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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beleffi (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 35

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/880)

Draft resolution (A/73/L.89)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.89.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): I am standing at this high rostrum to bring to the General Assembly the voices of the 400,000 people who have been forcibly displaced from Georgia. However, I am also standing here to bring the voices of the displaced from Syria, Venezuela, Myanmar and elsewhere. I say that because Georgian voices are no different from those of the 70 million other people displaced around the globe today. While the causes of their displacement may differ, their human suffering does not.

I am therefore standing here to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.89, “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”, under agenda item 35, “Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace,

security and development”, sponsored by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Tonga, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I am asking for Assembly members’ support. The draft resolution before us is based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and constitutes a collective call for adherence to three fundamental principles that are securing the rights of the displaced, including the right to a safe and dignified return and property rights; the unacceptability of forced demographic changes; and the need for unimpeded humanitarian access. The draft resolution underlines the importance and supports the work of the Geneva International Discussions, the negotiation format between Georgia and Russia, mandated by the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and co-chaired by the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Sadly, Georgia’s unwavering commitment to the Geneva International Discussions and the constructive actions it has taken within them remain a one-way street. We therefore have a decade-old stalemate because of a policy of concerted disrespect for the issue of return by some of the relevant

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participants, despite the Secretary-General's continued calls for an end to walkouts during the discussion on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees within the Geneva International Discussions.

The security and human rights situations in the occupied Georgian territories remain extremely alarming. Year after year, we continue to witness the installation of razor-wire fences and so-called border signs that cut through villages and even the backyards of their residents. Those installations have reached a shocking 49 kilometres in Abkhazia and more than 52 kilometres in the Tskhinvali region, which the Secretary-General also condemns in his latest report (A/73/880). The Human Rights Council, through its resolutions, has also continued to express its concern and to call for human rights monitoring mechanisms to have immediate access to the occupied territories, but they remain black holes where impunity and lawlessness reign and grave human rights violations are routine.

People endure kidnapping, arbitrary detention, property seizures and continued discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, including severe restrictions on free movement and residence and on access to education in their native language. It is heartbreaking to see the reference in the Secretary-General's report to the "tragic loss of life" of Georgian IDPs while in detention under the occupying Power. Such cases unfortunately occur far too often and are far too numerous. Basharuli, Otkhazia, Tatanashvili, Kvaratskhelia — every year I read out a new victim's name, hoping that it is the last, but unfortunately the list never stops growing.

Despite all the impediments on the ground, the Government of Georgia remains committed to peaceful reconciliation. Its peace initiative, "A Step to a Better Future", aims to enhance the interaction between the divided societies, facilitate and expand trade across the occupation line, create additional opportunities and simplify access to all levels of education and ease access to various services and benefits. We firmly believe that reconciliation and reintegration, along with a commitment to a rules-based order and a surge in diplomacy, are the only ways to achieve sustainable peace.

Last year was the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and 2019 marks 10 years since the adoption of the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the so-called

Kampala Convention. It is no coincidence that forced displacement was the overarching priority theme of the Africa Dialogue Series, held here at the United Nations just one week ago, during which Secretary-General António Guterres urged Member States "to consider the issue of displacement in the broadest context in their search for sustainable and durable solutions."

While the draft resolution before the Assembly refers to the situation in a single country, the issue at stake is an integral part of the global challenge that is forced displacement. To address it we must be principled, not bound by narrow regional or bilateral scope. In this Hall we all recognize the utterly humanitarian nature of the principle of return. We therefore appeal to the Assembly to apply the same principle to IDPs from Georgia, because they too are part of our global endeavour to leave no one behind. It is now time for us, the General Assembly, to show firm adherence to those principles and demonstrate our joint commitment to sustainable peace. We must continue to send that message of hope to the hundreds of thousands of victims of forced displacement. I therefore once again urge the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/73/L.89 and to once again recognize that internally displaced people do indeed have a right to return.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic States — Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Lithuania. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

First of all, we want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Today, more than a decade after the first adoption of the resolution on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in Georgia (resolution 62/249), no progress has been achieved on the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of IDPs and refugees on the basis of international law and internationally recognized principles. Hundreds of thousands of IDPs continue to be deprived of their right to a safe, dignified and voluntary return to their places of origin and their property rights. We are particularly concerned about developments in Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia related to demolitions and new

construction projects in places formerly inhabited by ethnic Georgians who were displaced as a result of the conflict.

We welcome the comprehensive report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/73/880), which encourages further concrete steps to promote greater engagement among the populations living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in line with recent outreach initiatives by the Government of Georgia. The draft resolution before us (A/73/L.89) clearly echoes the Secretary-General's goals and commits us all to continuing to work to protect and assist those who have been forcibly displaced from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia, and to ensure that they are able to exercise their fundamental right to a safe and dignified return. In this context, we commend the continued efforts of the Georgian Government, in close cooperation with international organizations, to put in place alternative, durable solutions providing opportunities for IDPs to integrate locally or, in other cases, to resettle elsewhere in the country in the absence of an option to return to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia.

The human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia remains a cause of serious concern. Russia continues to violate the commitments made in the six-point agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008, by maintaining a military presence in both the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia. We are deeply concerned about the impunity surrounding the grave human rights violations committed in conflict-affected areas. The ongoing borderization, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions — some with lethal outcomes — new restrictions on freedom of movement, including long-term closures of administrative border lines, and a lack of access to health care and to education in their native language have a direct negative impact on the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people affected by this protracted conflict.

The Human Rights Council's adoption at its fortieth session of resolution 40/28, on cooperation with Georgia, clearly demonstrated that the international community remains seized of the matter, as it emphasizes the need to address the human rights and humanitarian issues facing the people who have been forcibly displaced from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in Georgia. In that context, we remain concerned about the fact that in the past several years no international

human rights monitoring mechanism has been granted unrestricted access to the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. We therefore call for immediate access to the area to be granted to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights mechanisms.

We reiterate our support for the Geneva International Discussions process and join the Secretary-General's call on all relevant stakeholders to step up their efforts to make tangible progress on key security and humanitarian issues in order to meet the pressing humanitarian concerns of the affected population, including internally displaced persons. We remain concerned about the continued refusal by Russia and the participants from Tskhinvali and Sukhumi to engage on the topic of refugees and displaced persons in the Geneva International Discussions. We would like to emphasize that this topic is at the core of the mandate of the Geneva International Discussions.

The decision of the de facto authorities in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia to conduct so-called elections later this summer is a matter of concern. I want to remind the Assembly that we do not recognize the constitutional and legal framework within which these illegitimate elections are scheduled to take place. Such illegal elections violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and greatly undermine the ongoing efforts to arrive at a peaceful solution to the conflict.

In conclusion, given the lack of progress on the ground, we call for the continued engagement of the United Nations on the issue. As in previous years, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution and call on all States Members of the United Nations to do the same.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM and its member States, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and my own country, Ukraine.

Millions of people in the GUAM countries have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflicts, and forced displacement has led to a range of humanitarian challenges in the GUAM area. We believe that the humanitarian concerns of the populations affected should be a priority. Ensuring the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the GUAM area as the principal way

of achieving durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons is an overarching goal.

The GUAM member States are once again standing together to present a united position in support of draft resolution A/73/L.89, entitled “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”. The draft resolution before us addresses the issue of hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees forcibly displaced from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia as a result of the conflict and of several waves of ethnic cleansing. The document focuses solely on the humanitarian aspects of the displacement and calls for respect for the right of return and property rights, and for humanitarian access to the affected regions of Georgia. Given its purely humanitarian objectives, this annual resolution has been steadily gaining support from the States Members of the United Nations every year.

The GUAM countries thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/73/880). As it highlights, no major changes were observed during the reporting period with regard to the exercise by internally displaced persons and refugees of their right to return. It is regrettable that despite the calls of the international community, hundreds of thousands of ethnically cleansed IDPs and refugees from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia continue to be deprived of their right to a safe and dignified return to their homes. Moreover, the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground not only further impedes IDPs’ return but also poses the imminent threat of a new wave of forced displacement.

We reiterate our support for the Geneva International Discussions process, which is a unique platform for the participants to discuss security and stability and humanitarian issues, including in relation to the return of refugees and IDPs. We regret that discussion on the most essential humanitarian matter within the Discussions continues to be constantly undermined by the concerted disrespect of the issue shown by the relevant participants. We view today’s draft resolution as an important tool for further encouraging the participants of the Geneva International Discussions to redouble their efforts to address the issues within their respective mandates, including the creation of conditions conducive to a voluntary return in safety and dignity.

We remain seriously concerned about the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Illegal detentions and kidnappings along the occupation line, intensified ethnically targeted human rights violations, the deprivation of the right to life, the prohibition of the right to education in Georgians’ native language, the restriction of the right to freedom of movement, residence and property, and illegally erected razor wires and other artificial obstacles continue to affect the local population’s everyday life. The situation is particularly alarming considering that no international mechanisms are allowed to monitor the situation on the ground. In the complete absence of basic safeguards to monitor the situation in the occupied regions, unimpeded access to those territories for human rights monitoring bodies is of paramount importance. In that context, we welcome the Human Rights Council’s adoption of resolutions 34/37, 37/40 and 40/28, on cooperation with Georgia, which express serious concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation within the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia and call for immediate access to those territories to be granted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international and regional human rights mechanisms.

The GUAM member States reiterate their unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We consider the support for the draft resolution a sign of solidarity with all forcibly displaced persons around the world, as well as a reaffirmation of the international community’s commitment to the fundamental right of return and the right to property and humanitarian access. As in previous years, we will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution and call on all Member States to do the same. With that I conclude my statement on behalf of GUAM, and I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

Ukraine reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression and its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, the situation on the ground has deteriorated dramatically. Ukraine fully condemns the violations and abuses committed by the occupying Power, including discrimination on ethnic grounds,

restrictions on education in the native language of the populations in both Georgian regions and the reported mass demolitions of ethnic Georgians' houses in the Tskhinvali region. We are deeply concerned about the lack of progress on substantive issues, in particular internally displaced persons and returnees, the non-use of force and international security arrangements. We strongly condemn the fact that a large number of IDPs have been deprived of the right to return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner.

I urge the Russian occupying authorities to end their illegal practices and respect their obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law. Ukraine reiterates its demand to the occupying Power, the Russian Federation, to provide immediate and unimpeded access to independent international and regional human rights monitors, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Ukraine will support the adoption of draft resolution A/73/L.89 and calls on other delegations to vote in favour of this important document.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom thanks the Permanent Mission of Georgia for presenting draft resolution A/73/L.89, on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We are pleased to be one of its main co-sponsors.

The United Kingdom deplores the fact that for more than a decade now it has been necessary to reaffirm annually, in the Georgian context, the inalienable rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner, regardless of their ethnic origin. It was for that reason that the United Kingdom was moved this year to co-sponsor the draft resolution. We welcome the fact that our concern is shared by the many other countries that have been similarly moved to sponsor it. This is a humanitarian and human rights issue, and it should not be linked to wider political processes.

There are still more than a quarter of a million registered IDPs in Georgia, a country of less than 4 million people. Many live in difficult and vulnerable conditions. It is important to ensure that the General Assembly sends a message that it has not forgotten them and that it will continue to call for their return home. Indeed, it is perhaps more important to do so

with every year that goes by. The United Kingdom welcomes the Government of Georgia's work to help improve the situation of IDPs, along with the regular reports documenting the human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by both the Government of Georgia and Georgia's Ombudsman for human rights. It is important to see national and international legislation implemented effectively in support of efforts to help and protect the lives of IDPs. The United Kingdom calls on the Russian Federation to stop activities that act as direct impediments to Georgian IDPs' return to their homes. They include intimidation, the destruction of former houses and the construction of fences and barriers designed to hinder freedom of movement across the administrative boundary lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The United Kingdom urges all Member States to vote in favour of this important draft resolution, which is a simple statement of humanitarian principles regarding IDP rights of return. Ultimately, it is actions in the region that will determine progress on this important issue. We therefore urge all sides to use the Geneva International Discussions as the forum for discussing and making progress on humanitarian issues, including issues related to IDPs.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): The United States is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/73/L.89, which reaffirms the commitment of all States to ensuring the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of refugees and persons displaced from the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. We join the supporters of the draft resolution in urging the parties to work towards a comprehensive and durable peace. We particularly support Georgia's further calls on the parties concerned to take immediate steps to ensure respect for human rights and dignity, increase humanitarian access and create favourable security conditions conducive to the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who fled their homes as a result of political turmoil.

We note that the first operative paragraph of the draft resolution, consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recognizes only that no one should be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his or her own country and that in general all persons lawfully within the territory of a State should have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose their residences within that territory. The

Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are integral parts of Georgian territory.

The United States has consistently supported the human rights, dignity and humanitarian needs of IDPs, and we are actively working with the United Nations and other partners to find avenues to bring support and attention to them. The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. In the light of the current situation on the ground, it is essential that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution on Georgia IDPs that is before us today.

Separately, the United States would like to take a moment to honour the heroic protest movement of the Chinese people that ended on 4 June 1989, 30 years ago today, when the Chinese Communist Party leadership sent tanks into Tiananmen Square to repress a peaceful demonstration calling for democracy, human rights and an end to rampant corruption. We express our deep sorrow to the families that are still grieving for their lost ones.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank Georgia for introducing draft resolution A/73/L.89 today. Canada is proud to be one of the main sponsors of this annual resolution, which is an essential reminder of the suffering that people displaced from their own countries endure. The draft resolution also shows how important it is for us to work together to find lasting solutions to assist those affected and promote global peace and stability.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada fully supports Georgia's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We call on Russia to respect its commitments with regard to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and to end its interference in Georgia, in accordance with the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. We condemn Syria's recognition in August 2018 of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent States. We consider the Russian Federation's partnership agreements with the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be illegal and illegitimate.

Canada is deeply concerned about the protracted and ongoing displacements in Georgia. We once again give our full support to draft resolution A/73/L.89, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and

refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia". We continue to call on all participants in the Geneva International Discussions to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace, commit to enhanced confidence-building measures, and create security conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe and unhindered return of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. We are encouraged by Georgia's unilateral efforts to promote socioeconomic integration and humanitarian access for IDPs in the region. As the representative of Ukraine said just now on behalf of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, Canada also urges Member States to express their solidarity with all internally displaced persons and with Georgia by supporting this important draft resolution today.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to congratulate Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad Bande on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. My congratulations also go to the Vice-Presidents and Chairs of the Main Committees elected at this morning's meeting of the Assembly (see A/73/PV.87).

Against the background of a productive morning meeting, we now have to consider draft resolution A/73/L.89, an extremely politicized document dressed up with high-flown humanitarian rhetoric. It would be naive to think that it is dedicated exclusively to concerns about refugees and displaced persons. Its aim is to prevent the normalization of the situation in the region in question and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations between Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia, and rather than holding a dialogue on an equal footing, to impose others' will on their inhabitants and force them to obey. Such approaches do not work with the freedom-loving peoples of the Caucasus.

We deplore the fact that year after year Georgian diplomats and a fixed group of support countries introduce this draft resolution, to the detriment of practical steps to solve the existing humanitarian problems in the region. Their initiative has a serious negative impact on the Geneva International Discussions and complicates the already difficult relationship between our near neighbours, the representatives of the very varied nationalities living in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Today we should be talking about peaceful coexistence in the region and taking the current geopolitical realities into account. It is time for Georgia to make a choice in favour of a constructive

discussion of humanitarian issues rather than launching groundless and senseless attacks on Sukhumi and Tskhinvali in international forums.

The delegation of the Russian Federation requests a vote on draft resolution A/73/L.89 and will vote against it. We urge other delegations that are against the politicization of the work of the General Assembly not to support this draft.

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

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/73/L.89.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/73/L.89, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Belgium, Eswatini, Greece, Liechtenstein, the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Turkey.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/73/L.89, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon

Islands, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, Comoros, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/73/L.89 was adopted by 79 votes to 15, with 57 abstentions (resolution 73/298).

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

Mr. Baror (Israel): Israel welcomes the steps taken by the Government of Georgia to improve the status of internally displaced persons in the areas under its control. We appreciate the work done in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions and their mandate of 12 August 2008, which has led to concrete activities on humanitarian issues, including those related to the protection of the environment, and we support the constructive discussion in that context. Israel also takes a positive view of Georgia's programme of engagement through cooperation, which aims to build trust and confidence among divided communities. We support the spirit of reconciliation through direct dialogue promoted by the Georgian Government.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our support for and recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity. Our position on this and all other similar matters is that the way to resolve conflicts is through negotiation and that any solution must be based on a mutually agreed approach rather than unilateral actions.

Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil): Brazil once again abstained in the voting on resolution 73/298, concerning internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as it could prejudice or influence the consideration of the issue by the interested parties in negotiations in Geneva.

We reiterate that Brazil recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia and hopes that its dispute with the Russian Federation can be settled through peaceful negotiations and dialogue in the very near future. Brazil urges all interested actors to make concrete efforts to find lasting solutions to the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as to make sure that they can safely and fearlessly return to their homelands. Brazil also calls on all the parties to enhance dialogue, cooperate and adopt confidence-building measures aimed at reaching a final settlement to the dispute at hand within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions.

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

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to 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 from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of China,.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China will not accept the statement by the representative

of the United States on Georgia, which included groundless accusations against China.

With regard to the political turmoil of the late 1980s, the Chinese Government long ago came to a clear conclusion. In the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, we have achieved great success, which has fully demonstrated that the development path chosen by China is completely correct and firmly supported by the Chinese people. China will continue to progress along the path of socialism incorporating Chinese characteristics. In his statement just now, the United States representative made a groundless attack on China's political system, relentlessly discrediting China's human rights policy. That constitutes serious interference in China's internal affairs, as well as a violation of the basic norms of international relations. It does damage to the mutual trust between China and the United States, and we voice our categorical rejection.

Some people in the United States are always trying to tell other people what to do and interfering with the internal affairs of other countries on the pretext of democracy and human rights. At the same time, they fail to acknowledge their own internal issues. They have no right to teach China anything, and their attempts to interfere in China's internal affairs and destabilize the country will always fail. We hope that the United States will refrain from acting to the detriment of the mutual trust and good relations between China and the United States. It should refrain from perpetuating its mistakes, or it will become a laughingstock of international society.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.