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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 36

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/76/828)

Draft resolution (A/76/L.62)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.62.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): It is my honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.62, entitled “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”, sponsored by Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Tonga, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Vanuatu.

The draft resolution before the General Assembly addresses the humanitarian plight of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees of different ethnic backgrounds expelled from Georgia’s Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions as a result of multiple waves of ethnic cleansing, starting in 1993 and culminating with the full-scale aggression launched against Georgia in 2008.

The Assembly’s consideration of this issue under agenda item 36, entitled “Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development”, is particularly pertinent. I daresay the aggression against Georgia in 2008, in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and what our Organization stands for — the principles of the non-use or threat of use of force, the inviolability of internationally recognized borders and the sovereign equality of the Member States — went largely unnoticed. After all, the war lasted only five days. As result of the lessons not learned in 2008, the same playbook has been used against Ukraine, first in 2014 with regard to Crimea and Donbas and now in the outright war we are witnessing there.

Returning to Georgia, needless to say we were most grateful to our partners who mediated the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, which stopped the bloodshed. However, the war was not stopped. It soon evolved into its next phase — the occupation and creeping annexation of the occupied territories.

That is very clearly acknowledged in the decision of 27 January 2016 of Pre-Trial Chamber I of the

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International Criminal Court and the 21 January 2021 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, with the latter having legally established Russia's responsibility — as the authority exercising effective control over the regions — for violating the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes and concluding that, pursuant to its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, Russia has an obligation to enable displaced persons to return to their homes.

People living in the occupied territories endure continuous violations of their basic human rights, isolation and discrimination, including violations of the right to life, as well as deprivation of liberty, arbitrary detention, infringements of the right to property, violations of the right to health, restrictions on education in their native language and the continuing practice of demolishing houses belonging to internally displaced persons. Those facts have been systematically reflected in the annual reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Moreover, since 2008 none of the international monitoring mechanisms, including United Nations special procedures mandate holders, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and officials of the Council of Europe, have been allowed to enter the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions to conduct their respective assessments and monitoring. Even the European Union Monitoring Mission established under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August has been denied the opportunity to fulfil its mandate in the occupied territories over which Russia exercises effective control.

Needless to say, conflict settlement is a complex issue, and unfortunately takes quite some time. As a small country, Georgia relies on multilateralism — and on everyone here, collectively — and hopes that we shall reach a settlement of the conflict through meaningful political dialogue and negotiations at some time, hopefully sooner rather than later.

However, in this Hall we all agree that the rights of people, including those of IDPs and refugees, should be exercised and protected at all times, irrespective of the underlying conflict and its solution. Therefore, until that solution comes about, the least we can do as the United Nations is stand united and resolute in sending a strong message of support and solidarity to the people affected and to call on those in charge to bring about the much-awaited solution through negotiations. And

that is exactly what the draft resolution before the Assembly does.

First, based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and echoing the African Union's 2009 Kampala Convention on internal displacement, the draft resolution once again reaffirms the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees from Georgia, irrespective of their ethnicity, to return to their places of origin in safety and dignity, as well as their right to their property.

Secondly, the draft resolution recognizes the importance of the Geneva International Discussions as the only tool for settling the conflict and calls on the participants to produce results. Therefore, in supporting draft resolution A/76/L.62, we are not only telling those 400,000 people that they matter and are not forgotten or left behind but also putting moral pressure on the participants in the Geneva International Discussions to fulfil their obligations before the people affected and the world community.

We have many resolutions in the United Nations that address the suffering of people who have found themselves refugees and displaced persons in different parts of the world, whether in the Middle East or Africa, Asia or Latin America, or my own region, Europe. I strongly believe that the moment has come for all of us not to pick sides but to take a principled stand for the sake of the very principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The moment has come to go beyond the narrow regional scope and break with old paradigms, because there cannot be a hierarchy in solidarity, given that there is no hierarchy in suffering. I therefore urge members to vote in favour of draft resolution A/76/L.62, which will be a vote for the principles of the United Nations Charter and multilateralism.

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

Mr. Skoog (European Union): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as the Republic

of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

We support draft resolution A/76/L.62. The EU reaffirms its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The EU remains committed to supporting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Georgia, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions and the European Union Monitoring Mission.

We express our concern about the human rights violations in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the persisting challenges faced by the conflict-affected populations. The EU calls for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to be ensured to support those populations.

The EU underlines the importance of the right of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to choose a durable solution, including a voluntary, safe and dignified return, as well as to exercise their property rights. The EU regrets that to date no progress has been achieved on those issues and recalls that addressing the issues of refugees and IDPs is a core task of the Geneva International Discussions.

We welcome the efforts of the Georgian Government to find durable housing solutions for IDPs and to promote their socioeconomic integration. We encourage the Government to reinforce the inclusion and prioritization of IDPs in its national development plan and to make further efforts to improve their living conditions and livelihoods.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Baltic and the Nordic States, namely, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Lithuania. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Unfortunately, Russia's 14-year occupation of 20 per cent of Georgia's territory continues. It is deplorable that Russia continues to violate the commitments made in the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and

the implementation measures of 8 September 2008 by maintaining a military presence on Georgian soil.

Moreover, the illegal so-called parliamentary elections held in Abkhazia, Georgia, on 12 March and the illegal so-called presidential elections held in the Georgian region of South Ossetia on 10 April constitute further violations of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We remain deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, which are under Russia's occupation. The ongoing borderization process, the kidnappings, arbitrary detentions and arrests — some of them with a lethal outcome — the prolonged and unprecedented restrictions on the freedom of movement, and the lack of access to health care and education in the people's native language are unacceptable.

Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons continue to be deprived of their right to a safe, dignified and voluntary return to their places of origin and their property rights. Even more worrisome is the fact that, in the past several years, no international human rights monitoring mechanism has been granted unrestricted access to the regions of Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We therefore call for immediate access to those areas to be granted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international and regional human rights mechanisms.

As we are talking about internally displaced persons, I feel obliged to mention another brutal war that Russia is waging — against Ukraine. That despicable military aggression has resulted in displacement unseen in Europe since the Second World War, with an estimated 7.1 million internally displaced persons.

Last year's landmark ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in the *Georgia v. Russia (II)* case confirmed that, in exercising effective control over the illegally occupied Georgian territory, Russia is responsible for the grave human rights violations committed there, including the killing of civilians, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. We are witnessing Russia commit those same atrocities in Ukraine. The perpetrators of those violations must be held accountable.

In that regard, we welcome the application of 10 March by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for suspects bearing individual criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Russia's war against Georgia in 2008.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/76/828) on the implementation of resolution 75/285, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", highlights that no major changes were observed during the reporting period with regard to internally displaced persons and refugees exercising their right to return.

Draft resolution A/76/L.62 commits us all to continue working for the protection and assistance of those who have been forcibly displaced from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, and ensuring that they are able to exercise their fundamental right to a safe and dignified return.

We welcome the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 49/33, on cooperation with Georgia, which demonstrates the commitment of the international community to addressing the violations of human rights and the humanitarian issues faced by persons forcefully displaced from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

In that context, we commend the continued efforts of the Georgian Government, in close cooperation with international organizations, to provide internally displaced persons with alternative durable solutions in terms of housing, to improve their socioeconomic conditions and to assist the affected population as much as possible by providing free access to health care, education and other social benefits for all residents of Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

We reiterate our support for the process of the Geneva International Discussions. At the same time, we regret the fact that there is a constant lack of engagement from the Russian side and participants from Tskhinvali and Sukhumi on the topic of refugees and displaced persons.

In conclusion, given the lack of progress on the ground, we call for the continuous engagement of the United Nations. As we did for its iterations in previous years, we shall vote in favour of draft resolution

A/76/L.62, and we call on all Member States to do the same.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada): I have the honour to deliver the following remarks on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and my own country, Canada (CANZ), concerning draft resolution A/76/L.62, on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

CANZ remains concerned about the forced demographic changes resulting from the conflicts in Georgia and the humanitarian situation caused by the armed conflict in 2008, which resulted in the forced displacement of civilians. We welcome the General Assembly's recognition of the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants, regardless of their ethnicity, to their homes throughout Georgia. We again reiterate our support for the respect for and protection of human rights, including the rights of forcibly displaced persons, and for enabling their safe, voluntary, dignified and unhindered return to their homes, in accordance with international law.

More broadly, CANZ is concerned about the fact that the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement that was concluded between Georgia and Russia in 2008 remains largely unfulfilled. The process of so-called borderization, that is, the erection of razor-wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the administrative boundary line, as well as the denial of access for international human rights monitors to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, is seriously worsening the humanitarian situation on the ground. Those acts prolong the conflict, threaten peace and stability, interfere with the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and negatively impact the health and safety of people across Georgia, destabilizing the region as a whole. Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine, which has forcibly displaced millions of Ukrainians from their homes, is another stark example of why the international community must condemn Russia's repeated aggressions against its neighbours and support the rights of all forcibly displaced persons. CANZ condemns any plans in South Ossetia to hold a referendum on joining the Russian Federation.

CANZ calls on all the parties to facilitate immediate access for international humanitarian organizations to the populations in need and to fully implement the obligations and commitments under

the ceasefire agreement. Last but not least, CANZ unequivocally reaffirms its support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Let me also add a few words in my national capacity. Many mistakenly refer to this as a frozen conflict — but it is not. It is certainly not frozen for the Georgians who long to return, or those who suffer and continue to require humanitarian support, or those who want peace. As we heard earlier from our friend the Ambassador of Georgia, a vote in favour of draft resolution A/76/L.62 is a vote both for multilateralism and the Charter of the United Nations and for those Georgians whose needs continue to be unmet.

Mr. Osuga (Japan): First and foremost, I would like to reiterate Japan's unwavering support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the GUAM countries. We must oppose any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force anywhere in the world, and respond to any such attempt in a united and resolute manner. In the GUAM region, the very foundation of the international order, forged through centuries of human effort, suffering and sacrifice, is being seriously challenged. The rule of law and the rules-based international order, grounded in the shared principles and universal values articulated in the Charter of the United Nations, is at stake. No Member State can afford to be a bystander. The United Nations remains crucial to maintaining the rules-based international order, and the Security Council should fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter against threats to international peace and security. I would like to focus the rest of my statement on the dire threat to human security caused by forced displacement in some parts of the GUAM region.

In Ukraine, many evacuees and internally displaced persons continue to be deprived of freedom from fear and from want, as well as freedom to live in dignity. To address the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and in its neighbours, including Moldova, that have generously accepted a great number of refugees, Japan has contributed \$200 million for activities led by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations. People in Georgia have also experienced long-term forced displacement. Japan has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/76/L.62, on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Georgia, which we expect to see adopted shortly. Japan is committed to supporting the GUAM countries in tackling the various challenges caused by the ongoing and protracted

conflicts, including by providing assistance for internally displaced persons and refugees.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy supports draft resolution A/76/L.62 and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

We regret that so far no progress has been achieved on the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia, and we recognize the right of IDPs and refugees to a safe and dignified return. Italy is deeply concerned about the human rights violations in the breakaway Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. While commending the Georgian Government for its efforts to continue exploring sustainable and feasible solutions for IDPs and promoting their integration, we also call for unhindered humanitarian access in order to give those populations the support they need.

In the current situation, in which Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine has reawakened instability in Europe and beyond, it is crucial to foster our multilateral approach to the protracted crises on our continent, leverage all the tools at our disposal for preventing further conflicts and hold accountable anyone who has blatantly violated the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the international legal order and the equal right to exist of any country or people. In that regard, I would like to reaffirm Italy's strong commitment to ensuring that any international disputes are resolved by legal and peaceful means, upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the inviolability of frontiers.

Regarding the long-running tensions in the Caucasus, I would like to reaffirm in the same spirit Italy's unwavering commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and to call for intensifying the dialogue with the breakaway regions in order to relaunch the Geneva International Discussions, while strongly supporting the work and aims of the European Union Monitoring Mission.

Mr. Lu (United States of America): The United States is pleased to sponsor and support draft resolution A/76/L.62. More than a decade ago, Russia's aggression upended the lives and livelihoods of millions of Georgian civilians. Many of them remain unable to return to their pre-conflict lives and homes. Ordinary citizens' lives were upended as a direct consequence of a brutal and unjustified war of choice by Russia, and

while their suffering continues, Russia's aggression has expanded into Ukraine.

The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, just as we support the territorial integrity of all States Members of our Organization. Russia's military presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia violates Georgia's territorial integrity and undermines its sovereignty, threatening not just Georgia but also the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and our collective security. We call on Russia to cease its recognition of the so-called independence of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are integral parts of Georgia's territory. We also call on Russia to fulfil its obligation under the ceasefire agreement of 2008 to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions and allow and facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian organizations.

Furthermore, Russia and the de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia need to take immediate steps to respect human rights, cease construction of barriers along the administrative boundary lines and create security conditions that are conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Across the globe, the United States supports the human rights, dignity and humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees. We are alarmed by the increasing number of ongoing, urgent and, in many cases, completely avoidable conflict-driven crises that involve human rights violations and abuses and limits on humanitarian access.

We welcome the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Given the fact that forced displacement and humanitarian needs have reached unprecedented levels year after year, there is no time to waste. We encourage the United Nations to strengthen its vision for improving protection and assistance for IDPs and create incentives for development and peacebuilding actors and affected States to increase their efforts to meet the needs of IDPs and refugees. We must all do our part and promote durable solutions.

The United States is focused on the plight of the IDPs and refugees displaced from the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and all others whose lives and homes have been destroyed by Russia's

unnecessary war of choice in Georgia. And now we must also fear for the lives and livelihoods of the people forced to flee Russia's unnecessary war of choice in Ukraine. We urge the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.62, on Georgian IDPs and refugees, and to continue to protect the principles enshrined in the Charter.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We must stop walking in circles. The same group of States, in various configurations — including the European Union; the Baltic and the Nordic States; Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and so on — is basically repeating the same statements. The Russian Federation will of course vote against draft resolution A/76/L.62, which was introduced by the representative of Georgia. Another submission of Georgia's draft resolution this year is aimed only at undermining normalization in the region and exerting pressure on the sovereign States of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Tbilisi is no longer able to mask its real intentions by feigning concern about refugees and internally displaced persons.

We would like to stress that the Georgian authorities' exploitation for many years of the issue of refugees significantly harms efforts to resolve current humanitarian problems in the region. That practice does not promote progress within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions; rather, it provokes tensions among the representatives of the communities living in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We once again call on Georgia and its partners to once and for all stop the reckless accusations against Tskhinvali and Sukhumi in the international arena and to demonstrate in practice their commitment to constructively resolving humanitarian issues based on the principles of peaceful coexistence.

The delegation of the Russian Federation requests that draft resolution A/76/L.62 be put to the vote. We call on delegations who oppose the politicization of the work of the General Assembly, especially the issue of refugees, not to support it.

Mr. Roberts (United Kingdom): Our statement this year will be similar to our most recent one on this issue because, year after year, it continues to be true — 13 years since Russia's military invasion of Georgia, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the continued illegal Russian presence in parts of the country. We fully support Georgia's sovereignty and

territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and underline the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and international law.

Georgia has been under continuous hybrid attack from Russia since the 2008 war, which saw 20 per cent of Georgian territory effectively annexed. There are thousands of Russian troops and border guards stationed in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, some as close as 35 minutes from the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. And the human rights situation in those breakaway regions is of serious and growing concern.

We welcome Georgia's ongoing compliance with the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately fulfil its clear obligation under the ceasefire agreement to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions and its commitments to allow unfettered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and not impede international security arrangements from being implemented on the ground.

We also call on the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and end all practices aimed at the creeping annexation of those territories into the Russian Federation. We welcome the initiatives by the Government of Georgia to promote reconciliation among the populations separated by the administrative boundary lines, and we urge Russia not to obstruct those valuable peacebuilding and people-to-people contacts.

The United Kingdom, in solidarity with the Georgian people and all internally displaced people worldwide, has been a long-standing supporter of the annual iteration of draft resolution A/76/L.62, which the General Assembly will soon put to the vote. As others have said, the draft resolution is even more pertinent this year following Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine.

The draft resolution highlights the inalienable right of the forcefully displaced population to a safe and dignified return to their homes, acknowledges their property rights, reaffirms the unacceptability of forced demographic changes and creates a vital mechanism for the Secretary-General to report developments on this issue. Those are all matters vital to our universally

shared interest in human rights, reconciliation and peace.

We therefore urge all Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/76/L.62, which aims to protect the most vulnerable in society and to underline the unacceptability of using internally displaced persons as political pawns in conflicts.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): We are indeed walking in circles — the same circles perhaps that the Russian representative mentioned — but they are circles of blood and impunity, and that impunity is still with us because some people, including at least some of the people in the General Assembly, continue to be filled with apathy about what is going on in our region, and are thereby prolonging the impunity and bloodshed.

Today's agenda item is entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development". The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) consists of four member States — Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova. In fact, it is specifically the GUAM member countries that continue to be the most affected in Europe by conflicts that violate their sovereignty and territorial integrity, constrain their freedom and democracy and hamper their development and the livelihoods of their people.

In August 2008, Russia launched a full-scale military aggression and occupation of the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia, in violation of Georgia's territorial integrity. After 14 years of its aggression against, and occupation of, the Georgian territories, the Russian Federation still refuses to implement the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementation measures of 8 September 2008, in particular by withdrawing its military and security forces and armaments from both regions and allowing the establishment of international security mechanisms on the ground. Those who promote saving face and making deals with Russia in the context of the war it is currently waging against Ukraine should remember that. Moreover, the occupier continues its illegal military presence and activities on Georgian soil and is strengthening its control over parts of Georgia's territory.

Draft resolution A/76/L.62, which will be put to the vote today, addresses the issue of protracted displacement, whereby hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali

regions of Georgia have remained forcibly displaced as a result of the conflict and several waves of ethnic cleansing since the early 1990s. The draft resolution commits us all to continuing to work to provide protection and assistance to those who have been forcibly displaced.

Ukraine therefore joined as a main co-sponsor of draft resolution A/76/L.62 and will vote in favour of it. The draft resolution provides an opportunity for the States Members of the United Nations to reconfirm their commitment to the fundamental right to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and to express their solidarity with forcibly displaced persons around the world.

Russia did not stop in Georgia. In 2014, Russia continued to use its military aggression toolbox and the most barbaric and inhumane methods of warfare in Ukraine. Its invasion in 2014 was followed by eight long years of war and the eventual full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, aimed at destroying the Ukrainian State, seizing Ukrainian territory by force and establishing occupational control. That new wave of Russian aggression is an unjustified and unprovoked act of war, an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and a brutal violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms and principles of international law.

Depopulation by forcible transfer of local residents is an essential part of the nefarious plans of the Russian strategists. Up to 5 million people have been documented across Europe as individual refugees from Ukraine, mostly women and children. Almost 12 million people have become IDPs. It is alarming that more than 1 million Ukrainian citizens have been forcibly transferred to different regions of Russia, including more than 234,000 children, several thousand of whom are orphans and have been deprived of parental care.

For decades, Russia has persisted in its attempts to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, Ukraine and other GUAM member States, increasing regional insecurity and human suffering. The aggressor must and will be stopped in order to bring peace, security and prosperity back to the region.

And I would like to say to the Russian representative that the walking in circles must indeed be stopped.

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

Monsignor Murphy: (Holy See): The delegation of the Holy See welcomes this opportunity to address the topic of protracted conflicts in the GUAM area.

Protracted or frozen conflicts not only obstruct relations among States, peoples, ethnic and religious groups and individuals; they also inhibit integral human development and are at continual risk of reigniting widespread violence. When persistent disputes remain in a state of negative peace, it is all too easy for the international community to move on to seemingly more pressing issues. That is done, however, at great peril to the people on the ground, the parties to the conflicts and the work of the international community to put an end to the scourge of war.

The Holy See continues to insist that peace is not merely the absence of war; rather, it is an enterprise of justice that is never attained once and for all but must be built up ceaselessly. With that in mind, the Holy See supports all efforts aimed at supporting dialogue and respect for international law as a means of resolving those conflicts.

As a founding participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Holy See would like to highlight the key role that the organization should play in facilitating the end of such protracted conflicts. The Holy See fully supports the efforts undertaken in the Transnistrian settlement process, as well as the work of the Minsk Group to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

My delegation commends the early warning and early action of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, whose monitoring and promotion of the rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities — in line with OSCE commitments — helps to sustain peace and respond to tensions that could arise in the OSCE area.

The hostilities in Ukraine vividly illustrate the danger of underestimating or diverting attention away from unresolved conflicts or situations of escalating tension. The war in Ukraine is undermining international peace and security, with alarming implications for food security and the global economy. In that regard, the Holy See reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire, the continued establishment of, and respect for, humanitarian corridors, and a sincere and decisive focus on negotiations, in good faith, for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The intense resumption of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh two years ago also reinforced the need for greater diplomatic efforts. It remains my delegation's hope that the ongoing negotiations will lead to a genuine peace, founded on a mutual respect and encounter. In that regard, the Holy See welcomes the joint convening of commissions on delimitation and border security, which intend to lay the groundwork for the further renewal of economic, social and cultural ties. As part of those efforts, my delegation encourages the parties to ensure that any final agreement protects religious sites and permits worshippers to access them on either side of the border.

In conclusion, I wish to recall Pope Francis's 2016 visit to Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan in support of all efforts on the road to peace and to share steps on the path of reconciliation, which generates hope. May the road to peace and the path towards reconciliation become a tangible reality across the GUAM area.

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

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/76/L.62.

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

Mr. Poveda Brito (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its strong determination to preserve, promote and defend the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its unwavering commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, and supports all diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving that end. In that regard, we take this opportunity to express our concern about the growing tendency to attempt to exploit the General Assembly in order to attack its members, and even more egregiously to use it as a platform for adopting resolutions that lack consensus, which, far from contributing to fostering an environment conducive to dialogue and negotiation, deepens tensions and divisions and has the potential to further complicate regional situations and dynamics.

In adhering to the tenets of its Bolivarian diplomacy of peace, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela therefore calls on the sponsors of draft resolution A/76/L.62 to refrain from politicized approaches and instead promote

both confidence-building measures and a constructive approach to the issue, including within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability in the South Caucasus, using dialogue, negotiation and cooperation in order to find solutions to common challenges in the region, including in the humanitarian context.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.62, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/76/L.62, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Colombia, Guatemala, Japan, Liberia, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago.

The President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.62. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa,

San Marino, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen

Draft resolution A/76/L.62 was adopted by 95 votes to 12, with 56 abstentions (resolution 76/267).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 36?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 124 (continued)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The President: The General Assembly will continue its debate held pursuant to resolution 76/262, of 26 April 2022, on the situation in which a veto was cast by two permanent members at the 9048th meeting of the Security Council, on 26 May 2022, under the agenda item entitled "Non-proliferation — Democratic People's Republic of Korea".

Mr. Kvalheim (Norway): Norway welcomes the opportunity for the General Assembly to discuss this deeply troubling issue related to international peace and security today. Since the beginning of this year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has

performed a record number of ballistic-missile tests, including the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's disturbing rhetoric on nuclear weapons and the reported development of its nuclear programme. Norway strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's series of ballistic-missile launches. Its actions constitute a threat to international security and are in clear violation of a number of Security Council resolutions.

We therefore deeply regret the vetoes cast by the Russian Federation and China on draft resolution S/2022/431, proposed by the United States on 26 May in the Security Council (see S/PV.9048), blocking an otherwise consensus text and preventing the Council from fulfilling its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security. Those developments demand a unified response from the Council. It is now more necessary than ever for the Council to uphold its responsibilities and fulfil the commitment already established in 2017 under resolution 2397 (2017), in which the Council unanimously expressed its determination to take further significant measures in the event of more nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or launches of a ballistic-missile system capable of reaching intercontinental ranges.

Norway is worried about the humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, especially in the wake of the recent reports of the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) throughout the country. In that respect, we remain concerned about the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue to keep its borders closed, which impedes the international community's continued willingness to offer assistance to the vulnerable civilian population. We urge the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate with the international community in order to enable the delivery of humanitarian supplies, including COVID-19-related assistance.

It is deeply troubling to see the Government continuing to channel its resources into the development of weapons of mass destruction instead of using them to provide much-needed housing, food and vaccines to its own people. The proposed Council resolution would have broadened the humanitarian exemption mechanisms considerably, which would have been a timely update, given the critical humanitarian needs in

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is why Norway, as an elected member of the Council, voted in favour of the draft resolution. We urge the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with its international obligations, reverse its course, return to dialogue and rejoin the international non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

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

We regret the use of the veto that has brought us here today. It prevented the Council from fulfilling its mandate and taking necessary action on this very serious and escalating security and humanitarian situation. That lack of consensus on an issue of non-proliferation is deeply troubling, especially ahead of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in August. The NPT is the cornerstone of our common efforts towards nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses. The United Nations cannot remain silent on threats to international peace and security, especially issues of this magnitude involving the development of weapons of mass destruction and the imminent threat of proliferation, which ultimately endangers all of us.

Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the timely convening of today's meeting, in accordance with the mandate established in resolution 76/262 requiring a debate on the reasons for the casting of a veto by one or more permanent members of the Security Council. As a sponsor of that resolution, the Dominican Republic was pleased to see Member States' willing and active participation during this morning's debate (see A/76/PV.77), which speaks to the importance we attach to this issue. This is a practice that we believe will ensure that the use of the veto will not go unnoticed and will in turn ensure accountability and give a voice to the States Members of the Organization on the topics under discussion.

In that regard, we are concerned about the frequency with which the veto has been used in recent years, not just when there are threats to international peace and security, but also in the context of human rights violations and even during dire humanitarian crises. We want to emphasize that the veto is not a right but rather an enormous privilege that is discriminatory in

nature, creates a hierarchy among the members of the Council and, what is more, has impaired the Council's ability to take action on and respond to a number of grave situations.

With regard to the agenda item on nuclear non-proliferation during the consideration of which the veto was used most recently, we categorically condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued launches of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental missiles, which significantly undermine the stability of the Korean peninsula and adjacent areas, including the Sea of Japan. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development and improvement of its nuclear and ballistic-missile programme is a matter of grave concern, an undeniable threat to international peace and security, particularly in the region, and a flagrant violation of Council resolutions and the non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the international community must urgently make more meaningful efforts to fully implement the relevant resolutions of the Council and resume negotiations on the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. That course of action, including a return to the negotiating table, would help ease the tensions. In conclusion, we call for a political solution to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear issue and for the Council to consider it in a united and decisive manner.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Liechtenstein for spearheading the efforts that culminated in the adoption of resolution 76/262. As States Members of the United Nations, we have resolved unanimously to strengthen the General Assembly's response to issues brought to the Security Council when the latter fails to act due to a member's use of the veto.

The mechanism under resolution 76/262 is an opportunity for the whole membership to debate situations that may challenge the collective security system under the Charter of the United Nations, as well as establish a form of dialogue with the Council on those matters. Such challenges are too important. They demand that we all have a say on how to overcome them and enhance cooperation between the relevant United Nations bodies in addressing the underlying issues. And while all Member States are under an obligation to accept and implement the Council's decisions, it is

incumbent on the Council itself to carry out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The stagnation within the Council in performing its functions has exacerbated tensions in areas of conflict and led to escalations in related situations. It is in that context that the General Assembly must play a role in working to restore international peace and security and respect for the rule of international law. That is our shared responsibility. For that reason, Jordan calls for dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes regarding the Korean peninsula and for refraining from the use or threat of force, including the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction.

Today the international community urgently needs to advance nuclear disarmament in order to pave the way for a world free of nuclear weapons. Jordan therefore reiterates its emphasis on the importance of the upcoming tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), given the NPT's crucial role in international security. Achieving the universality of the NPT remains the strategic goal of our collective efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We believe that today's debate can have a positive impact on the prospects for the success of the Review Conference.

In conclusion, it is our shared responsibility to take resolute action for peace and security, and Jordan will continue to work with all partners and friends to achieve that goal.

Mr. Kulhánek (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by the observer of the European Union (see A/76/PV.77), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Czech Republic is gravely concerned about the reports of ongoing nuclear activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Security Council resolutions make it crystal clear that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must not conduct nuclear tests and must immediately abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and cease all related activities. However, over the past three years, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has significantly accelerated, expanded and improved its programme for the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Czech Republic deplors the fact

that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has abandoned its self-declared moratorium and continues to develop its ballistic-missile capabilities. Those alarming developments, together with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear capabilities, present the most worrying destabilizing factor in the region and a serious threat to international peace and security.

Since the beginning of this year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted an unprecedented number of missile tests, launching new types of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles, a submarine-launched ballistic missile and possibly even a hypersonic glide vehicle. Those activities demonstrate the strong intentions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to expand its ballistic-missile capabilities. The Czech Republic strongly condemns those illegal actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which are in flagrant violation of numerous Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile delivery-systems programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and comply fully with all its international obligations and commitments. We call on it to resume a dialogue with the relevant parties and to stand ready to engage meaningfully in any future diplomatic process aimed at securing peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

It is regrettable that owing to the use of the veto by Russia and China, the Council has not been able to respond effectively to the latest provocations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call on all members of the Council to take urgent action on the matter. At the same time, we urge all Member States to counter the evasion of sanctions that is enabling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue on its dangerous and threatening military path at the expense of its own people, especially in the light of the current outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the country. Contrary to the regime's frequent claims, no one has been at war with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for many decades. However, the sad fact is that the regime is at war with humankind and its own citizens, to whom it is denying their fundamental rights. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime acknowledges that, we will support the continuation of sanctions, and we call on all Member

States to implement them in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): The Republic of the Marshall Islands is gravely concerned about any growing threat involving nuclear weapons in our wider Asia-Pacific region, particularly with regard to North Korea. It is our deep regret that today's General Assembly meeting has been triggered by the recent veto used on Security Council draft resolution S/2022/431 by two of the Council's permanent members, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Their vetoes have halted the strengthened United Nations sanctions proposed to further implement paragraph 28 of Security Council resolution 2397 (2017) of December 2017, in which the Council expressed its determination to take further significant measures. That resolution was adopted unanimously and with no abstentions. It now appears that the Council can no longer make good on its own promises.

The Marshall Islands speaks about nuclear-weapon tests and exposure with unique authority. We continue to deal with the horrific consequences of the 67 nuclear tests that were conducted on our territory between 1946 and 1958. We use our voice not on the basis of politics, but of our own humanity and experience. For decades, we have reminded the world that no other people should ever face the consequences of nuclear exposure again. And today we must sadly remind the world of that yet again, which is truly unacceptable. We are alarmed about the increasingly real possibility of another nuclear test by North Korea in our region, which would be the seventh such detonation since 2006.

As a Member State, we view the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as binding, without discrimination. Every member of this body is and should be concerned about humanitarian crises and global pandemics in North Korea and anywhere else, and should respond accordingly. But a humanitarian crisis is simply no excuse for the Council to imply that a scaled-up nuclear threat is somehow acceptable. To be clear, such a threat is beyond unacceptable, to us and everyone else. The Marshall Islands is not a permanent member of the Council, but we urge the nations that are to use their veto wisely, please. Such a status is inherently accompanied by a wider global responsibility that goes far beyond immediate national self-interest or strategic rivalries. North Korea remains answerable to our region and to the world for its actions. But the Security Council and its members also remain

answerable for their leadership or their absence. As the United Nations, we can and must do better.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada): I appreciate the opportunity to address the General Assembly today. Diplomacy and dialogue represent the only path towards peace and prosperity for the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the safety and security of the region. We reiterate our call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to re-engage with the international community, but as long as it refuses to respond to diplomatic overtures and continues its development of weapons of mass destruction, we must and will act.

In this year alone, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted more than 30 ballistic-missile tests, all of which are explicitly prohibited by resolutions adopted unanimously by the Security Council. Moreover, those tests demonstrate the determination of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to advance and diversify its nuclear capabilities. That is a clear threat to international peace and security and requires international condemnation and collective action. It is in nobody's interests to see another State in possession of nuclear weapons. The nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as its cornerstone, must be upheld and employed to the full with a view to ensuring the complete and verifiable elimination of all of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

Like many others who have spoken here today, Canada condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's repeated ballistic-missile tests. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has reneged on its own commitment to halting long-range missile testing, has taken no concrete steps to fulfil its commitment to promoting peace on the Korean peninsula and has continued to show flagrant disregard for the resolutions of the Council over many, many years.

(spoke in French)

The Security Council has nevertheless failed to take unanimous action. Given the gravity of the situation, I want to emphasize Canada's disappointment at the Council's inability to respond effectively by adopting a resolution and upholding its previous decision to take further measures if North Korea proceeded to conduct further intercontinental ballistic-missile tests. We should emphasize that the sanctions are designed to target the country's programme of weapons of

mass destruction. They do not create obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea, as some may have argued. None of the measures imposed by the relevant Council resolutions are designed to harm the civilian population. On the contrary, they all stipulate that humanitarian activities are permitted and that exemptions can be granted if necessary. We would also like to emphasize that if it had been adopted, the Council's draft resolution S/2022/431, which was vetoed by two members, would have further simplified the current procedure for humanitarian exemptions through its requirement that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) should issue a list of well-defined categories of articles that would be exempt from the sanctions regime on humanitarian grounds.

We welcome the Council's efforts to enable humanitarian exemptions and the delivery of goods for humanitarian assistance. However, we remain concerned about the inability of humanitarian personnel to deliver aid since 2020. We call on North Korea to accept the international community's offers of aid to assist in its response to the coronavirus disease pandemic and help it avert what appears to be imminent famine on its territory. Canada and the entire international community stand ready to support North Korea. As I said at the beginning of my statement, diplomacy is the only way forward. We urge North Korea to end its destabilizing behaviour, live up to its international obligations, take concrete steps to reduce tensions in the region and to consider the humanitarian costs of its actions. In the absence of a viable path forward, we urge the members of the Security Council to address this issue and call on all Member States to implement the resolutions of the Council in full.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in accordance with resolution 76/262, which stipulates that a formal meeting of the General Assembly shall be held within 10 working days of the casting of a veto by one or more permanent members of the Security Council. This important resolution is being activated for the first time in today's historic meeting.

The State of Kuwait was among the countries that supported the resolution in the General Assembly because we believe it will strengthen the Assembly's role and its relationship with the Council. It will also emphasize two principles that Kuwait considers

fundamental, transparency and accountability. The use of the veto by some of the five permanent members has in many cases helped to undermine the decision-making process in the Security Council and in certain cases has prevented the Council from meeting its responsibilities. The Council's failure to take measures necessary for maintaining international peace and security has been a source of frustration for many peoples and within the international community generally. We believe that the right of the veto, an exceptional privilege that has been enjoyed by only five countries since the United Nations was established in 1945, is first and foremost a responsibility.

We followed the Council's meeting held on 26 May under the agenda item of non-proliferation concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (see S/PV.9048) and reviewed the special report (A/76/853) submitted by the President of the Security Council to the General Assembly regarding the use of the veto during the meeting. That veto resulted in a divided Council and a lack of consensus on the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the first time in 15 years. We would like to address the following points in that regard.

The situation on the Korean peninsula is one of the most long-standing and dangerous issues on the agenda of the United Nations. We have all followed with great concern the heightened tensions in this vital region and the accompanying threat of military escalation following the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles, including on 24 May, as well as its launch of other ballistic missiles in the past few days, which Kuwait condemns as a violation of Council resolutions and a threat to regional and international peace and security. We stress the importance of finding a peaceful solution to this crisis, in accordance with the treaties and agreements concluded between the parties concerned and pursuant to the relevant Council resolutions. We call on all parties to engage in dialogue and negotiations in order to reach a peaceful solution conducive to establishing stability, peace and security on the Korean peninsula. We stress the need to adhere to the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes and principles, particularly good-neighbourliness, the resolution of disputes by peaceful means and refraining from the use or threat of use of force against other countries.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its principled and firm stance on issues of non-proliferation, whereby we

condemn the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction anywhere, anytime and by anyone as a grave violation of international law. We also stress the importance of preserving the international non-proliferation regime, while reiterating our belief that global security, safety and stability can be achieved only through the full and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, we hope that the Council will be able to restore its unity regarding issues of non-proliferation, including where the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is concerned, and shoulder its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes the General Assembly's convening of this important debate on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, whose escalatory actions and continued breaches of Security Council resolutions we strongly condemn. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further ballistic-missile testing and engage in meaningful dialogue with key parties towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

Aotearoa New Zealand remains steadfast in its opposition to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unlawful nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes. They constitute a serious threat to international peace and security with potentially catastrophic consequences. The indications that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is preparing for a nuclear test are deeply troubling. Any such test would be a flagrant violation of the international norm against nuclear testing. As a party to both the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, New Zealand is strongly opposed to all nuclear tests. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to implement its nuclear safeguards obligations under the International Atomic Energy Agency. The situation on the Korean peninsula provides a stark reminder of the ongoing importance of our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation work and of why we must strive for an ambitious outcome at the NPT Review Conference in August.

New Zealand is committed to implementing Security Council resolutions. We encourage all Member States to ensure that sanctions that have been

put in place to deter the ballistic weapons and nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea be fully implemented in their jurisdictions. We are deeply disappointed that the Security Council was unable to adopt a renewed sanctions draft resolution the week before last (see S/PV.9048). That outcome has real world consequences. The proposed draft resolution (S/2022/431) was sound and enjoyed the support of 13 members of the Council — a clear majority.

The Council's inability to adopt such a draft resolution is a direct result of the actions of two permanent members. The use of the veto, for the first time on this issue since 2006, has once again prevented the Council from fulfilling its responsibility and once again undermined its credibility. New Zealand, along with a group of small States, opposed the veto from its inception. We remain strong in our conviction that there is no place for that undemocratic and anachronistic device at the United Nations, especially when it is used in the pursuit of national interest rather than in the interest of collective peace and security.

We call on Russia and China to work with the rest of the Security Council, refrain from blocking Security Council draft resolutions and encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea back to the negotiating table. Only through dialogue can we hope to realize a peaceful outcome.

We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to prioritize its response to the dire humanitarian situation, currently compounded by the coronavirus disease, and facilitate the access of international humanitarian organizations for the delivery of essential humanitarian goods, such as food and medicines. Aotearoa New Zealand supports an independent assessment of humanitarian needs on the ground as soon as possible.

We welcome today's opportunity for the General Assembly to voice its concerns about this important issue. It represents a test case for the newly adopted veto initiative. New Zealand is a strong proponent of that initiative and hopes it will encourage Council members to work harder to produce outcomes for the collective good.

New Zealand agrees with the point made earlier today by the representative of Liechtenstein that, when the Security Council is unable to act, the General Assembly can play a constructive role in finding potential ways forward, with the aim of improving the

effectiveness of the United Nations as a whole. It can do so by taking its own decisions on the question before it, if it chooses. Resolution 76/262 is not prescriptive in that regard. We are interested in hearing the collective view on what this might look like during this debate.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): Let me start by recalling the General Assembly's unanimous decision of 26 April to hold meetings whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council (resolution 76/262). That is a great success for the General Assembly in terms of strengthening its role within the United Nations system, making vetoes more transparent and — hopefully — in terms of contributing to a more responsible use of the veto.

While we still have a long way to go in the intergovernmental negotiations to make the Security Council reflect the realities of the twenty-first century, Germany welcomes the new mechanism as a much-needed step in bringing transparency and accountability to the work of the Security Council.

Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations states that the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It also states that, in discharging those duties, the Security Council should act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We therefore expect the Security Council to act when there is a clear and persistent breach of peace and security. If two Council members refuse to act on that responsibility, they do so in opposition to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, that is what happened. Over many months, we have witnessed an unprecedented series of ballistic missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea using increasingly versatile systems across all ranges, including intercontinental ballistic missiles — the latest of which were launched this past weekend. Those tests undermine international peace and security as well as the global non-proliferation regime. They also pose a danger and an unpredictable risk to international civil aviation and maritime navigation in the region.

Together with the evidence of ongoing nuclear activities, those reckless actions show that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is further advancing and diversifying its nuclear capabilities — all of which are flagrant breaches of the obligations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under many relevant Security Council resolutions. The situation

could not be clearer. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a legal obligation to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, and it is the Security Council's responsibility to make sure that its decisions are adhered to. Its credibility depends on that. Our security depends on that.

I deeply regret that the Security Council failed to adopt draft resolution S/2022/431, aimed at condemning the series of recent ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and strengthening measures against it — despite the support of 13 Security Council members. I deeply regret that Russia and China are shielding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from international scrutiny, and thereby allowing and condoning its illegal, reckless and dangerous actions.

Let me be clear: in resolution 2397 (2017) the Security Council unanimously expressed its determination to take further significant measures and made a formal decision that it would take action to further restrict the export to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of petroleum in the event of an intercontinental ballistic missile test. By casting their veto, Russia and China violated that decision.

That is all the more shocking since the permanent members of the Security Council have a special responsibility to uphold the non-proliferation regime, which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to flout. Member States expect better from the Council and its members. They expect the Security Council to condemn the behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and reaffirm its obligation to abandon its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes. We expect a united stance and further significant measures by the Security Council.

I therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come clean and finally comply with Council decisions, abandon its unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and engage in meaningful negotiations about this.

I also urge Russia and China to reverse course and live up to their responsibility to maintain international peace and security. We need a strong and united response from the Security Council to prevent further reckless action by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Aidid (Malaysia): Malaysia welcomes the convening of this plenary meeting — the first time the General Assembly is holding deliberations pursuant to resolution 76/262.

My delegation views this meeting as an integral part of the overall reform process of the United Nations. It will contribute to the strengthening of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council on peace and security issues, as the Council acts on behalf of the larger membership. It will also improve accountability on the use of the veto pending its actual abolition.

Malaysia unequivocally reaffirms its belief that the illicit development and procurement of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies and capabilities, by any State, is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated by the international community.

Malaysia remains gravely concerned about the ongoing developments on the Korean peninsula, particularly in relation to the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such programmes increase tension and instability and impede efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the long-standing conflict on the peninsula. We condemn the recent spike in the number of ballistic missile tests undertaken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including those of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from any further provocative and illegal acts, abide by its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and its international commitments, abandon all its nuclear weapons and immediately cease its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

We are also gravely concerned about the subsequent missile launches by the Republic of Korea and the United States early this week.

Malaysia believes that all efforts concerning the Korean peninsula should be predicated on the reaffirmation of shared commitments to the maintenance of international peace and security. We remain convinced that the interests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would be best served by its immediate return to the negotiating table. In that regard, Malaysia underlines the importance of self-restraint by all the parties concerned and the need

for the resumption of dialogue towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Efforts should also be intensified to ameliorate the humanitarian situation confronting the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the provision of aid to those in need.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates the need for prompt and effective action by the Security Council on the issue. At the same time, the Council must remain sensitive to genuine humanitarian concerns in discharging its duties in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Malaysia reiterates its continued commitment to implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and we stand ready to continue to render our full cooperation to the Council, including through the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). Malaysia firmly believes that ultimately, current challenges can only be overcome through peaceful political settlement.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.77) and would like to add further remarks in its national capacity.

Today's plenary meeting is the first implementation of the procedure established by resolution 76/262. This new mechanism contributes to the strengthening of the United Nations system and effective multilateralism by promptly allowing the General Assembly, in the light of the veto cast in the Security Council, to have a debate on a key security issue, such as non-proliferation related to the weapons of mass destruction programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Italy remains deeply concerned by the continued testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic and other missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the recent launches conducted on 5 June, which are flagrant violations of its obligations under numerous Security Council resolutions. Those activities constitute a threat to both regional and international security and the multilateral non-proliferation architecture that Italy has vowed to uphold.

Italy strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply in full with all obligations arising from the relevant Security Council resolutions;

abandon its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner; return at an early date to, and fully comply with, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards; and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Italy urges all Member States to join us in condemning unequivocally the behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and in reaffirming that country's obligation to abandon its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes. In that regard, we are greatly disappointed that — because of opposition by two of its permanent members — the Security Council failed to react swiftly to the threats posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and act in accordance with its own previous deliberations. Let us once again reiterate that the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demand a united and decisive response by the international community, including further significant measures to be taken by the Security Council.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): We know that today marks the first time that the General Assembly has been called upon in accordance with resolution 76/262 to consider a matter on which a permanent member of the Security Council evoked the provisions of Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. This meeting is being held because the Security Council was unable to act on a matter pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security. The inability of the Council to act when it should is a symptom of the greater weakness in the institution, which is in dire need of reform. It is for that reason that South Africa has consistently called for the urgent reform of the Security Council to ensure that it is representative of all Member States.

South Africa has consistently reaffirmed the centrality of the General Assembly and its role and authority as the most inclusive and democratic organ of the United Nations. The authority of the General Assembly is clearly articulated in Articles 10, 15 and 24 of the Charter, which determines that the Security Council should carry out its duties on behalf of the 193 States Members of the United Nations. The requirement for the Council to also submit an annual report — as well as special reports, when necessary — to the General Assembly is further testament to the General Assembly's centrality. We therefore appreciate the convening of this

meeting today to exercise the authority of the General Assembly accordingly.

South Africa is deeply concerned by the continued development of the nuclear weapons and missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in contravention of numerous Security Council resolutions on the matter. We are particularly concerned by the recent launches of ballistic and intercontinental ballistic missiles, which take advantage of increased global tensions and test the resolve and ability of the Security Council to act. My delegation believes that it is regrettable that the Council was not able to establish a unified response to the continued violations of Security Council resolutions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

South Africa has always believed that the Council should do all it can to encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to pursue a path towards the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, rejoin the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and fulfil its safeguards obligations to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Indeed, that is the intention of one of the most comprehensive sanctions regimes currently imposed by the Security Council, and it is essential that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and all Member States comply with those restrictions in order to give effect to the broader objective. We therefore urge all Member States to continue to fully implement existing Security Council resolutions on this and other matters.

We must, however, always bear in mind that the implementation of sanctions should be imposed in support of broader peace processes and with a view to encouraging political dialogue. Their implementation should therefore be balanced by a provision of exemptions for humanitarian purposes. The people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should not suffer needlessly as a result of actions taken by their Government that do not comport with the efforts of the international community to prevent the development of nuclear weapons that threaten global peace and security.

South Africa calls for a return to negotiations in order to create a solution that addresses the issue of the Korean peninsula in a holistic manner. Ultimately, it is only through dialogue that seemingly intractable disputes such as these can be resolved. It is therefore important for the Council to support and remain committed to all efforts for dialogue on the peninsula.

Ms. Lõuk (Estonia): Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union (see A/76/PV.77).

We welcome today's historic debate of the General Assembly pursuant to its unanimous recent adoption of resolution 76/262, of which Estonia was honoured to be a sponsor. Estonia deeply regrets that two permanent members cast a veto during the Security Council meeting on 26 May (S/PV.9048) held under the agenda item on non-proliferation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Charter of the United Nations has given the Security Council an unprecedented responsibility and power to maintain international peace and security. That responsibility and power grant the authority to act on behalf of the whole membership of the United Nations, taking into account the interests of the United Nations as a whole. They also entail ensuring prompt and effective action in response to serious violations of international law. Estonia considers that the Russian and Chinese vetoes were not cast in a responsible manner and have allowed a very serious situation on the Korean peninsula to escalate even further. We have taken note of the two permanent members' explanations but find them unconvincing for the following reasons.

This year alone the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has already launched 18 rounds of ballistic-missile tests, including six intercontinental ballistic-missile launches. The regime has demonstrated its commitment to developing its nuclear programme through rhetoric as well as action. We fully condemn those activities, which are in clear violation of the Security Council's unanimously adopted resolutions and pose a serious threat to North Korea's neighbours, the region and international peace and security. It is the Council's duty to address such threats in a robust and decisive manner and to send a message of condemnation on behalf of the United Nations community. Furthermore, when the Security Council fails to uphold its own resolutions, it risks undermining the rule of law and weakening the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Security Council draft resolution S/2022/431, put forward by the United States, was a necessary, appropriate and measured response to the threat and violations at hand. The text contained important elements aimed at further containing the nuclear-related activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including measures to counter its malicious cyber activities, which play an increasingly crucial role in

financing its weapons programme. The text would also have further facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid. In order to justify the veto, it has been argued that additional sanctions would only worsen the plight of the population of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is a clear example of manipulation of the facts and the truth. Instead of providing its population with food, medicine and basic services, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea spends its resources on its weapons programme. Easing sanctions will not make the lives of ordinary North Koreans better. The dire humanitarian situation that they have to endure rests squarely in the hands of the ruling regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its policies.

Lastly, we are worried about the message the veto sends to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as to other potential proliferators. In fact, we have already seen a reaction from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On 5 June, nine days after the veto was cast and the Council's action was blocked, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea test-fired eight ballistic missiles. Through the veto, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea received a signal from the two permanent members of the Council that its dangerous provocations can proceed without consequences.

The threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction affects us all. We therefore call on all Member States to implement the Security Council resolutions fully and strictly. We urge China and Russia to work with the rest of the Security Council in a responsible manner to address the growing threat posed by the nuclear and missile activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its provocations, respond positively and constructively to the offers of dialogue from the United States and take concrete steps towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union (see A/76/PV.77), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Slovenia supported the recently adopted standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council (resolution 76/262). We see it as an important step towards more accountability between the main organs of the United Nations in

accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We hope it will not need to be used very often, as we need a functioning Security Council. However, when a veto is used, it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to address the situation. We therefore welcome today's debate and hope it will strengthen multilateralism and ensure greater accountability for decisions taken in the Security Council, while not hindering in any way its work and important role within the United Nations system.

The latest series of provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a cause for increasing concern and have led to the further deterioration of the security situation on the Korean peninsula. Slovenia is seriously concerned about the indications of ongoing nuclear activities in various locations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The unprecedented number of its ballistic-missile launches in the past five months constitute an escalatory threat to regional and global stability and a blatant violation of multiple resolutions of the Security Council. Slovenia calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes without further delay and to resume dialogue with the United States and the Republic of Korea to enable steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We also call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to and fully implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State, as well as to the system of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards inspections.

Slovenia has always been a strong supporter of dialogue, but we also believe that sanctions are an important instrument at the Security Council's disposal. The aim of Council-mandated sanctions is to help ensure and maintain or restore international peace and security. The United Nations sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the proposed Security Council draft resolution (S/2022/431), which was not adopted because of the use of the veto, include a system of comprehensive humanitarian exemptions that can facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where the worsening humanitarian situation is worrying. Unfortunately, the regime keeps its borders closed and continues to limit humanitarian access. It has also refused offers of coronavirus disease vaccines.

In conclusion, it is essential that the international community remain steadfast in protecting peace,

stability and international law. We call on all Member States to fully implement all Security Council resolutions and remain resolute in preventing any further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations on the Korean peninsula. We call on Council members to seek unity, act decisively and take appropriate steps to reverse any additional risks that the behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea poses to the global non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union (see A/76/PV.77), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

In protecting international peace and security, it is the task of the Security Council to take timely and decisive action to prevent serious violations of international law. However, increasingly often, a divided Security Council is unable to perform that role. When the Security Council is unable to carry out its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security, the General Assembly must step in. Croatia therefore strongly supported the adoption of resolution 72/262, the so-called veto resolution. Today we are witnessing its mechanism in play for the first time, and I think we can be quite pleased. The debate we are having is a good opportunity for the permanent members of the Council to explain their veto and for everyone else to assess whether they think it was justified or not. All of us can learn something from such a transparent and inclusive dialogue. But if dialogue does not lead to progress, the General Assembly also has a mandate to take action and preserve peace and security when the Security Council fails to do so.

Exactly two weeks ago, on 25 May, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched three missiles, including one intercontinental ballistic missile. Its series of missile launches since September 2021, the most recent just a few days ago, and the intent of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to escalate such action, threaten international and regional peace and security. The country's return to nuclear testing is also a flagrant violation of its obligations under numerous Security Council resolutions, which the Council unanimously affirmed in resolution 2397 (2017). Indeed, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the only country in the world that has continued to conduct full-scale nuclear-explosive testing in the twenty-first century. Its nuclear and missile development poses a grave threat to international security and undermines

the global non-proliferation regime. We therefore condemn its ballistic-missile launches in the strongest possible terms. We demand that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea immediately abandon its nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, ballistic-missile programmes and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

We also firmly believe that the Security Council must take bolder steps to counter Pyongyang's pursuit of proliferation. It is regrettable that the Security Council failed to act on 26 May (S/PV.9048), in direct contravention of its unanimously adopted resolution 2397 (2017). We urge the Council to honour its commitments.

Finally, we urge all Member States to fully implement Security Council resolutions, which are the building blocks of international peace and security. We also urge Council members, especially permanent ones, to prioritize long-term global peace and security over short-term national interests.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): As one of our region's signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been and continues to be a staunch supporter of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In 1974 Iran proposed the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and has worked hard since then to realize that noble initiative. Furthermore, as a major victim of the most systematic use of chemical weapons in contemporary history, Iran has demonstrated its full commitment to the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The Security Council has not taken a balanced approach to the North Korea nuclear issue, as it has focused solely on the concerns of Western countries. The Council has imposed the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without duly considering the detrimental implications of its decisions for political, humanitarian and international security issues. The imposition of sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not only failed to serve international peace and security but has also exacerbated and complicated the security arrangements on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, such measures have stymied the delivery of life-saving humanitarian

supplies where they are needed most, wreaking havoc on vulnerable populations.

It is deeply regrettable that the Security Council's authority and powers have been repeatedly abused by certain States that in their pursuit of their illegitimate political objectives, particularly in relation to developing countries, regard sanctions as the preferred tool for exerting maximum pressure on targeted countries. As a country that has been negatively affected by illegal unilateral coercive measures, Iran is well aware of the devastating humanitarian consequences of such sanctions for ordinary people. We specifically want to highlight the destructive impact of sanctions on the effective and timely procurement of medical equipment and supplies, particularly during the current coronavirus disease pandemic. Furthermore, sanctions have detrimental effects on basic human rights, among other things, including the right to life, health and food. We believe that any imposition of new sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by the Security Council will not help resolve the situation on the Korean peninsula. On the contrary, it will have harmful repercussions for the people and escalate tensions in the region. We encourage settlement of these issues through dialogue, and to that end we stand ready to engage in any initiative that can fairly lead to a peaceful resolution of the ongoing situation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): Latvia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.77).

This meeting marks the first time that the General Assembly is exercising its mandate to hold a debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council. We welcome the mechanism as a necessary step for strengthening multilateralism, transparency and accountability. For those reasons, Latvia was among the main sponsors of resolution 76/262, which granted the General Assembly this important mandate.

The irresponsible behaviour and disrespect of the Security Council by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea threatens peace and security not only on the Korean peninsula but in the wider region and globally. We condemn the numerous missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since the beginning of this year, which further aggravate the situation and blatantly breach its international obligations. We are also deeply concerned about the

credible reports regarding an imminent nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As we prepare for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons this August, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains one of the global non-proliferation regime's most urgent challenges.

We reject attempts to paint the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a victim and blame the international sanctions for the escalation. Such allegations are irresponsible. It is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime that has breached international norms by pursuing illegal weapons of mass destruction and ballistic-missile programmes. It is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime that acts against the needs of its own people by keeping its borders closed to humanitarian assistance and diverting its scarce funds to military programmes instead of accommodating the basic humanitarian needs of its citizens.

We share others' concerns regarding the use of the veto by Russia and China, which blocked the Council's ability to act effectively in response to the recent intercontinental ballistic-missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They cast that veto despite the fact that in its resolution 2397 (2017) the Council had previously expressed a clear commitment to responding to further intercontinental ballistic-missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such behaviour by two permanent members does not contribute to the Council's credibility or help to solve the dire security crisis that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has caused. Taking into account the fact that the international security environment has fundamentally changed because of Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, that veto on a non-proliferation matter should also be seen in the broader context of Russia's irresponsible behaviour, including its nuclear sabre-rattling.

Let me finish by reiterating Latvia's call to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change its destructive course, refrain from further escalatory measures such as ballistic-missile and nuclear tests and respond to the calls to engage in a meaningful dialogue. We also urge the Security Council to uphold its previous commitments and take concrete steps to address the security challenges posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Ms. Stanciu (Romania): While Romania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union (see A/76/PV.77), I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

The number and pace of provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since September 2021, including its launches of intercontinental and other ballistic missiles, in clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, are unprecedented. Moreover, the reports that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is preparing to conduct its seventh nuclear test are deeply concerning. This course of action represents a real threat to international peace and security and seeks to undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

At such times there is a strong need for a resolute and united response on the part of the international community, as well as for effective multilateralism. And yet due to the use of the veto by China and Russia, the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution (S/2022/431) that would have strengthened sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That sends a troubling message about the Council's resolve to uphold its own resolutions and undermines the goal of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Romania therefore welcomes the use for the first time of the procedure established by resolution 76/262, which allows for General Assembly debates when the use of the power of the veto has prevented the Security Council from fulfilling its primary responsibility to maintain peace and security. We urge the Council to return to the united stance demonstrated on this dossier since its adoption of resolution 1718 (2006) and to take the appropriate measures that would pressure the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regime to reverse its dangerous and reckless course of action.

In the meantime, we call on all States to abide by their obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, including the full and effective implementation of all sanctions. Let me underline that despite what some delegations may argue, sanctions are not responsible for the dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but rather Pyongyang's spending of resources on a programme of weapons of mass destruction to the neglect of its own people.

Romania continues to support all efforts to achieve sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula, including through diplomatic engagement, and calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accept the repeated offers of dialogue and diplomacy that have been put forward by the relevant parties. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to negotiations, take concrete steps towards abandoning all nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and immediately cease all related activities, in accordance with all the relevant Security Council resolutions. We reiterate our steadfast commitment to the objective of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's return without delay to full compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, as well as its international obligations based on Security Council resolutions. We also call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and in the meantime to fully observe a moratorium on nuclear test explosions or any other nuclear explosion.

Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru considers this meeting of the General Assembly extraordinarily important, since it marks the first application of resolution 76/262, which empowers the President to convene a meeting of the Assembly when one or more of the permanent members of the Security Council exercises the right of veto. It is a milestone in the history of the United Nations. The reasoning behind the decision is based on the powers that the General Assembly has regarding the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as on the legal fact that the mandate for the members of the Council to maintain international peace and security is conferred on them by all the Member States. The practice that we are initiating today is a step forward in the democratization of the decisions taken by the Security Council and one that encourages transparency, responsibility and accountability in its functioning. Today's hearing of the explanations and grounds of the Chinese and Russian delegations regarding their exercise of the veto (see A/76/PV.77) is unprecedented. We have taken careful note of their statements, which form part of the accountability mechanism that we are inaugurating today.

We are aware that the Charter of the United Nations establishes a system of collective security that

involves the veto. That is a reality. But the principle of transformative realism should result in a veto that is used in strict accordance and coherence with the mandate that the Charter grants the Council, as well as in accordance with its purpose and design. According to a systematic interpretation of the Charter, the veto cannot be used in situations in which its exercise might have a negative impact on the maintenance of international peace and security.

At the same time, however, we cannot forget that the institution of the veto is a pressure mechanism that encourages negotiation and the establishment of mutually agreed decisions on the part of the members of the Council. In the teleological interpretation of the Charter, the use of the veto is a last resort that all the permanent members must strive to avoid. Moreover, their behaviour should reflect an awareness that consensus or unanimity necessarily entails negotiation and the search for a way to reconcile their interests. In Peru's view, the diplomatic action that is the most representative of the spirit of the Charter and of responsible action by the permanent members is this — negotiations, the reconciliation of positions and negotiations. And if necessary, that should be followed by further negotiations and reconciliations of position, and more negotiations. Because it is effective and leads to peace, that rational conduct on the part of permanent members has been successfully and consistently implemented since 2006 with respect to the nuclear and ballistic-missile development programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. All of the resolutions on this sensitive and urgent issue were adopted by the Council with the consensus of the permanent members. Unfortunately, on this occasion that practice has been brought to a halt. My Government is not pointing fingers but simply noting facts.

In accordance with its vision of global governance based on respect for international law, Peru has consistently and systematically condemned the ballistic-missile tests, especially intercontinental ballistic-missile tests, carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They violate Security Council resolutions, they are inconsistent with the maintenance of peace and security in the region and they are also in violation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Peru has also unequivocally condemned the missile launches carried out on 25 May.

In the context of the instability and the serious events that are currently posing a very dangerous threat

to peace, Peru has consistently prioritized negotiation, diplomacy and the quest for peaceful solutions to global crises and conflicts, and will continue to do so. Far from fuelling tension and fostering conflicts, the Charter obliges us to create the conditions for negotiation and the peaceful resolution of such conflicts. That necessarily implies the full application of the legitimate sanctions that the Charter authorizes the Security Council to mandate in extreme cases. That is the case with the sanctions outlined in resolution 2397 (2017). Those sanctions and the obligations that resolution 2397 (2017) imposes on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must be respected, without exception.

The international community also believes that legitimate sanctions must stop short of inflicting suffering or punishment on ordinary people. In that context, the Government of Peru urges the parties concerned to resume negotiations in order to arrive at a peaceful solution and be able to effect the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula by mutual agreement.

Mr. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia): When the General Assembly adopted resolution 76/262, just over a month ago, I doubt that anyone in this room anticipated that we would be back so soon for the Assembly to exercise its newly acquired mandate. But while it may be a success story for the Assembly, it should be very clear that it is no substitute for the Security Council's exercise of its awesome responsibility to take action on matters relating to international peace and security.

The Federated States of Micronesia is gravely concerned about the nuclear and missile developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We strongly condemned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's decision to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile on 24 March, undermining the global non-proliferation regime. It also undermines the Hague Code of Conduct, poses a clear threat to international peace and security and represents a hazard to everyone throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the world beyond.

We are deeply concerned about the utter disregard demonstrated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for various Security Council resolutions. Paragraph 28 of Council resolution 2397 (2017), unanimously adopted in December 2017, states that if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea "conducts

[...] a launch of a ballistic missile system capable of reaching intercontinental ranges", the Security Council, through a new resolution, will take action to further restrict the export of petroleum to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is regrettable that the proposed Security Council draft resolution (S/2022/431) to address this violation was vetoed, in complete disregard of the Council's own, earlier resolution (see S/PV.9048). That has emboldened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to exploit the Security Council's division. Just days ago, it pushed towards further provocation. The prospects for reducing the possibility of a war on the Korean peninsula are further diminished, and those with the veto power bear a heavy responsibility vis-à-vis the Assembly and the world for their decisions.

As a Pacific island State that understands the threat and devastating effects of nuclear weapons, Micronesia strongly urges all Member States to continue to fully implement the relevant existing Security Council resolutions and calls on the Council, especially its permanent members, to take serious, genuine and united measures against the flagrant actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom deeply regrets China and Russia's use of the veto on 26 May (see S/PV.9048) to block Security Council draft resolution S/2022/431, on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a draft resolution that enjoyed the support of every other Council member. Blocking the Council's response to repeated breaches of Security Council resolutions sends a dangerous signal to States seeking to undermine international peace and security, and that is why we are here today in the General Assembly.

On 5 June, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched eight ballistic missiles. That is the highest number in a single day and the sixteenth set of tests in 2022. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has tested six intercontinental ballistic missiles this year. It has publicly stated its intention to break its nuclear testing moratorium. We know it is making preparations to conduct a nuclear test this year.

All the existing United Nations sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were agreed unanimously. The threat that its weapons present to international peace and security has only increased. It was right for the Council to take further action. We

should continue to press for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to its commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. We again call on China and Russia to work together with other Council members towards that goal and for all Member States to fully implement the existing United Nations sanctions.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the result of the Government's diversion of resources into its weapons programmes. After two years of border lockdowns due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and with Pyongyang reporting its first fever cases, the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is deteriorating. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to provide access for United Nations humanitarian workers to deliver urgently required aid. United Nations sanctions are not targeted at the North Korean people, and we fully support the delivery of humanitarian support to the most vulnerable. The vetoed draft resolution would have made it easier to provide humanitarian support, including in response to the COVID-19 situation.

I feel obliged to respond to remarks made by the Chinese and Russian representatives about AUKUS (see A/76/PV.77). The trilateral cooperation between Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom will be fully consistent with the three parties' respective non-proliferation obligations and pursued in a manner that preserves the integrity of the non-proliferation regime.

Finally, let me again call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its provocations, engage meaningfully in dialogue and take concrete steps towards denuclearization. This must be done in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. In the long term, denuclearization is the only way to create a more stable and prosperous future for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its people.

Ms. Seid (Palau): Our small country of Palau in the far western Pacific is incredibly proud to be the first nation in the world to have adopted a Constitution that bans nuclear weapons. As a Pacific island nation, we had and continue to have a particular interest in realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world, given that our region experienced the catastrophic and ongoing humanitarian

consequences of more than 300 nuclear test explosions conducted over the course of five decades. Our bold action inspired and propelled further anti-nuclear movements throughout the Pacific, including in Fiji, New Zealand and other South Pacific neighbours, through the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, otherwise known as the Rarotonga Treaty.

Given our proximity to North Korea, we are gravely concerned about the nuclear and missile development that is currently happening. War is rarely, if ever, just. But there is a particularly grave injustice in robbing not only the current generation of peace and prosperity but multiple generations that have not yet even been born, as we have seen in the birth defects of children born to women with radiation exposure in the Marshall Islands. Babies with severe deformities, such as internal organs outside their bodies, have been born to parents at substantial risk for cancer and other serious illnesses as a result of exposure. Moreover, the environmental costs of nuclear fallout are also well documented. Many Pacific islands remain radioactive and uninhabitable to this day. Those islands were once home to people with ancestral ties, spirits and stories, and teemed with both terrestrial and marine life. Today they remain skeletons. If a nuclear war were to break out in the Pacific, it would expose our tuna and migratory fish stocks to the rest of the world. Let me remind the Assembly that the Pacific supplies 60 per cent of the global tuna trade. So while this might be thought of as a regional kerfuffle by some Member States, I would like to highlight the fact that a nuclear programme activation in our region might eventually end up in the fish on their grandchildren's plates, regardless of where they are in the world.

We listened carefully to the statements made this morning, which homed in on claims of self-defence, bias and self-righteousness and were rife with geopolitical agendas. However, they do not conceal the escalating reality, which is the fact that North Korea has launched 60 or more ballistic missiles since 2019. This year it has launched the most ballistic missiles ever in a single year, despite the fact that we are only in June, and last weekend, emboldened by China and Russia's veto in the Security Council (see S/PV.9048), it launched the most ballistic missiles it ever has in a single event. Furthermore, North Korea is the only country that has carried out nuclear tests in the twenty-first century. The International Atomic Energy Agency has reported observations that North Korea is preparing its seventh potential nuclear test site, and it has a track record of

exporting its weapons and technologies to third parties, in an overt violation of the global non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In that light, Palau condemns North Korea's intercontinental and other ballistic-missile launches, which are in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We call on all Council members to act responsibly and join the rest of the United Nations community in working to reduce the increasing threat that North Korea poses to world peace. We are dismayed that the Security Council failed to act according to its own decision in its unanimously adopted resolution 2397 (2017), which states that the Council will take further measures in the event of an intercontinental ballistic-missile launch by North Korea. We urge the Council to honour its commitment. We further urge all Member States to continue to fully implement existing Security Council resolutions.

On a softer note, we also urge North Korea to accept the invitation of many Member States to engage in dialogue and diplomacy, including by accepting humanitarian assistance for the coronavirus disease outbreak and food shortages that are plaguing their country today.

Palau considers the global non-proliferation regime a key safeguard in protecting our common humanity. It is an essential aspect of our broader struggle to end violence, promote harmony and friendship among the peoples of the world, achieve justice and respect for human rights and ensure a clean, safe and healthy environment for all of us, our children and our future generations. We call on everyone to stand up to guard it.

Mrs. Hanlomyuang (Thailand): The issue under discussion is the ballistic-missile tests undertaken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On 4 February, Thailand joined other Association of Southeast Asian Nations member States in expressing grave concern about the continued ballistic-missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea earlier this year, which have the potential to escalate tensions and threaten regional peace and stability. Unfortunately, the concerns of the international community seem not to have been taken into account. Thailand is therefore concerned about and disappointed by the latest ballistic-missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including an intercontinental ballistic-missile test last month. That

represents disregard for the calls of the international community and a violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and runs counter to the efforts of all parties to achieve a peaceful solution.

We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to halt its ballistic-missile tests, comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and refrain from actions that may obstruct possible dialogue. Thailand hopes that all the parties will use peaceful means and continue to work to realize peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and bring about its complete, verifiable, irreversible and peaceful denuclearization.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): This meeting is being held at a very sensitive time, when the international community is witnessing decisive changes, with complex tensions in the area of international security as well as increasing tensions at the regional level. That demands that we all step up our work and coordinate our endeavours to support international efforts aimed at ensuring the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. That will enable us to reach our ultimate goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction and ensure a safe and secure future for current and subsequent generations. That is important because those dangerous weapons have devastating and lethal effects on both people and the environment.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continuing nuclear tests and launches of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles, are irrefutable proof that serious efforts to achieve the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are more desperately needed than ever, since that would strengthen its binding nature as well as the effectiveness of both the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

The delegation of Iraq emphasizes that nuclear tests and repeated missile launches constitute a grave threat to international and regional peace and security. We therefore appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with all the relevant Security Council resolutions and to refrain from any more provocative actions designed to increase tensions on the Korean peninsula and all over the world. We also urge the international community to continue its diplomatic efforts, which have been effective in many situations and can promote efforts to support peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Ruiz Díaz (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome this historic meeting on the use of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council. I would like to reaffirm how important it is that the Security Council find ways to overcome its internal differences. Paraguay has historically been in favour of reforming the Security Council and specifically by gradually eliminating the veto. A broad majority of Member States have asked the Security Council to do so in specific instances, especially when its permanent members' exercise of their privilege results in the Council's failure to fulfil its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, thereby threatening multilateralism and the validity of the Organization.

As part of the first densely populated zone free of nuclear weapons, Paraguay has always reaffirmed its unbreakable commitment to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and advocated for transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament that is also legally binding on all States. The Government of Paraguay condemns in the strongest terms the recent actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea designed to increase tensions on the Korean peninsula and threaten the territorial integrity of a Member State, in violation of Security Council resolutions and international law. Today it is more urgent than ever that the Security Council demonstrate its capacity to act to avoid further undermining its credibility and its very reason for existence. It cannot continue to disregard noncompliance with its own decisions.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers on Friday morning on 10 June in this Hall after the item already scheduled for consideration.

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

Mr. Wu Jianjian (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is exercising its right of reply to respond to the statements by the United States of America, Australia, Japan and Germany, which made presumptuous comments and accusations about China's voting position in the Security Council that China categorically rejects.

In the Security Council meeting under discussion (see S/PV.9048) and in this morning's General Assembly meeting (see A/76/PV.77), China expounded its position on the Korean peninsula issue comprehensively. We should point out that China takes an extremely cautious and responsible approach to every vote in the Council. Our vote against draft resolution S/2022/431, submitted by the United States, was entirely reasonable, justified and within China's rights as a permanent member of the Security Council. The fundamental aim of our vote is to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula, achieve its denuclearization and resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation.

The Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and plays a constructive role in resolving regional hotspot issues. The Council has so far adopted 10 sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, establishing an extremely tough, complex sanctions system. Continuing to increase the sanctions will only make the likelihood of a political solution even more remote. The key to effective work for the Security Council lies not in making pronouncements condemning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or adopting a new sanctions draft resolution against the country, but rather in helping to maintain stability and prevent chaos on the peninsula, alleviating the difficulties that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is facing on the humanitarian and livelihoods fronts and creating conditions for a political solution to the problems there.

Adopting a resolution with no principle and plunging the country concerned into even deeper disaster would be an irresponsible dereliction of duty on the part of the Security Council. Rather than blaming China, the countries concerned should reflect on what they have done. They should abandon their double standards on nuclear non-proliferation and cease their efforts to create bloc confrontation in the Asia-Pacific region and shift the blame to others on the peninsula issue. As a permanent member of the Council, China will continue to earnestly carry out the responsibilities entrusted to it by the United Nations, participate responsibly in the work of the Security Council, actively maintain the unity of its members, strictly implement Council resolutions concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and firmly support the Council in playing its due role in the political settlement of the peninsula issue.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor to respond to statements made by some countries today. This morning (see A/76/PV.77) my Permanent Representative clarified the root causes of the escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula and beyond, as well as the inherent right of a sovereign State to self-defence. The explanations given by China and the Russian Federation resonated well in that regard through their deep analysis of the situation on the Korean peninsula.

However, some countries are still making desperate attempts to distort the nature of the security environment on the peninsula and are unilaterally seeking to shift the blame to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Against that troubling background, I would like to reiterate my country's principled position. No other country on the planet has been constantly threatened with war as has the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the result has been that our people long for peace more intensely than any country in the world. Were it not for the decades-long hostile policy and nuclear threats of the United States of America, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would not have opted to bolster its national defence capabilities while bracing for ordeals and sacrifices. Even after the holding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States summit in Singapore, the United States has carried out a huge number of joint military exercises directed against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, exercises that it had committed to suspending. Worse still, the United States has conducted a wide variety of tests of strategic weapons and has deployed advanced aggressive means on the Korean peninsula and beyond in a way that poses a serious threat to my State. The fact that we have so far maintained peace on the Korean peninsula even amid the threat of war by the United States is due solely to the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has increased

its national defence capabilities in its exercise of its legitimate right to self-defence.

The Security Council's adoption in the past of a number of resolutions and other documents has failed to help address the issue of the Korean peninsula and indeed has ended up triggering a vicious cycle of escalating tensions. The Council has failed to find an approach to resolving the issue of the Korean peninsula that aligns with the principles of objectivity, impartiality and equilibrium. It is the hostile policy and double standards of the United States that are disrupting peace and security on the Korean peninsula and undermining the international non-proliferation regime. If the Security Council is genuinely interested in ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula, it will first be vital to focus on doing away with the vicious, hostile policies and double standards of the United States rather than calling into question our legitimate exercise of our right to self-defence.

Only when the Security Council becomes cognizant of the immense responsibility entrusted to it by Member States and abides by the principles of sovereign equality and impartiality will it truly be able to contribute to ensuring lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula and beyond. Our efforts to build up our national defence capabilities are part of our national defence plan to bring the long-term military threats from the United States under control and prevent any potential outbreaks of war on the Korean peninsula. We will never retreat from bolstering our national defence capabilities as long as the United States persists in its hostile policies and double standards.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 124.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.