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Seventy-sixth session

61st plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the attention of the General Assembly to draft resolution A/76/L.40, circulated under agenda item 29, entitled “Advancement of women”. Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 29 at its 53rd plenary meeting, on 16 December 2021. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 29.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

The President: Members will also recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2021, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 29 to the Third Committee. To enable the Assembly to take action expeditiously on draft resolution A/76/L.40, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 29 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided (decision 76/506 B).

Agenda item 29 (continued)

Advancement of women

Draft resolution A/76/L.40

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 29, to take action on draft resolution A/76/L.40. I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Muhammad Bande (Nigeria): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.40, entitled “Addressing the situation of widows”, on behalf of the Group of African States.

Let me begin by thanking all colleagues for their support, constructive engagement and flexibility during the negotiations. It has been a very interesting experience. I would like to share some insights and perspectives on the issue of widowhood and the rationale for the draft resolution.

The practice of harmful widow rites and rituals is one of the complex problems that women — in countries on other continents as well as in Africa — currently contend with. Depending on the social status of a widow at the time of her husband’s death, a recently widowed woman may become economically vulnerable and suffer undue hardship. Most of the harmful practices involving widows are essentially another aspect of violence against women. They are rooted in cultural and traditional practices, as well as the socialization processes that subject women to passivity and dependence.

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The draft resolution therefore acknowledges the additional harm and human rights violations that may result from a woman becoming widowed and seeks to mainstream recognition of their vulnerabilities and marginalization within the United Nations system. To that end, the draft resolution recalls existing international obligations that Member States have committed to upholding by acknowledging the violations of their rights that widows suffer, such as disinheritance, harmful cultural practices, discrimination and the effects that they have on widows. As we speak, many countries across the globe continue to contend with record levels of insecurity and conflict in addition to the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, making the draft resolution incredibly timely, since the number of widows who are at risk of human rights violations is growing, owing to beliefs related to gender inequality that hinder their full enjoyment of those rights.

In that regard, the draft resolution seeks to concretize and expand on the commitments made in resolution 65/189, adopted in 2010, which recognized 23 June as International Widows Day. The resolution was aimed at providing Member States with specific and actionable steps to raise awareness of, mainstream, legitimize and protect the rights of widows within the United Nations system and at home. Despite that, since that resolution's adoption there have been no coordinated efforts to address the situation of widows or violations of their human rights. The lack of information on the issue has compelled Secretary-General António Guterres to call for quality data, disaggregated by age, sex and disability, to ensure that widows are counted and supported now and in future.

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to ensure that widows receive attention from the international community if their particular problems are to be addressed. That will be a step towards closing the gap in our collective understanding of progress on our goal of gender equality, the empowerment of women, the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the inclusion of a group that is routinely left on the margins of development programming.

The African Group is conscious of the fact that many of these issues were previously unknown to most members, and we are grateful for the openness and constructive engagement they showed with regard to the issue during the informal consultations. Our efforts to

achieve gender equality and women's empowerment will be woefully wanting if we do not address issues related to widowhood, particularly harmful practices such as grave violations of human rights, disinheritance and the institutional discrimination that limits widows' ability to access justice, decent work and social protections.

I would like to thank UN-Women and the Global Fund for Widows for their support and collaboration. Their encouragement throughout the process is very much appreciated. I am therefore deeply grateful to the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution and call on those that have yet to do so to become sponsors before its adoption.

Yesterday the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women opened with pomp and pageantry. Women from all over the world gathered here in New York to once again add their voices to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and to efforts to advance them. Today's adoption of draft resolution A/76/L.40 by consensus will ultimately be a fitting tribute and the best gift we can all give to our women. Let us fight against bias, discrimination and stereotypes. However diverse we may look, let us work for a more inclusive and equitable society. Let us stand up for our women by taking action on gender equality and women's empowerment so that we can collectively eradicate all harmful practices involving widows. Let me therefore invite delegations to support the draft resolution by joining the consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/76/L.40, entitled "Addressing the situation of widows".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/76/L.40: Angola, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burundi, China, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.40?

Draft resolution A/76/L.40 was adopted (resolution 76/252).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position after adoption, I would like to remind the Assembly that statements are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Ghadirkhomi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran is dedicated to removing the barriers that are obstacles to women and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights, and that applies particularly to women, including widows, in vulnerable situations. The empowerment of women and girls, particularly widows, is a high priority on the economic, legislative and political agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that regard, the Government has established several programmes addressing women's rights in the light of the coronavirus disease pandemic, including by providing health-care and financial assistance packages such as cash transfers or relief loans to female heads of households, including widows. During the pandemic the Government has also supported home-based businesses launched by female heads of households.

With regard to resolution 76/252, on addressing the situation of widows, we would like to further clarify that the Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes and takes into consideration the provisions of the resolution only insofar as they accord with its national priorities, regulations, legislation and policies, as well as Islamic principles, instruction and teachings and the religious norms, traditions and values of Iranian society.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position after adoption. We will now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Turay (Sierra Leone): Sierra Leone aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States, and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Sierra Leone is profoundly grateful to the African Group for embracing this initiative when it was first introduced to the Group in July 2021. I am pleased to say that since then our engagement on the issue has been positive and constructive. Sierra Leone has been a torchbearer for it, and we will continue to stand steadfastly with the many delegations that have responded similarly, as well as all those joining

the consensus on this ground-breaking resolution (resolution 76/252).

As Sierra Leone commemorates the more than two decades that have elapsed since our civil war ended, it is regrettable that we have to note that the combination of our country's 10-year conflict, the Ebola epidemic we experienced from 2014 to 2015 and the current coronavirus disease pandemic has created countless widows. The adoption of resolution 76/252 is therefore an opportunity for us to show global solidarity and cooperation in addressing the plight of widows. Based on our interaction with the Global Fund for Widows, my delegation acknowledges that one major concern surrounding the issue has been a dearth of accurate data. If that lack of information is not addressed after today's adoption of this resolution, it will prevent us, the international community, from adequately addressing the unique needs and human rights challenges that widows face in the areas of sustainable development, programming, policymaking and, of course, human rights and gender equality. The resolution calls for collective efforts to leave no one behind and envisions widows as powerful actors in our communities and countries.

In conclusion, by adopting resolution 76/252 today, we are reaffirming our shared values and our commitment to a more gender-equal world, addressing critical gaps in policy and practice to achieve gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly where the plight of widows is concerned, as well as reaffirming our promise to leave no one behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Monsignor Murphy (Holy See): The Holy See congratulates the Group of African States on the adoption of resolution 76/252, "Addressing the situation of widows". My delegation is grateful to the facilitator, Mr. Nnamdi Nze, of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria, for his efforts in leading the negotiations. The Holy See welcomes a number of positive elements in the final text that will help address the situation of widows. They include the condemnation of violence and harmful practices against women, including those that affect widows in particular, as well as their children; recognition of the important role of the family and family-oriented policies in promoting inclusion and supporting widows and their children; and acknowledgement of the need for social protection, particularly for widows

who experience isolation and exclusion. The resolution calls for the elimination of legal discrimination and other barriers, particularly with regard to property and inheritance rights and to ensure financial security for widows. Efforts to respond to widows' specific needs are considered in the implementation of existing relevant global commitments.

While grateful for those positive aspects, the Holy See finds it unfortunate that the resolution includes ambiguous terminology related to health, discrimination and exclusion, as well as pregnancy. The Holy See is obliged to make two reservations concerning the adopted text, reiterating those that we expressed at the fourth United Nations World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development, all of which remain valid and in force.

The Holy See interprets the terms "sexual and reproductive health" and "sexual and reproductive health-care services" and related terms as applying to a holistic concept of health. We do not consider abortion, access to abortion or access to abortifacients as a dimension of those terms. And the term "gender" is understood by the Holy See as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female.

The President: We have heard the last speaker under this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 15 (continued)

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

Draft resolution (A/76/L.36)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.36.

Mr. Vorshilov (Mongolia): My delegation has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.36, entitled "International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, 2026". We are most grateful to all the delegations that actively engaged in the informal consultations and contributed through their constructive engagement.

Pastureland currently accounts for more than half of the world's land area and plays a vital role in pastoralism. Rangelands and pastoralism support millions of people's livelihoods and food security, while delivering nature-based services benefiting all. Pastoralism generates significant employment and economic contributions to many countries' gross domestic product. The number of people raising livestock in pastoral and agropastoral systems is estimated at more than 200 million across every region of the world, and their practices vary according to the diversity of their ecosystems.

Pastoral systems rely on the seasonal mobility of animals and people within and across borders. Border issues can disrupt mobility and access to land and water and lead to reductions in workforces managing herds and landscapes. Having suffered for generations from benign neglect, pastoralists and rangelands are facing challenges and threats, including increasing climate variability, land degradation, insecure tenure rights and changes in land use, as well as reduced access to markets, education and health services. Given the importance of rangelands and pastoralists for global nutrition, healthy ecosystems, income and employment generation and other relevant aspects of sustainable development for the pastoral populations and humankind, the Government of Mongolia proposes observing 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in order to raise awareness of the perceived natural and cultural values of rangelands and pastoral livelihood systems.

Mongolia pursues a policy that combines traditional and modern ways of life. We have set ourselves the goal of preserving traditional nomadic heritage and ecologically friendly, sustainable and organic animal husbandry and promoting nomadic animal heritage to the world, as laid out in Mongolia's Vision 2050 long-term development policy document, adopted in 2020. Our key socioeconomic sectors, including agriculture, animal husbandry and the natural ecosystem, are being adversely affected by changing climate conditions and require urgent and timely action. Some 77 per cent of our land is currently facing desertification and overgrazing to some extent, and that area is continuing to expand. And we realize that it is a problem for other pastoral and nomadic countries as well as our own. The Government of Mongolia has therefore been working since 2018 to realize the International Year initiative.

We are confident that the proclamation of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026 will encourage more countries to spread awareness and knowledge of the sustainability of rangelands and pastoralists during and beyond the designated year. We consider that pastoralists are not mere victims but also strong allies who can play a vital role in overcoming our global challenges, including the coronavirus disease pandemic and climate change. My delegation would therefore like to underscore the essential support of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Support Group, which are taking proactive actions to raise awareness on that crucial aspect. I also want to underscore that the text of the draft resolution is based on relevant documents of the FAO, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, the International Federation of Agriculture Producers and other organizations.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the sponsors, I would like to express our sincere hope that the draft resolution will enjoy unanimous support at this plenary meeting.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.36, entitled “International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, 2026”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/76/L.36: Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Iraq, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Maldives, Mali, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zambia.

Bangladesh, Botswana, Chad, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, the Niger, Suriname and Uruguay have also become sponsors.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.36?

Draft resolution A/76/L.36 was adopted (resolution 76/253).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

Agenda item 16 (continued)

Culture of peace

Draft resolution A/76/L.41

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.41.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): On behalf of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.41, entitled “International Day to Combat Islamophobia”, which has been submitted under agenda item 16, on the culture of peace.

Islamophobia is a reality. If I may speak for a moment in my national capacity, I would like to recall that the issue of Islamophobia was first raised by my Prime Minister, Imran Khan, in his first address to the General Assembly on 27 September 2019 (see A/74/PV.9) and he has since repeatedly called for international attention and efforts to address this adverse phenomenon.

Islamophobia and its manifestations in hate speech, discrimination and violence against Muslims are proliferating in several parts of the world. Such acts of discrimination, hostility and violence towards Muslims — individuals and communities — constitute grave violations of Muslims’ human rights and violate their freedom of religion and belief. They also cause great anguish within the Islamic world. In his report dedicated to the issue of Islamophobia last year (A/HRC/46/30), the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief stated that since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, “institutional suspicion of Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim has escalated to epidemic proportions”. In such a climate of exclusion, fear and distrust, Muslims often feel stigma, negative stereotyping and shame and a sense that they are suspect communities that have been forced to bear a collective responsibility for the actions of a small,

fringe minority. The spread of Islamophobia, both in terms of its momentum and outreach, is particularly alarming these days, for it has emerged as a new form of racism characterized by xenophobia and the negative profiling and stereotyping of Muslims.

The rise in hate crimes against Muslims, both offline and online, as well as discrimination in education, citizenship, immigration, employment, housing and health care, among other things, is well documented. Unfortunately, the gender aspect of Islamophobia is also gaining prominence, with girls and women being targeted for their mode of dress and the general notion that Muslim women are oppressed and must therefore be “liberated”.

What is indeed worrisome is that Islamophobia continues to find strong resonance in the political arena, ultimately leading to the institutionalization of Islamophobia through new legislation and policies, such as discriminatory travel bans and visa restrictions. Various academic studies have revealed that Islamophobia is most visible in certain media and in the discourse of far-right groups and political parties that tend to exploit and build on the general fear of Islam for electoral gains. In some countries, anti-immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric has taken on anti-Muslim overtones and has often become the central theme of political campaigns. We have also noted with grave concern that a number of media outlets continue to propagate fear and negative stereotypes against Islam and Muslims, and especially by acting as a platform for the widespread dissemination of anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Despite its pervasive effects, Islamophobia remains poorly understood and discussions on how to address them are often fraught and complex. It seems essential to promote improving the information available about it, as well as solutions to the problem, through greater understanding and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Numerous United Nations officials, including the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, several special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council and world leaders, have noticed this disturbing trend in recent years and have underscored the importance of collectively addressing the problem of Islamophobia.

The OIC’s obligation to address Islamophobia is based directly on the organization’s Charter. At its third extraordinary session in Makkah, the Islamic Summit Conference stressed the necessity

of combating hate and fear of Islam and Muslims. In the aftermath of the deadly attack on two mosques in 2019, the forty-seventh session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Niamey, adopted a resolution calling for the General Assembly to designate 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. In accordance with that mandate, the OIC has submitted draft resolution A/76/L.41.

From the OIC’s perspective, the draft resolution we have presented serves to achieve the following objectives. First, it seeks to raise international awareness about the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. Secondly, it sends a clear message that the world opposes all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, negative stereotyping and stigmatization. Thirdly, it seeks to promote a message of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and interfaith and cultural harmony among all religions, races and nations. Fourthly, by commemorating this day it aims to demonstrate unfettered solidarity with all humankind, convey a strong message of respect for human dignity and reiterate our common commitment to unity in diversity. The objective of observing this day is about uniting, not dividing.

In view of that constructive approach, the members of the OIC have held extensive exchanges on the proposal over the past 12 months with all interested delegations. A draft text was circulated a month ago. The OIC conducted three rounds of open informal consultations on the draft resolution throughout February. Following the conclusion of the open informal consultations, the OIC also held extensive bilateral consultations on the draft resolution with the delegations concerned. Based on the responses received, the text of the draft resolution was streamlined and revised multiple times to accommodate all concerns. Even after submitting the resolution, the group remained engaged with all the delegations concerned. Based on further consultations with them, the OIC agreed to orally revise the text of operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, which will now read as follows,

“invites all member States, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, civil society, private sector and faith-based organizations to observe the International Day in an appropriate manner”.

We believe that the final text is balanced and should garner the widest possible support of the States Members of the United Nations. We are hopeful that it will be adopted by consensus. Through the observance of this Day, the OIC wishes to build a better global understanding of Islam and Islamic precepts. We hope to convey a message of international solidarity and cooperation through the General Assembly. We count on the full support of all Member States and their possible sponsorship of this important draft resolution.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.41, entitled “International Day to Combat Islamophobia”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/76/L.41, as orally revised: China, Cuba, Nicaragua, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.41, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/76/L.41, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 76/254).

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

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I am taking the floor to explain India’s position on resolution 76/254.

At the outset, allow me to express our deep concern about the rise in instances of discrimination, intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious communities in various parts of the world. As a pluralistic and democratic country that is home to almost all religions of the world, over the centuries India has always welcomed people who are persecuted around the world for their faith or belief. They have always found in India a safe haven, free of persecution or discrimination. That is true whether

they are Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Jews or people of any other faith. We are therefore deeply concerned about the growing manifestations of intolerance, discrimination and violence, including sectarian violence, against the followers of religions in some countries.

Let me also state that we condemn all acts motivated by antisemitism, Christianophobia or Islamophobia. However, such phobias are not restricted to the Abrahamic religions. In fact, there is clear evidence that such religiophobia has in fact also affected the followers of non-Abrahamic religions over decades. That has contributed to the emergence of contemporary forms of religiophobia, especially anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist and anti-Sikh phobias. These contemporary forms of religiophobia can be witnessed in the attacks on religious places of worship such as gurdwaras, monasteries, temples and so on, or in the spreading of hatred and disinformation against non-Abrahamic religions in many countries. Examples abound — the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the violation of gurdwara premises, the massacre of Sikh pilgrims in a gurdwara, attacks on temples, the glorification of the breaking of idols in temples, and so on — and contribute to the rise of contemporary forms of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions.

Hinduism has more than 1.2 billion followers. Buddhism has more than 535 million and Sikhism more than 30 million, spread around the world. It is time that we acknowledged the prevalence of religiophobia rather than singling out one religion. It is in that context that we are concerned about elevating the phobia against one religion to the level of an international day to the exclusion of all others. Celebrating religion is one thing but commemorating the combating of hatred against one religion is quite another. In fact, this resolution may well end up downplaying the seriousness of phobias against all other religions. Let us not forget that in 2019 we proclaimed 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, which is fully inclusive in nature. We even have an International Day for Tolerance, observed on 16 November. We are not convinced that we need to elevate a phobia about one religion to the level of an international day. We need to always be inclusive, especially at the United Nations.

India is proud that pluralism is at the core of our existence, and we firmly believe in the equal protection and promotion of all religions and faiths. It is therefore unfortunate that the word “pluralism” finds no mention

in the resolution and the sponsors have not found it fit to take on board our amendments to include it in the text, for reasons best known to them. We hope that the resolution adopted today does not set a precedent leading to multiple resolutions on phobias based on selected religions and dividing the United Nations into religious camps. It is important that the United Nations remain above such religious matters, which may seek to divide us rather than bring us together on one platform of peace and harmony and treat the world as one family.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): France aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

First of all, I would like reiterate that France stands unequivocally against all forms of discrimination. Article I of our Constitution states that the French Republic ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It respects all faiths, and that article compels us to do so.

That said, the text before us today raises several challenges concerning our determination to combat discrimination based on religion or belief. There is no definition of the term “Islamophobia” anywhere in international law, unlike that of freedom of religion or belief. It is that freedom that France defends, just as we defend all public freedoms, for example freedom of expression or opinion. The text also suggests that the religion itself is protected but not its adherents. But the fact is that it is the freedom to believe or not believe, as well as the right to change one’s religion, that we must promote. Furthermore, by establishing an International Day to Combat Islamophobia, resolution 76/254 does not respond to the concern we all share, that of combating all forms of discrimination, because it undermines the fight against religious intolerance by singling out one religion to the exclusion of all others, without any mention of the freedom to believe or not believe.

Societies are made up of diversity, with individuals who practise various religions and those who practise none at all. Should we expect an international day to be established for each religion or level of belief or unbelief? There might not be enough days in the year for that. A few years ago, we adopted resolution 73/296 establishing the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

Along with the European Union, France proposed making the text more universal. We proposed to refocus it on freedom of religion or belief and the fight against

discrimination that affects individuals. The European Union proposed compromises based on texts agreed by everyone to demonstrate that discrimination and violence of all kinds deserve equal condemnation and should be fought with the same vigour. France deplores the fact that none of those constructive proposals were taken on board. These issues are sufficiently serious to merit an in-depth discussion and attention that France and the EU were not afforded during consideration of the draft resolution. Nonetheless, because we hope to be able to resume a calm discussion of these important subjects, and despite the fact that the resolution as it stands is very unsatisfactory, France has decided not to oppose its adoption.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting. We will now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution.

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

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States on resolution 76/254.

The EU is strongly opposed to all forms of discrimination, hostility and violence, including those based on religion or belief. In many parts of the world, people are killed, attacked, persecuted or discriminated against because of their alleged race, religion or belief or other aspects of their personality. As the main sponsor of the annual resolutions on freedom of religion or belief, in New York and Geneva, the EU advocates a comprehensive and universal approach that seeks to eliminate all forms of incitement to discrimination, hostility, violence and intolerance directed against people because of their religion or belief, including non-believers.

For that reason, we are concerned about an approach that addresses only one religion through a General Assembly initiative. In our view, rather than singling out a specific religion, the United Nations should be impartial. By singling out a particular confession, we risk undermining the very universality of our approach. In addition, by using the term “Islamophobia” instead of “anti-Muslim discrimination” or “anti-Muslim hatred”, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s initiative focuses on protecting religion as such, which is an approach that undermines the protection of people’s individual human rights, such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to debate

and criticize religion, as enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. That includes democratically elected politicians.

The United Nations should focus on the protection of the right of persons to freedom of religion or belief as a human right, including the right not to practise a religion. In the spirit of the United Nations, we should speak up against injustice and abuse because it is individuals who suffer. Based on that approach, the United Nations recently adopted resolution 73/296, establishing the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief. That International Day addresses all forms of violence and hatred against victims of all religions and beliefs. It covers all aspects of anti-Muslim hatred, and the initiative before us today presents an unnecessary duplication in that regard.

Moreover, the EU has a long-standing position in opposition to the multiplication of international days. For the EU, there were four priorities throughout the negotiation process. The first was religion neutrality with regard to any initiative related to freedom of religion or belief. The second was the need to use the internationally agreed definition of freedom of religion or belief, as stated in article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice, including the right to change religions or not to believe. The third related to addressing the situations of people, not the situation of religions as such. The fourth priority was not infringing on other fundamental freedoms, such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

In our view, the best way to achieve that would have been to make the title more inclusive and universal by not singling out one religion. Our proposal was to call it an international day for the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination, based on religion or belief, which would correspond to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted in 1981. Such an international day would have addressed all individuals facing discrimination, regardless of their religion or belief. Our proposals sought to correct the imbalance in the text through provisions that would clarify that the concept of freedom of religion or belief protects every human being's right to believe or to hold an atheistic or non-theistic belief and to change religions or beliefs. It

does not protect any religion or belief as such. To that end, the EU engaged constructively in the negotiation process from the outset, and it is regrettable that not all of our main concerns were taken into account. However, notwithstanding the reservations that we continue to maintain with respect to the resolution, the EU decided not to oppose the consensus today.

Mr. Keçeli (Turkey): We would like to thank all Member States for their support for the adoption of resolution 76/254. For us, any form of discrimination — including Islamophobia and antisemitism — based on religion or belief is unacceptable and must be condemned. The resolution is aimed not at dividing but uniting us. For the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, it is reassuring to see that the threat of Islamophobia has not gone unnoticed, and it is very encouraging to know that the international community is united against it.

Islamophobia is an injustice plaguing humankind today, especially in certain parts of the world. It is a real and growing threat. It is experienced by individuals and by communities. It takes many forms, be they vulgar racism, xenophobia or lethal violence. Institutional Islamophobia is found even in State policies encouraged by irresponsible politicians. Examples can be seen almost everywhere in textbooks, pop culture and social media. Yet the majority of those human rights violations often go undocumented and receive little attention. Minority groups and women, who are disproportionately affected, rarely receive protection, support or even sympathy.

The penholders of the Charter of the United Nations realize that we have far more in common than that which divides us. It is critical for the nations of the world to continue working together to promote the values of peace, tolerance, justice and human rights. Today our conversation is focused on Islamophobia, but the source of that scourge is one that imperils us all. We can never allow hatred to take hold of society. The answer to all acts of violence motivated by religious hatred is solidarity, equality and respect for the equal dignity and entitlement to fundamental human rights of every individual.

It is incumbent on each of us to take every measure necessary to combat direct and indirect forms of discrimination and attacks on places of worship and persons on the basis of their religion or belief. Every one of us has an individual responsibility to

be vigilant, to call out any injustices we witness, to defend democracy and human rights and to condemn intolerance, incitement and harassment based on ethnic origin or religious belief. It is in that spirit that we have turned to the General Assembly in our fight against Islamophobia. We are grateful for the Assembly's support for the resolution's adoption, which demonstrates to the world that we are united against hate and violent extremism in all its forms.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): Indonesia welcomes today's adoption of resolution 76/254, designating 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Indonesia is concerned about the staggering increase in incidents and manifestations of Islamophobia globally. We need to work together to address it. This resolution is therefore timely and we are heartened by the support that many countries have shown to the initiative. The essence of commemorating the International Day is to foster global dialogue, promote our shared values of tolerance and interfaith harmony and reinvigorate the international community's commitment to unity and diversity. Through the International Day, we want to promote a greater understanding of human rights and freedoms and full respect for them.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population in one country, living side by side with adherents of other religions and beliefs. A message of tolerance, moderation and pluralism is one that we want to pervade our society. We believe that each of us is responsible for promoting and spreading that message, and we should therefore promote sustained dialogue to establish trust among people of different faith and cultures. We also need to harness the power of education and the media to counter hatred, prejudice and negativity and to reconstruct positive narratives around Islam and Muslims.

Finally, for us as Muslims, the commemoration of the International Day also presents an opportunity to accentuate our humanity and to show Islam as a blessing for the entire world, as well as to mainstream an understanding of the scriptures of Islam for the good of all creation. Through this commemoration, Indonesia hopes that we can stand united against Islamophobia and realize a world of harmony among faiths and nations.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The growing trend of intolerance and prejudice against Islam and Muslims worldwide is a daunting

challenge to the international community. Over the past few decades, harmful stereotypes and prejudices regarding Muslims and Islam have been constantly reinforced by certain media outlets, politicians and influencers of popular culture and within academic discourse. At the same time, we have seen numerous discriminatory practices implemented in various parts of the world, including measures that prevent Muslims from living in accordance with their belief system; the securitization of religious communities; restrictions on access to citizenship; socioeconomic exclusion; and pervasive stigmatization.

As responsible States Members of the United Nations, we bear a heavy burden in fighting discrimination, racism and xenophobia. We should strongly condemn hate speech and acts of hate against Muslims, while taking the necessary measures to prevent the violation of Muslims' basic human rights. It is critical to ensure that the United Nations is united against attempts to embrace Islamophobia, including through such measures as Muslim travel bans, bans on the hijab and Muslim symbols and the abhorrent use of such ignorant terms as "Islamic terrorism". It is our firm conviction that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

The Islamic Republic of Iran affirms its full support for Organization of Islamic Cooperation initiatives to combat Islamophobia, in particular the designation of 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia by the General Assembly. Through its observance, we can build a better global understanding of Islam and Islamic precepts and convey a message of international solidarity and cooperation via the General Assembly. In that regard, we welcome the Assembly's adoption by consensus today of resolution 76/254. It demonstrates our determination to effectively and constructively address Islamophobia as one of the main challenges facing the international community. We urge all Member States to shoulder their responsibilities and live up to their legal obligations in order to advance the shared values of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and mutual understanding. Let us keep striving for justice, dignity and inclusion for our Muslim brothers and sisters and for all humankind.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): The Government of Guyana recognizes that any form of discrimination against individuals on the basis of their religion is a violation of their human rights and contrary to the

purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In that context, we note with concern the rising incidence of manifestations of religious intolerance across the globe, sometimes evidenced by acts of violence and discrimination against individuals or religious communities. As a pluralist society where Islam is one of the main religions practised, Guyana is supportive of global action that seeks to stem that tide of intolerance, discrimination and violence. My delegation was therefore pleased to sponsor resolution 76/254 and is grateful to the General Assembly for supporting its adoption by consensus.

The designation of an International Day to Combat Islamophobia is an important step towards addressing that scourge and its growing adverse effects on the lives of many Muslims. My delegation has taken note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, in which there was a focus on countering Islamophobia. The Special Rapporteur observed that

“widespread negative representations of Islam, fear of Muslims generally... [and] security and counter-terrorism policies have served to perpetuate, validate and normalize discrimination, hostility and violence towards Muslim individuals and communities” (*A/HRC/46/30, p. 2*).

At the core of such behaviour is a lack of understanding of the religion and an acceptance of negative stereotypes about its adherents. The consequences of Islamophobia often translate into negative socioeconomic impacts, including reduced employment opportunities, which in turn result in Muslims as a group being disproportionately affected by poverty and its attendant effects. Islamophobia has also affected Muslims' access to education, health care and housing in some parts of the world. Those trends are all contrary to the aspiration expressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. It therefore behoves us to be more systematic in our efforts to eliminate Islamophobia and every form of religious intolerance.

Islamophobia remains poorly understood and efforts to combat it should therefore include awareness-raising at the national, regional and international levels. The designation of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia is a welcome step in that direction. Additionally, all Member States, including those where

Muslim populations live, should be encouraged to respect the religion of Islam, its adherents and their places of worship as part of efforts to promote cultural enrichment within their society and, more broadly, a global culture of tolerance and peace.

Mr. Yahiaoui (Algeria): Algeria welcomes the Assembly's adoption by consensus of resolution 76/254, by which we proclaim 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and resolutely commit to strengthening international efforts to foster global dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at every level.

Addressing the growing scourge of Islamophobia has always been at the heart of the main objectives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In line with the commitments made by the Foreign Ministers of the members of the OIC in November 2020, a further step was taken by OIC member States to level up in the fight against the threats emanating from Islamophobia and to build momentum within the United Nations to that end. In that regard, Algeria welcomes the spirit and purpose of the resolution as a contribution to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so as to promote and protect every human right and fundamental freedom for all. That contribution complements and further reinforces the need to implement the various resolutions that the Assembly has rightly adopted in noble causes, in particular those aimed at combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, hate speech, stigmatization, discrimination and violence against individuals based on their religion or belief.

It is high time that the international community committed to taking concrete action to fight the scourge of Islamophobia that continues to threaten our societies. The proliferation of manifestations of Islamophobia, hate speech, discrimination and violence against Muslims in many parts of the world remains an issue of deep concern. Indeed, the serious violations of human rights and of freedom of religion or belief through a variety of acts of discrimination, hostility and violence against Muslim individuals and communities must no longer be ignored.

In its belief in the value of living together in peace and the virtue of peaceful coexistence among peoples, Algeria took the initiative in this area in December 2017 through its submission of resolution 72/130, which declared 16 May the International Day of Living

Together in Peace as a way to mobilize the international community's efforts to promote peace, tolerance, understanding and solidarity. Against that backdrop, Algeria is firmly convinced that the proclamation of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia will be a major contribution to developing an understanding of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance.

In conclusion, Algeria reiterates its commitment to further promoting the values of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among all religions and faiths.

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon. Muslims around the world have been on the receiving end of racism, religious discrimination and xenophobia for many years. That intensified in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks, when incidents of Islamophobia increased, fuelled by hate speech, misinformation and unfounded suspicions. Muslims around the world continue to face various forms of hostilities and discrimination. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has amplified that. Sadly, as communities around the world have struggled in the face of waves of COVID-19 variants, Muslims have also faced a surge in Islamophobia during the pandemic. The waves of Islamophobia have never ebbed.

Malaysia condemns Islamophobia. It is a perversion of the truth and a manifestation of intolerance that feeds into extremism. Islamophobia is clearly a form of racism and religious discrimination. We are concerned about the growth of the phenomenon and of the religious intolerance and stigmatization that Muslims face, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across the globe. Malaysia calls on all individuals, organizations and countries to reject Islamophobia. We continue to urge all countries to refrain from policy statements and practices that associate Islam with terrorism, extremism or dangers that pose a threat to society. Malaysia will continue to promote mutual respect among religions and prevent the spread of misleading ideologies or teachings, as well as practices that deviate from Islam's true meaning. It is important that we work together to combat Islamophobia and promote harmonious relations and peaceful coexistence among peoples of different faiths and beliefs and in the context of a diverse global community.

While Malaysia acknowledges individuals' exercise of freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental human right, we strongly disagree with the notion that the defamation of religion is not an

infringement of human rights. The defamation of any religion constitutes a derogation of the right to freedom of religion or belief and is intimately linked to the incitement of racial and religious hatred. My delegation continues to underscore that our rights should not be in competition with one another, nor should one right be seen as superior to another.

History and the world today remind us of the danger of racial discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice. The spread of hatred through speech and media, as well as propaganda messaging and cartoons, in order to disparage, alienate and target a group of people based on their race, religion or faith is nothing new. The international community must push for greater efforts to combat and eliminate Islamophobia, racism, intolerance, hate speech and other prejudices. Such bigotry has no place in today's pluralistic society and must be countered. We therefore celebrate the adoption by consensus of resolution 76/254 and the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It is indeed timely, if not decades late. The adoption of this important resolution does not signal the end of efforts to counter Islamophobia. It is just the beginning. Islam is a religion of peace and Malaysia will not rest in the fight against ignorance and the continuing prejudices against Islam and Muslims.

In its Preamble, the Charter of the United Nations reminds us to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person. The Charter also reminds us to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours. To achieve that, we must protect the inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms of all peoples. We must protect those who are oppressed or subjugated and whose human rights are violated. We must intensify our efforts to enhance and promote a culture of peace. As a family of nations, we need to create a world that believes in a culture of inclusivity and shared prosperity. Only then will the United Nations live up to its *raison d'être*.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan): The adoption of resolution 76/254, initiating commemoration of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, is a landmark event that sends a message that hate speech and discrimination against followers of the Islamic religion will not and should not be tolerated by the international community.

Incidents of attacks on Muslims and their social and institutional exclusion are on the rise. The justification

and arguments used by the instigators of such attacks and discriminatory acts are becoming sophisticated, and guilt by association is often used as a reason to advance such narratives. That is why it is important that the international community stand together to confront such arguments and narratives and combat the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia. The resolution is an important step towards achieving that goal and enhancing the values of social inclusion and a culture of peace, tolerance and coexistence. Jordan regards freedom of expression as a core value that should be respected in the same manner as freedom of religion. They are not mutually exclusive, and the right of every State to protect itself and its citizens is also established under international law.

However, that right is not a licence to challenge a particular social or religious group in its beliefs and convictions or a pretext for veiled discrimination against that group's members by defaming their religion. In order to protect its citizens, a State necessarily has a duty to prevent and combat incidents of attack and discrimination against the members of that group, for whatever reason, including Islamophobia, which is a term well established in literature, writings and doctrine. It is also well established that isolationism, exclusion, negative stereotyping and marginalization are sources of radicalization and tools for recruitment by extremists and terrorist organizations.

It is against that backdrop that Jordan has been at the forefront of combating Islamophobia and has been a leader in interfaith dialogue. We have invested significantly in promoting freedom of religion, mutual respect, inclusion and social cohesion. We will continue to do so and to hope that the adoption of this resolution will solidify our common resolve to protect human rights and the principles of the United Nations and make the world a better place for future generations.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your work in convening this meeting. I also thank the delegation of Pakistan for introducing resolution 76/254, entitled "International Day to Combat Islamophobia", on behalf of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), including Qatar. I also thank the Pakistani delegation for facilitating the consultations on the resolution, whose adoption by consensus we welcome. The State of Qatar welcomes all the measures that have been taken in the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among religions, especially considering

the spread of fear, misleading information, increasing divisions among communities and polarization that has been caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic and that threatens international peace and security.

Today I am pleased to be able to highlight a number of initiatives through which my country is contributing to promoting a culture of peace at the national, regional and international levels. They emanate from our social, religious and cultural heritage and include the establishment of a number of institutions, such as the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, concerned with promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, accepting differences, combating extremism and enhancing non-violence. The Center embodies Qatar's belief that building nations starts with building human beings through cooperation in building societies based on mutual respect and living together in harmony, regardless of religion, culture or race. Since its creation, the Center has organized an annual international conference to consider many emerging issues, helping to promote dialogue among followers of different religions in order to gain a better understanding of religious concepts and teachings for the benefit of the whole of humankind, based on mutual respect and the acceptance of differences, in cooperation with relevant individuals and institutions. The fourteenth Interfaith Dialogue Conference, which was delayed due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, will be held in Doha on 24 and 25 May, under the theme "Religions and Hate Speech: Practice and Scriptures".

As an active member of the OIC, Qatar was delighted to sponsor the resolution presented today under the agenda item "Culture of peace" and entitled "International Day to Combat Islamophobia". We fully support the resolution, which reflects our deep concern in the light of the increase in acts of violence, incitement to violence and discrimination against Muslims resulting from Islamophobia, which we are seeing repeatedly and increasingly around the world.

We believe that commemoration of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia will make a significant contribution to strengthening international dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs. We emphasize that the resolution also reflects the international community's commitment to promoting dialogue among religions and cultures, enhancing peace, social stability, diversity,

mutual respect and creating an environment conducive to peace and mutual understanding at all levels.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to supporting all efforts aimed at promoting a culture of peace and non-violence for the benefit of all humankind.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Assembly's adoption by consensus of resolution 76/254, introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, entitled "International Day to Combat Islamophobia". I would also like to express my warmest thanks to all States Members of the United Nations for supporting this important resolution. Its adoption reflects the international community's commitment to countering all forms of Islamophobia and working to promote a culture of peace.

The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the designation of 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which should also be a day of reflection promoting dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations. At the same time, in line with the aspirations of King Mohammed VI, Commander of the Faithful, we affirm our tireless commitment to promoting international and regional cooperation in furthering the values of mutual respect, tolerance, coexistence, a culture of peace and the acceptance of others, based on respecting and promoting human rights.

Resolution 76/254 will contribute to combating Islamophobia. It is incumbent on us, as part of the international community and as individual countries, to combat all forms of hatred and discrimination based on religion or belief, including antisemitism and Christianophobia. The Kingdom of Morocco was actively involved in the negotiation process for the resolution and reiterates its gratitude to all delegations and partners for their laudable and constructive efforts demonstrating their commitment to the interests of all in order to achieve a consensus text.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation appreciates the consensus reached by the countries participating in this Hall on the adoption of resolution 76/254, entitled "International Day to Combat Islamophobia". Acts of hatred related to religion or belief are totally unacceptable and unjustifiable wherever and by whomever they are committed.

Hate speech and blind intolerance towards Islam is on the rise throughout the world. The Islamic religion advocates tolerance and coexistence with other religions. Today's resolution is therefore a clear example of that message and an initiative that can build bridges between Islam and other religions. It sends a clear message that coexistence among religions is vital to the continuation of humankind and human civilization. Hate speech and incitements to violence against other religions result in acts of violence against defenceless people and their safe communities and undermine their security and stability. They have the potential to spread from local to regional and international contexts, threatening international peace and security. Today's resolution clearly demonstrates the solidarity and cooperation that exists among Member States to counter such acts, which every society rejects and finds unacceptable, as they contravene all religions and threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that my country is committed to combating all forms of hate speech and incitement to violence against other religions. We support coexistence and a culture of tolerance. In that regard, Pope Francis's visit to Iraq on 6 February was commemorated as a day of tolerance in Iraq.

My country's delegation would like to thank the delegation of Pakistan and those of all the Member States that participated in drafting, preparing and discussing the draft resolution.

Mr. Shahin (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt expresses its gratitude and appreciation to the States Members of the United Nations for their consensus adoption of resolution 76/254, sponsored by the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, designating 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and contributing to fighting an abhorrent and destructive phenomenon, one that aims to destroy the foundations of our contemporary human civilization, which rejects discrimination against any human being based on religion or belief.

Egypt once again categorically rejects every form and manifestation of racism and discrimination. We are deeply concerned about the continuing increase in discrimination against Muslims, documented in a number of international reports that assert the reality of Islamophobia as a cause of suffering for many Muslims. It is used as a pretext to justify discrimination, hostility and violence against them, with serious consequences

for Muslims' enjoyment of their human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. It also purveys negative stereotypes associated with Islam, as well as hatred and fear of Muslims.

Resolution 76/254, adopted by consensus today, reflects the international community's firm rejection of the phenomenon of Islamophobia and reiterates the importance of concerted international efforts to seriously counter the hate speech and negative stereotypes that fuel it. In that context, we urge all Member States to fully implement the resolution and commend the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard, as well as the initiatives of the representative of the Alliance of Civilizations.

We stress that Egypt will continue to cooperate in good faith and transparency with Member States and the Secretariat in implementing United Nations resolutions against Islamophobia, while highlighting the major role that Egypt plays in supporting dialogue among civilizations and peaceful coexistence among human beings and in promoting religious tolerance and human brotherhood, in particular through the Al-Azhar Al-Sharif.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation expresses its thanks and gratitude to the Member States supporting the adoption of resolution 76/254, which designates 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It is a step that helps to reinforce understanding of the Islamic religion as one of tolerance and to correct mistaken concepts and distance Islam from the actions of self-proclaimed adherents whose behaviour and actions run counter to Islam's spirit as a religion of peace, coexistence and moderation. The resolution also reaffirms the separation between Islam and terrorism.

Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islamic holy sites and its attitude to followers of other religions, ideologies and cultures is one of tolerance and moderation. My country also rejects extremism in any religion and in all its forms. As one of the sponsors of the resolution, Saudi Arabia sought to reflect that attitude in the text, which emphasizes the importance of mobilizing international efforts to launch a global dialogue promoting a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on the principle of respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs, and on the rejection of all forms of violence and discrimination against anyone based on religion, denomination or belief.

The adoption by consensus of resolution 76/254 is a clear demonstration of the international community's willingness and genuine determination to engage in dialogue and build on common ground in order to achieve coexistence without discrimination based on race, religion, or cultural background.

Mr. Al Hassan (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): In December 2020 the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/187, reaffirming the collective, constant and united position of all Member States on combating intolerance, discrimination and incitement to violence against people based on their religion or belief. In his report on the subject (A/75/369), among other things the Secretary-General encouraged all actions, measures and policies aimed at strengthening respect for and protecting places of worship and believers.

Regrettably, the problem of Islamophobia confronting the international community, which has been discussed in previous reports of the Secretary-General and reflected in many resolutions adopted by this Organization, is clearly a growing reality affecting the lives and rights of millions all over the world. It is unacceptable, and particularly pernicious if we let it go without addressing it while in certain cases, unfortunately, minimizing its effects under a pretext of support for freedom of expression or other freedoms. That runs counter to the foundations and noble principles on which our Organization was established and to the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

My country welcomes the Assembly's adoption by consensus of resolution 76/254, entitled "International Day to Combat Islamophobia", especially because the text calls for respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs, as well as the promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance, while stressing the importance of eliminating all forms of discrimination, intolerance and violence.

In conclusion, we would like to stress the need to refrain from insulting the symbols of any religion or belief, which has serious consequences for the people it targets. We believe that such actions run counter to the founding principles of the Organization and cannot be considered exemplary of freedom of expression or of the press. Respect is an obligation. Coexistence is essential if we are to reconcile our ideas and promote the cooperation and coexistence that can end intolerance and prevent conflicts. From this rostrum, my country urges all States to adopt the means and measures

necessary to address these phenomena and hold their instigators accountable.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 20 (continued)

Sustainable development

(i) Harmony with Nature

Draft resolution A/76/L.35

The President: The Assembly will now proceed to take action on the draft resolution issued as document A/76/L.35. I give the floor to the representative of Turkmenistan to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.35.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (spoke in Russian): On behalf of the delegations of Bahrain and my country, Turkmenistan, I would like to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.35, on the integration of mainstream bicycling into public transportation systems for sustainable development.

We thank all delegations for their constructive and productive negotiations, thanks to which we have developed a substantive draft text. We note with satisfaction the continued broad interregional support for the draft resolution. Besides the authors, 56 States have become sponsors of the draft. Throughout the negotiations thereon, we made every effort to maintain a constructive atmosphere and achieve consensus.

We all know that the bicycle was invented more than 200 years ago and has been one of human beings' main means of movement for more than 140 of those years. According to current estimates, there are more than 1 billion bicycles in the world and more than 50 per cent of the world's population can ride a bike. The global objectives set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals are aimed at ensuring that we can all enjoy our human rights. Cycling has already allowed us to achieve some of those aims around the world, and that is sufficient reason for increasing investment in cycling. Ensuring that we have more sustainable modes of transportation is hugely important to humankind and the planet. The bicycle plays an important role in mobility around the world. Considering the bicycle's convenience, health benefits and availability, it could account for a much larger share of urban public

transportation, thereby helping to cut energy usage and greenhouse-gas emissions worldwide.

The idea of integrating bicycles into public transportation systems has been ignored for many years. However, it is now playing an important role as we are tackling the climate crisis and the pandemic. The concept is gradually being implemented in developed countries, but many developing countries are still experiencing some difficulties with it. Research has been done on integrating bicycles into public transportation systems since the beginning of the 1990s. One of the obstacles has been the mistaken view of the bicycle as merely a form of sport rather than a mode of transportation. We firmly believe that we should change that so that bicycles are viewed as a means of everyday transportation around the world, especially when we take the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and climate change into account. Integrating bicycles into public transportation systems is not just a good idea. It has achieved the status of satisfying a greater human need.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, transport needs and behaviours have changed, leading many cities to rethink their transport systems. The further development of cycling should be accompanied by more active efforts to increase road safety and to integrate cycling into sustainable transport planning and projections and design. We need investment in urban infrastructure, including dedicated cycle lanes and other measures to make cycling safer and to combat car dominance.

In today's draft resolution, it is proposed that all Member States — both developing and developed — integrate bicycling into public transport in urban and rural regions. Member States should also increase road safety and facilitate people's and businesses' use of bicycles in order to increase the number of trips made by bicycle. That in turn will help us to achieve sustainable development, including by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. The draft resolution also encourages Member States to pay particular attention to bicycling in the context of cross-cutting development strategies, including shared use, and, depending on the circumstances, to include cycle concepts and a bicycle network infrastructure in international, regional, national and subnational development policies and programmes.

We firmly believe that the draft resolution offers more opportunities for integrating mainstream bicycling into public transportation systems for sustainable development as a means of reliable and safe transport. We encourage all members to support the draft resolution and to join the list of sponsors, which will give an additional impetus to our joint efforts in the area of transport.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/76/L.35.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.35, entitled “Integration of mainstream bicycling into public transportation systems for sustainable development”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/76/L.35: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania, Monaco, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.35?

Draft resolution A/76/L.35 was adopted (resolution 76/255).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (i) of agenda item 20.

Agenda item 116 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(e) Election of members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

The President: The 30 outgoing Member States are as follows: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Those Member States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to inform members that the following States will continue to be represented on the Commission: Algeria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Those 30 States are not eligible for election.

Members will recall that the Assembly, by its resolution 76/109 of 9 December 2021, decided to increase the membership of the Commission from 60 to 70 States. Of the 10 additional members, five States — that is, one from each regional group — will be elected during the election to be held during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, which will take place today. That will increase the number of seats to be filled by each regional group in this election as follows: for the African States, from seven to eight; for the Asia-Pacific States, from seven to eight; for the Eastern European States, from four to five; for the Latin American and Caribbean States, from five to six; and for the Western European and other States, from seven to eight seats. The remaining five additional members will be elected during the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the election to replace those members whose term of office will expire on 26 June 2022, as well as to elect the five additional members pursuant to resolution 76/109. In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the

election shall be held by secret ballot. I should like to recall, however, paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary bodies when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to this election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot where applicable?

It was so decided.

The President: I would like to give members some information with regard to candidatures. For the eight seats from among the African States, the names of eight endorsed candidates from the following countries have been communicated to the Secretariat: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda. For the eight seats from among the Asia-Pacific States, the names of eight endorsed candidates from the following countries have been communicated: Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Turkmenistan. For the five seats from among the Eastern European States, the names of five candidates from the following countries have been communicated: Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Poland. For the six seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, the names of six candidates from the following countries have been communicated: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Panama and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. For the eight seats from among the Western European and other States, the names of seven endorsed candidates from the following countries have been communicated: Australia, Austria, Israel, Italy, Spain, Turkey and the United States of America.

Since the number of candidates corresponds to, or is fewer than, the number of seats to be filled from each Group, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to elect those candidates for a six-year term, beginning on 27 June 2022, which corresponds to the first day of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, and expiring on the last day prior to the beginning of the sixty-first session of the Commission in 2028?

It was so decided (decision 76/416).

I congratulate the following States, which have been elected members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law for a six-year term beginning on 27 June 2022: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Kuwait, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Members are reminded that one vacancy remains to be filled from among the Western European and other States for the term beginning on 27 June 2022 and expiring on the last day prior to the beginning of the sixty-first session of the Commission in 2028.

I now give the floor to delegations wishing to make statements after the election.

Mr. Ludchak (Ukraine): I would like to inform the Assembly that the delegation of Ukraine dissociates itself from the consensus on the election of Belarus to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. The Assembly's adoption by an overwhelming majority on 2 March at its emergency special session of resolution ES-11/1, entitled "Aggression against Ukraine", reaffirmed its strong commitment to the main principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which have been flagrantly violated by the Russian Federation. In particular, in the wake of Russia's unprovoked and all-out invasion of Ukraine, the resolution also clearly deplores Belarus's involvement in the unlawful use of force against Ukraine. In that regard, we consider Belarus's election to the Commission to be unethical and immoral.

Mr. Fodda (France) (spoke in French): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Norway also align themselves with this statement.

The States Members of the United Nations share the responsibility for upholding the fundamental principles of the Organization enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and defending the credibility of the United Nations system. The unprovoked and unjustified military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, with the participation of Belarus, represents

a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter and undermines international security and stability. Russia and its accomplice, Belarus, bear full responsibility for this war of aggression. Resolution ES-11/1, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 March, deplores the fact that Belarus is complicit in the illegal use of force against Ukraine and demands that it uphold its international obligations.

In the circumstances, the Member States on behalf of which I am speaking dissociate themselves from the consensus on the election of Belarus to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and reaffirm their full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Fogarty (United States of America): The United States dissociates itself from the consensus on Belarus's election to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, in the light of that country's role in Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine, which is in direct violation of international law and the international principles that we as Member States have all pledged to respect.

Mr. Yates (Australia): I would like to make a brief statement on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand (CANZ). CANZ joins others in the General Assembly in condemning in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine. Furthermore, we condemn Belarus for its role in aiding and abetting Russia's aggression, including allowing Russia to launch attacks from its territory. While we have joined others in supporting the consensus on the nomination of the candidates from the Group of Eastern European States to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, that should not be interpreted as our Governments' tacit approval of Belarus's appointment to the Commission. Australia, Canada and New Zealand choose to dissociate themselves from that appointment. Together we reiterate our staunch support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and people of Ukraine.

Mr. Croker (United Kingdom): The States Members of the United Nations have a responsibility to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and defend the credibility of the United Nations system. Belarus is joining the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law while facilitating Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Resolution ES-11/1, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 March, deplores

the involvement of Belarus in the unlawful use of force against Ukraine. The Belarusian regime stands in clear violation of international law in its support of Russia. We therefore join others in dissociating ourselves from the consensus on the election of Belarus to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): With regard to sub-item (e) of agenda item 116, on the election of members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and the nomination of candidates from the Group of Western European and other States, my delegation would like to state that the Islamic Republic of Iran values the work of the Commission as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly that is responsible for helping facilitate international trade and investment. With that understanding, my delegation did not object to the candidates endorsed by the Group of Western European and other States and did not request a secret ballot for the election of new members from that region. Meanwhile, we would like to state that joining the consensus on endorsing new members from that Group should not be construed as expressing recognition of the Israeli regime. Furthermore, we would like to dissociate ourselves from the consensus on Israel's election to the Commission.

Mr. Shaev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We call on our colleagues to refrain from politicizing issues in the General Assembly when they are not relevant to the subject of the meeting. We are once again seeing a biased approach from a group of countries, mainly from the West, whose accusations against us we consider unjustified. The Republic of Belarus remains committed to the norms of international law.

Mr. Kawase (Japan): Belarus has allowed Russian troops to pass through its territory and is clearly involved in the recent aggression against Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Japan strongly condemns it. At this time, unfortunately, Japan is therefore compelled to dissociate itself from the consensus on Belarus's election to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), as there are doubts surrounding its qualifications to function properly in an institution such as UNCITRAL that aims to support the rule of law. I would like to take this opportunity to call on Belarus to heed the overwhelming voice of the international community as reflected in

resolution ES-11/1, adopted on 2 March during the emergency special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have once again been confronted with an unacceptable example of politicization in the work of the General Assembly. Elections to a subsidiary body of the General Assembly should be conducted in line with the Assembly's rules of procedure. Any State that has the right to participate in a meeting of the Assembly has the right to be elected. What we have heard today are nothing but political insinuations with entirely lawless motives. Right now, the very States that are claiming that Belarus should not be on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law are themselves trampling on that same international trade law by using commercial mechanisms and leverage to settle scores.

We are all very familiar with the history of the conflict in Ukraine. What is going on with regard to Belarus is an orgy of a shabby kind of vengeance that is unworthy of discussion in this forum, and it is a great pity that it is taking place here. Our calls for getting on with our work continue to go unheeded. Peace will absolutely be restored in Ukraine, and at that point many States will regret their attitude towards their partners and comrades at this very difficult time.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 116.

Agenda item 117 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/76/637)

The President: As indicated in the note by the President of the General Assembly circulated in document A/76/637, the General Assembly is required during the current session to appoint four members to fill the vacancies on the Joint Inspection Unit that will arise from the expiration on 31 December 2022 of the term of office of Mr. Gopinathan Achamkulangare of India, Mr. Jean Wesley Cazeau of Haiti, Mr. Nikolay

Lozinskiy of the Russian Federation and Ms. Sukai Prom-Jackson of the Gambia.

In accordance with the procedures described in paragraph 1 of article 3 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit and with resolution 61/238 of 22 December 2006, the President of the General Assembly, having held the necessary consultations with the regional groups concerned, requested Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Iraq and the Russian Federation to propose candidates to serve for a period of five years beginning on 1 January 2023.

As indicated in document A/76/637, the candidates, in accordance with resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As further indicated in document A/76/637, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with paragraph 2 of article 3 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the President of the General Assembly has submitted to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Conrod C. Hunte of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr. Gaeimelwe Goitsemanang of Botswana, Mr. Mohanad Ali Omran Al-Musawi of Iraq and Mr. Pavel Chernikov of the Russian Federation for appointment as members of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning 1 January 2023 and expiring on 31 December 2027.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint Mr. Conrod C. Hunte of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr. Gaeimelwe Goitsemanang of Botswana, Mr. Mohanad Ali Omran Al-Musawi of Iraq and Mr. Pavel Chernikov of the Russian Federation as members of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2023 and expiring on 31 December 2027?

It was so decided (decision 76/417).

The President: I now give the floor to delegations to make statements after the appointment.

Mr. Fodda (France) (*spoke in French*): I once again have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Norway align themselves with this statement.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of the founding principles of the Charter of the United Nations, is inflicting indescribable suffering on the Ukrainian people. There are serious concerns that the Russian army may have committed war crimes. Here in this Hall the Russian Government is demonstrating its disdain for human life and international humanitarian law, as well as for the Assembly. On 2 March the Assembly adopted resolution ES-11/1 by an overwhelming majority, demanding that Russia immediately cease its military action and withdraw all its forces from Ukraine's territory within its internationally recognized borders.

In the circumstances, the member States on behalf of whom this statement is delivered dissociate themselves from the consensus on the appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit of the candidate presented by the Russian Federation. We would like to add that as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit, Mr. Chernikov should carry out his duties in an independent manner and free of any politics that might prevent him from doing his job objectively.

Mr. Ludchak (Ukraine): Under no circumstances do we support the appointment of Mr. Chernikov to the Joint Inspection Unit.

As the large-scale aggression against Ukraine is only intensifying, with its inhumane cruelty to civilians, direct shelling of critical civilian infrastructure and hostage-taking of women and children, we consider the appointment of the representative of the aggressor State to be unethical and immoral. Moreover, Russia's very presence in the United Nations, both politically and legally, is open to question. The full responsibility for the appointment of the Russian representative lies with the leadership of the United Nations and its agencies, which are continuing to appoint Russian nationals during the ongoing war against Ukraine. In that regard, I want to inform the Assembly that the delegation of Ukraine dissociates itself from the consensus regarding the appointment of the Russian Federation's candidate to the Joint Inspection Unit.

Mr. Croker (United Kingdom): The Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Assembly condemned Russia's actions on 2 March (see A/ES-11/PV.5), calling on Russia to cease its military actions immediately and withdraw all of its forces from the territory of Ukraine. It has not done so.

No amount of disinformation or lies — such as those we heard earlier today and will no doubt hear again from Russia and its allies, here or in other forums — will change that. Russia remains in breach of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore dissociate ourselves from the consensus, and specifically with regard to the appointment of the candidate presented for the Joint Inspection Unit by the Russian Federation.

Mr. Yates (Australia): I would like to make another brief statement on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

As we said earlier in this meeting, we condemn Russia's unprovoked and illegal attack on Ukraine. Our joining the consensus on the appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit should not be interpreted as tacit approval or endorsement of the appointment of a Russian national to the Joint Inspection Unit. Australia, Canada and New Zealand choose to dissociate themselves from the Russian national's appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit and reiterate our staunch support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Since the Russian delegation has already spoken on the issue of elections, I am not going to repeat what was said. I would simply like to express regret about the politicization of the elections and the lying accusations made about my country. I would also like to remind the Assembly that Russia's candidate, Mr. Pavel Chernikov, is a prominent expert and a true professional with a great deal of experience — more than 38 years, in fact. There can be no doubt that he will make a valuable contribution to the work of the Joint Inspection Unit.

Mr. Alshahin (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Some delegations are trying to take advantage of this meeting to distract attention from its main purpose, which is elections and appointments to subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly. The issues they are raising today are purely political, but

there are other forums available to discuss them rather than in today's meeting. I would therefore like to urge you, Mr. President, to ask the representatives of those countries to stick to the main topic of the meeting.

We condemn the words of some representatives criticizing the Russian Federation. Considering that the chief topic of today's discussions is elections, if Russia is being condemned we should be condemning Israel's repeated acts of aggression against my country, along with the occupation by Turkey and the United States of territories in north-eastern and north-western Syria.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 117?

It was so decided.

(h) Appointment of members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly, by its resolution 67/203 of 21 December 2012, decided to establish a 10-member Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, consisting of two members from each United Nations regional group.

Members will also recall that the Assembly, by its resolution 69/214 of 19 December 2014, decided that the duration of subsequent terms for members of the Board should continue to be two years, starting on 16 September of every second year, and that the United Nations regional groups may renominate one of their existing two members of the Board for one consecutive term, while ensuring that no Member State may be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms and taking into account the importance of ensuring continuity and rotation in the work of the Board.

As outlined in the letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 31 January 2022, I propose that the two-year term of members of the Board shall

begin on the date of appointment, that is, 15 March 2022, taking into account resolution 69/214.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The President: In that regard, the Secretariat has received nominations from Costa Rica, Croatia, Kuwait, Mauritius, Senegal, Sweden and the United States of America for the term beginning on 15 March 2022 and ending on 14 March 2024.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to appoint Costa Rica, Croatia, Kuwait, Mauritius, Senegal, Sweden and the United States of America as members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns for a term beginning on 15 March 2022 and ending on 14 March 2024?

It was so decided (decision 76/418 B).

The President: Members are reminded that vacancies remain to be filled for a term beginning on the date of appointment and expiring on 14 March 2024 by one member from among the Asia-Pacific States, one member from among the Eastern European States and one member from among the Latin American and Caribbean States.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 117.

Agenda item 67 (continued)

The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

The President: I have been informed that the remaining speakers carried over from the 59th plenary meeting, on 23 February, no longer wish to take the floor.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 67.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.