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President: Mr. Villegas..... (Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 1.45 p.m.

Agenda item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

(continued) ([A/HRC/51/L.18](#), [A/HRC/51/L.19](#), [A/HRC/51/L.23](#) and [A/HRC/51/L.41](#))

Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.18](#): Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the main sponsors, namely France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Türkiye, the United States of America and his own delegation, said that the situation on the ground in Syria continued to deteriorate year after year. Human rights violations remained widespread and systematic. The now critical humanitarian situation was exacerbated by the insecurity that the regime and its backers continued to provoke. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic had recently warned the Council that there was a risk of further dire consequences if that trajectory continued.

2. The draft resolution specifically focused on developments in Syria over the past six months. Targeted attacks on civilians, in their homes and at markets, had killed innocent women and children. Civilians were being deprived of food, water and other basic necessities. Those in detention continued to suffer appalling conditions, ill-treatment and torture. The Council could not remain silent in the face of the regime's blatant disregard for the rights and lives of its people. The draft resolution condemned the lethal violence inflicted on the Syrian people, demanded that critical humanitarian aid should be delivered without hindrance, and called for further support for those seeking to clarify the fate of their loved ones. Given the lives lost, the suffering endured and the unwillingness of the regime to protect the Syrian people, the very least that the Council could do was to adopt the draft resolution and send a message that the world had not forgotten the people of Syria. He urged members of the Council to vote in favour of the draft resolution if a vote was requested.

3. **The President** announced that 10 States had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution, which had no programme budget implications.

General statements made before the voting

4. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Union that were members of the Council, said that the European Union welcomed the decision to submit a short draft resolution on the human rights situation in Syria, focusing on recent developments and on the most egregious ongoing violations. The European Union fully supported the draft resolution's emphasis on accountability and justice, as well as the continued attention paid to missing persons. The European Union echoed the draft resolution's calls for a complete, immediate and nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria and its reaffirmation of the Council's commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The European Union reiterated its full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and of the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). A political solution remained absolutely essential. For those reasons, the European Union supported the adoption of the draft resolution.

5. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) said that the human rights situation in Syria remained one of the most serious in the world. The United Nations had documented the tragic human toll of the regime's systematic repression of its own people. In a country of 21 million people, at least 350,000 had died and 150,000 had disappeared, most of them in prisons. There were more than 6 million refugees and a similar number of internally displaced persons. Until the regime undertook to implement a credible and inclusive political solution, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), there would be no lasting peace in Syria, nor could the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons be ensured. France was fighting tirelessly to ensure that the human rights situation in Syria remained a priority for the international community, including by submitting a draft resolution on the subject at each session of the Council. It would also pursue its efforts to combat impunity for the systematic and widespread violence against the people of Syria. There could be no lasting solution without justice. His delegation called on all States members of the Council to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

6. **Ms. Taylor** (United States of America) said that her delegation strongly supported the draft resolution, which highlighted the violations and abuses committed in Syria, including in relation to prolonged detentions and disappearances. It appreciated the persistent documentation and advocacy by the Commission of Inquiry and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the fate of those missing and arbitrarily detained in Syria. As stated in the draft resolution, her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic and its finding that measures to address missing persons must be coherent, inclusive and centred on victims. The draft resolution highlighted the fact that Syrian civil society groups, in particular women- and victim-led groups, continued to provide critical assistance to survivors and advocate for justice. It also reiterated the call for the Syrian regime to immediately release all those arbitrarily detained and to cease enforced disappearances, the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Her delegation urged all Council members to support the draft resolution. As the Commission of Inquiry had noted in its report, the international community could not look away from the atrocities being committed in Syria. The adoption of the draft resolution would send a much-needed message of support for the brave Syrian human rights defenders and families of the detained and missing and would show that the international community had not turned away from the long-standing grave and tragic human rights situation in Syria.

7. **Ms. Al-Muftah** (Qatar) said that the draft resolution reflected the international community's concern over the continued crimes and human rights violations being committed in Syria. It recalled the need to work seriously to arrive at a political solution in line with the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), with a view to putting an end to the conflict and the suffering of the Syrian people. The draft resolution called for the protection of the rights of the Syrian people, an end to impunity for all those responsible for crimes and human rights violations, and the provision of support to the families of missing persons. Her delegation called on all members of the Council to vote in favour of it.

8. **The President** invited the State concerned by the draft resolution to make a statement.

9. **Mr. Aala** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation reiterated its rejection of unilateral, politicized resolutions targeting the Syrian Arab Republic, as exemplified by the draft resolution currently before the Council. The draft resolution was being presented to the Council without justification a mere three months after the adoption of a similar resolution submitted by the United Kingdom and a group of States that insisted on using the Council and its mechanisms to serve their interventionist agendas, thus violating the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity on which the Council had been founded. Considering the liquidity and credibility crises recognized at the current session of the Council, the political motives behind the draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 4 and the double standards applied by their sponsoring States, the Council had a particular responsibility to stop the wasting of resources and to oppose such a politicized approach, which continued to undermine the role and mandate of the Council under General Assembly resolution 60/251.

10. Like previous texts submitted by the United Kingdom without the consent of the State concerned, the draft resolution lacked impartiality and objectivity. It reproduced baseless accusations that underscored its selective and biased nature and its aim of defaming the Syrian Arab Republic as part of a political campaign by the sponsors. The armed forces of the United Kingdom, the United States and the international coalition had destroyed his country without regard for human rights. His delegation rejected the fabricated allegations and illegitimate mechanisms promoted by the draft resolution, including those whose technical nature went beyond the competence of the Council. His delegation reaffirmed the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to its responsibilities to protect its citizens and respect human rights in accordance with its national laws and treaty obligations. It rejected the sponsors' attempts to use the draft resolution to interfere in the political process facilitated by the United Nations and based on the intra-Syrian dialogue and the exclusive right of the Syrians to shape the future of their country without foreign interference. The draft resolution

ignored the suffering endured by Syrians as a result of the terrorist war, Turkish and American aggression and the plundering of the country's natural and economic resources, the repeated Israeli military attacks on civilian facilities, and the role of the economic embargo in violating the human rights of Syrians and impeding the return of refugees and displaced persons. His delegation therefore rejected the draft resolution and called on all Council members to vote against it.

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

11. **Mr. Quintanilla Román** (Cuba) said that his delegation objected to the manipulation of human rights for political purposes, as well as the submission of country-specific resolutions that were not supported by the State concerned. The interventionist agenda must be abandoned and serious work must be done to find a solution to the situation in Syria that prioritized the right of its people to self-determination and peace. The role of the international community was not to legitimize punitive actions, which did nothing whatsoever to protect human rights. His delegation rejected any attempt to undermine the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. The illegal use of force was a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The draft resolution was not in line with the objectives towards which the Council was supposed to be working, would not help to improve the human rights situation on the ground and was based on politicization, double standards and selectivity in dealing with human rights. For those reasons, the Cuban delegation requested a recorded vote and would vote against the draft resolution.

12. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation rejected the draft resolution, which was being presented mere months after the previous hostile initiative at the Council's fiftieth session. Like all previous such resolutions, the draft resolution represented an unacceptable politicization of the Council's work. The situation in Syria was addressed at every session without the country's consent and without regard for the millions of dollars that were needlessly being spent. Each time, the sponsors repeated the questionable and unverified allegations of the failed International Commission of Inquiry and the recommendations and conclusions it fabricated in order to serve the hidden agenda of its supporters. No credence should be given, for example, to the Commission's allegations of enforced disappearance, as the serious efforts being made by Syria in that respect, including in the framework of the Astana peace process, were ignored. The steps taken by Syria to strengthen the national legal framework and bring legislation into line with international commitments were also deliberately ignored. No consideration was given to the serious repercussions of the illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States and the European Union against Syria, including during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Those measures targeted basic and vital sectors, undermining the enjoyment of human rights by the Syrian people, especially the rights to life, health, food, education, livelihood and development.

13. His delegation condemned once again the systematic policy of destabilization and open interference in the internal affairs of Syria through the use of force and illegal actions to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity, which constituted serious violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Efforts must be made to safeguard peace and stability in Syria by preventing terrorism in all its forms, which caused the death and suffering of so many innocent people. The draft resolution undermined the credibility of the Council, whose work should be based on genuine dialogue and cooperation, as well as on the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. For those reasons, the Venezuelan delegation would vote against the draft resolution and hoped all other members would do the same.

14. **Mr. Rosales** (Argentina) said that his Government continued to support the Syrian people in their desire for a political rather than a military solution to the conflict. The only way to arrive at a solution to the Syrian crisis and genuinely restore the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of that country was to end the violence, respect human rights, alleviate the humanitarian situation and allow the Syrian people to decide their own future. Women had a vital role to play in building a sustainable and lasting peace in Syria, and their full and meaningful participation in the political process was therefore of the utmost importance. Argentina supported all efforts to achieve justice and accountability for

the crimes committed in Syria. Lasting peace in Syria would not be possible without justice, which must include the transparent and verifiable release of all arbitrarily detained persons, as well as the provision of information on the whereabouts of missing persons. There could be no military solution to the Syrian crisis. What was needed was a frank dialogue aimed at finding sustainable solutions and involving all actors in society. Argentina therefore reiterated its call on the parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and commit themselves to resolving their differences by peaceful means. They should participate in good faith in the negotiations coordinated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. In that framework, his delegation welcomed the efforts of regional and international actors to achieve political stability in Syria while respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the country. For those reasons, the Argentine delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution.

15. **Mr. Yang Zhilun** (China) said that his delegation supported the Cuban delegation's request for a vote on the draft resolution. Differences of opinion in the field of human rights should be addressed through constructive dialogue and cooperation and not through the politicization of human rights and interference in the internal affairs of States. The draft resolution reproduced the text of previous resolutions on the subject and put pressure on the Government of Syria while ignoring the root causes of the situation, including illegal foreign military interference and unilateral coercive measures and their negative impact on the human rights of the Syrian people. The draft resolution was not objective and would not facilitate a political settlement of the situation in Syria or relieve the suffering of the Syrian people. For those reasons, his delegation would vote against the draft resolution and called on all other members to do the same.

16. **Mr. Da Silva Nunes** (Brazil) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria. The economic and humanitarian situation on the ground was the worst it had been since the onset of the conflict. An estimated 14.6 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, as documented by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Brazilian delegation strongly condemned the violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law that continued to be perpetrated by different actors in the country. It continued to fully support the work of the Commission of Inquiry and took note of its recommendations to cease all indiscriminate and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, to ensure rapid, safe, unimpeded and unconditional access to humanitarian relief and to conduct independent assessments of the impact of sanctions. While his delegation also continued to support the Council's engagement in fostering a political and human rights-based solution to the Syrian conflict, it considered the draft resolution deeply unbalanced, selective and partial. Multiple actors bore responsibility for the human rights violations committed in Syria, notwithstanding the primary responsibility of the Syrian Government to protect the Syrian population. For those reasons, his delegation would abstain from voting on the draft resolution.

17. *At the request of the representative of Cuba, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Argentina, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

Armenia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Eritrea, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining:

Brazil, Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan.

18. *Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.18](#) was adopted by 25 votes to 6, with 16 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/HRC/51/L.19: Situation of human rights in Ethiopia

19. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union, said that, almost two years into the conflict in northern Ethiopia, the situation remained alarming. Fighting had resumed on 24 August 2022, ending a five-month truce. The first priority should be an immediate cessation of hostilities, direct talks with a view to reaching a permanent ceasefire and a political solution to the conflict, and full humanitarian access to all conflict-affected areas. The European Union welcomed the announcement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission that the African Union-led peace talks were due to start soon in South Africa. Meanwhile, there continued to be reports of grave human rights violations and abuses, such as large-scale killings of civilians because of their ethnicity and widespread sexual and gender-based violence. The conclusions of the report issued by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia were very much in line with those of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission/OHCHR joint investigation team. There were reasonable grounds to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity had been and continued to be committed. The European Union was appalled by the gravity and scale of the human rights violations and abuses and feared that much of what was happening still remained unknown. The Tigray region had been cut off from the outside world for months, without any telecommunications, Internet or electricity. The United Nations presence was very limited, and there were hardly any visits by journalists or independent actors. The European Union was firmly committed to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Ethiopia and fully supported the ongoing mediation efforts led by the African Union. A stable, prosperous and peaceful Ethiopia was important for the entire Horn of Africa. The Commission of Human Rights Experts had been established to complement the work undertaken by the joint investigation team and by domestic accountability mechanisms. Its work had not yet been completed. The European Union therefore called upon all States members of the Council to renew the Commission's mandate by voting in favour of the draft resolution.

20. **Mr. Yang Zhilun** (China), introducing a proposed oral amendment, said that peace and stability in Ethiopia were of great significance for ensuring lasting peace in the region. The international community should support all parties that sought a lasting and effective domestic solution, while fully respecting the will of the country concerned. The draft resolution was seriously unbalanced. Its sponsors had selectively ignored the Ethiopian Government's efforts and progress in the promotion and protection of human rights and had disregarded the authorities' strong objections, thus intervening in the internal affairs of Ethiopia. As the legitimate recommendations made by the Chinese delegation during the consultations on the draft resolution had not been accepted, his delegation felt compelled to propose an oral amendment. Its proposal was to delete paragraph 9, which read: "Decides to renew the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia for a further period of one year." Forcing the establishment of a country-specific mechanism without the consent of the country concerned was not conducive to constructive dialogue and cooperation. Extending the mechanism's mandate was unnecessary and would not promote development in Ethiopia or ease the regional situation. The fact that his delegation had proposed an oral amendment should not be taken to mean that it supported the draft resolution. His delegation requested that the oral amendment should be put to a vote and called on all members to vote in favour of it.

21. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the main sponsors of draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.19](#) wished to request a vote on the proposed amendment, which they did not support. They urged all members of the Council to vote against it.

22. **The President** said that three States had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

23. **Mr. Fofana** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the proposed amendment, if adopted, would reduce the total resources required for the draft resolution's implementation. The revised resource requirement would be communicated subsequently and would be reflected in the next annual report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council.

24. **The President** invited members of the Council to make general statements on the draft resolution and the proposed amendment.

25. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Union that were members of the Council, said it was deeply regrettable that the delegation of China had resorted to the presentation of an oral amendment that served no purpose other than to render the draft resolution meaningless by deleting the paragraph that renewed the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. Taking other delegations by surprise so that they could not seek instructions or engage in further consultations was not a constructive way of working. It led to unnecessary polarization and had a pernicious effect on the Council's integrity and credibility. The Council should not reward that kind of aggressive behaviour. The draft resolution merited adoption as originally formulated. It was the product of a thorough, open and transparent negotiation process. The International Commission had a key role to play in ensuring that ongoing and future efforts to deliver accountability and realize transitional justice were successful. Its mandate must be renewed. While awaiting the commencement of peace talks, the international community could not simply ignore the massive human rights violations and abuses taking place in northern Ethiopia on a daily basis. Reconciliation must be built on justice. The Commission was the only existing international mechanism that was mapping what was happening in northern Ethiopia, including with regard to the role played by Eritrea. For those reasons, the European Union would vote against the proposed amendment and called on others to do the same.

26. **Mr. Honsei** (Japan) said that his Government was deeply concerned about the escalation of violence and the deteriorating human rights situation in Ethiopia. It urged all parties to the conflict to refrain from direct attacks against civilians and any action that might exacerbate the already acute humanitarian crisis. It appreciated the Ethiopian Government's efforts to implement the recommendations of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission/OHCHR joint investigation team and called on all parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia to enable it to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into alleged violations of international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. The Government of Japan was committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia and, along with the rest of the international community, would continue working to address the humanitarian crisis and achieve peace and stability in Ethiopia. The draft resolution should therefore be adopted in its original form.

27. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) said that the situation in northern Ethiopia since the resumption of hostilities in August 2022 was alarming. The number of human rights violations that were a direct consequence of the conflict was mounting; there had been reports of killings of civilians on account of their ethnicity and of the systematic use of rape and sexual violence, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity. The inhabitants of the Tigray region were without access to basic services such as water, electricity, health care and telecommunications. The recent announcement that the Government of Ethiopia and the regional government of Tigray were willing to resume negotiations under the aegis of the African Union gave grounds for hope; in that context, the renewal of the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts was essential, as the Council must stay informed of ongoing developments. For over a year, the International Commission had been actively contributing to the fight against impunity and making recommendations that would pave the way for a negotiated and lasting solution. His delegation thus hoped that the amendment that China had proposed orally at such a late stage, without allowing time for discussion or reflection, would be rejected. His delegation called on all members to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

28. **Mr. Idris** (Eritrea) said that his delegation would like to reiterate its principled position that States bore the primary responsibility for safeguarding human rights within their territory. Politicized mandates such as the one provided for in the draft resolution had never been effective in furthering that aim. The dire circumstances and human rights challenges afflicting Ethiopia were the consequence of an unprovoked, premeditated war initiated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Regrettably, however, in what had become a familiar pattern, the draft resolution largely ignored the heinous crimes committed by the Front while

shifting the blame to its primary victims in order to advance a political agenda. It was biased, marred by procedural and substantive flaws and at variance with the facts on the ground. In particular, it included a claim that there was a renewed presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray and called on Eritrea to withdraw them, an untenable request that was being made for the political purpose of implicating Eritrea and emboldening the Tigray People's Liberation Front. For those reasons, his delegation would support the amendment proposed orally by the delegation of China and would vote against the draft resolution as a whole. It called upon fellow members of the Council to do likewise.

29. **Ms. Taylor** (United States of America) said that the Government of the United States supported an African Union-led peace process to end the fighting in Ethiopia and restore security for its people. Her Government commended the African Union's readiness to launch a robust mediation effort and welcomed recent statements by the Government of Ethiopia and regional authorities that attested to their readiness to meet as part of that process. Her delegation called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a return to the negotiating table and sustained, unhindered humanitarian assistance. It called on the African Union to integrate human rights accountability into the peace negotiations and urged all actors to end abuses and hostilities without preconditions and to follow through on their commitment to a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent transitional justice process. The adoption of the draft resolution and the renewal of the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts would be steps in the right direction. The United States commended the Ethiopian Government's support and facilitation of the 2021 joint investigation into the human rights situation in Tigray and urged it to extend the same cooperation to the International Commission. Her delegation vigorously rejected the proposed oral amendment, which would discontinue the mandate of a mechanism that was only just getting started on its work. The proposed amendment had been introduced in bad faith at the last minute and was deeply misguided.

30. **Ms. Pujani** (India), recalling that the international community had consistently called for the cessation of violence, the exercise of restraint and the rebuilding of trust to pave the way for dialogue, said that, despite some positive developments earlier in 2022, the fighting that had broken out in August was deeply troubling. Her Government was particularly concerned about the looting of fuel intended for humanitarian purposes from the warehouse of the World Food Programme and about the fact that women, children, older persons and others who were particularly vulnerable continued to suffer most. It welcomed the Ethiopian Government's commitment to the peace talks and the regional authorities' agreement to an African Union-led peace process. It hoped that an amicable political solution that served the interests of all Ethiopians could be found. To that end, humanitarian assistance must continue to be provided, the international community must continue to support and assist the Government of Ethiopia, and steps must be taken to allow Ethiopians to return to their sources of livelihood. Humanitarian action should always be guided by humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and should not be politicized, and the initiatives led by the African Union and the region must have the Council's strong support. India reiterated its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

31. **Mr. Mika** (Namibia) said that, as his delegation had made clear on previous occasions, the work of the Council and its mechanisms should complement, and not undermine, national and regional efforts to address the human rights situation in Ethiopia. His delegation was concerned to note that, while Human Rights Council resolution S-33/1 establishing the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia mandated the mechanism to conduct its investigation by "building upon the report" of OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.19](#) indicated that the International Commission had been established with a view to "furthering the work" of ongoing processes, a change that shed light on the real intent behind its establishment. His delegation also took issue with the statement released by the International Commission on 7 September 2022, in which it "welcomed" rather than "took note" of the Security Council's decision regarding the situation in Ethiopia; issues of international peace and security did not fall within the Commission's mandate. For those reasons, his delegation could not support the draft resolution in its current form and would vote in favour of the oral amendment.

32. **The President** invited the State concerned by the draft resolution to make a statement.

33. **Mr. Korcho** (Observer for Ethiopia) said that his delegation categorically rejected the draft resolution. In considering whether the draft resolution was warranted, the Council should bear in mind that the Government of Ethiopia had been taking various steps to ensure accountability. It had, for example, dispatched teams of prosecutors to localities where serious human rights violations were alleged to have occurred. In addition, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had undertaken its own independent investigations and had published its findings. The Government had also facilitated the joint independent investigation by OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, had agreed to implement the resulting recommendations, and had established an interministerial task force to do so. The task force had recently reported on the first phase of its investigations and was endeavouring to ensure that victims received immediate psychosocial and livelihood support. It was finalizing a draft national plan for transitional justice that would provide a basis for sustained accountability efforts, healing and reconciliation. Furthermore, individuals accused of human rights violations had been brought before the courts; some had been convicted, while others had been acquitted, in full observance of due process.

34. The sponsors and supporters of the draft resolution were aware of those and other commitments undertaken by the Government. They knew that a humanitarian truce had been declared and that the delivery of humanitarian aid had been expedited. They also knew that the Tigray People's Liberation Front had blatantly violated the truce and reignited the conflict. Nonetheless, they had presented a draft resolution calling for the renewal of the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts even before the Commission's report had been released. That report was replete with politically motivated and unsubstantiated allegations and failed to meet the United Nations standard of proof for such investigations.

35. Despite its misgivings, the Government of Ethiopia had endeavoured to accommodate the International Commission and had allowed it to undertake on-the-ground investigations in the hope that they would contribute to national accountability efforts. However, the Commission had refused to listen to reason and had insisted on undertaking investigations all over the country, unnecessarily repeating work carried out during the joint investigation. It had submitted an irresponsible, substandard report containing an ultra vires call for action by the United Nations Security Council that revealed its political purpose. The draft resolution was intended to increase the pressure on Ethiopia for an additional year even though the Government was implementing all the accountability measures he had outlined. That was unacceptable. The Government had agreed to participate in the African Union-led peace talks without preconditions. In keeping with the principle of complementarity, the country's partners should have focused on supporting those efforts and the genuine national efforts to ensure accountability. His delegation asked the members of the Council to reject the draft resolution and to support his Government's efforts to ensure peace, accountability and progress.

36. **The President** invited the Council to take action on the amendment proposed orally by the delegation of China.

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

37. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was strongly opposed to the last-minute oral amendment proposed by the delegation of China. If adopted, the oral amendment would discontinue the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts, thus striking at the very heart of the draft resolution. Deleting the paragraph in question would mean the end of the Commission and of the vital investigative work that it carried out. In the run-up to the African Union-led peace talks, it was clear that any solution to the crisis in Ethiopia must include justice and accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict by all parties, including human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law potentially constituting war crimes or crimes against humanity. The need for full, impartial, independent and transparent investigations into the entire conflict in Ethiopia was just as pressing as it had been a year previously, when the Council had decided to establish the International Commission. The Commission must be given the time and resources it needed to conclude its vital work and advance accountability

in Ethiopia. Its mandate must therefore be renewed. His delegation would vote against the proposed oral amendment and encouraged other members of the Council to do likewise.

38. **Mr. Bichler** (Luxembourg) said that his delegation regretted the last-minute oral amendment introduced by the delegation of China. The Tigray region of Ethiopia had been plagued by deadly conflict in addition to a vast humanitarian crisis; the report recently issued by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts had corroborated the extent to which the conflict exposed civilians to the worst forms of human rights violations. If adopted, the oral amendment would eradicate the mandate of the main mechanism through which members of the Council stayed informed of the situation, potentially leaving them unaware of developments in one of the worst humanitarian crises on the planet. Leaving the civilian population to its fate would be intolerable; the members of the Council had a collective responsibility to address serious human rights violations, and the proposed oral amendment was intended to deny it that role. For that reason, Luxembourg encouraged the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities and any other belligerent forces to put an end to the hostilities and to cooperate fully with United Nations mechanisms. His delegation would vote against the proposed oral amendment and called on all other delegations to do the same.

39. **Ms. Stasch** (Germany) said her delegation regretted that the oral amendment had been proposed at such a late stage of the process, especially since there had been ample opportunity to discuss the human rights situation in Ethiopia in informal consultations. The conflict in Ethiopia had been ongoing for two years and the report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts gave reasonable grounds to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity had been and continued to be committed. Ending the Commission's mandate, which was the aim of the proposed oral amendment, would be tantamount to ignoring one of the direst humanitarian situations on the planet. Was that really what certain members of the Council were seeking to achieve? Germany had no interest in singling out parties to the conflict or undermining domestic efforts, but it recognized that the International Commission was the Council's only impartial source of information on the human rights situation in Ethiopia and that its mandate should therefore be renewed. Her delegation would vote against the proposed oral amendment and called on all members of the Council to also oppose its adoption.

40. *At the request of the representative of Czechia, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, India, Libya, Mauritania, Namibia, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Against:

Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Gambia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Qatar, Uzbekistan.

41. *The amendment proposed orally by the delegation of China was rejected by 21 votes to 18, with 8 abstentions.*

42. **The President** invited the Council to take action on draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.19](#).

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

43. **Ms. Salah** (Somalia) said that, as a member of the Human Rights Council, Somalia had an obligation to promote the principle of solidarity and cooperation in promoting and protecting human rights. It believed that human rights were integral to the promotion of peace and security, economic prosperity and social equality. However, it was extremely concerned about the politicization of the Council's activities, to which the report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia clearly attested. Mandates established without the agreement of the country concerned lacked credibility and, in the case of Ethiopia, undermined the accountability and redress measures implemented by the

Government; international mechanisms should complement, rather than replace, national efforts. It was unfortunate that the European Union had once again submitted a draft resolution that not only did not have the consent of the country concerned but also went beyond the mandate of the Council. Furthermore, the draft resolution would contribute neither to the peace process nor to the protection and promotion of human rights on the ground. The time had come to terminate that unnecessary mandate and enhance opportunities to advance the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia and its cooperation with OHCHR. Against that backdrop, her delegation was not in a position to support the draft resolution and called for a vote on its adoption. Her delegation would vote against it and invited all other members of the Council to do the same.

44. **Mr. Rosales** (Argentina) said that, as in previous years, his delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution. It recognized that the interministerial task force established by the Government of Ethiopia was making headway in ensuring redress and accountability and had begun taking steps to implement the recommendations contained in the report published jointly by OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

45. **Mr. Da Silva Nunes** (Brazil) said that his Government was deeply concerned about the resurgence of the conflict in Ethiopia and the deteriorating human rights situation. It was troubled by reports of widespread abuses and violations and called on all parties to fully respect international human rights and humanitarian law and take all necessary measures to protect civilians without discrimination. His delegation appreciated the balanced and constructive approach maintained in the draft resolution, the fact that it recognized the responsibility of all parties and the willingness of the Government of Ethiopia to meet with the International Commission to discuss possible modalities for future cooperation, and its focus on accountability, technical assistance and national reconciliation and healing.

46. However, although the continuing hostilities and deteriorating conditions in Ethiopia justified the involvement of the Human Rights Council, his delegation believed that due consideration should be given to the concerns recently expressed by the Government of Ethiopia and that the International Commission of Experts had overstepped its mandate, particularly in the statement issued on 7 September 2022. Council resolution S-33/1 mandated the International Commission to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation, to establish the facts and circumstances, to provide guidance on transitional justice, to integrate a gender perspective and a survivor-centred approach, and to engage with all relevant stakeholders. It did not empower the International Commission to call upon United Nations bodies, especially the Security Council, to take action. That was the role of Member States, based on open and inclusive consultations with all stakeholders and international and regional organizations. His delegation wished to reiterate its support for the efforts undertaken by the African Union and would vote in favour of the draft resolution on the understanding that the International Commission would abide strictly by the terms of its mandate, as established in resolution S-33/1. In particular, his delegation called on the International Commission to engage actively with all relevant stakeholders. It would continue to monitor the work of the Commission closely with a view to advancing a sustainable solution to the conflict.

47. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), expressing his delegation's strong opposition to the draft resolution, said it was regrettable that the main sponsors had been unwilling to engage in frank dialogue with the country concerned and had instead opted for a coercive approach, seeking to renew the mandate of a body that did not have the support of the country concerned and was thus unfortunately destined to fail. The draft resolution undermined the efforts of OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, especially since the Government of Ethiopia had repeatedly undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in their joint report. The Ethiopian authorities had also demonstrated a readiness to continue cooperating with the Council and its mechanisms and a resolve to fulfil their national and international human rights obligations. The draft resolution was therefore without purpose, and constituted a further example of the selectivity, politicization and double standards that had characterized the Council's response to the crisis; a number of the draft resolution's sponsors had committed, and in some cases continued to commit, violations of human rights yet had never been targeted by similar resolutions. His

delegation would vote against the draft resolution and hoped that other Council members would do likewise.

48. **Mr. Yang** Zhilun (China) said that his Government had always maintained that the work of the Human Rights Council should be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity and that States should engage in constructive dialogue in the field of human rights without politicization. It was opposed to the establishment of mechanisms without the consent of the country concerned and to interference in the internal affairs of States in the name of human rights or humanitarian needs. The draft resolution was a product of politicization and a typical attempt to exert pressure on developing countries. China urged the parties concerned to respect the human rights development path chosen independently by Ethiopia in the light of its own domestic conditions. His delegation would vote against the draft resolution and called on other delegations to do the same.

49. *At the request of the representative of Somalia, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, India, Libya, Mauritania, Namibia, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining:

Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Qatar, Uzbekistan.

50. *Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.19](#) was adopted by 21 votes to 19, with 7 abstentions.*

Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.23](#): Situation of human rights in Burundi

51. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union, said that the aim of the text was to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi. The new Government of Burundi had made encouraging statements and gestures, but transitions took time, and, as the Special Rapporteur had noted, there was still considerable room for improvement in the human rights situation in the country. Regrettably, during the informal consultations, no agreement had been reached with the delegation of Burundi on how to carry forward the work of the Special Rapporteur. He called on all Council members to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

52. **The President** said that two States had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution, which had programme budget implications amounting to \$500,500.

General statements made before the voting

53. **Mr. Kouame** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group welcomed the progress made by the Government of Burundi in the field of human rights, particularly in combating corruption and human trafficking, instituting reforms in areas such as good governance, justice and media freedom, and working towards national reconciliation. It also welcomed the authorities' efforts to reduce overcrowding in prisons and a number of other developments, including the voluntary return of some human rights defenders and political actors to the country and the reaccreditation of the national human rights institution with category A status. In recognition of that progress, the country's international and regional partners had lifted all the sanctions that had been imposed on it in the wake of the events of 2015, and both the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council had removed Burundi from their political agendas.

54. The Group of African States regretted that the European Union was insisting on continuing to impose a human rights monitoring mechanism on Burundi against the Government's wishes. The country's population, which was already vulnerable, was the

primary victim of that international pressure campaign, which could be counterproductive and could lead to renewed escalation. Cooperation, dialogue, technical assistance and capacity-building were the only way forward. Renewed dialogue between the Government and its European and other partners would help rebuild trust, foster mutual understanding and make it possible to create a mutually advantageous partnership in which the country's sovereignty was respected.

55. **Mr. Yang Zhilun** (China) said that China had always maintained that differences over human rights should be addressed through constructive dialogue and cooperation. It opposed the politicization of human rights issues, including the establishment or renewal of country-specific mechanisms without the consent of the country concerned. His delegation therefore called for a vote on the draft resolution, which took no account of the progress made by the Government of Burundi or of the Government's explicit requests for the Council to put an end to the Special Rapporteur's mandate. His delegation would vote against the draft resolution and called on other delegations to do likewise.

56. **The President** invited the State concerned by the draft resolution to make a statement.

57. **Mr. Ndinduruvugo** (Observer for Burundi) said his delegation regretted that the States members of the European Union had found it necessary, despite the international community's recognition of the positive developments in Burundi, to put the draft resolution forward over the objections of the country concerned and of other countries that directly or indirectly rejected unilateralist, neocolonialist attempts to exert geopolitical control over the global South. The adoption of the draft resolution would be a non-event for Burundi, which was not concerned by any decision that was made behind its back.

58. Burundi had made tremendous progress in the area of human rights. Everyone in the country had access to justice; human rights, including freedom of expression and of the press, were respected throughout the country; and Burundi had returned to the regional and international scene. It had also undertaken to act on all the recommendations that it had received during the universal periodic review of its human rights record. Unfortunately, some countries were discouraging its development by politicizing human rights, democratic principles and the fight against impunity. It was time for OHCHR to act in accordance with the views of Member States as a whole instead of seeking to satisfy third States by imposing an external monitoring mechanism, which smacked of paternalism and would only worsen relations between Burundi and its international partners. His Government reiterated its intention not to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur if the mandate was renewed.

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

59. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation was opposed to the draft resolution, an unbalanced, politicized and interventionist text that did not have the support of the country concerned. The main sponsors' determination to continue to use human rights as a political instrument with which to produce reports critical of the Government of Burundi was the only reason why the draft resolution was being considered. Burundi needed solidarity, not hostile mechanisms. His delegation would therefore vote against the draft resolution and encouraged other delegations to do likewise.

60. **Ms. Salah** (Somalia) said that her delegation was of the view that the Council should recognize the recent positive developments in Burundi by deciding that the human rights situation in the country no longer required the Council's attention and by giving priority to the assistance and capacity-building programmes that Burundi needed. It was highly regrettable that the European Union, without the consent of the country concerned, had again brought a draft resolution on the human rights situation in Burundi before the Council. All members were encouraged to respect the principle of sovereignty enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and, as her delegation intended to do, to vote against the draft resolution.

61. *At the request of the representatives of China, Somalia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Czechia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mexico,

Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Libya, Mauritania, Pakistan, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining:

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Namibia, Nepal, Qatar, Senegal, Sudan, Uzbekistan.

62. Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.23](#) was adopted by 22 votes to 12, with 13 abstentions.

Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.41](#): Situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

63. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the main sponsors, namely Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and his own delegation, said that the text was a regional initiative that had a total of 48 sponsors thus far. Since 2020, when the Council had adopted resolution 45/20, Venezuela had taken steps to work with OHCHR and to strengthen the rule of law. It had failed, however, to act on the large majority of the recommendations made by OHCHR and the independent international fact-finding mission. The grave human rights violations that had led to the creation of that mission and the mandate of OHCHR to monitor and report on the situation in the country were still occurring. As the former High Commissioner had noted in June 2022, the mandate of the mission, which involved fact-finding with a view to accountability, and that of OHCHR, which involved monitoring and technical assistance, were complementary.

64. The main sponsors of the draft resolution, which had engaged with the country concerned during two rounds of informal consultations, were of the view that the two mandates should be extended for a further two years. The facts spoke for themselves: the human rights situation in Venezuela still required the Council's attention. All Council members were encouraged to support the draft resolution.

65. **The President** said that 11 States had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution, which had programme budget implications amounting to \$7,086,200.

General statements made before the voting

66. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union continued to be very concerned about the protracted human rights crisis in Venezuela and strongly supported the extension of the two mandates, as proposed in the draft resolution. It welcomed the country's cooperation with OHCHR but was of the view that it should also cooperate with the fact-finding mission, whose report to the Council demonstrated the importance of continued monitoring and assistance. Full accountability for human rights violations was the only guarantee of positive change. The States members of the European Union that were members of the Council would therefore support the draft resolution. He called on other Council members to do likewise.

67. **Mr. Honsei** (Japan) said that Japan, which was a strong supporter of the fact-finding mission, remained concerned about the human rights situation in Venezuela and was alarmed by the conditions described in the mission's reports. The numerous crises affecting the country had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting more than 6 million Venezuelans to emigrate. His delegation urged Venezuela to address those crises and improve the situation by acting on the recommendations of OHCHR and the fact-finding mission and by giving both bodies full access to the country. He called for an immediate resumption of dialogue with a view to the restoration of democracy in Venezuela and hoped that, in the near future, the people of the country would be able to fully enjoy their human rights.

68. **Ms. Taylor** (United States of America) said that the United States fully supported the draft resolution. The fact-finding mission and OHCHR provided unbiased reporting,

documenting the abuses committed by the regime and other actors in Venezuela. In its report of 20 September 2022 (A/HRC/51/43), for example, the fact-finding mission had documented ongoing human rights violations and abuses, including extrajudicial killing, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture –

69. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on a point of order, said that decorum should be observed. The use of language intended to strip his Government and country of their dignity was unacceptable.

70. **The President** said that untimely interruptions were unwelcome in the Council and that proper procedure should be observed.

71. **Ms. Taylor** (United States of America) said that the fact-finding mission had highlighted the lack of judicial independence in the country, the regime's failure to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses and the need to amplify the voices of the victims of those violations and abuses. Her delegation called on Council members to support the draft resolution.

72. **Ms. Macdonal Alvarez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the draft resolution did not take into account the openness to negotiation that Venezuela had shown in relation to the text and that progress in the area of human rights was more sustainable when it was made in concert with the country concerned. Her delegation, which was opposed to the creation or extension of country-specific mandates without the support of the countries concerned, called for a vote on the draft resolution, would vote against it and asked other delegations to do the same.

73. **Mr. Quintanilla Román** (Cuba), noting that he wished to join the Venezuelan delegation's call for respectful language, said that his delegation reiterated its rejection of the use of human rights mechanisms to implement policies that were hostile to the people and Government of Venezuela. The main sponsors of the draft resolution, which would only poison the work of the Council, had disregarded the spirit of cooperation shown by the Venezuelan authorities, thereby missing an opportunity to prove that they were motivated by a genuine interest in the promotion of human rights. Moreover, adopting the draft resolution would lead to a waste of scarce resources. OHCHR already had a field presence in Venezuela that was hard-pressed to carry out its work owing to a shortage of resources, yet millions of dollars were to be squandered on a fact-finding mission whose members would not even set foot on Venezuelan territory. The members of that illegitimate and interventionist mechanism had never stopped lying and never would stop if their mandate was extended. Cuba would continue to support the Venezuelan people, the Bolivarian Government and President Nicolás Maduro Moros. It joined the call for a vote on the draft resolution, which it would oppose.

74. **Mr. Idris** (Eritrea) said that, like the Cuban delegation, his delegation agreed with the comments made by the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on a point of order. Concerning the draft resolution under consideration, Eritrea had taken the consistent position that genuine human rights concerns were best addressed through cooperation and engagement. The fact that the independent international fact-finding mission had operated in parallel with the OHCHR mandate had made the Venezuelan Government less willing to cooperate. The Council had continued to renew the mission's mandate without evaluating the results of its work. The sponsors of the draft resolution should recognize the negative effects of unilateral coercive measures on the lives of ordinary people. In that connection, his delegation drew attention to the work of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. His delegation would vote against the draft resolution.

75. **Mr. Chen Xu** (China) said that his country was a steadfast advocate of safeguarding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms of international relations. China had consistently opposed any interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela and, in accordance with the right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination, supported the efforts of the Government and the opposition to find a political settlement in accordance with the law. The Chinese Government's consistent position was that all States should engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues with a view to resolving their differences. China appreciated the efforts made by the Venezuelan Government to promote and protect human rights and hoped that the

international community would respect the human rights development path independently chosen by the Venezuelan people and take a fair and objective view of the human rights situation in the country. Experience showed that politicizing human rights issues, interfering in the internal affairs of States in the name of human rights and establishing country-specific mechanisms without the consent of the countries concerned were detrimental to the proper resolution of such issues and ran counter to the healthy development of the cause of human rights at the international level. Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.41](#) was a typical example of politicization. In view of those considerations, China would vote against the draft resolution and called on other members of the Council to do the same.

76. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay) said it was clear from the findings of the reports of the independent international fact-finding mission and the most recent OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ([A/HRC/50/59](#)) that the Council should continue to address the situation in that country. It was recognized in the draft resolution that, while the Venezuelan Government had taken reasonable steps in the right direction, and there existed dialogue processes that could lead to an understanding among Venezuelans themselves, enormous human rights challenges remained. The draft resolution, which placed victims at the heart of the Council's concerns, would extend the complementary mandates of the independent international fact-finding mission and OHCHR. Both mandates were necessary for making the promotion and protection of human rights a reality in Venezuela. Far from doing away with the need for an independent investigative mechanism to ensure accountability, the cooperation fostered by OHCHR reinforced that need.

77. Venezuela, as a member of the Council, must fully cooperate with all human rights mechanisms and comprehensively implement OHCHR recommendations, particularly with regard to the conduct of prompt, exhaustive and independent investigations. The sponsors of the draft resolution had engaged in a frank, open and transparent dialogue with the Venezuelan authorities at all times and had encouraged them to cooperate with the fact-finding mission, regrettably without success. They encouraged the Government to renew its letter of understanding with OHCHR. In view of the findings of the reports, the sponsors urged the members of the Council to recognize that the human rights situation in the country required special attention and to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

78. **The President** invited the State concerned by the draft resolution to make a statement.

79. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the President's remarks concerning the point of order raised by his delegation were inappropriate. His delegation would politely but firmly raise points of order whenever necessary to uphold decorum and the dignity of his country.

80. Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.41](#), which his delegation rejected in the strongest possible terms, was a hostile initiative that undermined the universal principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The initiative was to be condemned as further evidence of selectivity, politicization and double standards. The acolytes of the United States that had put forward the draft resolution had chosen the path of conflict over that of cooperation. Given the biased media coverage of the initiative in recent weeks, it had come as no surprise that, despite his Government's willingness to engage in a sincere dialogue with the sponsors, the die had already been cast. Negotiation had once again given way to imposition. The narrative of good versus bad countries was being promoted and enormous financial resources were being mobilized for the sole purpose of distorting the reality of the human rights situation in his country to serve political interests and destabilize the legitimate Government.

81. Those delegations that had joined the main sponsors were invited to ignore the noise and visit Venezuela, where they would find a population whose spirits were undaunted, despite the country's challenges. Alongside that population was a State that did not need any country-specific mandate to tell it how to promote and protect human rights. In Venezuela, that responsibility was mandated by the Constitution, and the country's cooperation with OHCHR was a clear demonstration of its commitment to transparency.

82. The draft resolution offered a tangible example of the manipulation and political abuse of the Council at the expense of genuine dialogue and relevant international standards.

Among the sponsors was a small group of States that had set themselves up as bastions of morality despite their own serious human rights problems and their support for the adoption of illegal unilateral coercive measures against the Venezuelan people; that made them accomplices in the perpetration of crimes against humanity. Although the States in question sought to suffocate his country economically and violate the rights of its people to health, food, education and social welfare, they thought nothing of dreaming up mandates that would waste colossal resources on the production of reports that were never based on reliable sources, revealing once again the clear political motivation behind the initiative.

83. The draft resolution would do nothing for the human rights of Venezuelans. Every paragraph betrayed the clear divide in the Council between the persecutors and the persecuted. There could be no genuine cooperation between a State and the human rights system without respect for the basic principles of sovereignty and self-determination. The draft resolution had no justification, particularly in view of the fact that his delegation had tried, until the eleventh hour, to persuade the sponsors to strengthen the role of OHCHR on the ground. How could the sponsors claim to be upholding human rights when they were undermining the work of the OHCHR field presence in Venezuela?

84. Venezuela and its people could never accept the imposition of monitoring mechanisms such as the independent international fact-finding mission, which would undoubtedly undermine the Government's cooperation with OHCHR on matters of technical assistance. The draft resolution could jeopardize the process of dialogue under way among the country's main political actors and sent the wrong message to the community of nations at a time when the Government was hosting important talks to achieve the long-awaited objective of regional peace. When it came to human rights, while his country wished to take the path of cooperation, guided by mutual respect, the draft resolution would lead in the opposite direction. His delegation called on the members of the Council to turn away from the bitterness of hegemony and support Venezuela, a country that would keep looking optimistically towards the future.

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

85. **Mr. Rosales** (Argentina) said that his country was concerned about the human rights situation in Venezuela. The Council's assistance was essential for helping the Venezuelan people to restore peace and democracy with a view to achieving inclusive and sustainable development. From the beginning, Argentina had supported the work of OHCHR and the assessments it had carried out, which showed that ensuring full respect for human rights remained a challenge in Venezuela. It was only through dialogue and cooperation with the Government and civil society that the country's compliance with its international human rights obligations could be ensured. As stated in the most recent OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in the country (A/HRC/50/59), that approach had made it possible to improve detention conditions, ensure the resumption of family visits, officially dissolve the Special Action Forces of the Bolivarian National Police and secure authorization for the establishment of an office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in Caracas.

86. In that context, his delegation had decided to abstain from voting on the draft resolution, since the assessments of the independent international fact-finding mission were not based on investigations conducted on the ground in direct dialogue with all relevant governmental and non-governmental actors. While his delegation agreed that it was for the Venezuelan Government to grant the fact-finding mission access to the country so that the complaints received could be properly investigated, the extension of the mission's mandate under the current circumstances was not likely to result in an improvement in the human rights situation. It was to be hoped that the Government would allow the fact-finding mission to operate as an investigative mechanism of OHCHR. If the mission's reports were based on investigations carried out with the Government's consent, its conclusions would be more likely to effect change and make a real contribution to improving the human rights of the Venezuelan people.

87. **The President** announced that Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had withdrawn their sponsorship of the draft resolution.

88. **Mr. Quintanilla Román** (Cuba) said that the draft resolution was not a regional initiative, as had been claimed. In fact, several of its key proponents had been instrumental in weakening the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean over the past decade. For more than 20 years, the Venezuelan Government had been striving to improve the lives of millions of people in the country and in the wider region. The draft resolution was an interventionist and politicized initiative that would undermine the country's proven efforts to cooperate with OHCHR. The national authorities had expressed their intention to further strengthen those efforts without the interference of foreign Powers seeking to achieve geopolitical objectives in the country. In addition, paragraphs 10 and 12 of the draft resolution, which concerned the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission, had very significant programme budget implications. The extent of the resources that the Council was prepared to allocate to initiatives aimed at achieving geopolitical objectives was astonishing. In view of those considerations, Cuba would vote against the draft resolution.

89. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation fully supported the renewal of the mandates of the independent international fact-finding mission and OHCHR, both of which had proved instrumental in revealing the extent of human rights violations in Venezuela and formulating recommendations on the way forward. The mission's findings, which included evidence of the perpetration of grave human rights violations as part of a widespread and systematic attack by the authorities on the civilian population, showed why its mandate needed to be extended. In the absence of official data from the Venezuelan authorities, the mission's impartial and evidence-based reports documented events that deserved the attention of all members of the Council.

90. In that context, his delegation also welcomed the renewal of the OHCHR mandate. OHCHR played a key role in providing protection services for victims and detainees, reporting on the extent of the authorities' cooperation and tracking human rights developments in the country. There was no doubt that the work of OHCHR in Venezuela greatly enhanced the international community's ability to monitor continuing violations and positive developments. His delegation urged the Venezuelan Government to fully comply with the previous recommendations of OHCHR, maintain technical cooperation in good faith and provide OHCHR with unfettered access to the entire country.

91. The Council should stand up for freedom and show solidarity with the Venezuelan people. Renewing the mandates of the independent international fact-finding mission and OHCHR would ensure continuity, scrutiny and accountability and open a path towards a freer future for the Venezuelan people. His delegation would therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution and urged other members of the Council to do the same.

92. **Ms. Stasch** (Germany) said that OHCHR and the independent international fact-finding mission had complementary mandates, both of which were necessary. Germany remained concerned about the human rights crisis in Venezuela, in particular the human rights violations perpetrated by State mechanisms and officials in the context of political repression and the crackdown on crime; it was also concerned about the impunity that prevailed in that context. Coupled with political and economic hardship, the human rights situation had led to the biggest refugee crisis in peacetime, as nearly 7 million Venezuelans had felt compelled to leave the country. In those circumstances, the work of the fact-finding mission was critical for ensuring that human rights abuses were independently and impartially documented. Its most recent report clearly demonstrated that further efforts were necessary to ensure full accountability for past and current human rights violations. Her delegation encouraged the Venezuelan authorities to continue to cooperate with OHCHR and other relevant international human rights and accountability mechanisms, including the fact-finding mission and the International Criminal Court. Granting the independent international fact-finding mission access to the country would send a further signal of the Government's commitment to human rights and accountability. For those reasons, the German delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution and called upon other members to do the same.

93. **Ms. Méndez Escobar** (Mexico) said that, as her Government was seeking to maintain political negotiations with a view to hosting peace talks between the Government of Nicolás Maduro and the opposition Plataforma Unitaria de Venezuela, which would include discussions on the human rights situation, it would abstain from voting on the draft resolution. Mexico had repeatedly expressed deep concern regarding the human rights situation in the

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and had emphasized the need to ensure that human rights defenders and journalists were able to work independently and safely, without fear of repression or violence, and that their rights to freedom of association and freedom of opinion and expression were respected. Through the forthcoming talks, which would open a path towards peace and democracy, efforts would be made to strengthen institutional capacities to ensure that the human rights of all persons were respected and protected and to promote initiatives to address the country's major challenges. Nevertheless, Mexico called upon the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to maintain a collaborative, constructive and open dialogue with the Council and its mechanisms. Her delegation believed that the cooperation and technical assistance provided by OHCHR helped to strengthen the measures taken by States.

94. *At the request of the representatives of Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Cuba, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Brazil, Czechia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Eritrea, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining:

Argentina, Armenia, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan.

95. *Draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.41](#) was adopted by 19 votes to 5, with 23 abstentions.*

96. **The President** invited delegations to make statements in explanation of vote or general statements on any of the draft resolutions considered under agenda item 4.

97. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that, like the sponsors of draft resolution [A/HRC/51/L.19](#) on the situation of human rights in Ethiopia, Cameroon hoped for peace in that country. Cameroon had a profound commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and condemned violence wherever it arose. The right to life was sacred and must be strictly and constantly protected, especially for civilians. Cameroon supported all initiatives aimed at promoting peace, in particular those developed within the framework of the United Nations, including OHCHR and the Council. However, his Government had consistently opposed what was happening in Ethiopia as an attempt to destabilize a sovereign State with a view to partitioning it. In view of the facts on the ground, his country supported and would continue to support the regional initiative of the African Union led by former President Olusegun Obasanjo. The efforts of the international community notwithstanding, that regional initiative should be strongly supported with a view to bringing an end to the violence and restoring peace. Such an approach would further the aim of promoting and protecting human rights in the country. In that connection, his Government was pleased to note that the Government of Ethiopia had shown real willingness to cooperate with international human rights initiatives. Cameroon encouraged the other parties to the conflict to choose the path of dialogue and peace in order to make human rights an enduring reality in Ethiopia and in the wider subregion.

98. **Mr. Da Silva Nunes** (Brazil) said that the establishment of the Council pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251 had shown the international community's resolve to mitigate the political selectivity and double standards that had been rightly criticized in the work of the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In that connection, his delegation wished to reiterate its concern about the increasing polarization and politicization of the Council's work. Brazil was of the view that, while the Council needed to take robust action in response to humanitarian crises and human rights challenges around the world, country-specific initiatives should be introduced only exceptionally and after thorough and

exhaustive deliberation and comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders. It had been alarming to note that, over the current cycle, the number of country-specific draft initiatives under agenda items 2, 4 and 7 and the number of texts, including proposed amendments, on which votes had been taken had been among the highest in the Council's history.

99. To overcome that undesirable trend, the Council should comprehensively review country-specific draft initiatives through non-selective, transparent and inclusive dialogue among all members and observers, as mandated by the Council's guiding principles. Dialogue should be promoted over accusation, restraint over naming and shaming and solidarity over censure. It was clear that some of the Council's country-specific initiatives needed to be renewed, that others would benefit from a thorough update, including with regard to the frequency with which they were introduced, and that still others should be withdrawn and retooled as technical assistance initiatives. The members of the Council should work together to find common ground based on their shared principles and commitment to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Council and OHCHR should refocus their efforts towards supporting international cooperation and promoting technical assistance. As his delegation had stated previously, most if not all of the pressing issues before the Council required a collective response.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.