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President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 69

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1)

The President: I would like to recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September, the General Assembly decided to consider agenda item 69 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281, of 17 June 2011.

It is my honour to welcome Her Excellency Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan for the presentation of the annual report (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1) of the Human Rights Council, which has the responsibility to promote and protect human rights. The mandate of the Human Rights Council is rooted firmly in the three pillars of the United Nations. From addressing gross and systematic violations to the promotion and mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations, the Council has continuously delivered on that mandate.

Over the past 18 months, the pandemic has exacerbated existing human rights crises, which has led to an erosion of human rights as access to the most essential resources, such as water and health, became even more limited. With the world now trying to move into a recovery from the pandemic, human rights can — and must — play a key role in our resolve to ensure that no one is left behind. It must influence our

efforts and perceptions around education, access to vaccines and support to jobs and livelihoods, to name a few areas. On that note, I commend the active role of the Council in promoting the significance of vaccines, particularly through the adoption of resolutions on ensuring equal and fair access and distribution.

One of the priorities of my presidency is focused on human rights. It is my intention throughout the session to instil hope by delivering concrete actions through a human rights lens. That includes actions on vaccines, gender equality and sustainable recovery, as well as climate action. Of particular significance is the high-level event on vaccines that I intend to convene early next year, which will contribute to the aim of achieving universal vaccination for all by the end of 2022.

Similarly, the high-level thematic debate on the theme “Delivering climate action: for people, for planet and for prosperity”, which was held last Tuesday, underscored what the Human Rights Council has recently recognized for the very first time: that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right.

In Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, the Council called on States around the world to work together and with other partners to implement that newly recognized right. The adoption of the resolution and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change is a testament to the Council’s commitment to its work in an ever-changing world. I commend the Council on its pathbreaking work.

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I would like to inform the membership that, pursuant to resolution 75/309, on promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech, 18 June has been proclaimed as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech. The resolution requests the President of the General Assembly to convene an informal high-level meeting on countering hate speech to mark the commemoration of the first such International Day in 2022. I look forward to working with the Council to ensure that the high-level meeting is a success.

I once again congratulate the President of the Human Rights Council for presenting its annual report. I wish everyone a successful session.

In accordance with resolution 65/281, I now give the floor to the President of the Human Rights Council.

Ms. Khan (Fiji), President, Human Rights Council: I am honoured to present the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1) for this year, as mandated by resolution 65/281.

It has been an immense privilege for me to serve as President of the Council during its fifteenth cycle. I continue to take enormous pride in presiding over the United Nations premier human rights body, which continues to spotlight human rights situations across the globe. I present today's report on behalf of the Council and its Bureau, whose support I could not have done without over the past 10 months.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, Eritrea, Finland, the Gambia, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Qatar, Somalia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America for having been elected by the General Assembly earlier this month to serve as members of the Human Rights Council. As members of the Council, those 18 States, along with the 29 continuing members, undertake a great responsibility to uphold the highest standards of human rights, as set out in the Council's founding document, resolution 60/251, which was adopted in this Hall in 2006.

As a result of those elections, as of 1 January 2022 a total of 123 United Nations States Members will have served as members of the Human Rights Council — nearly two thirds of the States represented here. That diversity in membership is one of the

Council's greatest strengths and gives it legitimacy when speaking out on human rights violations in all countries. Today we are faced with many global crises that cannot be addressed by a single nation or region; rather, they require the deep commitment and determination of all States, big and small, represented in this Hall.

Turning to the report, the Human Rights Council has indeed accomplished a lot this year. The Council continued to introduce innovations, break boundaries and set new standards, all against the backdrop of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which continues to disrupt countless lives and livelihoods. As my predecessor informed the Assembly last year (see A/75/PV.21 and A/75/825), the COVID-19 pandemic has in some ways acted as a magnifying glass for pre-existing human rights issues. I could not agree more. In response, the Council has sharpened its focus and resolve on numerous rights challenges posed by the pandemic. It is essential that we continue to do so.

No fewer than 12 reports highlighting multiple human rights dimensions of the pandemic have been presented to the Council this year. Five panel discussions have been held with the same purpose. Four specific resolutions have been adopted to further address the irrefutable link between the COVID-19 pandemic and human rights. Those resolutions recommend ways to ensure that people's rights are respected in the face of the devastating pandemic. They assist and support us as we look towards recovery and prepare better for future health emergencies.

The Council not only managed to successfully complete its mandated tasks for the year, while navigating the obstacles posed by the pandemic, but also continued to lead the way for other United Nations bodies and international organizations by showing great flexibility and innovation through the strengthening of its working methods. Our intention was to ensure that there was no human rights protection gap in the time of global crisis.

For the first time in its 15-year history, in 2021 the Council adopted extraordinary modalities allowing for the decision-making process to take place in a fully virtual manner. First, a virtual roll call voting approach endorsed by Member States was made available at our special session on Myanmar held in February. Subsequently, the Council approved the use of the "e-Recorded votes", a module on the e-deleGATE

platform, for its forty-sixth regular session in March. That module was specially tailored to meet the needs of the Council, with instantaneous and sequential voting.

The Council thereby became the first United Nations intergovernmental body to have used an electronic means for decision-making when in-person meetings were impossible. That allowed its members to electronically cast their votes on 29 of the 45 draft proposals adopted by the Council at the end of its forty-sixth session. Had it not been for the determination, flexibility and innovative approach by all stakeholders, we simply would not have managed to complete our work this year.

The generous provision of use of the Zoom platform and United Nations webcasting in all six official United Nations languages also enabled the Council to successfully continue its work and complete its mandated activities unabated, despite the restrictive conditions.

While we cannot ignore that the virtual modalities had their challenges, the benefits of their application were numerous. For example, the virtual high-level segment in February yielded a record high number of participants — including nine Heads of State and Government and about 121 ministers — many of whom participated for the first time. The common thread in their statements was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights, and the resounding message was that we are all in this together and must work together to overcome the persistent global challenges created by the pandemic.

The overall number of participants in Council meetings and informal negotiations increased as well, because the use of the virtual platform provided a greater degree of accessibility for participants who would in normal circumstances not have been able to travel to Geneva. The Council's steadfast commitment to addressing human rights issues and responding promptly to human rights emergencies was reflected in the need to add extra meetings to our regular sessions this year in order to complete our work. While we have had more meetings and longer sessions, we are extremely conscious of the need to carry out our work as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will continue to work hard to implement various measures for increasing the Council's efficiency.

This year the Council extended more than 17 special procedure and investigative body mandates and

created five new mandates. In total, the Council adopted 83 resolutions, three decisions and one President's statement at its three regular sessions and three special sessions.

Building on its work in 2020 on the issue of the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers, the Council decided during its forty-seventh session in July to establish an international independent expert mechanism, comprising three experts with law enforcement and human rights expertise, to drive transformative change for racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement globally.

In Human Rights Council resolution 48/14, adopted earlier this month, the Council established a new mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change; and in Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, also adopted earlier this month, the Council recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Those two resolutions are the culmination of years of work and the result of strong political will and commitment to address the global environmental crisis and achieve environmental justice.

The Council also established a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. The mandate holder will benefit from additional expertise to be provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and is mandated to ensure accountability for human rights violations and crimes under international law in the country.

In addition, in Human Rights Council resolution 48/16, on the situation of human rights in Burundi, the Council welcomed the steps taken by the Government to reinforce cooperation with the international community and regional organizations and decided to appoint a new Special Rapporteur to monitor the situation of human rights in the country, make recommendations for its improvement and support the Government in fulfilling its human rights obligations.

This year, in its prompt response to human rights emergencies, the Council convened three special sessions to address the human rights situations in Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and Afghanistan.

At its special session on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Council decided to establish an ongoing independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate in the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April.

In addition, the Council extended the mandates of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan; the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya; and the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Council also created a new mandate for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to enhance its monitoring and reporting on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, including on progress in reconciliation and accountability.

The Council also maintained its focus on providing technical assistance and capacity-building by deciding to continue the mandates for individual mandate holders on Cambodia, Mali and Somalia, while also extending and expanding the mandate of the team of international experts on the situation in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which now covers the entire country. In addition, in Human Rights Council resolution 47/13, adopted in July, the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide advice and technical assistance in order to strengthen the capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the criminal justice system.

Allow me to turn briefly to the Human Rights Council resolutions that contain specific recommendations for the General Assembly. This year the Council recommended that the General Assembly submit the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar to relevant United Nations bodies for their consideration and appropriate action, and that the Assembly submit the reports of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to the Security Council for appropriate action. The Council also recommended that the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic continue briefing the Security Council and the General Assembly. In addition, Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable

environment, which I mentioned previously, invites the General Assembly to consider the matter.

As well as its regular sessions, the Human Rights Council convened two sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, and it will convene the third session of the Working Group next week, from 1 to 12 November. That universal peer-to-peer review mechanism, which focuses on improving the human rights situation on the ground through nationally owned processes led by Governments, with the constructive engagement of other national stakeholders and the support of the international community, continues to celebrate 100 per cent participation by all Member States. To date, a total of 168 Member States have been reviewed in the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, with an additional 14 States due for review next week.

Through the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, about 25 countries have requested assistance this year. I would like to highlight the importance of donor countries using their overseas development assistance to support the efforts of States to implement human rights recommendations — especially States that are already recipients of development assistance and States in which the recommendations of donor countries have been accepted by the State under review.

The Council's other subsidiary bodies have also continued their important work despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. This year the Council's think tank — its Advisory Committee — submitted four thematic reports — on gender equality, new and emerging digital technologies, ways and means of assessing the situation of racial equality in the world, and the negative effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights. The confidential work of the Council's complaints procedure also yielded several positive achievements at the national level on issues such as the death penalty, the deprivation of nationality to avoid statelessness and worker's rights.

I am also pleased to report that, throughout 2021, the Council's Task Force on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, which was established in 2011 with a mandate to enhance the accessibility of the Council and its mechanisms for persons with disabilities, continued to work towards the full implementation of the United

Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy in the work of the Council. In that regard, the Council held 11 fully accessible debates this year.

The Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council also continued to strengthen the national capacities of the least developed countries and small island developing States to advance the enjoyment of human rights. Despite COVID-19-related restrictions, the Trust Fund supported the participation of a total of 19 representatives in the regular sessions of the Council.

In Human Rights Council decision 46/115, adopted in March, the Council decided to convene a high-level panel discussion to mark the tenth anniversary of the Trust Fund, with a record number 160 Member States sponsoring it. As a national of a small island developing State, I am deeply grateful to those that have contributed so generously to that important initiative, which allows representatives from around the world to participate in our meetings, especially those without permanent representation in Geneva, and take their unique experiences back home.

The work of the Council would not be complete without the invaluable role played by civil society. Their voices speak to the conscience of the Council and their contributions bring truth to power. This year alone, civil society representatives delivered approximately 900 statements, while some 260 civil society organizations participated in our meetings, sometimes at great risk to their own personal safety.

In order to achieve our common goal of guaranteeing all human rights for everyone around the world, it is imperative that we continue to remain inclusive and representative and build strong relations with civil society and reserve a safe space for them. To that end, I am pleased to report that, at its latest session, the Council adopted without a vote, for the first time, a resolution on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (Human Rights Council resolution 48/17).

The Human Rights Council continues to demonstrate to the world that it is a body well-poised to address crises, both protracted and looming, even when faced with extraordinary challenges. It has demonstrated great flexibility, creativity and determination in carrying out its mandate. I have no doubt that it will continue to

achieve significant results and make positive impacts on the lives of people. We must never lose sight of those whom we serve. We have a collective moral duty to speak out for those who cannot speak, champion their causes and work towards the protection and promotion of human rights everywhere.

The work of the Council is vital to the work carried out here in New York, and vice versa. We have seen many discussions extend across the various United Nations bodies and forums, reinforcing the pillars upon which the United Nations is built — human rights, peace and security, and development. In order for the United Nations to live up to its full potential, it is essential that we continue to strengthen our cooperation, build new bridges and work collectively.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to take the floor on behalf of the delegations of Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nicaragua, the State of Palestine, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria, Zimbabwe and my own country, Venezuela, all members of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

First of all, we would like to congratulate Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan for her leadership of the Human Rights Council during its fifteenth cycle, corresponding to 2021. We would like to express appreciation to her for the presentation of the report of the Council (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1) to the General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 60/251, of which we have taken due note.

The Group of Friends considers the Charter of the United Nations to be a milestone and a true act of faith in the best of humankind. It is the code of conduct that has ruled international relations among States for the past 76 years, based on such timeless principles as the self-determination of peoples, the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Those are all basic norms and principles that, apart from being the foundation for international law, remain as relevant today as they were in 1945.

We therefore believe that ensuring compliance with, and strict adherence to, both the letter and spirit of

the United Nations Charter is fundamental for ensuring the realization of the Organization's three pillars and moving towards the establishment of a more peaceful and prosperous world and a truly just and equitable world order. In that context, we would like to express our serious concern at the current and growing threats against the United Nations Charter.

We refer, *inter alia*, to the growing resort to unilateralism; attacks on multilateralism; claims of a non-existent exceptionalism; attempts to ignore and even substitute the purposes and principles set out in the Charter, with a new set of so-called rules that have never been discussed in an inclusive or transparent manner; and selective approaches to, or accommodative interpretations of, the provisions of the Charter. Those practices have resulted, as history proves, in massive violations of human rights and other tenets of international law, which in many cases remain unpunished to date.

Seventy-six years ago, the international community rallied around a series of common purposes and principles, all set out in the United Nations Charter, and declared their commitment to defend life, freedom, independence, justice and human rights, the latter being precisely one of the three fundamental pillars of our Organization. Therefore, achieving the full enjoyment of human rights in all their dimensions represents a noble ideal and objective that is more relevant than ever today.

The Group of Friends attaches supreme value to the promotion and protection of all human rights — both individual and collective rights — including the right to development, without distinction on the basis of levels or categories. We also believe that their promotion and protection is enhanced by dialogue and cooperation, in line with the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation and in the context of equality and mutual respect among States. We reject all kinds of double standards that undermine human rights and prevent a harmonious environment and progress in this domain.

We are concerned by the proliferation of unilateral mechanisms that seek to carry out an impartial assessment of the human rights situation in specific States, particularly when they do not have the due consent and participation of those States. The continuation of that practice infringes upon the

spirit that must guide the higher ideals to achieve the genuine promotion and protection of human rights and also represents a clear violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which has committed us to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind. We recall, in that regard, that the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council is the appropriate mechanism for discussing human rights situations in a constructive manner.

In conclusion, while calling for an end to the politicization of human rights, the Group of Friends reaffirms its willingness to continue contributing to the institutional strengthening of the Human Rights Council on the basis of an approach that promotes multilateralism and is complemented transparently with other United Nations bodies. If we really seek to advance universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, we must have consensual political and diplomatic mechanisms for their promotion and protection. We must also prevent the name of our Organization — the United Nations — and the spirit that should guide its endeavours from being misused for goals that are contrary to the purposes and principles enshrined in its very own founding Charter.

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

Mr. Forax (European Union): The European Union (EU) and its member States warmly welcome Ambassador Khan to New York and thank her for the presentation of the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1).

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro, and the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina align themselves with this statement.

The Human Rights Council often spearheads the evolution of international human rights, including in new fields as it did during the forty-eighth session in a landmark resolution that recognizes that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right and calls upon all States to take urgent action to give it immediate effect (Human Rights Council resolution 48/13). In her dialogue with the Third Committee held two weeks ago, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet relayed that call.

The Human Rights Council also continues to respond to acute human rights crises, as it demonstrated this year by holding special sessions on Myanmar, on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and on Afghanistan, as well as through new initiatives such as the one proposed by the EU on Belarus. The EU welcomes the capacity of the Human Rights Council not only to address violations and abuses of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and abuses, but also to respond promptly to human rights emergencies and improve human rights standards and their implementation worldwide through systematic work on relevant thematic issues.

We regret that the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts was not renewed during the latest session of the Human Rights Council, in spite of the dire humanitarian situation and the unabated human rights violations and abuses committed on the ground.

We welcome other recent decisions of the Human Rights Council, including those concerning the establishment of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi; the renewal of the mandates of the Fact-Finding Mission on Libya and of the Special Rapporteurs on the human rights situation in Belarus, Eritrea and Iran, among others; the call for additional resources for the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar; the reporting requested from the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Tigray; the work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar; and a number of other country situations.

The EU is supportive of establishing more synergies between the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee, while at the same time ensuring that the mandate, independence and work of the Council is respected. We also underline the importance of the Human Rights Council making use of existing mechanisms to play a stronger prevention role, including by transferring reports and other materials to the General Assembly and the Security Council when relevant. A stronger link between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council is key: peace and security and human rights belong together. We also regret that the briefing to the Human Rights Council by the Peacebuilding Commission has not yet been held, and we hope that it will be held soon.

The EU also reiterates the complementarity of country-specific resolutions and accountability mechanisms with the Universal Periodic Review, the system of special procedures and all other mechanisms of the Council. We welcome the Council's commitment to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to Governments that need it.

We follow with interest the ongoing discussion in Geneva on the efficiency of the Human Rights Council and look forward to the outcome of the work of the co-facilitators on the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, whom the President appointed earlier this year. With regard to the Human Rights Council status review, we share the President of the Council's views that the General Assembly should involve the Council so that it may provide its expertise in the process whenever it starts.

With regard to the United Nations treaty bodies, the EU calls on the treaty body Chairs to increase their efforts with a view to the establishment of a predictable calendar of review cycles, as well as the introduction of harmonized, streamlined and modern working methods. While we acknowledge the flexibility shown in adopting virtual working methods during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we urge the Chairs to make rapid progress, on the basis of previous reports of the Chair and based on last year's recommendations of the co-facilitators on the future of the treaty body system.

The EU remains committed to a strong Human Rights Council, in particular to the mandate holders it appoints and the renewal of their mandates. Special procedures must keep their freedom to choose the themes of their reports without feeling under the threat of a non-renewal of their mandate. Any kind of pressure against mandate holders is unacceptable. The EU also calls upon States to cooperate with the special procedures and give them access.

The EU strongly condemns acts of intimidation and reprisal against those who have cooperated, cooperate or seek to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms, including in New York and Geneva. Those actions simply cannot be tolerated, and the United Nations system must more actively oppose them.

The EU supports the close involvement of civil society in the work of the General Assembly, including the Third Committee. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has rather hampered the exercise of that right,

at least here in New York. We therefore look forward to a meeting of the Committee with civil society following the current session of the Third Committee, and we observe with interest that the Human Rights Council has managed to involve civil society more closely in its work.

Two weeks ago, new Human Rights Council members for the period 2022 to 2024 were elected by the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.19). We welcome the diverse membership of the Human Rights Council and encourage countries that have never been members to consider their candidatures. The EU also wishes to reiterate that, in paragraph 9, resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council, makes clear that Council members “shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights” and “shall fully cooperate with the Council”. We expect all Human Rights Council members to adhere to those important principles. All 27 EU member States have issued a standing invitation to all special procedures, and the EU institutions have received all their visits upon their request. We encourage all members to do the same.

We regret that not all candidates have participated in the meeting on commitments organized by a group of non-governmental organizations ahead of the election. We believe that it would be useful to jointly and actively encourage all candidates to participate next year.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the EU’s ongoing commitment to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council and further strengthen its role in the protection and development of international human rights law and the prevention of human rights violations and abuses. We will continue to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, strongly advocate for the universality of human rights and promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Zellenrath (Netherlands): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate with the President of the Human Rights Council.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 37 countries, namely, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

Malta, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and my own country, the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The human rights situation in Yemen is dire. The fourth report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts outlines a litany of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by parties to the conflict in the period from July 2020 to June 2021, including those involving indiscriminate and disproportionate shelling and air strikes; attacks on medical facilities and schools; failing to abide by international human law principles; humanitarian restrictions such as obstacles to access to food and health care; arbitrary detention and forced disappearances; gender-based violence, including sexual violence; torture; denial of fair trial rights; prosecution of and violations and abuses against journalists, human rights defenders, persons belonging to minorities, migrants and internally displaced persons; and shocking violations and abuses of children’s rights.

In 2017, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts was mandated to examine alleged violations and abuses of international human rights. We deeply regret that the Group’s mandate was not extended at the most recent session of the Human Rights Council. As the conflict in Yemen enters its seventh year, there continues to be an urgent need for independent and impartial monitoring and investigations into all alleged violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and human rights abuses by parties to the conflict.

It remains vitally important to identify and use all opportunities within the United Nations system to assess the facts on the ground in an impartial manner and work towards accountability and a just and inclusive peace for the people of Yemen. It is imperative that the international community come together to actively explore further alternative mechanisms to monitor the human rights situation in Yemen and ensure accountability. Together we must end impunity.

I would like to ask President Khan: in the light of what I mentioned earlier in this statement, now that the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts has ended, what role does she see for the Human Rights Council in ensuring human rights

monitoring and accountability on behalf of the people of Yemen?

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela and my own country, Yemen.

Allow us, at the outset, to thank the Human Rights Council President, Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, for being with us and to express our utmost appreciation for the Human Rights Council's efforts to promote human rights around the world. We would like to reiterate our support for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as our unwavering commitment to monitoring and investigating all alleged violations and holding perpetrators accountable in accordance with applicable international and domestic laws.

In that regard, we welcome the Human Rights Council decision to not extend the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts. The Group's work failed to meet the applicable standards of reporting. Those shortcomings were clearly recognized by a majority of the members of the Human Rights Council.

We further welcome Human Rights Council resolution 48/21, which recognized the primary responsibility of a State to promote and protect human rights, which in turn highlights the importance of supporting and relying on national mechanisms in that regard.

In particular, the resolution requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide technical and logistical support to the Independent Yemeni National Commission of Inquiry. Continuing the support for that national mechanism, including through substantive capacity-building and technical assistance, will ensure human rights monitoring, investigation and accountability on behalf of the people of Yemen, while maintaining the international community's strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen, and indeed of all Member States.

The politicization of human rights matters in Yemen will only prolong the war. We believe that the only

sustainable solution to the crisis in Yemen is a political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. Otherwise, the Yemeni people will continue to suffer from a lack of progress in that regard.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her work, and we appreciate this opportunity for exchange here in New York.

Human rights need to be at the heart of our efforts both in Geneva and in New York. Human rights need to be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system and be provided with the necessary adequate funding. We see room for improvement in both respects, especially with a view to the nexus between peace and security and human rights. We strongly believe that the briefing by the Peacebuilding Commission Chair to the Human Rights Council adds to the necessary mainstreaming, and we express our hope and expectation that it will be held soon.

Addressing the challenges of our times requires a strong and human rights-based approach. That applies to climate change, new and emerging digital technologies, gender equality and many other topics. Germany welcomes the important steps taken in that regard, such as the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, as well as the recognition by the Human Rights Council, at its forty-eighth session, of the right to a healthy environment.

We are also committed to the important role and contributions of civil society for all pillars of the United Nations. We wish to ask the President of the Human Rights Council the following: how does the Council contribute to the Secretary-General's prevention agenda? Also, what more could the Human Rights Council do if it were better funded?

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her leadership in ensuring business continuity during the pandemic and welcome the use of electronic voting by the Council during this time, in line with decision 75/510. We appreciate this opportunity to flag some of

the key aspects of the work of the Council, which is the key United Nations human rights body, during the reporting period.

We welcome the Council's decision to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy as well as the recent adoption of resolution 48/4, on that topic. That is particularly relevant in the time of the pandemic, given the complex and much-discussed relationship of privacy rights with other human rights and the demands of public health policies.

We also strongly believe in the responsibility of Governments and business enterprises to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms online and offline. The United Nations system should play a leading role in ensuring transparency in the development and use of new technologies in fields such as surveillance, artificial intelligence and automatic decision-making.

We appreciate the Council's convening of special sessions on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and Afghanistan, which, however, should have resulted in stronger outcomes. The situation in Myanmar has deteriorated significantly since the coup carried out by military forces in February. The use of lethal force and violence against civilians and the arbitrary detention of politicians, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society members are just some of the massive human rights violations perpetrated as part of an attack against the civilian population.

We reiterate the call of the General Assembly to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar. We also welcome the important steps taken by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court to investigate atrocity crimes, such as those against the Rohingya, and to end impunity, which has been at the root of the ongoing violence.

We are acutely troubled by the recent developments in Afghanistan, in particular the stark humanitarian situation in the country, as well as human rights violations, especially against women and girls. We urge those effectively in control to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The United Nations has a special responsibility with respect to that situation. We also recall the importance of the mandate of the International Criminal Court for investigating crimes committed by all conflict parties.

We regret that the situation of human rights in Belarus, which was discussed at an urgent debate of the Human Rights Council held in 2020, has continued to worsen in spite of calls from the Council and other bodies. We condemn human rights violations in that country, most recently the exploitation of vulnerable migrants to place political pressure on neighbouring States, and we call on the Government to fully cooperate with the mandates established by the Council.

It is very disappointing that the Council was unable to agree on the continuation of the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, one of the most problematic developments in the Council in recent years. Accountability for crimes committed is indispensable, both for those who have been victimized and in order to allow the country to move towards reconciliation and a future sustainable peace. If the Human Rights Council is no longer able to help chart that way forward, the Assembly in particular is asked to step in.

Resolution 60/251, the founding resolution of the Human Rights Council, provides that the Council's members shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. Its members, both newly elected and incumbent, should be faithful to that mandate, as it is a prerequisite for the Council's effectiveness. We call on the members of the Council to cooperate fully with the United Nations human rights system, including by issuing standing invitations to special procedures and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We strongly believe in the special procedure system and the Universal Periodic Review, as well as a strong role for civil society, which was also flagged by the President of the Council this morning. Human rights defenders are often at the front lines of the fight to promote and protect human rights and defend democracy, and their voices need to be heard clearly in the halls of the United Nations. We therefore also expect that civil society members will be allowed access to United Nations premises here in New York as expeditiously as possible. We strongly condemn all acts of retaliation and reprisals against them and are concerned by the misuse of legislation and pandemic prevention measures to erode human rights.

We welcome this debate as an important opportunity to engage in the work of the Council. But we also see much room for more synergy between

the Human Rights Council and the political bodies here in New York throughout the year, with respect to both the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and questions concerning the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Ahmed (Maldives): I would like to thank Her Excellency Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan of Fiji, President of the Human Rights Council, and her Bureau for guiding the Council's work this year. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and her Office for their commitment to advancing human rights globally. This year's report (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1) once again demonstrates the importance of the Human Rights Council as the forum of global conscience.

The Council's mission, which is to ensure that violations of human rights and dignity are met not with apathy but with the full weight of the world's attention and scrutiny, is vital in today's world. The Maldives has prioritized the promotion and protection of human rights as an integral component of the Government's domestic reform agenda and foreign policy. That includes deepening our engagement with international human rights bodies.

In that regard, in June 2019, we welcomed the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights to the Maldives, followed by the visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture in November 2019. We warmly welcome more engagement and visits from special procedures mandate holders and again reiterate our standing invitation.

Last week, the Maldives successfully completed its review of the sixth periodic report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. We were represented by a multisectoral delegation of 30 high-level representatives, led by the Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services, Her Excellency Ms. Aishath Mohamed Didi, with participation from all three branches of the State.

Last year the honourable Aisha Shujune Muhammad, one of the first female Maldivian Supreme Court justices, was elected to the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Last year also saw the review of the Maldives during the thirty-sixth Universal Periodic Review, providing

us with an opportunity to highlight the significant progress made under the current administration in the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as to constructively engage with the international community in concluding the review. Our Government accepted 187 of the 259 Member State recommendations.

The report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review noted the significant progress achieved by the Maldives in the area of human rights in recent years. The Government's reforms have included the establishment of the Presidential Commission on Investigation of Murders and Enforced Disappearances, the Presidential Commission on Corruption and State Asset Recovery and presidential committees focused on unfair dismissals and corruption.

One of the salient lessons of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is that human rights protection cannot rest on the establishment of rules and institutions alone — it requires constant vigilance. The pandemic exposed the fragilities of domestic and international institutions and challenged the underlying norms of equality and fraternity. Human rights were too often bypassed in national responses to the pandemic, rather than human rights informing those responses. Sidelining human rights has real world consequences for billions of people, and women and girls disproportionately bear the most negative consequences.

Recognizing the importance of financial security as the cornerstone of gender equality, the Maldives initiated a basic safety net as part of our COVID-19 pandemic response, which included providing income support mechanisms, debt moratoriums and tax relief programmes. We managed to provide that response despite the negative impact of the pandemic on our tourism-dominated economy due to international travel restrictions. That shows the Government's commitment to protecting human rights.

I would like to note Human Rights Council resolution 47/15, entitled "Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities". In that regard, to further enhance the rights of women and children, the Maldives recently withdrew several reservations to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signed the declaration under article 22

of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. On 1 October 2020, the Maldives judicially recorded the first conviction for marital rape in a historic verdict, an important step in our efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

I would also like to note Human Rights Council resolutions 46/7, on human rights and the environment, and 47/24, on human rights and climate change, as well as the landmark Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, which recognized for the first time the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and Human Rights Council resolution 48/14, which established a Special Rapporteur on climate change given that it poses an undeniable threat to almost all human rights, from the rights to health, housing and employment to the fundamental right to a life with dignity.

To small island developing States such as the Maldives, climate change and environmental degradation are existential threats. We lack the required resources to adequately respond to those multidimensional threats to our very existence. The economic toll of climate change and the pandemic threatened the precarious fiscal balance the State must maintain in relation to sovereign debt. Under those conditions, an onerous debt burden would risk evolving into a crisis of debt distress.

In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the world must redouble its efforts to alleviate such pressures through increased access to concessional financing. The unpalatable alternative would see a regression on development gains and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We have limited funds, which are directed towards debt servicing at the expense of other important investments in climate resilience and the realization of human rights.

This year's report of the Council highlights the devastating conditions of many who are denied a life with dignity. The Maldives expresses deep concern about the deteriorating human rights crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, which was further exacerbated by the pandemic. We reiterate our call for an internationally agreed two-State solution with an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is the only way to achieve long-lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

The Maldives denounces the military coup in Myanmar and calls upon the military regime to return power to the civilian Government, in line with democratic norms. We also reiterate our call upon Myanmar to cease all hostilities and atrocities committed against the Rohingya people and for permanent repatriation efforts to be conducted humanely and swiftly.

Respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights and gender equality informs all Maldivian policy, foreign and domestic. The continuing work of the Council is vital in facilitating international cooperation and accountability in that area. We remain committed to working with Member States towards a peaceful, sustainable and secure future for all.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): I first wish to thank Her Excellency Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the Human Rights Council, for her presentation.

The Philippines reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights, which are entrenched in our Constitution and our national development framework. We believe that we must uphold the Human Rights Council as a venue for genuine cooperation, open dialogue and constructive engagement. The Council must observe the highest standards of balance, fairness and objectivity in its discourse and must conduct its work in the spirit of inclusivity and with full respect for the sovereignty and the national processes of Member States.

We oppose the politically motivated use of human rights. Country-specific resolutions that do not have the support of the State concerned stand little chance of making a meaningful difference on the ground, and they are therefore a waste of resources.

We regret that the programme budget implications of country-specific resolutions mostly involve salaries and travel and make scarce provisions for actual projects that benefit concerned communities. Even the structure of the programme budget implications of draft resolutions under agenda item 10 need a drastic reformulation to ensure that they are fit for the purpose of generating concrete and positive change. We see merit in broader discussions to assess the cost of the Council's actions vis-à-vis their impact on the ground with a view to further exploring pathways for more useful and depoliticized actions that invest in national institutions and communities.

The Philippines-United Nations joint programme on human rights, signed on 22 July, is the result of genuine cooperation and a model for constructive engagement on human rights between a Member State and the United Nations. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet affirmed the joint programme as an important milestone that represents a transformative approach to human-rights-based reforms. It is a cohesive and inclusive technical cooperation framework that brings together the Philippine Government, United Nations agencies, our national human rights institutions and the stakeholders of projects on accountability and the rule of law.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator has a crucial and central role in the joint programme, which is fully integrated into the strategic framework of the United Nations and the Philippines, which was updated last year, allowing for broader integration with the work being undertaken by the United Nations in our country. Instead of a piecemeal approach to human rights, the United Nations now has one voice, one strategy and one budget in the Philippines.

The joint programme also brings together the expertise of United Nations technical agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, among other agencies. The Philippines has committed \$200,000 for 2022 and invites Member States to support the programme.

Finally, we wish to convey our full support for the President of the Human Rights Council and her excellent work in promoting inclusivity in the Council, facilitating dialogue between States and OHCHR, including on the matter of programme budget implications, and pursuing practical initiatives that serve to address the legitimate concerns of States with respect to visibility, transparency and access to State responses to press releases and reports of the OHCHR.

Mr. Ilnytskyi (Ukraine): We believe that one of the main responsibilities of the Human Rights Council is to react in a timely and appropriate manner to human rights situations that require its urgent attention. We are pleased to acknowledge that, despite the continuing realities of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic during the reporting period, the Council

demonstrated its ability to respond to emergency situations in the field of human rights.

I would like to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the President of the Council, the Ambassador of Fiji, Her Excellency Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, and to commend her experience and devotion and her able and effective management of the activities of the Human Rights Council against the backdrop of continuing uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our colleagues in Geneva made the right choice when they voted for Ambassador Khan's candidature for the presidency.

In our view, the extraordinary modalities of this year's sessions of the Human Rights Council were applied rather successfully. Moreover, thanks to a virtual format, a number of dignitaries were able to participate in the high-level segment.

At the same time, we witnessed attempts to use the COVID-19 crisis to divert the attention of the Council from the human rights violations being committed by States, including in the occupied territories in the heart of Europe. The dire humanitarian situation caused by the spread of COVID-19 must not be exploited to escape international legal responsibility.

During the forty-sixth through forty-eighth sessions of the Human Rights Council, the representatives of the occupying Power in Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol delivered a number of statements on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, claiming to represent the people of Crimea.

In that regard, I wish to once again recall resolution 68/262, which calls upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and to refrain from any action or dealing that might be interpreted as recognizing any such altered status.

Considering the substance of that provision, it is apparent that the consistent efforts by the Russian Federation to push through the participation of representatives of Crimea's occupation authorities in the proceedings of the Human Rights Council as part of its delegation are directed towards exploiting the Council as a diplomatic tool in its ongoing aggression against Ukraine. We strongly believe that the provisions of General Assembly resolutions concerning the status of Crimea and representatives of the Russian occupation

administration have to be strictly adhered to in the work of the Council.

Ukraine was among the countries that enthusiastically supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council. Regrettably, recent years have demonstrated that adherence to the highest standards in human rights protection is not always a prerequisite for countries to be elected to the Council, thereby harming its credibility. Such an attitude can only weaken the Human Rights Council, making it indulgent towards human rights violators. Human Rights Council members are supposed to demonstrate their commitment to the highest standards of human rights, including their full cooperation with all United Nations mechanisms as set forth in resolution 60/251.

In that regard, we welcome the return of the United States to the Council, which should bring more democracy to that central human rights body. As a member of the Human Rights Council until 2023, Ukraine exerts every effort to ensure that the Human Rights Council fulfils its mandate responsibly and effectively and will keep working with partners to further promote and protect human rights globally. We will strive to increase transparency in the work of the Council, which that body sometimes lacks.

Amid tremendous challenges, it is extremely important to ensure that the Human Rights Council be actively engaged in multilateral endeavours to defend, promote and protect human rights globally, prevent their abuses and violations and enhance the international community's response to emerging threats to human security and human rights. Ukraine needs a Council that can become a genuine, uncompromising platform for defending human rights, including the human rights of those who suffer under Russian occupation in Crimea and Donbas, who have become political hostages deprived of their freedom by the Kremlin regime. The Government of Ukraine will continue to take further measures to ensure the proper protection of the rights and freedoms of all persons living in the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Ukraine also continues to pay special attention to the issue of technical assistance. We appreciate the contribution of the Human Rights Council and its special procedures to addressing the current human rights situation in Ukraine, including in occupied Crimea. The resolutions on cooperation and assistance

to Ukraine in the field of human rights that have been adopted since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014, as well as the interactive dialogues on Ukraine held at each session of the Council and during its intersessional periods, are important tools for providing the international community with objective information about the real human rights situation in Ukraine.

Mr. Manolo (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The comprehensive and timely reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", which were submitted to the Human Rights Council in June (A/HRC/47/58) and to the General Assembly in September (A/76/260) pursuant to resolution 75/192, represent a valuable account of the numerous violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the occupying Power in the Ukrainian peninsula. The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly should continue to work in tandem to address the pressing issue of the gross human rights violations by the Russian aggressor on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

It is also important that the reports and the recommendations contained therein be respected and duly implemented. Therefore, Ukraine has submitted to the Third Committee a substantially improved draft resolution on human rights in Crimea based on those reports (A/C.3/76/L.29). We would appreciate the support and co-sponsorship of Member States and look forward to the consideration of the draft resolution in the Third Committee later this month.

Ms. Khachidze (Georgia): At the outset, I would like to thank the Human Rights Council President, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, her team, the Bureau and the Secretariat for their outstanding work despite the challenges that continue to be imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The crisis caused by the pandemic has served as a reminder of the fragile nature of our societies and has emphasized the interconnected and interrelated nature of human rights. It has also threatened to undermine progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and efforts to achieve a sustainable world as promised by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

However, despite those challenges, the pandemic offered us an opportunity to strengthen human rights

protection systems in a more resolute manner. We fully agree with the President of the Human Rights Council that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that human rights standards, in combination with our shared commitments to achieve the SDGs, guide us in recovering from the global health and human rights crisis. The role of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms throughout that process remains significant.

As a candidate for Human Rights Council membership for the period 2023 to 2025, Georgia continued its active engagement with the work of the Council throughout the year, contributing to its growing inclusivity and focus on initiatives concerning human rights defenders, inclusive civil society participation and the advancement of rights of the most vulnerable groups, with special emphasis on children, women, girls and internally displaced persons.

I would like to highlight that Georgia, as a member of the core group of sponsors of the draft resolution on promoting, protecting and respecting women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights in humanitarian situations, attaches great importance to the prevention of violations and abuses of the human rights of women and girls in humanitarian situations. We appreciate the cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. I would also like to emphasize the important role of the High Commissioner and her Office in providing technical assistance to countries, including Georgia, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We uphold the universality of the Universal Periodic Review, one of the key mechanisms of the United Nations human rights machinery. Georgia underwent its third review in January. We will spare no effort to ensure the implementation of the recommendations accepted. I would like to reiterate our full support for the special procedures. Georgia has extended a standing invitation to all special procedures mandate holders, has already hosted several visits and looks forward to providing continued cooperation.

We also believe that the effective work of the Council depends greatly on the universal participation of all United Nations States Members, and for that reason we contributed to supporting the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the work of the human Rights Council in previous years.

During the reporting year, the Council adopted very significant substantive and country-specific resolutions. I would like to highlight resolution 46/30, on cooperation with Georgia, which calls for immediate access to be given to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international and regional human rights mechanisms to the Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region.

Regrettably, despite the repeated efforts of the High Commissioner, her Office and other human rights monitoring actors have been prevented by the occupying Power from entering those regions. The subsequent report of the High Commissioner (A/HRC/48/45) duly demonstrates that the pandemic has aggravated the already dire human rights and humanitarian situation in the Russian-occupied regions of Georgia. The report refers to human rights violations resulting from discrimination on ethnic grounds, particularly affecting ethnic Georgians, including restrictions on the freedom of movement, access to personal documentation and the rights to education and property.

Unfortunately, despite the pandemic, the list of specific human rights violations in the Russia-occupied regions of Georgia is long and includes, but is not limited to, deprivation of life, torture and ill treatment, kidnappings and arbitrary detentions and violation of the right to health. Dozens have died due to denial of medical evacuation to the Georgian cultural territory.

Alarmingly, justice has not been served for the killings of Georgian citizens in the Russia-occupied regions, and the perpetrators of those crimes remain at large. As much as the Russian Federation tries to deny its responsibilities, the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights has legally attested that Russia was responsible for the massive human rights violations committed against the Georgian population as it exercised effective control over the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia.

Therefore, there must be a consolidated approach on the part of international society to firmly remind the Russian Federation of its responsibility to comply with the European-Union-mandated ceasefire agreement, withdraw its military forces from the territory of Georgia, allow international security and human rights mechanisms to obtain access on the ground and cease grave human rights violations in those regions.

We believe that Human Rights Council resolution 46/30 and the subsequent report of the High Commissioner (A/HRC/48/45) represent valuable instruments for keeping the focus on the developments on the ground. Therefore, we need to keep that issue high on the international agenda. With that in mind, we plan to submit a draft resolution on that issue again during the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, to be held next year.

In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Georgia's readiness to continue its efforts to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights at national and international levels, leaving no one behind and building back better.

Mr. Muller (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for her statement and her commitment over the past year, especially in the current context complicated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Switzerland would like to take this opportunity to highlight the following three points for the attention of the President of the Human Rights Council: cooperation between Geneva and New York, accountability for human rights violations and the role of civil society.

First, Switzerland welcomes this exchange, which strengthens the connection between Geneva and New York. We remain convinced that it is essential to mainstream human rights throughout the United Nations system. Switzerland reiterates that only human rights-based approaches can provide lasting solutions to promote peace, security and sustainable development. The same is true for the response to the pandemic and rebuilding for a post COVID-19 world. The three pillars of the United Nations must therefore work closely together, in particular to ensure effective prevention.

In that context, we regret that the briefing to the Human Rights Council by the President of the Peacebuilding Commission, in keeping with Human Rights Council resolution 45/31, on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations, could not be held in September. We hope that it will be held as soon as possible.

Cooperation between New York and Geneva will remain a priority for Switzerland, and we will continue to strengthen it. In that spirit, Switzerland remains committed to an open, transparent and inclusive dialogue with all States and other stakeholders in Geneva and New York on the right to a clean, healthy

and sustainable environment. The recognition of that right by the Human Rights Council at its latest session — through Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, which was jointly submitted by Costa Rica, Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia and my own country, Switzerland — sends a strong political signal that ties in with the Secretary-General's call in his report on *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982).

Our second point concerns accountability. Switzerland is deeply concerned about the human rights violations and abuses that continue to be perpetrated in all regions of the world. In order to ensure respect for, and the protection of, human rights and fight impunity, we need regular and reliable mechanisms to monitor their implementation. Switzerland therefore strongly supports the work of the human rights treaty bodies, the system of special procedures, the commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and the International Criminal Court.

We encourage all States to cooperate fully with all such mechanisms, which are crucial to achieving justice for victims and preventing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in future. Those mechanisms are essential for security, reconciliation and building sustainable peace. In that context, Switzerland deeply regrets that the Human Rights Council did not renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen at its latest session. In contrast, we welcome that the Human Rights Council addressed emergency situations in special sessions again this year.

In conclusion, Switzerland wishes to reiterate the crucial role of civil society in respecting, promoting and protecting human rights. Its commitment is indispensable to the work of the United Nations. In that context, Switzerland is concerned that the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (A/HRC/48/28), which was introduced to the Human Rights Council by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, mentions reprisals and intimidation against members of civil society, including journalists. Switzerland calls on States to take all the measures necessary to put an end to those unacceptable practices.

In that regard, Switzerland regrets the measures introduced to respond to the pandemic that restrict civil society's access to the United Nations. Public health

emergencies must never be used as a pretext to impede civil society's access to the United Nations. It is high time to open the doors to civil society, including human rights defenders, in order to achieve more inclusive and effective multilateralism.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations does not frequently respond to the baseless, one-sided and outright falsehoods of the Human Rights Council's accusations against Israel. But there comes a time when the lies must be answered. There comes a time when staying silent is no longer an option. There comes a time for the truth to be told. And that time is long overdue.

This year the Human Rights Council once again let us all down. It has let Member States down. It has let down all those who serve our nations in this body. It has let the world down. Bestowed with the sacred task of defending human rights, it continues to get it wrong. It has let down people all over the world who endure human rights abuses every day, every hour, every minute. But their voices are not heard. The voices of the victims of the terrible crimes against humanity that we have already seen in the first decades of this century cannot be heard over the obsession of the so-called Human Rights Council with targeting Israel.

Yes, the Human Rights Council has failed the victims of human rights abuses all around the world. But that does not come as surprise, as the Human Rights Council spends most of its time focused on Israel, adopting a total of 95 resolutions against the only Jewish State.

It has let down the people of North Korea, who are starved and imprisoned by their leadership. Yet the Human Rights Council has spoken against those crimes only 13 times in 15 years.

The Human Rights Council has let down the people of Syria, who have been displaced, murdered and bombed by their leader with chemical weapons. Yet the Human Rights Council has only cared to speak against those crimes fewer than 40 times in 15 years.

It has let down the people of Iran and Yemen, who are ruled by violent Islamist fanatics. How many times has the Human Rights Council spoken out against them? Less than 15 times combined.

The Human Rights Council has let all those victims down. And you know what? The Human Rights Council has even let down the Palestinian people,

whose leaders are the ones who abuse the rights of their people, whether by the Fatah-run Palestinian Authority, who imprison their critics and even beat them to death, like Nizar Banat, who dared to speak out against the corruption of the Palestinian leadership, or by Hamas in Gaza, where children in schools are used as human shields and hospitals are used to store and launch rockets in Hamas' terrorist war. The Human Rights Council whitewashes those crimes, lending a hand to the terrorists and laying the blame — all the blame — at the door of the State of Israel as it only seeks to defend its people from Hamas' indiscriminate rocket attacks.

Sadly, the voices of the oppressed cannot be heard, because the Human Rights Council insists on wasting its time, its budget and its resources targeting one country — my country, a free and flourishing democracy with a free press, freedom of worship and freedom of expression. A country with more equality for women, the LGBTQ community and minorities than any country in our region and further afield. A country whose people are the target of daily terror attacks. A country that, because of our values of democracy and freedom, stands on the frontline against global terror and extremism. A country that, because its flag is the Star of David, because its language is the ancient language of the Bible and because it is the homeland of the Jewish people, is the only country in the world today that is threatened with annihilation at the hands of Iran's genocidal, nuclear-obsessed Ayatollahs.

That is the country — the only country — that is designated as a permanent open-ended agenda item at every Human Rights Council session, to be demonized and singled out. Because any time is a good time to attack Israel. It is always open season on Israel at the Human Rights Council.

Since the establishment of the Council, 15 years ago, it has decided to blame and condemn Israel not 10 times, like Iran, or 35 times, like Syria. No. The Human Rights Council has attacked Israel with 95 resolutions, as compared to 142 against all other countries combined. Since its founding, the Council has used — or I should say, abused — one third of all its inquiries to target and attack the world's only Jewish State.

This past May, the Human Rights Council decided to carry out an investigation into a conflict between a terrorist group and a law-abiding democratic State. It established a commission of inquiry that completely disregarded the hostilities of one party to the conflict,

Hamas, while shifting all the blame to the other party, Israel.

The Human Rights Council suddenly became the Harry Potter Council, able to make all of Hamas' war crimes and atrocities — the 4,300 Hamas rockets fired at Israeli civilians — magically disappear. Less than two kilometres separate the Israeli towns of Sderot and Naham from the border of the Gaza Strip. It is less than 500 metres from the community of Nahal Oz. In the short distance it takes for a Qassam missile to fly from Gaza to strike and kill Israeli civilians, the Human Rights Council is able to wash away Hamas' offences and instead lay the blame on Israel for daring to defend its people.

While the Human Rights Council spends its time twisting reality and ignoring true human rights violations, Israel has been very busy. Israel is constantly working for the sake of human rights and is saving human lives all over the world, whether it be our soldiers who travel around the globe on humanitarian missions, often arriving first at the scene of disasters, or the Israeli scientists dedicated to providing access to clean drinking water or food security and providing clean, renewable energy to countless people, or the Israeli doctors and nurses who treat Syrian victims coming to our borders seeking help and treatment.

The State of Israel always has and always will provide vital aid to the countless nations in need. Nevertheless, Israel is the country — the Jewish country — that the Human Rights Council decided to continue to bash with its hateful anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rants. The absurdity of that situation would seem almost comical if the severity of the repercussions were not so immense. By whitewashing Hamas' terror attacks and focusing so much time and energy on Israel, the suffering of the victims of humankind's greatest crimes goes unnoticed. Shame on you. Shame on you. Shame on you.

Make no mistake. The Human Rights Council has let us all down. But let us be honest. It has not surprised us. It is a body that has included in its ranks representatives of dictatorships and oppressive regimes. How can you sleep at night when the worst human rights violators are the supposed defenders of human rights? While the Council chooses to willingly discriminate against Jews in Israel, it did not invent anti-Israel bias. It has no copyright claims on hatred against Israel.

It was in this Hall of this very Organization that the very right of the Jewish people to have a national home was itself declared to be racist, a decision that was justly overturned, a decision that Israel's Ambassador at the time, Chaim Herzog, tore up before the United Nations. And that is exactly what should be done to the anti-Semitic, distorted one-sided report of the Human Rights Council (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1).

For just as that 1975 resolution (resolution 3379 (XXX)), which equated Zionism with racism, was itself a gross form of anti-Jewish racism, which has no place in this international Organization, so too is the Human Rights Council's obsessive anti-Israel bias embodied once again in the report of the Council. And it should have no place in any organization concerned with human rights, security or peace. Its only place is in the dustbin of anti-Semitism. And that is exactly how we shall treat it.

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to acknowledge and welcome the presence of the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Nazhat Shameen Khan, at this meeting. Chile recognizes the Human Rights Council as the main body for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people without distinction of any kind, be they older persons, women, children, indigenous people, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities or anyone in any context or circumstance.

My country views the Council and its mechanisms as the cornerstones of the global architecture for international human rights law that must guide the work of the international community in this domain, focusing in particular on the most vulnerable.

In that context, Chile has actively promoted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its link with human rights; democracy as a system of Government; mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system; combating all forms of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity; creating space for the meaningful participation of civil society in international and regional organizations; the role of good governance and local Governments in promoting and protecting human rights; the autonomy and independence of special procedures; and the value of the Universal Periodic Review.

The work of the Human Rights Council is critical when it comes to adopting a cross-cutting approach to

human rights throughout the United Nations system and when it comes to the national and international work of States working together constructively and in full cooperation. That is why we are concerned about the increasing polarization of the Council's work when it comes to the specific treatment of issues or matters linked to the progressive development of international human rights law. That cannot be an obstacle to a normal debate of ideas.

There must be a constructive dialogue and, where possible, consensus. The constructive negotiations that led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its progressive implementation over the subsequent seven decades is more necessary now than ever. Polarization and the different perspectives of States must not be an obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights anywhere.

We should recall what we said 30 years ago at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993: that all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and they are interrelated. States have the duty, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

That is even more relevant in the wake of the devastating effects of the pandemic on people's health and human rights. In that context, we recognize the great opportunity provided to us by the 2030 Agenda as a springboard for achieving sustainable development and a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic for all, focusing on the promotion and protection of human rights.

We would like to conclude by underscoring the important work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the value of the technical assistance and national capacity-building that the Office provides to States. Chile has a long-standing commitment to democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. We will therefore continue to work to ensure respect for, and the promotion and protection of, human rights throughout the world, without any distinction, in particular during this complex period that poses many challenges to democracy.

In that context, people need better protection, and it is in that spirit that we continue to contribute to and strengthen the Council and its mechanisms. We are a candidate for membership of the Human Rights

Council for the period 2023 to 2025, and we hope in that context to contribute to making progress towards the universalization of human rights without leaving anyone behind.

Ms. Millard (United States of America): The United States is proud to have been elected to the Human Rights Council for the 2022 to 2024 term, after re-engaging as an observer State in February 2021. Although the Council continues to have flaws, which we have noted since its creation, we believe our engagement with the Council results in better outcomes in promoting and protecting human rights around the world.

While on the Council, we will continue to be a vocal advocate for the inclusion of civil society. Our non-governmental organization partners add an important voice, bringing unique perspectives to the Council chamber and translating our words into action on the ground.

During this past year as an observer, the United States was proud to co-sponsor 41 resolutions and be a part of 40 joint statements on crucial human rights situations and important thematic issues during the three Human Rights Council sessions held in 2021.

During the March Human Rights Council session, we galvanized 157 members of the international community to join us in acknowledging the corrosive legacy of racism — a scourge we contend with domestically and globally. Advancing racial justice and equity is a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration, and we will seek to partner with all those who share that goal. To that end, the United States looks forward to engaging with the new mechanism focused on systemic racism in the context of law enforcement that was established during the June session of the Human Rights Council.

At the same session of the Council, the United States led the first-ever side event on the human rights of transgender women, highlighting the violence and structural, legal and intersectional barriers faced by transgender women.

The Human Rights Council took another important step during the June session, when it passed a resolution on human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, which called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the swift, verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops and holding accountable those responsible for human rights abuses and violations. The resolution welcomed the joint Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-Ethiopian Human Rights Commission investigation and requested the High Commissioner to present an oral update at the Human Rights Council's September 2021 and March 2022 sessions.

Our joint statement, co-signed by 47 other countries, during the September session of the Council further underscored those concerns. We commend OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission for their joint efforts to date and welcome the release on 1 November of a joint report reflecting the findings and recommendations of both entities. We encourage the Government of Ethiopia and all parties to the conflict to accept and implement the recommendations of the joint OHCHR-Ethiopian Human Rights Commission report to pursue accountability.

We also remain deeply concerned by reports of violence and human rights abuses and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, which is particularly dire for women, children, journalists, human rights defenders, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community and members of minority groups. The Human Rights Council's decision in resolution 48/1 to establish a Special Rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation there created an important mechanism for documenting abuses and laying the groundwork for future accountability.

We are deeply disappointed that the Human Rights Council failed to renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts at its September session. The Group provided critical, independent reporting on human rights abuses and violations in Yemen. We strongly support the United Nations-led Yemen peace process, including ensuring that women, civil society and minority leaders have substantive input. Accountability for human rights abuses is vital to sustaining an enduring peace, and we will work in partnership with allies and civil society to seek accountability for violations and abuses in Yemen.

Human Rights Council resolutions on Syria co-sponsored by the United States continue to accurately describe the egregious violations and abuses that Syrians have suffered over the past decade. We appreciate the efforts of OHCHR and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to document abuses by the Al-Assad regime and engage with courageous Syrian human rights defenders. We were pleased to see the resumption of a United Nations count of civilians killed in the conflict.

We urge OHCHR, in coordination with relevant United Nations agencies and parties, to continue to engage on the issue of missing and arbitrarily detained persons.

While the Human Rights Council has taken important steps to advance respect for human rights around the world, we continue to oppose its biased approach towards Israel through its stand-alone Israel-specific agenda item. We also reject the creation of an open-ended commission of inquiry on Israel in May 2021. While no country is above scrutiny, we continue to advocate for the Human Rights Council to treat any potential concerns related to Israel in a proportionate way.

We also believe more can and should be done to ensure that elected members of the Council embody Human Rights Council ideals. We remain concerned by the continued membership on the Human Rights Council of States with egregious human rights records, exemplified most recently by the re-election of Eritrea this year.

While no country holds a perfect human rights record, we all must work to improve the situation of human rights domestically and internationally. Governments that actively undermine human rights in their own countries and abroad should not hold a seat on the Council. As a new Human Rights Council member, we look forward to working with international partners to protect, defend and advance respect for human rights globally.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Syria on a point of order.

Mr. Al Khalil (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I take the floor to raise a point of order.

The representative of the United States mentioned the Syrian "regime" in her speech. I request the Acting President to call on representatives, notably the representative of the United States, to respect the protocol for speeches delivered at the United Nations. After all, we are Members of the United Nations, and not of the united "regimes".

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her comprehensive briefing. We welcome the reports of the forty-sixth, forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions of the Council and the reports of the three special sessions that were held this year (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1).

Bangladesh attaches great importance to the work of the Human Rights Council and recognizes its role as the principal body of the United Nations for the promotion and protection of human rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council and a party to almost all the core human rights instruments, Bangladesh remains actively engaged and committed to the mandate and work of the Council.

Over the past decade, we have made it a priority to strengthen compliance with human rights instruments, including through regular engagement with the treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) processes. In order to ensure the effective implementation of UPR recommendations, we are currently developing an implementation plan in consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society organizations.

It is from our unwavering commitment to human rights and respect for human dignity that we continue to provide shelter and protection to more than 1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals, the Rohingya, who fled Myanmar in the face of horrific human rights violations in 2017. We believe that it is our sacred duty as a member of the international community to ensure the realization of the basic human rights of the Rohingya, including their right to return to their ancestral lands in Myanmar and live a safe and dignified life, free from discrimination and persecution. Allow me to highlight a few issues covered in the reports of the Council.

First, we are pleased to see that the Rohingya issue continues to remain high on the Council's agenda. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 47/1, on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

We also appreciate the Council's efforts to address the human rights implications of the declaration of a state of emergency in Myanmar. We welcome the establishment of various mechanisms, such as the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar and its successor, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

We express our deep appreciation to Special Rapporteur Thomas Andrews and the head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, Mr. Nicholas Koumjian, for their work despite

non-cooperation from Myanmar. We would like to take this opportunity to assure both of them of our full support and cooperation.

Secondly, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has made all the more evident the importance of the Council's work and the need for strengthening its role in the fulfilment of the fundamental rights of all and for ensuring inclusive and resilient societies. However, we note with deep concern that countries from the developing South lag seriously behind in gaining equitable and timely access to COVID-19 vaccines. There can be no recovery without access to vaccines for all.

We welcome Human Rights Council resolution 46/14, on ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We call upon the Council to continue to address the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, particularly the impacts on the most vulnerable, and to promote advocacy and international cooperation in addressing the rising inequalities caused by the pandemic.

Thirdly, as a climate-vulnerable country, Bangladesh commends the Council for its attention to the human rights aspect of climate change. Bangladesh and a core group of Member States have regularly submitted to the Council a draft resolution on human rights and climate change. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 48/14, which created the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. That is indeed a very important development. We would like to see the Council devote enhanced attention to the issue of climate-induced displacement, which remains a major challenge in many climate-vulnerable countries, including my own country, Bangladesh.

Fourthly, as a major country of origin of migrant workers, Bangladesh is deeply committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of migrant workers. We are particularly concerned at the severe impact of the pandemic on migrant workers and their families. We are also worried about the vulnerability of migrants resulting from stigmatization, discrimination and social exclusion, which has been exacerbated and compounded during the pandemic.

We stress the need to end all forms of discrimination against migrants, regardless of their status, and to ensure their access to essential services, including COVID-19

vaccines. We welcome the adoption by the Council of resolution 47/12, on the human rights of migrants. We also assure the Assembly of our full cooperation with, and support for, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.

Fifthly, gender equality and the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls remain an enduring priority for Bangladesh. We believe that human rights and gender equality are mutually reinforcing and that we must continue to stress the advancement of women's rights in order to fully realize the objectives of the human rights instruments. The Human Rights Council has a key role to play in that regard.

We are deeply concerned that there has been a slide back in the progress made in women's advancement due to the pandemic. Women's economic independence has been threatened due to job loss and income. Violence against women has also been on the rise. We are worried about the closure of schools in many developing countries, which has also led to school dropouts and has exposed girls in particular to a higher risk of early marriage, violence, abuse and other forms of discrimination.

We welcome the adoption by the Council of resolution 47/4, on menstrual hygiene management, human rights and gender equality. I believe that is a very important step in ensuring the rights of women and girls.

In conclusion, we would like to echo the call of many countries to promote mutual trust and confidence among the Council's mechanisms and States Members of the United Nations. We believe that it is only through a collaborative approach that the mandates of the Council can be implemented meaningfully. Bangladesh will continue to support the work of the Council for the full promotion and protection of human rights for all everywhere around the world.

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): Malaysia is pleased that the Human Rights Council continues to deliver its mandate despite the enormous challenges faced in the light of the global pandemic and the United Nations liquidity crisis. Malaysia believes that the role of the Council is now more vital than ever, especially as the world rebuilds and recovers from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and ensures that a focus on human rights is sustained. In that regard, we commend the excellent work of the Human Rights Council 2021 Bureau under the leadership of its

President, Ms. Nazhat Shameen Khan. We thank her for her comprehensive report (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1).

Malaysia will join the Human Rights Council as a member next year. That is not the first time Malaysia will be at the Human Rights Council. Previous stints on the Council have allowed Malaysia to learn from other member States and stakeholders of the Council. The Human Rights Council affords that as it allows its member States to learn from one another as we strive to do better together, while recognizing that no State has a perfect human rights record but that States, including Malaysia, constantly desire to improve themselves.

For Malaysia, human rights is alive, dynamic and ever-evolving. It is a lifetime journey, not a destination. Our work at the Council will be based on constructive engagement, cooperation, inclusivity, transparency and mutual respect. We look forward to working closely with member States of the Council. Other stakeholders may also contribute actively to the discussions on the human rights issues before the Council.

For Malaysia, it is important that the Council be able to address key issues, share good practices and experiences and identify gaps and challenges, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted myriad areas linked to human rights. As a Council member, Malaysia intends to prioritize the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly children, women, indigenous peoples and the elderly. Malaysia plans to push for the empowerment of young people.

In facing climate change, Malaysia will also uphold access to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right that needs to be protected and promoted. Malaysia will continue to advocate strongly against human rights violations, such as the systematic oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel and the systematic oppression of the peoples of Myanmar, in particular the Rohingya, by Myanmar's military.

We welcome the fact that the Human Rights Council is better equipped this year, using innovation and technology to adequately address and ensure that mandated activities continue uninterrupted. We also commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which rapidly adapted its activities to assist Member States and human rights bodies and mechanisms to contribute to the global response in fighting the pandemic. Indeed, with a strengthened Council and the support of OHCHR,

efforts to build back better and make communities that are more resilient, anchored to human rights and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be achievable.

Malaysia believes that the continued exchanges of views and consultations on the work of the Human Rights Council will benefit all countries, taking into account each country's unique domestic situation. Malaysia firmly believes that, in the interest of the promotion and protection of human rights, States Members of the United Nations should ensure genuine dialogue and cooperation with a view to strengthening the capacity of States to comply with their human rights obligations.

We would like to emphasize that it is important that the Human Rights Council ensure universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, including the elimination of double standards and the politicization of issues.

We are also of the view that any attempt to review the work and functions of the Council should involve all States Members of the United Nations in order to ensure that the outcome of the review on improving the Council's effectiveness and its mechanisms in deliberating human rights issues takes into account the views of all regional groups. We need to continue to strengthen the work of the Council by streamlining its programme of work and ensuring improved coordination between the Council and its subsidiary mechanisms and bodies.

Malaysia will remain steadfast in fulfilling its commitment and obligations as a member of the international community. We will continue to sustain and strengthen our engagement with the Council's mechanisms and to support the work of OHCHR. Our active participation on the issue of human rights is a manifestation of Malaysia's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, both at home and globally.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada): Canada associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of a group of countries earlier this morning.

I thank the President for allowing me to speak as well in my national capacity to reaffirm Canada's strong support for the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC). Allow me to also thank the Council

President for her report to the plenary as well as for her interactive engagement with the Third Committee.

I would like to acknowledge the important work the Human Rights Council has undertaken these past few months, including on the rights of indigenous peoples and on the protection and promotion of human rights in situations of crisis and conflict, including in Afghanistan. We regret, however, that the HRC was not able at its recent session to continue its accountability mechanism for the people of Yemen. We hope that, with renewed energy and membership, from 2022 consensus can again be forged within the HRC on that and other acute human rights concerns around the world.

(spoke in French)

The coronavirus disease and the associated consequences have been a tremendous challenge for the international community. It has served to remind us that, in times of crisis, the protection and promotion of human rights are of paramount importance. The pandemic has also shown the critical importance of close cooperation among different United Nations actors and bodies. As the Secretary-General so eloquently said, human rights are the ultimate tool to help societies grow in freedom, including in the pursuit of human rights, sustainable development and international peace. It is urgent that the prevention of crises and human suffering be placed at the heart of the United Nations efforts. That is why we encourage and support active cooperation among the three pillars of the United Nations to strengthen the Organization's capacities to promote and protect human rights.

(spoke in English)

Canada will work alongside all Member States to promote stronger links between our work here in New York and in Geneva. In that context, we welcome HRC resolution 45/31, on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations, and the intention of the HRC to invite the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to provide annual briefings to the Human Rights Council on its work, including in relation to country situations on the agenda. That invitation is entirely consistent with the PBC's mandate to play a bridging role across the United Nations principal organs. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our regret that the briefing by the PBC Chair was unable to take place as intended in September and our hope that it can happen soon. We urge all States to recognize that human rights

issues are broader than the work of individual United Nations bodies. As one of the three pillars of the United Nations, each United Nations body has an integral role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights.

All of our countries have work to do to improve respect for human rights at home and abroad. Let us use the tools we have established to help us do so.

Mr. Kassaye (Ethiopia): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the Human Rights Council, for presenting the Council's annual report (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1). My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the President of the Council for the manner in which she has guided the work of the Council during the difficult times posed by the global pandemic.

The Human Rights Council is an important subsidiary body within the United Nations entrusted with the responsibility of promoting and protecting human rights. As a Member State that served for two consecutive terms in that intergovernmental body, Ethiopia understands the relevance of the global body and remains committed to playing a constructive role in its work.

The last review cycle during the thirty-third working group session of the Universal Periodic Review afforded us an opportunity to share the profound political, economic, legal and administrative reforms we had been implementing since 2018. In the cycle reviewed, Ethiopia highlighted the results achieved on multiple fronts, including in the protection and promotion of human rights, and accepted many of the recommendations.

The past year brought an existential challenge of unprecedented magnitude. Our defence force was attacked, and all federal institutions and personnel in Tigray regional state were subjected to a treasonous attack. Had it not been for the swift measures we took, not only the human rights of our citizens but also the survival of the Ethiopian State itself would have been under serious threat. Following reports of allegations of human rights violations committed in connection with the law enforcement operation, the Government conducted several layers of investigation within the Ethiopian law enforcement and human rights architecture, which has already led to accountability of perpetrators. We even agreed to a joint investigation conducted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the outcome of which is expected to be released soon.

Throughout that process, while we have exhibited transparency and cooperation, some, backed by unethical media, have been engaged in portraying an inaccurate picture of Ethiopia, undermining the Government's relentless efforts. Not only that, in July, amid ongoing investigation, resolution 47/13, on my country, was adopted by the Human Rights Council. Prior to the adoption of that politically motivated resolution, Ethiopia pleaded with the Council to support its efforts, particularly by providing the necessary time and space for the investigation to run its course. Regrettably, in a manifestation of the undue politicization of human rights, the Council proceeded to adopt a resolution that undermines our efforts. In the face of that, 14 members of the Council voted against that politically motivated resolution, and my delegation would like to seize this opportunity to express our thanks to those countries.

Ethiopia is of the view that the Council must always be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, non-selectivity, dialogue and cooperation. Unfortunately, those cardinal principles are often circumvented due to the politicization of the work of the Council and its hasty and untimely decisions. If left unaddressed, that could derail the collective hard-won gains achieved in the field of human rights and undermine the credibility of the Council. My delegation therefore calls upon States that choose to speak on our internal affairs to remain objective in this approach.

The Government of Ethiopia is committed to ensuring the rule of law and accountability. It calls on the international community to hold the criminal terrorist group responsible for committing heinous crimes, including using children in combat, killing of civilians, looting and destroying property. Ethiopia is fully committed to the objectives of the Human Rights Council as enshrined in founding resolution 60/251. We are of the view that the process of strengthening the work of the Council must be guided by the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and inclusiveness.

Mr. Oddone (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the attendance at this meeting of the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, and we reiterate our support for her mandate.

Argentina, which is currently a member of the Human Rights Council, was recently been re-elected for the period 2022 to 2024. That serves to underscore the relevance of human rights as one of our fundamental policies. We are also grateful to the international community for supporting our re-election. We are committed to promoting and protecting human rights at the global level.

I would like to highlight the work of the Human Rights Council in preventing human rights violations and acting expeditiously in urgent situations. We believe that monitoring national situations is an essential tool for preventing human rights violations and that the response to those situations must be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive dialogue and cooperation, while avoiding the politicization of a body that is so crucial for us all.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Argentina cooperates with all special procedures. We also support the Universal Periodic Review, as we believe it is a significant, objective and essential tool. During the new mandate, we will reaffirm our support for the strengthening and independence of the special procedures and their constructive participation in order to provide the Universal Periodic Review with greater capacity for change, while ensuring technical cooperation for all States that require it. We believe that, when it comes to making recommendations, it is crucial that the different levels of development be considered, and we believe that a gender and diversity perspective must also be borne in mind.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that activities linked to universalizing the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance represent one of the critical elements of our foreign policy, as are the efforts under way in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to strengthen the protection of older persons' rights and the protection of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the President of the Human Rights Council for her briefing on the activities carried out by the Council from December 2020 through July 2021. Despite the constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Council held two regular sessions and two special sessions during the reporting period.

The leading role that the Human Rights Council plays in upholding human rights standards at the international level is undeniable. The resolutions that it adopts are an eloquent illustration of that. However, in order for all of the resolutions adopted in Geneva to produce tangible results on the ground, it is important that they be subject to acceptance and ownership by all countries on the basis of the principles of universality, transparency, impartiality and non-politicization. The excessive politicization of human rights and the artificially maintained Manichean division between States are unlikely to create the necessary conditions for dialogue and cooperation to improve the human rights situation in the world.

On the contrary, they carry the seeds of an instrumentalization that led to a lack of productivity in the defunct Commission on Human Rights. If we want to spare the Human Rights Council from a similar fate, it is high time that a non-confrontational approach be adopted that leaves room for dialogue between countries and dialogue on subjects that bring us together, a dialogue without which it will be difficult to achieve expected results on the ground.

There are many such subjects that bring us together. They concern issues that are likely to substantially and sustainably change the lives of millions of people around the world, such as those who still suffer from hunger and from HIV/AIDS and those who cannot go to school or do not have access to vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine. We can make a difference in the lives of all those people, particularly in the lives of migrants and people of African descent, especially the African diaspora.

The related resolutions, as well as those on country-specific situations, also deserve the special attention of the General Assembly. Those resolutions underscore — if there is still a need to recall it — the mutually reinforcing links between all human rights. They strengthen our commitment to promote equality, complementarity and interdependence between all human rights. Cameroon firmly believes in the value of economic, social and cultural rights and the added value that they bring to the enjoyment of all other rights.

It is true that it is difficult to enjoy a right without putting in place the underlying infrastructure to support that enjoyment. From that point of view, large-scale investments are necessary in order to set up infrastructure for health care, communication,

transport and education, which are necessary for the enjoyment of the right to life and the freedoms of expression, communication, thought and so on. In that regard, my delegation commends the Human Rights Council for the adoption of its resolution 47/11 on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, which calls on all States to promote sustainable development to enable better enjoyment of all human rights by all and to promote equitable development.

The President of the Human Rights Council can always count on the cooperation of Cameroon, which was recently re-elected to the Council, to continue to work within it to promote all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. In doing so, it will always prioritize the most vulnerable, namely, migrants, refugees, people of African descent and the African diaspora. Indeed, the true measure of any society is in how it treats its most vulnerable members. The true measure of the Human Rights Council and the place it will leave in the history of the United Nations and of humankind will be found in the importance that it attaches to the issues facing the most disadvantaged.

I conclude by reaffirming that, in reality, human rights are in a state of constant evolution and no one country can impose its views in that regard on any other country. We are all students in that area, including countries with secular experience, and may sometimes suddenly find that human rights are fragile and must be continuously reinforced. As students of human rights, we must all cooperate to progressively, patiently and in an appropriate way promote the enjoyment of all human rights.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

We would also like to commend Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan for her leadership at the helm of the Human Rights Council and to thank her for presenting her exhaustive report to the General Assembly (A/76/53 and A/76/53/Add.1).

Bolivia is proud to have one of the most advanced and progressive political Constitutions in our region. It stipulates that international treaties and instruments on human rights that we have ratified or joined and

which provide for more favourable rights than our own Constitution will take precedent if there is any discrepancy. That is why we take very seriously the need for ongoing dialogue with the treaty bodies to which we are a party. It is also why we have done our utmost to submit our country reports on time to the relevant bodies.

In that context and under that constitutional mandate, my country, as a member of the Human Rights Council, has been committed to work to develop a common international order. Bolivia contributes constructively to the discussions within that important multilateral forum from an inclusive and decolonizing viewpoint that is respectful of diversity.

We strongly believe that the countries of the South can and must contribute actively to the work of the Human Rights Council and must do so in a horizontal relationship framework in which all countries are treated on an equal footing. Under such conditions, we will be able to build an international law that is more supportive and that encourages access to justice for violations of human rights committed in colonial contexts as well as currently.

Like all countries that are members of the Council, we face challenges in the attempt to build a fairer world, which is why we would like to appeal for the Council not to be used as a political forum to destabilize democratically elected Governments through foreign policy agendas. We hope that the double standard used to judge some countries will no longer be the habitual practice of some Powers.

Bolivia welcomes the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 46/14, on ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. That is an effort that requires constant work. Vaccines and vaccination for COVID-19 are a priority for my country, and that is why we believe it is now time to begin waiving patents in that regard.

We also welcome the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 48/11, on human rights and indigenous peoples, and Human Rights Council resolution 47/24, on human rights and climate change. We would like to echo the call to focus particularly on the specific needs of indigenous women. That is why, in line with Human Rights Council resolution 48/11, we wish to see work stepped up in relevant national

institutions to prevent and eliminate the violence suffered by indigenous women and girls.

As clearly stated in Human Rights Council resolution 47/24, indigenous peoples suffer from the negative consequences of climate change, and they are also key actors in combating it. Many of the efforts to deal with climate change must be carried out by those who care for Mother Earth. Protecting the lifestyle of indigenous peoples can only enhance our relationship with the world in which we live.

Therefore, we welcome the fact that the Council has recognized the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a critical human right to ensure the enjoyment of all human rights. We have made progress in the fight against climate change, but we must do more. We must focus on recognizing the rights of Mother Earth as well.

Mr. Sharma (India): I would like to begin by thanking the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, for her detailed briefing on the activities of the Council. I would also like to convey our appreciation for the smooth and effective manner in which she has conducted the deliberations of the Council.

As an ancient civilization of immense diversity, and as the world's largest democracy, India firmly believes in the principles of pluralism and the rule of law for the effective realization of all human rights. Human rights considerations are deeply ingrained in the inclusive development efforts in India that have lifted millions out of poverty. Women's leadership and political participation, especially at the grass-roots level, have played a pivotal role in that context. Our approach to the realization of human rights globally is inspired by our own experiences of being a pluralistic and vibrant democracy.

India's active engagement with the global human rights agenda dates back to the early days of the Commission on Human Rights and the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights treaties. India has always played an active role in the global promotion and protection of human rights. We believe that the promotion and protection of human rights are best pursued through dialogue, consultation and cooperation among United Nations States Members.

Since its establishment, 15 years ago, the Human Rights Council has strengthened consensus on a wide range of thematic issues. As a member of the Council, India has always made efforts to ensure that the Council functions in an objective, non-selective, non-politicized, inclusive and transparent manner.

The Council should promote and protect all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis. The human rights agenda, including the Council's contribution to the prevention of human rights violations, must be pursued in a fair manner with due respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, such as national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

The selective focus of the Council on certain human rights issues and situations are counterproductive to the Council's mandate of global promotion and protection of all human rights. We place emphasis on the spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation that should guide the work of the Council. With regard to country-specific initiatives, it is of paramount importance that such initiatives enjoy the support of the Member States concerned so that they lead to the desired impact on the ground.

The unique and inclusive Universal Periodic Review mechanism has bolstered the credibility and effectiveness of the Council. We need to retain its universality and further improve its efficiency by rationalizing recommendations and by avoiding using it to impose specific thematic issues that may not have acquired universal acceptance. It must be strengthened by allotting sufficient time for having a fruitful exchange of views.

We believe that more balanced geographical representation in all Human Rights Council bodies and mechanisms is necessary to promote objectivity and effectiveness. That will bring in diversity, grass-roots knowledge and empathy, and that in turn would contribute to constructive engagement with Member States and other stakeholders.

The special procedures are an important mechanism of the Council for a genuine dialogue aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States. It is of the utmost importance that mandate holders carry out their duties in conformity with the code of conduct

as stipulated in Human Rights Council resolution 5/2 and in accordance with their respective mandates. That would enhance mutual confidence and trust with the Member States.

While issuing press releases and statements, the special procedures should take into account the perspectives of, and the information provided by, Member States. It is of paramount importance that statements and press releases of special procedures be based on verified information, as emphasized in the code of conduct.

The scourge of terrorism is today the gravest violation of human rights. Despite terrorism being acknowledged as one of the foremost global challenges, meaningful collective responses to address this menace continue to be inadequate. We appreciate the role of the Human Rights Council in advocating a balanced approach that considers the impact of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights while espousing international cooperation to combat the menace of terrorism. We will continue to seek the cooperation of all Member States to prevent any support from reaching terrorist groups, to deny terrorists safe haven and to extradite the perpetrators of terrorist acts or supporters.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we remain committed to bringing a pluralistic, moderate and balanced perspective to help build bridges across multiple divides in the human rights discourse and practice.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The protection and promotion of human rights should be a common cause for all. We place a premium on genuine and non-political concern about human rights, mutual respect and dialogue. It is an irrefutable fact that the only way to guarantee the promotion and protection of human rights is by encouraging dialogue and cooperation based upon mutual respect and on an equal footing. The Islamic Republic of Iran underscores the need for all Member States to remain open to dialogue and inclusive, respect the diversity of civilizations and the development paths independently chosen by countries and to refrain from imposing one's own social system and model on others.

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains seriously concerned about the ever-increasing greed for targeting independent nations with country-specific resolutions. Counterproductive by nature, such resolutions pose a deadly threat to the cause of human rights. My Government reiterates its call on certain States to once

and for all shed and abandon the weaponization of human rights, selectivity and double standards and to instead cherish human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review.

Reiterating our principled position on non-recognition and rejection of country-specific mandates, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its genuine interaction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other competent United Nations human rights mechanisms to collaborate on the protection and promotion of human rights. While we observe our international obligations to help promote and protect human rights globally, we will continue to focus on serving our people, further deepen our truly democratic system of governance and institutionalize our human rights accomplishments.

We continue to witness the application of unilateral coercive measures, which are contrary to the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, multilateralism and the basic norms of international relations. Such measures violate human rights by hindering the well-being of the population in the targeted countries, in particular women and children. The cruel, punitive measures are maliciously designed to hinder people's access to much-needed medicine and drain Iran's resources during the coronavirus disease pandemic.

My Government would like to underscore the important role of the Human Rights Council in confronting and addressing vicious waves of racism, violent extremism and terrorism. The Human Rights Council has a role to play in raising global awareness around the looming, quickly moving and evil forces of violent extremism and terrorism.

Finally, we heard this morning yet again the baseless allegations made by the representative of the Zionist regime against my country. It is no secret that, no matter how the child-killing Israeli regime attempts to raise unfounded allegations against Iran, it cannot hide its heinous crimes committed against the innocent Palestinian people on a daily basis. The ugly face of Zionism, racism and apartheid cannot be whitewashed by cheap rhetoric.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item for this morning's meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.