking the two co-facilitators, Ambassadors Jürg Lauber and Juan José Gómez Camacho, for their dedication and hard work in facilitating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195). I also want to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for its hospitality in hosting the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Compact earlier this month in Marrakech.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Denmark on behalf of a group of countries (see A/73/PV.60), and I would like to add the following remarks.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration encourages States to increase and strengthen their cooperation in order to better manage migration by contributing to effective global migration governance, addressing a wide range of migration-related issues and dealing with the importance of addressing the root causes of irregular migration. The Compact is a milestone in the international discussion on how to reduce irregular migration and make regular migration more safe and orderly, based on a spirit of partnership. It has recently become the subject of growing public interest and political debate in many countries, including Lithuania. Such political deliberations show that migration-related issues are relevant yet challenging, and that we have to control migration flows for security and sustainability. They are also an indication of the need to find a better approach to migration-related issues.

In joining the Global Compact, Lithuania finds it necessary to clarify its national position on certain parts of the Compact. I want to clearly articulate Lithuania's understanding that the Global Compact is a non-legally-binding document. The Compact offers a wide range of policy actions and best practices. It is up to individual States to decide how and whether to draw from those policy options, taking into account

their specific situations as countries of origin, transit or destination. It does not in any way create legal obligations for States, nor does it seek to establish international customary law or further interpret existing treaties or national obligations. Discussions among the relevant stakeholders in every country will enhance the implementation of the Compact.

The Global Compact reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policies and their prerogative of governing migration within State jurisdiction and in conformity with national law. In that regard, States have the authority to distinguish between regular and irregular migration status, and we will apply that in our reading of the Global Compact. Receiving social security, among other rights, remains an issue of national competence. Furthermore, effective border management is crucial to the security of States, communities and migrants, as is fighting human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants. Countries of origin, transit and destination, and other relevant actors in the international community, should make appropriate efforts to manage migration. We emphasize that a comprehensive approach is possible only when possibilities go hand in hand with responsibilities, respecting the values, concerns and needs of societies that are hosting migrants. Our common objective in achieving safe, orderly and regular migration is that all migrants have proof of legal identity and hold valid travel documents. However, the issuance of such documents by host States does not in any way imply an entitlement to residency unless the documents specifically indicate that.

Furthermore, as human beings, all migrants are entitled to the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, the Global Compact does not create any new legal categories for migrants or establish a human right to migrate. Our position is that Lithuania's migration policy legislation is functioning well. It is therefore our understanding that the objective of enhancing regular migration cannot be interpreted as an obligation to further expand Lithuania's national legislation or policies in that regard, as they already comply with international law. Based on those clarifications, Lithuania supports the Assembly's endorsement of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration through its adoption of resolution 73/195.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): Jamaica welcomed the opportunity to join the international community in

Marrakech in adopting the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations to cover all dimensions of international migration. We are mindful of the important role played by migration in shaping our identity, which is embodied in Jamaica's national motto "Out of many, one people". From the earliest years of its history, Jamaica has been a place of destination, origin and return for many from around the world. It was in that historical context that we engaged actively throughout the 18-month intergovernmental process in all its phases.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) is founded on a vision by which, through international cooperation and unity, we can harness the opportunities that migration brings while strategically confronting its challenges. The 10 cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles of the Global Compact serve as a lodestar for the important task of implementing the 23 objectives contained in the text. While attaining all the objectives is crucial, all Member States and stakeholders in this partnership will craft the most appropriate responses prioritizing the objectives and proposed actions within their national contexts.

Jamaica is cognizant of the delicate balance required to ensure that its migration policies reflect a people-centred and human-rights-based approach while simultaneously safeguarding its national security interests. We have to strike that balance, given our situation as a small island developing State located along one of the more heavily traversed international transportation routes and confronted by challenges in ensuring the security of our porous borders. We must also take account of the interests of the approximately 1.3 million Jamaican-born nationals, equivalent to almost 50 per cent of our resident population, who live outside our country.

For those reasons, Jamaica voted in favour of the resolution adopting the Global Compact. We affirm our commitment to a comprehensive approach to facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, and we look forward to engaging with other Member States and partners in activating the Marrakech Compact for migrants, communities and countries.

Mr. Saint-Hilaire (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): In voting for the endorsement of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195), my delegation reaffirmed the solemn commitment

made by Haiti on 19 September 2016 in the context of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. That commitment is founded on some irrefutable facts, the first being that migration is a global phenomenon that requires concerted global solutions. The second is that no country, however powerful, can single-handedly find lasting solutions to the issue of migration. The third is that international migration affects all countries and is a shared responsibility.

The Marrakech Compact is part of the efforts needed to mitigate issues related to human mobility and to make it beneficial for all. Our unanimous adoption would have testified to the willingness of all States Members of the United Nations to contribute to improving the governance of international migration. Regardless, my delegation hopes that all the countries and stakeholders concerned will one day come to understand the relevance of the Marrakech Compact.

I would be remiss if I did not reiterate my country's commitment to the vision and principles of the Compact, especially with regard to State sovereignty and the human rights of migrant workers. Quite apart from the Compact, nothing should distract us from the centrality of the dignity inherent in all human beings, regardless of their migratory status. All countries would benefit from taking inspiration from the vision, principles and objectives of the Compact with a view to establishing more coherent and humane migration policies. For some, the Compact falls short of expectations because it is a non-legally-binding instrument. For others, in great contrast, it goes much too far. What is certain is that the Compact represents progress. Needless to say, it is an instrument that must be perfected, like any other human endeavour. Nevertheless, it remains a balanced and valuable instrument for improving cooperation on international migration at every level.

A large percentage of Haiti's population lives outside the country. For the vast majority of my compatriots, nothing would be better than to be able to stay in Haiti's sunshine. In the light of the Marrakech Compact, the Government of the Republic of Haiti will continue to work responsibly to tackle the main reasons driving its citizens to undertake migration that is often insecure, irregular and the cause of suffering. The Government remains committed to dialogue and cooperation with all countries involved in this problem.

In conclusion, our main challenge here is to be collectively able to provide adequate and sustainable

responses to the great challenges of our time. The issue of migration, which is intrinsically linked to all the others, is not the least of those challenges.

Mr. Verleni (Albania): Albania voted in favour of resolution 73/195, on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, considering it a comprehensive multilateral framework for addressing the issue of migration and bearing in mind that it is a non-legally-binding document. Rather than promoting a right to migrate, its aim is to ensure that migration take place in a safe and orderly manner. It is also essential to emphasize that the Global Compact does not encourage migration. In that regard, respect for the rule of law is fundamental to all aspects of migration, such as the implementation of border-management policies that respect national sovereignty, obligations under international law, the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, and non-discriminatory, gender-responsive and child-sensitive policies.

Albania's relevant State institutions and agencies are working in close cooperation with neighbouring countries to prevent the transit of irregular migrants targeting European Union (EU) member States. Those agencies exchange information and duly cooperate with neighbouring countries, other EU countries and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency on a regular basis.

Furthermore, Albania believes that increasing remittances are a more effective instrument for income redistribution, poverty reduction and economic growth than large bureaucratic development programmes or development aid. Yesterday, on 18 December, International Migrants Day, Albania launched its national strategy on migration governance and its action plan for 2019 to 2022, with the aim of achieving target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals by implementing well-planned and -managed migration policies.

Mrs. Nipomici (Republic of Moldova): The Republic of Moldova is pleased to support resolution 73/195, adopted earlier today, endorsing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compact provides Member States with a global framework for cooperation on addressing the challenges of irregular migration and harnessing the potential of legal migration.

We value the fact that the non-legally-binding Compact takes into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respects national policies and priorities when it comes to its implementation. In connection with the second preambular paragraph of the Global Compact, we would like to note that the Republic of Moldova has no obligations under international legal instruments to which it is not party.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote following the voting.

We will now hear a statement following the adoption of resolution 73/195. I give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Father Charters (Holy See): The Holy See welcomes the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 73/195, which endorses the outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted on 10 December in Marrakech, Morocco. Throughout the negotiation process, there has been an honest effort to build the Global Compact on the firm foundations of the international principles and obligations that guarantee respect for the human dignity of all migrants, and in full respect for the sovereignty of all Member States. It will make it possible for everyone, including Governments and non-governmental institutions and organizations, to better understand the challenges that people on the move face, encouraging Governments to assume their shared responsibilities, in particular towards those most in need of our solidarity.

Pope Francis has encapsulated those shared responsibilities and the call to solidarity in four verbs — to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. He has reminded us that in the face of the challenges of contemporary migration movements, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy, a response less concerned with calculations than with the need for an equitable distribution of responsibilities, for an honest and sincere assessment of the alternatives and for prudent management.

The Holy See, while having voted in conformity with its nature and particular mission for the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Marrakech, wishes to register a number of reservations and make comments on some documents and references cited in the Compact.

First, we want to put it on record that during the intergovernmental negotiations leading to the text of the Global Compact just adopted, we vigorously and consistently called for deleting the broad references to the Global Migration Group's Principles and Guidelines in subparagraph 23 (l), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Principles and Guidelines in subparagraph 27 (g) and the Framework of Priorities and Guiding Principles of the World Health Organization (WHO) in subparagraph 31 (e), because those documents are not outcomes of intergovernmental negotiations. Indeed, they contain terminology, principles and guidelines that are not agreed language and therefore tend to undermine the intergovernmental nature of the process and the transparency needed to reach consensus.

Secondly, also with regard to subparagraphs 23 (l), 27 (g) and 31 (e), the Holy See considers the terms "sexual and reproductive health" and "sexual and reproductive health-care services" as applying to a holistic concept of health. We do not consider abortion, access to abortion or access to abortifacients as a dimension of those terms.

Thirdly, the Holy See rejects the so-called minimum initial service package recommended in the WHO Framework as among essential health services, particularly as some of the minimum initial service package kits contain abortifacients and tools to procure abortion.

Fourthly, the Holy See understands the term "gender" as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female. It therefore excludes extraneous or novel interpretations based on ideologies that assert that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to suit new or different purposes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on this item.

Through its adoption of resolution 73/195, the General Assembly has endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and sent a clear and strong message to the world that we are willing and able to discuss and find shared solutions to global challenges together. Today multilateralism has emerged the stronger. I would like to dedicate this enormous expression of support to migrants on their International Day, celebrated yesterday, 18 December. I want to reiterate that the Global Compact is a useful tool, with a text that takes the various perspectives on

migration into account and enables us, as I said this morning, to address in a coordinated and collective way the challenges that no State can solve on its own.

Now that we have endorsed the Global Compact, I will launch the process to determine the modalities of the international migration review forum. In the next few days, I will designate the co-facilitators for the consultations. I reiterate my desire to ensure that the process is open, transparent and inclusive. By implementing the Compact, we can have a real and positive impact on the lives of millions of migrants, their families and their communities all over the world. We can establish mechanisms for cooperation and interaction, and every country can act according to its own priorities, visions and internal regulatory frameworks in order to achieve truly safe, orderly and regular migration.

In conclusion, I reiterate my full support to continuing to promote the multilateral dialogue on international migration. Ensuring that the Compact has social ownership will be key. Its responsible dissemination is essential and will help to promote progress in building societies that are more inclusive, fair and dignified and that leave no one behind.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 14 and 119.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

High-level meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Agenda item 74 (continued)

Promotion and protection of human rights

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

The Acting President: We will now exhaust the list of speakers for the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and

Fundamental Freedoms, in accordance with resolution 72/247, of 24 December 2017.

Mr. Carazo Zeledón (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are celebrating the fact that 20 years ago the international community took the major step of granting due recognition to all who devote their lives and efforts to fighting for human rights. Human rights defenders play a key role in strengthening democracy, peace, social inclusion and sustainable development, including environmental protection. As the President said yesterday, they are our collective conscience in action (see A/73/PV.59).

In Latin America, we began to strengthen our institution for the defence of human rights more than 20 years ago through our decisive collective efforts to protect the integrity and even the lives of those who were threatened on account of the part they played in that essential function. Today, in the light of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, whose twentieth anniversary we are celebrating, we have underscored the duty and responsibility of States to protect human rights defenders against any violence, threats, reprisals and arbitrary actions they may encounter in exercising their fundamental rights.

In our region, 15 countries signed the Escazú Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, a historic human rights treaty that guarantees the protection of human rights defenders in environmental areas through specific provisions for a safe and supportive environment. Costa Rica reaffirms its commitment to protecting and empowering human rights defenders and is part of the Shelter City programme, which provides temporary protection and support to human rights activists and defenders who are at risk in their countries because they are defending the rights of the people in their communities.

We remain critical of the significant gaps that exist in the implementation of the Declaration on human rights defenders. It is alarming that attacks on human rights defenders and their organizations continue to increase and are a daily reality all over the world in every type of political system. Human rights defenders play an important role in the prevention efforts of the

United Nations. The information that they relay can provide early warnings of serious crises, and their analysis can help the Organization better understand the root causes of conflict and find possible solutions to them. That is why we call for opening up more space for the engagement of human rights defenders and deplore the fact that despite the organizers' efforts, Member States opposed the meaningful participation of civil society in this event.

Mrs. Chatardová (Czech Republic): Human rights cannot be effectively promoted without human rights defenders, who deserve our respect and support. Unfortunately, increasing reprisals and a shrinking space for civil society continue to be a significant challenge in their work today. In that context, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/230) on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. As the report says, a renewed commitment to the Declaration on human rights defenders represents the best pathway to realizing the human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Declaration.

Two weeks ago, we in the Czech Republic also commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the legendary breakfast held by the then President of France, François Mitterrand, with eight Czech human rights defenders, including Václav Havel and Jiří Dienstbier. That memorable meeting proved that even symbolic international support for active defenders of human rights is significant in emphasizing the importance of active engagement in public affairs.

The work of defenders is crucial to a thriving civil society and democracy, yet we still see human rights defenders facing harassment, persecution and attacks, including unlawful imprisonment, disappearances and even blatant killings. Human rights defenders and representatives of non-governmental organizations are often referred to as terrorists or criminals, and concrete steps are taken to suppress their activities. We are especially concerned about reprisals for their efforts to work with the United Nations and its mechanisms. In that regard, the Czech Republic fully supports the work of the United Nations focal point on reprisals. We also believe that more can be done in the Human Rights Council to prevent and effectively tackle allegations of reprisals, including through its President and

Bureau. Furthermore, women human rights defenders face additional, gender-specific threats, including threats of sexual violence, retaliation and harassment, and can suffer from physical attacks and attacks on their credibility.

We condemn all attacks on human rights defenders and journalists and respect all who advocate for the protection of human rights, often in life-threatening conditions. Every State should recognize the importance of their work and provide a safe environment in which they can operate. Our world cannot be based on the full enjoyment of human rights if the defenders of human rights are under threat. We pay tribute to all who dedicate their efforts to the protection of human rights.

Ms. Tasuja (Estonia): We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened today's meeting.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union yesterday (see A/73/PV.59).

Twenty years have passed since the General Assembly affirmed that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights, at the national and international levels. Human rights defenders have always been and will continue to be key actors in the international human rights system. They help to communicate information, raise awareness and exert pressure on Governments to better protect the human rights of all people. The Governments of the States Members of the United Nations should protect human rights defenders from all harm that derives from their work. Specific care and protection should be given in particular to women human rights defenders, who are at heightened risk of violence, intimidation and persecution. Taking everything into account, the continued attacks and reprisals against human rights defenders are deeply saddening and utterly deplorable. Over the past couple of years, more than 1,000 human rights defenders have been killed in 61 countries. Today, we must remember the people who have given their lives for the protection of human rights.

Global trends on Internet freedom are currently a major concern for Estonia. For civil society, digital technology is becoming a larger part of life. Subsequently, there is a correlating significant increase in the level of freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to privacy, access to

education and the World Wide Web, as well as to the promotion of human rights online. However, according to Freedom House's *Freedom on the Net* report, a cohort of countries is moving towards digital domination by embracing the model of extensive censorship and automated surveillance systems. Many Governments have adopted laws and regulations to restrict the freedom of civil society online. Estonia is proud to share first place in the *Freedom of the Net* report on Internet freedom with Iceland. We will continue to support civil society, including human rights defenders, domestically as well as internationally, for example, by funding the Digital Defenders Partnership, which was established by the Freedom Online Coalition to provide rapid grants and responses to digital emergencies related to human rights defenders and organizations.

In addition, Estonia looks forward to contributing to the improved work and inclusion of civil society in United Nations activities as a soon-to-be member of the Non-Governmental Organization Committee. As we celebrate the anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, let us be thankful for all human rights defenders and their work. Most importantly, let us encourage them and ensure their protection in their efforts to promote and protect human rights. The world will always benefit from and improve as a result of their activism.

Mrs. Duda-Plonka (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union yesterday (see A/73/PV.59). I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

It is my great privilege to represent Poland at this important commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Let me begin by re-emphasizing Poland's strong support for all efforts aimed at strengthening democracy, the rule of law and good governance and at protecting civil society carried out by the United Nations, the European Union and other international and regional bodies. We remain committed in particular to the promotion and protection of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and to the advancement of human rights defenders' rights in that regard.

The protection of human rights defenders is becoming increasingly difficult. There has been visible backsliding and deterioration of fundamental freedoms and human rights across the world. We see a growing number of restrictive laws that limit space for civil society. The imposition of severe bureaucratic limitations on non-governmental organizations, restrictions on access to resources and barriers to free communication are just a few examples of that negative trend. We strongly oppose any harassment and intimidation of civil society. A robust civil society is a driving force of any democratic change and also guarantees that those processes will be sustainable and stable. That is why we must pay more attention to supporting new local-level civic activism. Poland knows very well from its own history how important the voice of citizens is. Our own successful transformation would not have been possible without civil society. By being willing to support democracy worldwide and share our transformation experience, we have established initiatives aimed at strengthening citizens' voices.

In the challenging times in which we live, with a shrinking space for civil society and constant violations of the freedom of speech of journalists and media workers, Poland attaches great importance to giving a voice to the representatives of non-governmental organizations. The annual international conference entitled "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy", organized by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2012, is the best tangible example of our commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of human rights defenders. Every year, the conference brings together civil-society activists, academics and politicians from all around the world to discuss ways of promoting democracy and advancing human rights and democratic values. So far, more than 800 participants have taken part in this yearly event.

Moreover, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs has established an award called Pro Dignitate Humana as a recognition of dedication to defending the victims of persecution and repression and unwavering advocacy for the rights of the individual and respect for human dignity. So far, it has been awarded to, among others, Belarusian activist Ales Bialiatski; Pakistani lawyer Asma Jahangir; and Russian activist for human rights and civil liberties Lyudmila Alexeyeva, whose recent passing we deeply regret, as well as to Yazidi survivors of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham Nadia Murad

and Fareeda Abbas, and, most recently, to Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian filmmaker imprisoned in Russia.

I hope that today's event will help us to raise awareness of and better understand the challenges that civil society representatives face today. It is also a unique opportunity to pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives in defence of the human rights of others. Let us not forget that human rights defenders stand for our rights too.

Mr. Motufaga (Fiji): I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened today's high-level meeting marking the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Today's meeting serves to call for deeper and faster action in protecting human rights defenders across the world. I salute the commitment of Argentina, Norway and Italy in their work in bringing forward the resolution in support of this. The event held yesterday and today shows respect for and pays tribute to the countless human rights defenders around the world, who take great risks in pursuit of the defence of human rights. It is especially poignant that we are marking this anniversary at a time when we are also celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a truly special way to mark our respect for all those on the front lines of human rights protection across the world. They deserve our support. They deserve a United Nations system that can protect them. The United Nations system should be capable of protecting them whenever the need arises, but it falls short.

This is an especially significant meeting because it serves to remind us how far we still need to go in protecting human rights defenders. It serves to remind us that when we fail to protect human rights defenders anywhere, we are threatening the human rights of all of us everywhere. It is even more pressing now that we are paying a great deal of attention to human rights defenders owing to the new forms of pressure they face. New technologies, asymmetries of information, the great power of individuals and corporations, the rise of extremism and a growing gender divide all make the work of human rights defenders far more challenging than ever before. They need States and an international system to recognize these growing challenges. As a

newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, Fiji attaches great importance to protecting the rights of those who protect our rights and freedoms.

We all have an important role to play in protecting human rights defenders and the spaces in which they work and operate. Fiji has been playing its part in this respect. Its Constitution enshrines human, political and socioeconomic rights, which bring security, opportunity and dignity to all Fijians. They broaden and protect the spaces and work of human rights defenders. Fiji has ratified five of the core international human rights instruments. The Fijian Parliament earlier this year approved the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This reflects the sustained progress that Fiji is making in protecting and advancing human rights.

Fiji, the first-ever Pacific island nation to be elected to the Human Rights Council, attaches high priority to the important relationship between climate change and human rights. We will highlight, through international forums, the increased vulnerability of communities, including women, children and persons with disabilities, to disasters and climate-induced catastrophes. In responding to the human rights aspects of climate change, Governments of vulnerable States prone to climate catastrophes need to be far more inclusive and engage with communities and civil society. We need to rely on a range of actors, community elders, the scientific community and civil society to improve our understanding of the still-unfolding human rights consequences of climate change. Indeed, Governments and communities have come to rely on a range of human rights defenders to improve our understanding of the unpredictable ways in which climate change is adversely affecting the human rights of individuals, groups and communities.

I thank President Espinosa Garcés once again for having convened this high-level meeting. Fiji joins the United Nations family in giving its total support to our collective aspiration that human rights defenders should enjoy all the protections and freedom to carry out the great work that they do on behalf of all of us. I take this opportunity to convey to all human rights defenders present in this Hall and the global community of human rights defenders season's greetings and our personal best wishes for a safe, peaceful and rewarding New Year.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): The United States is thankful for the opportunity to provide remarks on the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Twenty years ago, we collectively adopted this Declaration (resolution 53/144) to demonstrate to the world the vital role that human rights defenders play in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Declaration reminds us that human rights defenders should be able to enjoy the same rights that all individuals must enjoy — rights that all Governments must respect. While the Declaration was important then, it is even more important now, as the status of human rights defenders and the conditions in which they operate continue to worsen.

The United States position on human rights defenders remains steadfast. States can do more and should do more to uphold the ability of human rights defenders and all individuals to fully express their fundamental freedoms of expression, association, movement and peaceful assembly without undue interference. Let us be clear: human rights advocacy — advocacy that advances the promotion of fundamental freedoms, whether domestically or under the auspices of the United Nations — is to be protected and respected by all Governments. It is with alarm that the international community regularly observes reprisals against human rights defenders by State actors. The United States condemns measures taken to suppress the voice of victims of and witnesses to horrific violations and abuses of human rights. We call attention to the plight of human rights defenders in China, where individuals such as Jiang Tianyong are prevented from fully exercising the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, movement and peaceful assembly owing to State-sponsored acts of reprisal. In Cuba, State authorities arbitrarily detained more than 5,000 individuals last year, and dissidents and activists are routinely beaten and jailed for purely political reasons. In Iran, the Government continues to arbitrarily detain an estimated 800 to 900 prisoners of conscience for daring to advocate for human rights or for respect for their religious beliefs. In Venezuela, we highlight the suspicious death of Fernando Albán, whose tragedy highlights a continuing pattern of human rights violations, abuses and repression of the

democratic political opposition by the Maduro regime and its desperate attempt to hold on to power by any means necessary.

The United States firmly believes that people should not be harassed, imprisoned or executed just because they do not agree with a repressive regime. While there are worsening conditions in some places, we are also happy to highlight important positive improvements. The international community's awareness of human rights defenders has grown significantly owing to digital technology and increased attention to these issues within domestic and international forums. Within the United Nations, Special Rapporteurs and others have reported with increased frequency on the role of human rights defenders within their thematic mandates. We applaud this development and the establishment of a position at the Assistant Secretary-General level for addressing reprisals.

This fall, the United States submitted a new resolution in the Third Committee addressing the increase in the number of Governments violating human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly the freedoms of assembly and association. The resolution, adopted with the sponsorship of 86 Member States, urges Governments and non-State actors to immediately end threats and attacks on civil society and human rights defenders, among others. In addition, we also strongly support domestic and international efforts to document, investigate and provide accountability for acts of reprisal against human rights defenders. Specifically, we, along with the other Member States in this Hall, support the multilateral Lifeline Embattled Civil Society Organization Assistance Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to civil-society organizations and human rights defenders facing threats or attacks for their work to promote human rights and democracy.

We appreciate the work done by the Office of the President of the General Assembly in organizing this important event, which rightfully recognizes the significant contributions that human rights defenders make to a freer, more just and peaceful world. We regret that changes were made to the modalities of the event in an attempt to restrict civil-society participation, and we urge the General Assembly to reflect upon how poorly such tactics reflect on this body.

As we reflect on the twentieth anniversary of this important Declaration, we ask Member States to consider what more can be done, whether through domestic policy or in concert with like-minded Member States and others, to ensure real consequences and accountability for State-sponsored acts of reprisal against human rights defenders.

Ms. Chidiac (Lebanon): Evelyn Beatrice Hall once said,

"I may disagree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

This is what human rights defenders are all about. This is their creed and tenet, and this is also why we are here today — to tell the millions of them out there who may sometimes disagree with what we have to say and yet support us anyway that we thank and salute them and value their courage and sacrifices for our own freedoms and fundamental rights and the promotion and the protection of pluralistic, free, diverse and inclusive societies.

As we celebrate 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us not forget those who stand on the front line in its defence and in the defence of our common values and our right to enjoy life and all its beautiful attributes. Human rights defenders are a powerful factor of change in our countries. Their vibrant and colourful contributions have been vital in building strong, dynamic, cohesive and democratic societies where dissent enriches and does not threaten public discourse. However, as we stand here today we are well aware of the challenges facing human rights defenders and civil society in general. They are challenged with regard to their own human rights, vital existential spaces and ability to move freely, to assemble and express their opinions, freely protected and unhindered. Therefore, I am here today to reaffirm Lebanon's support for and the Lebanese delegation's commitment to the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Lebanon has concretely supported here at the United Nations all the relevant resolutions on and language concerning human rights defenders, from the resolutions on violence against women to those on extrajudicial killings, summary executions and freedom of assembly and association. At the national level, civil society is an

essential partner and ally in promoting and enhancing human rights at every level.

I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this high-level meeting and for this opportunity to tell all human rights defenders that they are not alone in this, as we are all human rights defenders in one way or another.

Mr. Tanner (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.59).

We commend the President of the General Assembly and the Permanent Missions of Argentina, Italy and Norway for their work in organizing this event, including in involving civil society.

Finland reaffirms its long-term commitment to supporting human rights defenders. Finland fully supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst.

The Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has contributed to the visibility and the protection of human rights defenders. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world we are witnessing worrying restrictions and blatant violations of the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Human rights defenders are detained or harassed under the pretext of, for instance, libel or foreign-agent laws. As has been highlighted by the Special Rapporteur, some defenders face heightened levels of risk, for example, owing to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Women human rights defenders may face more challenges when taking an active role in society. That is particularly so when they challenge gender roles and violence against women and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Digitization and artificial intelligence are important tools in enhancing human rights. They can also play a key enabling role for human rights defenders. They provide enormous opportunities for providing services, access to information and the development of new forms of civic participation. But digitization may also be used as a means to threaten, monitor or restrict the work of human rights defenders. Human rights must be respected in enhancing digitization and artificial intelligence. The 70-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core international human

rights instruments provide us with a robust framework to address those opportunities and challenges. We encourage the Human Rights Council to actively discuss the human rights aspects of digitization and artificial intelligence. As candidates for membership in the Council for the period from 2022 to 2024, that is one theme that we aim to continue highlighting and advancing.

Ms. Van der Sar (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.59), and I would like to add the following additional remarks in my national capacity.

First, we would like to thank the President of the General Assembly as well as Norway, Italy, Argentina and those members of civil society involved for having ensured the holding of this meeting, as we recognize that the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is as important today as it was on the day of its adoption. The work of human rights defenders on the ground and around the world is indispensable in order for inclusive, just and peaceful democracies to flourish. Yet human rights defenders, as well as media freedom, are under attack. The Netherlands applauds all those courageous individuals and groups who continue to stand up for human rights and access to information. Threats, violence and harassment against them are unacceptable.

The Netherlands is concerned that the legitimate expression of dissent is increasingly being criminalized. We are also alarmed by growing restrictions on freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression, which are core freedoms for a vibrant civic space. We believe that civil society has a central role to play in the sustainable development of our societies through peaceful dialogue with respect for diverging views. We strongly condemn all forms of reprisals against defenders, including for their important contributions to, and interaction with, the United Nations. The Netherlands is especially concerned about the high number of reports of human rights defenders killed, and we underline the importance of holding to account those responsible for those killings and all other violations.

Paragraph 1 of the Declaration stresses that everyone has the right to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and

fundamental freedoms. Therefore, we underline that all human rights defenders should be protected, regardless of what they stand for, whether freedom of religion or belief, the rights of LGBTI persons, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, or whether they fight for land rights or a healthy environment for their communities. Human rights defenders constitute a key priority in our human rights policy. The Netherlands supports projects for the protection, safety and capacity-building of defenders, offers temporary relocation in the Netherlands and provides visibility for defenders through the annual Human Rights Tulip Award. Moreover, human rights defenders continue to be central in our efforts as a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period from 2020 to 2022.

Let me conclude by stressing that the primary responsibility to protect human rights lies with States, but all of us — every person — can and should play their role and, as such, be a human rights defender.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): We appreciate the convening of this high-level meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This is a good opportunity to reflect on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration. We just observed the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Earlier this month, we observed Human Rights Day. Bangladesh joins in those celebrations and reiterates its unwavering commitment to upholding the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people around the globe.

On this occasion, it is of particular importance to remind ourselves of the critical complementary role that human rights defenders play in curbing human rights violations and abuses throughout the world. We are conscious of the need to protect them and are committed to doing so in the context of their efforts in pursuit of their noble cause. As we also observed International Migrants Day and just adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) this morning, we would like to take this opportunity to applaud the role that human rights defenders play in upholding the rights of migrants and refugees in host countries, often in the most difficult of circumstances. Guided by constitutional obligations,

our Government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has always kept people and human rights at the centre of our development pursuit. In so doing, we have particularly been mindful of the vulnerable segments of our population. The Government is always working closely with human rights defenders and civil society in its constant quest to further improve its human rights record. Our long-term policy goals — Vision 2021 and Vision 2041 — are leading us towards achieving a society that is free from want and fear.

As it is party to almost all human rights instruments, Bangladesh remains deeply engaged with the human rights mechanism of the United Nations. We have been regularly participating in the Universal Periodic Review, the most recent cycle of which was held in May, as well as engaging with treaty bodies and other mandate holders and extending them our full support. Although fraught with many challenges, multilateralism is still our best hope with regard to human rights, and the United Nations is the best platform for pursuing that. That is why, when people in many parts of the world are treated with cruelty or exterminated based on their racial or religious identity, Member States need to come together in the General Assembly to act in unison. As such situations pose a risk to the maintenance of international and regional peace and security, we also seek the custodianship of the Security Council to act decisively. The atrocities committed against the Rohingya people remind us of the challenges that the world, as well as human rights defenders, face today in realizing human rights and fundamental freedoms. As a committed, responsible and responsive member of the international community, we have stood alongside that helpless people and provided shelter to nearly 1.1 million of them fleeing persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The international community must come forward to put an end to the suffering of the Rohingya people by ensuring their safe, voluntary, secured and dignified return to their homeland.

As a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council for the term from 2019 to 2021, Bangladesh pledges to continue to play its contributing and responsive role in realizing the objectives of global human rights instruments in a spirit of engagement and cooperation.

Mr. De Souza Monteiro (Brazil): Brazil would like to start by reaffirming its commitment to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in the Declaration on the Right and

Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Through its Ministry of Human Rights, Brazil implements its national policy for the protection of human rights defenders, adopted in 2007, and the programme for the protection of human rights defenders, established in 2016. At present, 462 human rights defenders are included in that programme. Approximately 86 per cent of cases are related to land disputes, which often involve indigenous peoples and other traditional communities. Protective measures include visits, public hearings for conflict settlement, the monitoring of investigations and coordination with the security forces for police protection in cases involving serious risk. They also include regularization, land titling, the investigation of threats and the punishment of perpetrators. Furthermore, the programme makes use of coordination with national and international non-governmental organizations to structure a network of protection of human rights defenders.

Currently, the Ministry of Human Rights is trying to eliminate bureaucracy and facilitate entry into the protection system, reducing the time it takes for cases to be evaluated for admission as well as improving the early-alert system and strengthening the network of support for the protection system. In September, new policies were introduced to better protect media workers and environmental activists. Furthermore, the Government expanded programme resources by more than 300 per cent in 2018, making it the largest budget ever. Extrabudgetary resources of more than \$1 million were also allocated in 2018 to expand the network of protection. In addition to the aforementioned programmes, the Ministry of Human Rights also coordinates the federal programme of assistance to threatened victims and witnesses, created in 1999. That programme aims to provide special protection to victims and witnesses of crimes who are coerced or exposed to serious threats because of their collaboration with an investigation or criminal case and who do not have their physical and psychological integrity protected by other means. Protective measures include psychosocial support and other forms of assistance.

At a time when the multilateral system is faced with significant and simultaneous challenges across all its pillars, it is more important than ever to establish a careful and constructive dialogue among Member States, international organizations and civil society.

Rest assured that Brazil is committed to working harder to face its challenges and offer improved conditions for the protection and the promotion of human rights.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): The Republic of the Marshall Islands reaffirms its support for the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Two decades ago, the Declaration not only specified States' obligations derived from core human rights treaties, but also ensured the duties of everyone — every possible actor — to ensure that the work of those who advocate for human rights on behalf of vulnerable groups and persons can conduct their work openly and without retribution. The Declaration seeks to advance the vital ability to lodge complaints concerning official policies affecting human rights and to ensure that such complaints are reviewed. Those and other goals of human rights defenders are a key pillar of any society that seeks freedom and is committed to tirelessly working towards the achievement of basic human rights regardless of the hurdles encountered. There must be impartial investigations into and appropriate responses to allegations and violations if, as the United Nations, we wish to be responsible vis-à-vis our global population.

The anniversary of the Declaration is not at all a time for self-congratulation, but must be one of urgent recognition of the fact that we need to do more. I am gravely concerned at reports that more than 300 such defenders were murdered last year while carrying out their duties. Our own perspective as a Pacific small island developing State is that our progress in advancing and addressing human rights is an ongoing endeavour in which much has been done and much remains to be done. Like every nation, we have our own challenges and unique identity. It is therefore imperative that we ensure the realization of our human rights in our own contexts. However, in so doing, it is also critical that we all, nations and stakeholders alike, also ensure common and universal rights, including the unimpeded role of human rights defenders to ensure that truly no one is left behind.

Ms. Prizreni (Albania): Let me congratulate all the organizers on this very timely event on human rights defenders, which Albania is very pleased to join. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, said last October during the

Paris Human Rights Defenders World Summit, every step towards greater equality, dignity and rights that has been made over the past 70 years in the name of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been achieved because of the struggles and the advocacy of human rights defenders.

As many colleagues of mine highlighted, 2018 marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (resolution 53/144), but it also marks the tenth anniversary of the Committee of Ministers Declaration on Council of Europe action to improve the protection of human rights defenders and promote their activities. Both documents recognize the primary responsibility of the State in promoting and defending human rights defenders.

Today Albania proudly marks the aforementioned anniversaries as a country and a society that fully encourages and creates favourable conditions for human rights defenders to participate in public life and engage in dialogue with the authorities and cooperation with national and international stakeholders. The work of human rights defenders in the country is very open, and they are regularly involved in the development of policies and legislation related to human rights issues. Through various reforms, of which the most ambitious involves the judicial sector, the Albanian Government is fully committed to ensuring that national human rights legislation complies with how people experience their own human rights. In this regard, we consider crucial the role of the Ombudsman as a key defender of human rights in my country.

Human rights defenders in Albania have also made great efforts to achieve better regional cooperation among them. That is why the fourth Regional Rule of Law Forum for South East Europe was held in Tirana in 2017. The Forum, organized by civil rights defenders and the organization Advice on Individual Rights in Europe, had as its main focus the right to freedom of expression contained within the European Convention on Human Rights, and in particular its relationship with the right to respect for private life and the right to a fair trial. As the organizers affirmed, the aim was to encourage and facilitate regional cooperation and dialogue in order to overcome the challenges that human rights defenders, civil society and civil-rights defenders are facing in the region.

The daily reports and the statements made yesterday by human rights defenders themselves in this Hall (see A/73/PV.59) show that as the global ambition to achieve full enjoyment of human rights increases, the battle to defend human rights and their defenders is also becoming more difficult. As challenges become greater, the crucial role of defenders in the development of human rights, democratic government and the rule of law should also be publicly acknowledged and recognized. We, as a part of the international community, can guarantee rights to our human rights defenders only by being unconditionally and without prejudice on their side.

Mr. Warraich (Pakistan): My delegation thanks the President for having convened this high-level meeting today. This debate is all the more important as it coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a landmark document that provides a blueprint for humankind's collective ambitions and aspirations to ensure the dignity, security and well-being of all peoples of the world without discrimination.

Pakistan's commitment to human rights is firm and abiding. The very creation of my country was the result of a political struggle that had at its heart a deep yearning to protect the rights of minorities and the marginalized. The promotion and protection of human rights is part of our ethos, and we continue to consider human rights the bedrock for peace and democracy at home and abroad. Our Constitution devotes a complete chapter to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of all without discrimination. Our executive, parliament, judiciary, civil society and media stand guard to protect these constitutional rights.

Although the world has made huge advances in promoting human rights, many challenges persist. In many cases the words of the Declaration are yet to be translated fully and matched by the reality on ground. There are places in the world where the cardinal principles of human rights continue to be violated, in plain sight of the international community. Our persistent failure to reach out to people under foreign occupation and alien domination remains a blot on the conscience of humankind. Poverty, inequality, hunger and deprivation are not only decelerating our social, political and economic development, but are also creating an environment that is not conducive to the full enjoyment of these fundamental human rights.

The rise of populism and the politics of fear have also emerged as contemporary threats to the international efforts to broaden the scope of human rights. A world that feels threatened by diversity and breeds intolerance runs the risk of becoming a world intrinsically opposed to the idea of the universality of human rights.

Despite these negative trends, we should not lose sight of our objectives. Seventy years on, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continues to serve as a reminder that the job of promoting human rights is far from accomplished. It also calls for a renewed international commitment to achieve a world in which the enjoyment of human rights for all peoples does not remain a dream, but becomes a reality.

In all these efforts, the international community will find Pakistan a reliable and dedicated partner.

Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In our increasingly interconnected world, everyone — every individual — seems able to act as an advocate for human rights and its values. The rampant injustice and inequality at the local and international levels calls for everyone to become involved in an active and passionate manner to promote human rights values.

No one can shed light on human rights violations better than free, independent and honest human rights defenders. On the promotion of dialogue and the protection of human rights, one may also find them to be reliable partners.

At a time when Governments are putting economic profits ahead of human rights values, something that a few regularly do, genuine human rights defenders are expected to take the lead. At a time when Governments are simply ignoring the grave and deep-rooted human rights violations at their doorsteps, which some usually do, genuine human rights defenders are expected to speak out. At a time when Governments are closing their eyes to the worst atrocities being committed by their allies, which a few routinely do, genuine human rights defenders are expected to expose the wrongdoers. At a time when Governments are resorting to the abuse of human rights and fundamental freedoms as an instrument in their foreign policy toolbox to be used against people they dislike, which a few conveniently do, the world is putting its trust in independent and genuine human rights defenders.

However, the risks are neither trivial nor few. It is the exact same unprincipled Governments that have done everything in their power to hijack and abuse the notion of human rights defenders for their political interests. They manufacture pseudo-human rights defenders, create pseudo-non-governmental organizations (NGOs), lavishly fund them, manipulate them and even forced the Economic and Social Council to vote to grant their pseudo-NGOs consultative status at the United Nations. Believe me, one of those instances happened just earlier this year. The United States should remember it very well.

Those few Governments do not even shy away from glorifying renowned terrorists, self-confessed separatists and ruthless spies who are on their payroll as human rights defenders. Those unscrupulous Governments are the biggest adversaries of human rights and democracy. In fact, those few self-righteous Governments are not attacking the people and the Governments they dislike; rather, they condemn human rights and real human rights defenders.

Indeed, they are abusing freedom to obscure freedom. They are destroying rights in the name of rights. In order to save and protect the noble cause of human rights, civil society activists and real, independent human rights defenders have a responsibility to expose the true face of those deceitful players.

Mr. Rabi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 20 years ago was an important moment in the history of the United Nations toolkit the promotion and protection of human rights. The Declaration embodies the strong determination of the international community to protect human rights defenders. It has put in place a series of provisions that enable them to carry out their tasks in the best conditions possible.

Reaching agreement on the Declaration was not an easy task. On the contrary, it took no less than 14 years of heated negotiations to arrive at consensus on an acceptable text. To illustrate those difficulties we need only consider the title of the Declaration. Although it is commonly referred to as the Declaration on human rights defenders, the agreement reached in 1998 on the text was possible only under a title that underlined the responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of

society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Two years would elapse after the Declaration was adopted before a resolution was adopted that included human rights defenders in the title. Morocco is proud to have been the country to sponsor and submit that resolution to the Human Rights Council on 26 April 2000, as well as to protect it against amendments that sought to weaken it and, above all, to kill the initiative to create the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on that issue.

The full and effective implementation of the Declaration on human rights defenders remains a serious challenge for the international community. Many obstacles stand in the way of human rights defenders, hindering their right to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In that regard, it is necessary to strengthen the legislative provisions and institutional mechanisms that will enable us to create an environment conducive for human rights defenders to carry out their work and one that ensures their safety. In that context, education and training on human rights is an essential tool for disseminating a culture of human rights values and, by doing so, contributing to bolstering the work of human rights defenders. Moreover, national human rights institutions play a crucial role in expanding the scope of human rights enforcement, specifically by supporting human rights defenders and safeguarding their rights.

Twenty years ago, when the United Nations adopted the Declaration on human rights defenders, it did not necessarily enjoy the unanimous support of Member States. In contrast, today its acceptance is much broader. In addition, commemorating the anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration should spur the international community to redouble efforts to facilitate and promote the work of human rights defenders, who, ultimately, are an integral part of a healthy society that respects human rights and a fundamental link in the Organization's toolbox for the protection and promotion of human rights.

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

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Castillo Santana (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made by the delegation of the United States of America.

That delegation's statement is an example of the manipulation of the human rights issue. Guaranteeing the exercise of human rights is a priority obligation for the Cuban State. Every sphere of social life in Cuba has thousands of human rights defenders, whose work is recognized and supported by the Government. Just as in other countries governed by the rule of law, Cuba's constitutional order and political system, which Cubans have freely chosen, as well as our laws, cannot be broken or subverted by acting in service of a foreign agenda for regime change. Those who attempt to do so do not deserve the noble title of human rights defenders, but rather agents of a foreign Power, pursuant to a majority of Western laws.

The United States is in no position to lecture us. They lack moral authority. We have serious concerns about respect for human rights in that country, where there are many cases of murder, as well as police abuse and brutality, particularly against the African-American community and human rights defenders. The right to life is undermined as a result of firearm-related deaths. Child labour is practiced, and there are serious displays of racial discrimination. Further limitations to health-care services are being contemplated, which would leave more than 23 million people without health insurance. There is a gender wage gap. Migrants and refugees are marginalized, and international commitments to protecting the environment and addressing climate change are abandoned.

Cuba's exemplary human rights record gives the lie to any distorted statement made against my country.

Mr. Poveda Brito (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply to deplore the aggressive and repeated conduct of the United States against Venezuela. Its behaviour is based on a false notion of exceptionalism that has led it to believe it has the moral authority to lecture others on human rights.

It is astonishing that the United States should speak about protecting human rights and feign interest in the issue when its record violating such rights is widely known, studied and debated worldwide, especially when it comes to lecturing the countries that have been the victims of its aggression despite its evident

and notorious contempt for the human rights of its own ethnic and cultural minorities and migrants. Perhaps the Government of the United States has not been made aware of the situation with its African-Americans or the migrant children who are separated from their parents and locked in cages like animals. Is that the example that it wants the rest of the world to follow?

The United States has not adhered to or ratified various fundamental international treaties on the protection of human rights, among them the conventions against war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has not ratified the conventions on the freedom of association, collective bargaining and minimum age for employment, or the International Covenants on Civil, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. And just this morning here in the Hall it set out its opposition to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (see A/73/PV.60).

For all of those reasons, the United States Government lacks any authority to lecture my country or speak of human rights. As such, we reject all of the attacks made by the delegation of the United States and its Government against my country in bilateral and multilateral arenas.

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statements made by the delegations of the United States and Germany.

The promotion and protection of human rights is an ideal and a pursuit shared by all of humankind. There is no one universally applicable path to human rights development. By combining the principles of the universality of human rights with the contemporary practice, China has embarked on a course of human rights that reflects its own national conditions.

We respect the primacy of basic human rights such as the right to survival and the right to development. We are committed to enhancing — in a coordinated manner — the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental rights of all of our people in an effort to uphold social justice and equity and promote comprehensive human development.

A happy life for our people is regarded as the most important human right. China's development

success can be best summarized by the fact that there is a steady improvement in the lives of hundreds of millions of Chinese people. That constitutes the largest human rights undertaking, reflects best practices in human rights and helps advance global human rights. National Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting and promoting human rights in their countries.

At the same time, the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms points out that national laws that are in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international obligations are the legal framework for the implementation of the Declaration.

No one should flaunt the banner of human rights defender in order to regard themselves as above the law or immune from it. We uphold the principle of equality before the law and respect every person's entitlement to basic and equal human rights. We do not believe that human rights defenders deserve being placed in a separate category of people who are given special rights and legal status.

China adheres to the rule of law. Whoever breaks the law, regardless of that person's status or position, will be brought to justice. China's judicial bodies process cases through the strict application of national law. We afford effective protection to the rights of suspects and convicts. We are opposed to interference with our national judicial sovereignty under the pretence of the defence of human rights.

China attaches great importance to the protection of the rights of minorities, including all of our ethnic minorities, such as the Uyghurs, who have been provided effective guarantees and protection. A certain country repeatedly underscored at this meeting its sovereign and national rights on some issues, while on others has engaged with wanton interference in other countries' sovereignty, especially their judicial sovereignty. That country turns a blind eye to the ongoing problems within it, while it very irresponsibly calls out other countries. That fully attests to its double standard on the issue of human rights.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of

Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote
and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and
Fundamental Freedoms.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to
conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda
item 74?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.