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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 124 (continued)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Special report of the Security Council (A/76/905)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will continue the debate pursuant to resolution 76/262, of 26 April 2022, on the situation in which a veto was cast by a permanent member at the 9087th meeting of the Security Council on 8 July 2022, under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East”.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.95).

It is unfortunate that the mechanism set by resolution 76/262 has been triggered for the second time in less than three months since its adoption. The reason for today’s debate is the veto cast by the Russian Federation on 8 July (see S/PV.9087) on draft resolution S/2022/538, submitted by Ireland and Norway, on ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. Its objective was clear — humanitarian assistance should reach the Syrian people. It enjoyed the support of 13 members of the Security Council and yet was vetoed. The arguments for the veto of the Russian Federation are far from convincing. The

use of the veto was even more regrettable because on this particular occasion it went against the principles of international humanitarian law and humanitarian assistance — humanity, neutrality and independence. We acknowledge that a solution was subsequently found. The mechanism is now renewed for six months, and the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing remains open. However, the decision on further renewal will have to be taken in the middle of winter when people will be most in need of assistance.

We urge the members of the Security Council to ensure a smooth renewal in six months. United Nations agencies and the other international organizations delivering life-saving humanitarian aid to Syria should not be forced to rely on contingency planning and should be able to continue to provide food, medicine and hygiene supplies, drinking water, shelter and fuel to those in great need. Humanitarian assistance cannot and should not be used as a mere tool for the achievement of selfish political goals. The Syrian people, especially Syrian women and children, deserve to be assured that their pleas are heard and that their unhindered and sustained access to adequate humanitarian aid is strictly guaranteed by international humanitarian law and the international community.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Syrian crisis has dragged on for 11 years and has been a deep calamity for the Syrian people. China pays great attention to this issue. We have always supported the United Nations and the international community in extending humanitarian relief to Syrians in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

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For our part, we have also actively delivered assistance of all kinds to Syria through multiple channels and have played a constructive role in improving the humanitarian situation on the ground and overcoming the difficulties afflicting the country's economy and people's livelihoods.

China's position on the Syrian humanitarian issue has been consistent and clear. The efforts to address it must fully respect Syria's sovereignty and the ownership of the Syrian Government. Cross-line delivery should become the main avenue for humanitarian aid to Syria, while the cross-border mechanism is only a temporary arrangement. It was made based on the extraordinary situation in Syria and should transition at a greater pace towards cross-line delivery, with a clear timeline for bringing cross-border aid to an end.

At the same time, more and targeted investment should be made in early-recovery projects to enhance Syria's homegrown development drive. China wishes to emphasize once more that unilateral sanctions have had an enormous negative impact on socioeconomic recovery and development in Syria by impeding the operations of international humanitarian agencies there. The sanctions have become the most significant obstacle to resolving the Syrian humanitarian issue and should therefore be immediately and fully lifted, and the Security Council should make clear provisions for that.

Security Council resolution 2642 (2022) allows for a more flexible arrangement for renewing the authorization for cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria, which will facilitate the Council's timely assessments and adjustments of its authorization. In the light of the current circumstances, the resolution further requires the delivery of early-recovery projects and greater transparency in relief efforts. The Council's informal interactive dialogues, held every two months, are also conducive to concrete follow-up on the progress made in implementing the resolution, and a majority of Council members voted in its favour. We expect all parties to strictly abide by the basic principles governing international humanitarian assistance, stringently adhere to the resolution's provisions, ensure the neutrality and transparency of relief efforts and make them more targeted and effective.

During the consultations on the draft resolution, China repeatedly called on all the parties to stick to dialogue and consultations and work up to the last

minute in an effort to find a practical and viable solution. Regrettably, two days before the expiry of the authorization, when there was still margin for compromise, the Council forcibly resorted to a vote, which led to the use of the veto. Forcing the vote in such a manner was not necessary. This case shows that in the face of differences and contradictions, Council members can find an effective solution to the issue at hand only by following through with dialogue and consultation. Forcibly pushing for a vote only escalates such contradictions and divergence and does a disservice to the Council's effective discharge of its responsibilities.

A fundamental settlement of the Syrian humanitarian issue requires actively promoting a Syrian-led and -owned political process. The relevant countries should immediately end their illegal occupation of Syria and cease all acts that undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is our expectation that Syria will soon return to the family of the League of Arab States, which will be conducive to fostering regional synergy in promoting peace and a speedy resolution of the Syrian issue.

Mr. Prvý (Slovakia): Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.95). The following remarks will be made in my national capacity.

We appreciate the convening of this second debate held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/262, providing the broader United Nations membership with an opportunity to speak about the important topic of humanitarian access in Syria. Slovakia commends the renewal of the mandate of the cross-border mechanism, which ensures that irreplaceable humanitarian assistance can continue crossing at Bab Al-Hawa for now. The extension of the mechanism's mandate was a humanitarian imperative for preserving the functioning of a critical humanitarian lifeline for 4.1 million Syrian men, women and children. That includes the 2.8 million internally displaced people in north-western Syria who depend on the vital humanitarian assistance delivered through the mechanism for their survival. It is estimated that today 12 million Syrians are food insecure and fully reliant on external food assistance.

We were, however, saddened by the Russian Federation's veto of draft resolution S/2022/538, proposed by the co-penholders for a 12-month renewal of the cross-border mechanism. That proposal, calling

for a full year's renewal, which was advocated by numerous humanitarian experts, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Secretary-General himself, garnered wide support from Security Council members, with 13 votes in favour. The Russian Federation, ignoring those calls, once again politicized the discussion, took the Security Council hostage and cynically blocked a path to predictable and long-term cross-border humanitarian access in Syria.

Slovakia continues to advocate for all parties to depoliticize and allow the unimpeded, continued delivery of humanitarian aid to all in need. Cross-border assistance will continue to be vital to meet the immense humanitarian needs in Syria, and we strongly urge the members of the Security Council to uphold their commitment to renew the resolution for a further six months by January 2023, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance continues through the middle of winter, when people need it most. As has been well documented by the humanitarian community, there is no adequate alternative to cross-border assistance for meeting significant humanitarian needs that only continue to increase, especially in the light of the food crisis caused by Russia's illegal, unjustified and totally senseless invasion of Ukraine. Life-saving and -sustaining humanitarian actions must not be disrupted, targeted or politicized. Safe, unhindered and sustained access to all in need in Syria must be guaranteed.

Slovakia calls on all the parties to the conflict to join forces to reaffirm and consolidate their strong support for a political solution, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), and commends the tireless efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to advance such a solution. In the meantime, all parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including those related to humanitarian access. Sustainable peace and stability can be achieved only through a genuine, inclusive, comprehensive and Syrian-led political solution.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/76/PV.95), and I would like to add some further remarks in my national capacity.

Today's plenary meeting is the second implementation of the procedure set by resolution 76/262 on strengthening the United Nations system and aimed at debating the use of the veto in the Security Council. However, it is the first time that we are

discussing a veto on a humanitarian draft resolution. What we should be discussing today are not the political reasons behind Russia's decision to veto draft resolution S/2022/538, on the cross-border mechanism in Syria, but the humanitarian consequences of such a decision.

Looking carefully at those consequences, the Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths strongly requested a renewal of 12 months rather than the six months imposed by Russia, for the following main reasons. First, 12 months would ensure full coverage of the winter, when people's humanitarian needs are at their peak. Secondly, 12 months would enable humanitarian agencies to plan better. And finally, 12 months would enhance the logistics and the implementation process of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground. Unfortunately, Russia's decision to veto the draft submitted after the extraordinary diplomatic effort of the co-penholders, Ireland and Norway, will create a sense of uncertainty about the future for the Syrian population and an incredibly complex endeavour for the humanitarian system. Those consequences are indeed very tangible both for the Syrian people and for the humanitarian agencies and NGOs on the ground. What is worse is that a short-term renewal is less effective in fostering the early-recovery projects that Russia itself requested, owing to their inherently medium-term nature.

The Security Council should not fail to address the urgent humanitarian needs of a suffering population, especially if all the remaining members are not against the co-penholders' text. We therefore urge the Council to renew the cross-border mechanism for Bab Al-Hawa next January, and we hope that a reliable United Nations-facilitated political process that is Syrian-led and -owned can parallel that renewal. We commend the exceptional work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its implementing partners in Syria, and we will continue our support in the future.

Mr. Mohammad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting in line with General Assembly resolution 76/262, also known as the veto initiative. The resolution was adopted by consensus and provides that the General Assembly shall convene a formal meeting within 10 working days of the casting of a veto by one or more permanent members of the Security Council.

This meeting is the second in which we are implementing that important resolution. The State of

Kuwait was among the core group that proposed the resolution to the Assembly, and we did so out of our belief that it would enhance and enable the Assembly's role and increase the transparency and accountability in the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The use of the veto by one of the five permanent members has in many cases undermined the Council's decision-making process. It has also hindered the Security Council from shouldering its responsibilities, and created frustration among States and the international community as a consequence of the Council's failure to take measures necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We believe that the right of veto is an exceptional and rare privilege that has been granted to only five States in the world since the creation of the United Nations and that entails responsibility above all. In that context, I would like to mention several innovative initiatives that Kuwait has joined, such as the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, under which Member States commit to refraining from using the veto to block draft resolutions addressing crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. We have also participated in the French-Mexican initiative, which asks permanent members to voluntarily refrain from using the veto right in cases of mass killings.

We paid close attention to the Security Council meeting (see S/PV.9087) on 8 July on renewing the cross-border mechanism for humanitarian aid to Syria, and we have taken note of the special report (A/76/905) presented by the President of the Security Council to the General Assembly pertaining to the use of the veto during that meeting. In that context, we would like to mention the following points.

In the light of the humanitarian disaster in Syria, which has been going on for more than 10 years, Kuwait has adopted a purely humanitarian approach to dealing with the crisis, based on our belief in the need to assist our brother people of Syria and alleviate their humanitarian suffering. My country hosted several international donor conferences jointly with the United Nations in 2013, 2014 and 2015. We also participated effectively in the donor conferences that followed. My country has become one of the major donor countries in the context of the humanitarian response in Syria and in neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees.

During our membership in the Security Council for the period from 2018 to 2019, Kuwait was the penholder

for the Syrian humanitarian dossier, alongside Sweden in 2018 and Germany and Belgium in 2019. One of our responsibilities was renewing the work of the cross-border mechanism in Syria. We succeeded in that mission in 2018, thanks to resolution 2449 (2018), which renewed the work of the mechanism through four crossings for 12 months. As a previous penholder, we are fully aware of the sensitivities of this dossier in the Council and the lengthy and difficult negotiations that were needed to renew the mechanism. We therefore want to express our appreciation to Ireland and Norway, as the current penholders, and to thank them for their efforts.

As the penholder during our membership of the Council, we took on the responsibility from a purely humanitarian standpoint. As we noted at the time and have seen ever since, the humanitarian needs on the ground in Syria are huge, and millions of Syrians are benefiting from this assistance mechanism. Those humanitarian needs have escalated over the past few years and this year reached levels unprecedented since the crisis in Syria began, according to United Nations reports and statistics. More than 14 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, and considering those increasing humanitarian needs, it is regrettable that we are seeing the work of this important mechanism being hindered. We were hoping that the Security Council would be able to reach an agreement to renew the work of the mechanism for another 12 months, as requested by the Secretary-General and those working in the humanitarian arena.

Kuwait is deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Syria, our brother Arab country with an important heritage. We have always insisted that there can be no military solution to the crisis there. The solution must be a political one, agreed on by all the Syrian people and responding to their legitimate aspirations while safeguarding Syria's unity, sovereignty and independence, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). We also reiterate that no sustainable and comprehensive peace can be achieved in Syria without justice and accountability and without fighting impunity.

In conclusion, although the veto was used on 8 July, we welcomed the adoption on 12 July (see S/PV.9089) of resolution 2642 (2022), which renewed the work of this vital mechanism. It will guarantee access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and relief for millions in need in Syria, although only through a single crossing and

only for six months, with the possibility of renewal for another six months through a second resolution. We reiterate the importance of guaranteeing access to humanitarian assistance to all in need in Syria in a safe and sustainable manner, without obstacles or discrimination and using all available means including through cross-line delivery. We hope that the Security Council will overcome its divisions on the Syrian dossier in all its dimensions — humanitarian, political and chemical — and that it will demonstrate unity and shoulder its responsibility in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Rizk (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express Egypt's appreciation for the convening of this meeting, considering the special importance of our sister country of Syria to security and stability in the Middle East.

More than a decade into the Syrian crisis, the country is still witnessing clashes and economic deterioration, as well as an increase in the humanitarian needs of our brother people of Syria. That has been exacerbated by ongoing international tensions and a rise in food prices worldwide. Despite the painful situation in Syria, and considering that the country is one of the Arab region's cradles of civilization, the current developments should not discourage the international community from trying to reach a sustainable, Syrian-owned political settlement that is agreed on by all Syrian stakeholders.

We need to create an enabling environment to achieve the desired progress on the political track by adopting important measures that would help to improve the situation on the ground. They are, first, the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. Any military escalation that threatens Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be avoided. All efforts to prevent terrorism must be supported.

Secondly, given Syrians' increasing humanitarian needs, we must provide the assistance they need to help them face the food crisis and the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Thirdly, support must be given to early-recovery projects in all sectors, leading to the initiation of the reconstruction process and the return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons.

Fourthly, the necessary support must be provided to refugees' host countries in order to alleviate the burdens they are shouldering, which have been exacerbated

by the current international economic situation. In that context, Egypt welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), on the assistance mechanism in Syria, and we look forward to its full implementation by the parties concerned.

Peace, stability and security cannot be restored in Syria without achieving progress on the political track and on the work of the Constitutional Committee, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). That means that Syrian national interests should be given priority over any other considerations and that the political settlement to which we all look forward should maintain Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mr. Alateek (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The world today is experiencing difficulties linked to the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic, which is weakening State public health and economic systems, in addition to threats of food insecurity and the exacerbation of humanitarian needs in conflict areas and areas exposed to natural disasters. For that reason, it is important that the international community should reconsider its priorities and emphasize the humanitarian situation and humanitarian needs first and foremost.

In that regard, Saudi Arabia welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), on renewing the cross-border assistance mechanism in Syria. We also welcome the concerted efforts by the penholders, the delegations of Norway and Ireland, to reach a final text. The resolution is of vital importance. While the renewal is only for six months and assistance is going through only one crossing point, it will nevertheless allow humanitarian assistance and urgently needed supplies to reach the Syrian people. The cross-border mechanism will ensure that they reach them, which is especially vital given the increase in humanitarian needs and the number of displaced persons, according to the various reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We also reiterate that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stands ready to continue to provide Syrians with humanitarian and relief assistance within and outside Syria through the programmes and projects implemented by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, which total more than \$330 million in total.

My country's delegation associates itself with many delegations of Member States in calling upon the

international community, in particular the members of the Security Council, to put political differences aside and shoulder its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Syrian people so that we can continue our constructive cooperation to reach consensus on all issues that could alleviate the humanitarian suffering of civilians, especially the most vulnerable groups in Syria.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): We should not be here today. There was no justification, no conceivable reason, for Russia's decision on 8 July (see S/PV.9087) to veto a Security Council draft resolution (S/2022/538) designed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to more than 4 million people suffering from 11 years of war. These meetings are intended to promote accountability — accountability for the abuse of the very special veto power. There is no question that, in vetoing a draft resolution authorizing humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable Syrians, one Council member abused its veto.

Right now, the humanitarian needs in Syria are greater than they have ever been. When the Security Council took up this issue, the Secretary-General asked for more aid. United Nations agencies asked for more. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) asked for more. Tragically, heartbreakingly, the Syrian people asked for more. But one country chose not to put humanitarian needs first. Rather than scaling aid up, that country scaled aid down.

Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, Russia has vetoed 17 Security Council draft resolutions on Syria. Throughout that time, Russia has sought only to shield the Al-Assad regime — to shield it from accountability for its brutal human rights abuses and its chemical weapons use. Russia has propped up the regime's tattered standing in the international community and forced humanitarian organizations to capitulate to the regime's whims. Let us remember that the reason the Security Council has a mandate for cross-border humanitarian aid is because the Al-Assad regime has a well-documented history — a history of corruption, stealing aid and denying it to communities in need.

Beyond its 17 vetoes, Russia has undermined the work of the Security Council on Syria in other ways. Just in the past few days, we have seen Russia push the Al-Assad regime to suspend its participation in the ninth round of the Constitutional Committee — a Syrian-led, United Nations-facilitated process. Russia

continues to prioritize narrow Russian interests over finding a political path out of a devastating conflict that has now entered its eleventh year. It is far past time that the regime and Russia engage constructively in helping to advance the political solution that is called for in Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

Russia's veto earlier this month has consequences. The first of the two six-month extensions authorized in Security Council resolution 2642 (2022), as many have said before me, brings us to January, when humanitarian needs will be greatest. That timeline risks leaving Syrians without blankets and heating fuel and depriving them of a steady supply of basic food items during the coldest of months if the draft resolution confirming the second sixth-month extension is not adopted. The scale of the United Nations cross-border delivery mechanism is immense and requires detailed, long-term planning. Without certainty about the duration of the authorization, the ability of humanitarian organizations to organize supply chains, retain staff and plan operations will be severely impacted.

As others have said, the international community must come together now and firewall any further politicization of what is a purely humanitarian issue. The United States will work with any and every country that prioritizes delivering aid to the most vulnerable.

In that spirit, let us all redouble our support for the United Nations and those NGOs working to deliver the desperately needed assistance to Syria. Let us remember the Syrians who have suffered for over a decade and are counting on leaders in New York to put Syrian needs ahead of politics. Let us remember that there is a different way to pursue the draft resolution — one in which no vetoes are used and the entire Council comes together in a spirit of solidarity. We have done that before, and we must return to that path in the future. We have the power to make that difference. The Syrian people are counting on us to deliver.

Ms. Kinyungu (Kenya): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting.

On 8 July (see S/PV.9087), the Security Council took action on the renewal of the Syria humanitarian cross-border mechanism by taking a vote on two competing draft resolutions, which were not adopted, one (S/2022/538) owing to a negative vote by a permanent member and the other (S/2022/541) having failed to obtain the required number of votes. The impasse was the result of a difficult negotiation and essentially

arises from disagreements concerning the length of the mechanism's renewal. The draft resolution proposed by the co-penholders, Norway and Ireland, called for a 12-month renewal period, while the draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation called for a six-month period. Extensive negotiations were undertaken to arrive at a single consensus draft resolution, but they did not succeed. The Council's inability to unite endangered a critical channel of aid.

Kenya, as the coordinator of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E-10) for July, facilitated a conversation that confirmed the support of elected members for the co-penholders' draft resolution. An important point of unity for the E-10 was that a 12-month renewal offered humanitarian organizations more certainty in their operations, particularly during the coming winter. The E-10 agreed on a common position reflected in an explanation of vote before the voting, which supported the co-penholders' draft. The E-10 was also ready to support a compromise, reflecting its primary focus on the need to prioritize the provision of humanitarian aid to the Syrian people.

We believe that the E-10 played a constructive role in seeking to bridge divides and identify useful compromises between Council members. Perhaps a lasting lesson that the General Assembly can take from this experience is that elected members that are ready to work across divides are important to the success of the Security Council. The experience has also left us with the conviction that E-10 unity is an important pillar of an effective Security Council. In time, the role of this elected block should be strengthened procedurally and considered when it comes to fundamental Security Council reform.

It is also important that the permanent members engage the E-10 as a bridge to unity and necessary compromises in the implementation of the mandate. The immense efforts by the elected co-penholders to find a compromise may also inform future changes to the penholder system, especially at this time when some of the five permanent members are engaged in far-reaching geopolitical confrontations.

Despite the differences among its members, the Security Council was able to adopt resolution 2642 (2022) on 12 July (see S/PV.9089). We listened carefully to the reasons for the veto, and we believe that more could have been done by all delegations to close the divide. We are encouraged that the initial failure to

adopt a draft resolution and the subsequent compromise will make for a more realistic and more united Council when the six-month cross-border mechanism expires and there is a need to negotiate a continuation. In time, we hope that Security Council resolutions will not be necessary to ensure humanitarian access in Syria. For that to happen, Syria and regional countries should undertake trust-building, dialogue and negotiations for a security solution that puts the needs of the Syrian people first.

In conclusion, as Kenya draws close to the end of its term on the Security Council, we want to make clear that our primary motivation has been to support every measure that relieves the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people.

Mr. Croker (United Kingdom): The use of the veto is a heavy responsibility, and it is therefore one that should not be used lightly. It has been 50 years (see S/PV.1666) since the United Kingdom last unilaterally vetoed a Security Council draft resolution. When we negotiate draft resolutions, our objective is to reach agreement and, where necessary, to win arguments in votes rather than to use our veto to block Council action.

Unfortunately, the same is not true of Russia, which has now used its veto 17 times since 2011 to block the Council's efforts to protect the Syrian people. That is in addition to the numerous other times they have used it, including to protect themselves following their illegal invasion of Ukraine. Those 17 vetoes are a significant cause of the international community's failure to protect the Syrian people from the Al-Assad regime — a failure that has undermined and weakened the Council and should weigh heavily on our collective conscience.

The unilateral Russian use of its veto to block a humanitarian draft resolution (S/2022/538) on a mechanism upon which 2.4 million people rely is particularly egregious. Humanitarian need in Syria is the greatest it has ever been. We heard repeatedly from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations that renewal of the cross-border mechanism for 12 months was necessary to provide the operational certainty to meet humanitarian needs.

The explanation we heard from Russia today (see A/76/PV.95) is pure fiction, including their farcical suggestion that the United Kingdom, alongside the United States of America and France, blocked their proposed text. Let us be clear on the facts — their proposed text was supported by only one other member

of the Council. Two votes in favour are far from the nine votes required for a draft resolution to be adopted. No amount of disinformation can change the fact that only one member of the Council chose to politicize this issue. The United Kingdom approached this negotiation as we have every year since 2014 — on the basis of humanitarian need alone.

We commend the co-penholders, Norway and Ireland, for their efforts to secure the adoption of a draft resolution that would maintain that vital humanitarian lifeline in the face of Russian intransigence, which received 13 votes in favour. And we should be clear: under resolution 2642 (2022) the intent of the Council is to maintain the mechanism for 12 months. The United Kingdom will continue to support United Nations efforts to deliver its humanitarian response plan, and we call on other Member States to do the same.

Finally, as we have said many times before, a genuine political process is the only sustainable means of ending suffering in Syria.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Member States of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/76/PV.95). I wish to make the following statement in my national capacity.

This is the second time that we are meeting pursuant to resolution 76/262, entitled “Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council”. The concerns and interpretations that our delegation expressed when that resolution was adopted (see A/76/PV.69) remain true today. The fact that the mechanism is triggered automatically, without any margin for Member States to decide whether or not it is necessary to hold a meeting, proves the insufficiencies of a text that was not discussed in depth or with sufficient time.

In our opinion, this General Assembly meeting is unnecessary. The issue under consideration has already been surpassed by events with the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) in the Security Council on 12 July (see S/PV.9089). Pursuant to that resolution, the authorization to extend the cross-border humanitarian mechanism in Syria was approved.

Cuba rejects the politicization of humanitarian aid and its use as an instrument of political blackmail.

Any decision adopted in the Security Council about the humanitarian situation in Syria should take into account the interests and concerns of that country.

We reaffirm the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance pursuant to resolution 46/182. It is essential to obtain the consent of the country concerned. We must fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We demand that there be no more external influence in that brotherly Arab country. The main responsibility for guaranteeing that humanitarian aid reaches all Syrians falls on the Government. Therefore, we must duly take into account all concerns relative to assistance.

The United States claims to be very concerned about the humanitarian situation in Syria, yet it maintains criminal unilateral coercive measures against Syria. Those measures, along with the impact of more than 10 years of a war that has been waged against this country, as well as the socioeconomic and humanitarian impacts of the multiple global crises exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, have undermined sustainable development in Syria and inflicted enormous suffering upon the Syrian people. Those unilateral measures should be eliminated promptly. What is necessary is to encourage cooperation with the Syrian Government in order to benefit its people, without the selectivity or political bias that we see today against that country.

Mr. Lam Padilla (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting in line with the provision of resolution 76/262 to hold a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council.

Guatemala joins others in once again expressing its rejection of the use of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council. We are deeply concerned that draft resolution S/2022/538 was vetoed by a permanent member despite the work carried out by the delegations of Norway and Ireland who, as non-permanent members of the Security Council, led the preparation of a draft resolution aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to those most in need in the Syrian Arab Republic for a period of 12 months.

According to reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is alarming. Beyond the complex humanitarian situation caused by a

conflict that is more than a decade old, the destruction of infrastructure, the critical economic situation, the socioeconomic consequences and the coronavirus disease pandemic have compounded the basic needs of the country as a whole, with more than 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Once again, Guatemala calls for the Security Council to act responsibly regarding the maintenance of international peace and security, based on the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its purposes and principles. Humanitarian assistance is one of the fundamental purposes of the Organization, as stated in the Charter, promoting international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature.

In conclusion, we recognize the subsequent efforts to adopt resolution 2642 (2022), on humanitarian assistance in Syria. However, we are of the view that, in circumstances as complex as those that the country is going through, it is necessary to act in a timely manner to assist the civilian population in need.

Mr. Benaabou (France) (*spoke in French*): France regrets that the draft resolution (S/2022/538) submitted by Ireland and Norway on 8 July (see S/PV.9087) and supported by almost all the members of the Security Council was not adopted, following the veto used by the Russian Federation alone.

The Security Council has since adopted resolution 2642 (2022), renewing the cross-border humanitarian mechanism. I wish to commend the outstanding work of Ireland and Norway. However, that represents a precarious renewal, lasting only six months, which will expire in mid-winter and without a firm guarantee of renewal. The Security Council has therefore failed to live up to its responsibilities, ignoring the appeal of the Secretary-General and the entire humanitarian community to renew the mechanism for 12 months. Progress in cross-line access must of course continue. However, even if the cross-line convoys were deployed regularly, they could not replace the 800 aid trucks that cross the Turkish border each month.

In six months, at the time of the renewal of the cross-border mechanism, France will be extremely vigilant in order to ensure that the Council gives the humanitarian community the possibility of responding to the immense needs of the population. We will continue to fully assume our humanitarian responsibilities, in

the spirit of the Secretary-General's "Parameters and principles of United Nations assistance in Syria".

I recall that at the sixth Brussels Conference, held last May, the European Union and its member States committed to disburse more than 4.8 billion euros of the nearly €6.4 billion that had been promised. In terms of funding, Russia gives nothing or almost nothing. France remains committed to putting an end to the war. Our position and that of our European partners remains unchanged: we will not finance reconstruction and we will not lift sanctions until a credible and inclusive political process is firmly under way, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

Ms. Matar (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates appreciates the convening of today's meeting on the mechanism established by resolution 76/262 to enhance the transparency of the work of the Security Council, which acts on behalf of all Members of the United Nations.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022), which represents a compromise solution. My country participated constructively in the negotiations, during which the Council's 10 elected members took a united position in a clear demonstration of their commitment to the implementation of the Council's mandate. That meticulously drafted resolution reflects the Council's commitment to respond to the dire humanitarian needs in Syria and ensures that relief assistance reaches all those in need across the country and by all possible means.

Although we had hoped that the cross-border aid mechanism in Syria would be extended for 12 months, we believe that resolution 2642 (2022) contains critical additional provisions that provide a basis for addressing the humanitarian situation in Syria in the long term and on a larger scale. For example, it calls for the intensification of early-recovery projects, including to provide electricity to the Syrian people. Electricity is a fundamental humanitarian need. Without it, essential services, in particular hospitals and schools, cannot function and millions of Syrians will not have access to water.

In that context, my country urges Member States to focus on the humanitarian imperative of this dossier and avoid politicization, while placing the needs of all Syrians above any other considerations when the cross-border mechanism is discussed for renewal in January 2023.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates calls for continued importance to be given to the Syrian dossier in all its long-term aspects in order to achieve stability, prosperity and peace for the brotherly Syrian people and end their humanitarian crisis.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer (see A/76/PV.95). I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

At the outset, let me stress that we deeply regret the latest veto cast by Russia against the draft resolution (S/202/538) proposed by Norway and Ireland for a 12-month renewal of the cross-border mechanism in Bab Al-Hawa. By using its veto power yet again, Russia not only put at risk the lives of millions of Syrians who rely on humanitarian aid for their sheer daily survival but also held that purely humanitarian draft resolution hostage to achieve its political goal of bolstering the Syrian regime.

We strongly condemn such political tactics. The lives of human beings should under no circumstances become a pawn of political power games. That is inhumane and morally unacceptable. Humanitarian access in the situation at hand is governed by international humanitarian law. The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, and such consent must not be refused on arbitrary grounds.

The uncertainty created by the repeated threat and use of the veto in recent years is clearly at the expense of the Syrian people, as well as the effectiveness of the humanitarian work provided by the United Nations and its partners. It is also a distraction from the Security Council's core task in the Syria file: to work towards a sustainable political solution, within the framework of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), that addresses the root causes of the conflict and ensures accountability.

We expect the Security Council to renew once more the cross-border mandate in January 2023, simply because it will be a humanitarian imperative to ensure life-saving and life-sustaining humanitarian deliveries for more than 4 million Syrians in northern Syria, particularly throughout the harsh winter.

The General Assembly needs to closely follow the humanitarian situation in Syria. Any failure to guarantee the continuity of humanitarian aid deliveries will need

to see consequences. The General Assembly should therefore stand ready to assist given a scenario in which the Council shows itself again obstructed. It did so when it successfully established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. That foreshadows the way for further action by the Assembly, if need be.

Humanitarian needs in Syria are most likely to increase in the upcoming months, in particular in the coming winter. Demands will be further intensified in the light of the global food crisis and skyrocketing prices for basic commodities and energy due to Russia's unlawful and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. We cannot risk another obstruction that would deprive people in dire need of international humanitarian assistance.

We therefore urgently call on the Russian Federation to refrain from using its veto power again. It is also important to reiterate and remind ourselves that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in Syria. We underscore that no normalization, lifting of sanctions or assistance for reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime in Damascus engages in a true and meaningful political transition in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2022) and the Geneva communiqué of 2012 (S/2012/522, annex).

Ms. Kókai (Hungary): Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/76/PV.95), in its capacity as observer, and would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

In April, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the so-called veto initiative (resolution 76/262), which enables United Nations States Members to discuss an issue in the framework of a formal meeting of the General Assembly if a veto was previously cast on that situation in the Security Council. Hungary underlines the importance of the initiative, which we believe largely contributes to strengthening transparency within the United Nations decision-making system.

Humanitarian needs in Syria are greater than ever. Hungary believes that the renewal of the mandate on the cross-border humanitarian mechanism was of the utmost importance to alleviate the humanitarian needs of the Syrian population. While Hungary welcomes the latest six-month extension of the mandate, we also urge Council members to uphold their commitment and renew the mechanism for a further six months by January 2023.

Mitigating the serious humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict, which has been going on for more than 11 years, should be one of our most important priorities — not only for Syria but also for the entire region. Therefore, Hungary is also implementing a number of development and humanitarian projects with a long-term impact in Syria and the countries of the region. We believe that the international community should spare no effort to help people in need in Syria, and cross-border humanitarian access plays a significant role in that regard. We emphasize that humanitarian action should not be politicized and that humanitarian assistance must be provided in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Let me underline again the importance of the extension of the Syrian cross-border mechanism and our sincere hope that the mandate can be renewed again by January.

Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of Venezuela for speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/76/PV.95). Nicaragua aligns itself with that statement.

Unfortunately, today's meeting exposes the politicization, double standards and selectivity with which resolution 76/262, on a standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council, was also handled. The mechanism of that resolution is being exploited and abused by some Western countries that promote trends and measures that result in negative votes by the other permanent members of the Security Council on draft resolutions presented by Western countries.

Those draft resolutions clearly uphold and promote Western interests and the Western global agenda, while simultaneously undermining any effort at responsible, good-faith negotiations on the draft resolutions before the Security Council, putting the maintenance of international peace and security in real danger.

Nicaragua is of the view that the issue of concern today has already been resolved, since Security Council resolution 2642 (2022) on extending the authorization of the Syria cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism was adopted by 12 votes in favour, with 3 abstentions, on 12 July (see S/PV.9089).

The adoption of resolution 2642 (2022) confirms that, when negotiations are responsible and not

politicized, the Council acts accordingly and fulfils its responsibilities. Therefore, if the negotiations had continued on 8 July, today's meeting would not have been called, as other delegations have stated.

In that regard, we must thank the Russian Federation for its explanation of vote in the Security Council, its solidarity with the humanitarian situation in Syria and its refusal to allow the politicization of that humanitarian aid, as well as for its defence of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and self-determination of the people and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

We underline the need to use these spaces to promote greater cooperation and collaboration with the people and the Government of Syria. We must eliminate double standards and the imposition of illegal, criminal and inhumane unilateral coercive measures, which constitute aggression and have catastrophic effects on the lives of the Syrian people and their livelihoods, thereby hampering the work of the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies in Syria. The international community believes that, if the desire and intent is truly to provide humanitarian assistance to, and alleviate the suffering of, the Syrian people, then the first step should be the immediate cessation of sanctions and unilateral measures, which during a pandemic are also a crime against humanity.

Nicaragua reiterates its position of principle with respect to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all peoples. Nicaragua, as a nation of peace-loving people who respect international law, does not recognize or accept initiatives that violate the sovereignty of Syria, which has suffered attacks on, and violations of, its territorial integrity and political independence.

We reiterate that any resolution and decision related to the situation in Syria, whether taken in the General Assembly or in the Security Council, must take into account the legitimate concerns of that country, as the main stakeholder in the resolution of this issue, its rebuilding and its right to live in peace. We reject any attempt to politicize humanitarian assistance and reaffirm our support for the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, international law and international humanitarian law.

To truly address the humanitarian situation in Syria, we must take a wise and constructive approach that demands an end to attempts at isolation, hostility

and unilateral coercive measures and policies. We must find a way to create an environment that is conducive to a political solution that is Syrian-owned and Syrian-led; is free of external interference; restores the security and stability of that country, while allowing what has been destroyed by terrorism, interventionism and foreign aggression to be rebuilt; and allows for the voluntary and dignified return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

In conclusion, the international community hopes that transparency and accountability will prevail in meetings on this topic. In that regard, it would also be appropriate for permanent members that cast a negative vote on the draft resolution submitted by Russia on 8 July (S/2022/541) to present their explanations. That would preserve the credibility of the General Assembly, since the resolution adopted on 12 July did not differ substantively from the draft resolution presented by Russia on 8 July.

Mr. Ferreira Silva Aranda (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/76/PV.95), in its capacity as observer, and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

For the second time, we are making use of a mechanism meant to strengthen the United Nations system and ensure accountability between the Security Council and the General Assembly. As co-sponsors of the veto initiative, we believe that this debate is very relevant, although one we would rather not have. The uncertainty arising from the repeated threat and use of the veto in the Council is at the cost of the Syrian people and the effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

We regret the veto used by the Russian Federation on the draft resolution (S/2022/538) proposed by the co-penholders for a 12-month renewal of the cross-border mechanism. If approved, that would have ensured further predictability for humanitarian actors on the ground in order to better plan and provide critical assistance to the Syrian people. The renewal of the mechanism was an important outcome for millions of Syrians who depend on United Nations humanitarian assistance. Nonetheless, we urge all Council members to uphold their commitment to renew resolution 2642 (2022) for a further six months by January 2023 in order to ensure that cross-border assistance continues

through the winter, especially in the context of the food crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine.

Portugal will continue to support a peaceful political transition in Syria and to pay special attention to the provision of education in the humanitarian context. Education is critical for children and young people in conflict settings. It is the very foundation of tolerance and peace and the cornerstone of sustainable development.

Finally, on the use of the veto, we would like to encourage all Member States to join the Political Declaration on the Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocities and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr. Shaev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/76/PV.95).

In our opinion, this meeting is the result of deep-rooted disagreements among the permanent members of the Security Council. We are forced to note that the subject of international humanitarian assistance is increasingly being used by individual countries as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign States — States that are going through a difficult period of humanitarian disasters — and also as an opportunity to shed doubt on the very basis on which the Security Council operates.

We believe that practice is unacceptable. Instead of dealing with the deep-rooted causes of those disagreements, the inability of the Security Council to reach consensus and the reasons for which permanent members of the Council are reluctant to reach a compromise, we are being asked today to give our opinion on the agenda of the Security Council.

Having taken the decision to dissociate from the adoption of resolution 76/262, a standing mandate for convening a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council, we clearly understood that duplicating in the General Assembly the work of a primary organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security would only erode the mandate the Security Council and weaken its role.

We are not opposed to additional discussion of questions on the agendas of primary organs of the United Nations in the General Assembly. Far from it. But let us be realistic and ask ourselves whether this is constructive. This will inevitably detract from the time and resources of the United Nations system.

When it comes to the veto right, we are forced once again to note that this institution should not be seen as a privilege for individual countries. That right is an exclusive element of the responsibility of permanent member countries when it comes to considering questions of the maintenance of international peace and security. The mechanism of the veto right is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and is an important tool for coming up with balanced decisions that will shape the peace and security of our planet.

Returning to the substance of this meeting, we note that, if the draft resolutions on the cross-border mechanism for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Syria are compared — draft resolution 2022/541 proposed by Russia and draft resolution 2022/538 proposed by Ireland and Norway — among other things, they take the same stance on the extension of the mechanism for six months. That gives rise to the question of whether this meeting is appropriate, given that the mechanism was ultimately renewed.

Belarus continues to share in the concerns of the international community with respect to the humanitarian situation in Syria. We believe that comprehensive, constructive solutions should be found to the long-standing problems in this area on the basis of consensus to de-escalate the situation in the region.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea welcomes this opportunity for the General Assembly to debate a situation on which a veto was cast in the Security Council on 8 July (see S/PV.9087).

Syria is indeed in a grave humanitarian crisis. We are deeply troubled by the report that the number of people in need is the highest since the start of the war, which began 11 years ago. Soaring food and fuel prices are only exacerbating the already serious humanitarian situation on the ground. It is of particular concern that needs in the north-west of Syria continue to grow. More than 90 per cent of people in the north-west need aid, and 80 per cent of those in need are women and children. The massive humanitarian operation by the United Nations and its partners allowed us to stave off the worst. But more is required.

Against that dismal background, we regret that the Security Council failed to adopt a 12-month extension of the mandate for cross-border aid despite the support of a vast majority of members. Without the veto cast by the Russian Federation, the original draft resolution (S/2022/538), proposed by Norway and Ireland, would have provided humanitarian organizations on the ground with more certainty and predictability, which are essential for an adequate humanitarian response.

While we welcome and support the significant progress in cross-line assistance and early-recovery efforts across Syria, it is an undeniable reality that there is no alternative to cross-border deliveries in terms of scale and scope. The cross-border mechanism still remains the critical lifeline for millions in need in the north-west of Syria. It is therefore a relief that the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing remains open following the adoption of resolution 2642 (2022).

However, we share the concerns expressed about the precarious status of the mandate. We hope the Security Council can unite on intrinsically humanitarian issues and that the Council's decision on this matter in six months' time will be guided solely by humanitarian needs, putting the needs of the Syrian people at the heart of the Council's deliberations.

The Republic of Korea, for its part, is deeply committed to joining the international effort to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. At the sixth Brussels Conference, held last May, we pledged to contribute \$13.8 million in humanitarian assistance to Syria and neighbouring countries that host Syrian refugees this year. As the Secretary-General recently underlined, the only way to end the humanitarian tragedy in Syria is through a truly nationwide ceasefire and a political solution that enables the Syrian people to determine their own future. We strongly encourage the Syrian parties and countries involved to move forward towards an inclusive political solution, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), in order to end this long-standing humanitarian catastrophe.

Before concluding, I would like to remind the Assembly that this is the fourth consecutive occasion since last year that the use of the veto by one or two States has blocked the Security Council's action on such critically important issues as climate change, aggression, non-proliferation and humanitarian assistance. The veto lies at the heart of the problem that undermines the Council's ability to carry out its

core mandate. A growing number of Member States are now vocally supporting a limitation of the veto. My delegation would like to reiterate its support for all initiatives aimed at limiting the use of the veto.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Mr. Beresford-Hill (Sovereign Order of Malta): The Sovereign Order of Malta gives its thanks to Ireland and Norway for their relentless pursuit of this agenda, confronting the devastating consequences that the recent veto cast will have on the millions of people whose welfare and very lives depend on the maintenance of a humanitarian corridor between Türkiye and Syria. A total of 4.1 million people in north-western Syria will be affected — 90 per cent of whom are in severe need of humanitarian assistance. By putting politics above human lives, basic human rights have been undermined.

In March, I visited a hospital supported by the Sovereign Order of Malta and a refugee camp in Bab Al-Salamah, in Turkish-controlled Syria. There I saw for myself the suffering and privation of the area, how the supply of aid from all aid agencies was making a difference to the inhabitants and how that aid was one of the last remaining agents of hope.

What would a closure of the border mean for the dynamics of humanitarian assistance in north-western Syria? We know that the entire United Nations coordination mechanism would be threatened by a non-renewal of the cross-border facility. There would be a transitional period due to a necessary shift of roles and responsibilities from cross-border, United Nations-controlled to cross-line commercial operations. It is unclear how such a change would impact the volume of aid distribution, especially in the light of concerns about aid diversion in regime-controlled areas and the ability of Damascus to implement humanitarian decisions.

We must face the fact that six months will not give sufficient time to build a long-term and sustainable alternative strategy to meet the needs of civilians affected. Training and capacity-building for health authorities and local professionals will continue to be very difficult, if not impossible, in many areas.

It remains our deep concern that the lack of respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law is becoming more and more prevalent across the international community. The Charter of the United Nations, in its Preamble, set the objective

of establishing the conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.

We urge the Members of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to put politics aside and focus on those who are, most decidedly, left behind. Among other things, not to do so makes a mockery of our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and the work that the Economic and Social Council recently completed here in this very Hall.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in this debate. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 124.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

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

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 25 at its 54th plenary meeting, on 17 December 2021. In order for the General Assembly to take action on the draft decision, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 25. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of agenda item 25?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Members will also recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2021, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 25 to the Second Committee. To enable the Assembly to take action expeditiously on the draft decision, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 25 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

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

Agenda item 25 (*continued*)

Operational activities for development

Draft decision A/76/L.73

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/76/L.73, entitled “United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities”.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision A/76/L.73?

Draft decision A/76/L.73 was adopted (decision 76/573).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 25.

Agenda item 20 and 78 (*continued*)

Sustainable development

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution A/76/L.72

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.72, entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.72?

Draft resolution A/76/L.72 was adopted (resolution 76/296).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Guerra Sansonetti (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again thanks Portugal and Kenya for organizing the Ocean Conference, as well as for the amenities provided to our delegations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the delegations of Denmark and Grenada for co-facilitating the declaration that was adopted within the framework of the Conference, which was held in Portugal, in support of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

In that context, we recall that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as a responsible member of the international community, decided to support that recently adopted declaration, as my country is aware of the importance of maintaining consensus on a matter as vital as the comprehensive achievement of sustainable development in its three pillars, and of making progress on an issue as crucial as the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

However, during the course of negotiations and at the time of adoption of the declaration in Portugal, my delegation had — and continues to have — serious reservations regarding the references in the declaration to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), given that our country is not a party to the Convention. The norms of that Convention are not applicable to my country as conventional law, or as international custom, except those that the Venezuelan State has expressly recognized, or may recognize in future, through their incorporation into national legislation.

In that regard and in relation to resolution 76/296, we reiterate our reservations and emphasize that our joining the consensus that allowed its adoption without a vote should not in any way be interpreted as a change of position with respect to UNCLOS, since the reasons that motivate the decision of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela not to sign that instrument still stand.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 20 and sub-item (a) of agenda item 78.

Agenda item 68

New Partnership for Africa’s Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa’s Development: progress in implementation and international support

Draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Draft resolution A/76/L.60

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1.

Ms. Majeed (Pakistan): On behalf of the Group of 77 (G-77) and China, Pakistan has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1, entitled “New Partnership for Africa’s Development: progress in implementation and international support”.

The countries of Africa have strengthened their commitments and actions in the area of socioeconomic development and have continued to undertake the actions and efforts necessary to achieve sustainable and resilient recovery from the coronavirus disease pandemic. In that regard, it is very important to highlight their crucial role in transforming the development agenda through the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents the commitment of the leaders of all countries to multilateralism, the central role of the United Nations and the promotion of sustainable development. In that context, draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1 is a shared pledge by Africa and all its partners, based on a common vision and their firm and shared belief that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty in Africa and put the continent on a path to sustainable growth and development.

The G-77 and China has always supported the ambition of the Group of African States to encourage international cooperation with Africa in a spirit of mutual benefit and international solidarity. We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the African Group, represented by the coordinators, Ms. Meryem Hamdouni of Morocco and Mr. Jeswuni Abudu-Birresborn of Ghana, for their excellent work representing the G-77 and China during the process. In addition, we want to thank the facilitator, Mr. Mohamed-Esseghir Latrous of Algeria, for his outstanding leadership and stewardship of the process. We would also like to thank all delegations for their continuous engagement and active commitment.

With the very minor technical updates made this year, we look forward to the substantive discussions to be held during the seventy-seventh session with the aim of stepping up our efforts to cooperate in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in synergy with the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, for the shared development and prosperity of all African countries.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1, entitled "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Ochalik (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In addition to the members of the Group of 77 and China, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1: the Russian Federation and Türkiye.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/76/L.59/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 76/297).

The Acting President: Before giving to speakers who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Atanaszov (Hungary): With regard to resolution 76/297, entitled "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support", Hungary wishes to add some remarks in its national capacity.

Hungary remains committed to promoting development in Africa; nevertheless, we would like to take this opportunity to put on the record Hungary's position concerning the eighteenth preambular paragraph of the resolution, which contains references to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I would like to recall that Hungary did not adopt the Global Compact and does not participate in its implementation, as we firmly believe that migration has no positive impact on inclusive growth and development. In our view, instead of promoting departures from countries of origin and facilitating migration, we should focus on providing assistance to third countries locally by creating stable and secure conditions, thereby ensuring that people can stay in their homeland in peace and prosperity.

The Hungarian Government therefore prioritizes development projects in Africa that can contribute to establishing lasting solutions for those in need and improving the living conditions of people in vulnerable situations.

For those reasons, Hungary disassociates itself from the eighteenth preambular paragraph of resolution 76/297.

Ms. Kafková (Czechia): Czechia is pleased to join the consensus on resolution 76/297, entitled “New Partnership for Africa’s Development: progress in implementation and international support”.

We fully recognize the importance of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development. Through its development cooperation, Czechia assists partner countries in Africa to promote democracy, human rights and good governance, as well as to build resilience and achieve sustainable development.

Czechia did not join the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, did not participate in the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, held in Marrakesh, and voted against resolution 73/195, by which the General Assembly endorsed the Global Compact, for the reasons we clearly explained in the explanation of vote delivered on 19 December 2018 (see A/73/PV.60).

Recalling those facts, Czechia cannot accept the word “reaffirming” in the eighteenth preambular paragraph of resolution 76/297, and it is therefore obliged to disassociate itself from that paragraph.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 68?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.60.

Ms. Majeed (Pakistan): On behalf of the Group of 77 (G-77) and China, Pakistan has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.60, entitled “Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa”.

The draft resolution highlights the crucial role of African countries in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in building peace for sustainable development. The causes of conflict in Africa are many. Complex internal and external factors continue to cause, fuel and perpetuate disputes in many parts of the world, including Africa.

Despite the progress made in recent years, the global health crisis has directly affected Africa’s ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular to address the many challenges and threats to its peace and stability. Peace and security in Africa have an important bearing on the stability and development of the world generally. Consequently, partnerships are essential, particularly for pooling efforts and means of action in the areas of crisis prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The international community should collectively uphold the leadership and ownership of African countries in suppressing conflicts by acting on the root causes of such conflicts.

African countries can address the causes of human insecurity if afforded the policy space and international solidarity. The work of the United Nations in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding requires constant rethinking and should be based on the principles of national ownership and respect for African resolutions. The key will be ensuring the speedy and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. African countries have taken numerous and significant steps to address peace and security challenges at the national and regional levels.

Despite the progress that has been made in the area of security, the international community and partners should continue to support activities and initiatives aimed at strengthening the efforts of African countries to address the continent’s peace and security. In order to prevent and resolve conflict at its earliest stages, we stress the importance of ensuring that the United Nations system supports the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable and durable peace.

The G-77 and China has always supported the ambition of the Group of African States to step up international cooperation for Africa in a spirit of mutual benefit and international solidarity. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Group of African States, represented by the co-coordinators, Mr. Joseph Davies of South Africa and Mr. Tony Oweke of Kenya, as well as to the facilitator, Ms. Nadja Micael of Eritrea, for their brilliant work and great leadership. We would also like to thank all delegations for their active engagement and commitment, which enabled us to proceed with technical updates. We look forward to the substantive discussions to be held during the seventy-seventh session.

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.60, entitled “Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa”.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.60?

Draft resolution A/76/L.60 was adopted (resolution 76/298).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Atanaszov (Hungary): Hungary wishes to add some remarks in its national capacity regarding resolution 76/298, entitled “Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa”.

Hungary attaches great importance to sustainable development in Africa and recognizes the challenges caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate change and so on. However, we would like to put on the record Hungary’s position on paragraph 11 of the resolution, which contains references to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Hungary did not support the adoption of the Global Compact and does not participate in its implementation. Since 2015, Hungary has consequently emphasized that, instead of promoting or facilitating migration, the focus should be on providing assistance to third countries locally by creating local conditions that are more conducive to stable growth and development. Therefore, we put emphasis on building health care, agriculture, sanitation, water management and educational infrastructure in African countries.

For those reasons, Hungary disassociates itself from paragraph 11 of this resolution.

Ms. Kafková (Czechia): Czechia is pleased to join the consensus on resolution 76/298, entitled “Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and

sustainable development in Africa”. For the reasons explained in its statement in explanation of position on resolution 76/297, Czechia disassociates itself from paragraph 11 of resolution 76/298.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 68 and of agenda item 68 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 75 (continued)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Draft decision A/76/L.71

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus to introduce draft decision A/76/L.71.

Mr. Evseenko (Belarus) (spoke in Russian): The Republic of Belarus has the honour to introduce draft decision A/76/L.71, entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance”.

Under the draft decision, the General Assembly would defer to its seventy-eighth session its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 74/114, of 16 December 2019, on the persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster, under the sub-item entitled “Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”.

In submitting this draft decision, we are guided by the importance of international cooperation on Chernobyl under the auspices of the United Nations and the fact that it is unacceptable to politicize international cooperation aimed at overcoming the long-term impacts of the accidents at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. To a greater or lesser degree, the impacts of the largest man-made disaster of the twentieth century, which happened more than 35 years ago, have affected more than two dozen countries, which means that we can say it is global in nature.

The heaviest burden was borne by Belarus. About 35 per cent of the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl on the European continent is on the territory of our country. The impacts of Chernobyl for Belarus have been described as a national ecological disaster, and dealing with that is a State priority.

The subject of the legacy of Chernobyl remains relevant for the affected areas. We are grateful for the contribution of the international community to their recovery and development. A particular role in that area has been played by the United Nations Development Programme, which acts as coordinator of all the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system involved in that work.

Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, as the countries that were worst affected by the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, were the initiators of the sub-item under consideration today. We are convinced that such an important subject must not be looked at in the context of confrontation and a lack of consensus. The subject of Chernobyl is perhaps one of very few subjects today that can — and must — unite us, rather than becoming another opportunity for mutual recrimination.

Having set aside political considerations, let us ask ourselves a simple question. Are we ready to submit to the international community — and above all to the peoples of the three worst-affected countries — joint creative proposals on the basis of genuine dialogue? That is a rhetorical question. We are convinced that international cooperation on Chernobyl must be continued exclusively in the spirit of coordination and partnership, rather than becoming a platform for manipulation and exacerbating confrontation. Belarus will never back away from the subject of Chernobyl. That catastrophe must remain on the General Assembly's agenda for many years to come.

Draft decision A/76/L. 71 is an attempt to protect cooperation on Chernobyl from irrelevant rhetoric and to preserve the fragile consensus that we managed to achieve with great difficulty three years ago. Deferring this important subject, which requires exceptional trilateral consent on cooperation, would send an important and sobering signal to the international community about the need to preserve the principles of multilateralism and consensus. We hope for the solidarity of the Assembly and call on it to support the draft decision.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/76/L.71.

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

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): We just heard a statement in which the gentleman said that it is very important to preserve the trilateral agreement. Perhaps he meant Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation — and yet the gentleman has never made an effort to get in touch with the Ukrainian delegation to discuss the matter. Nevertheless, let me proceed with my explanation.

Thirty-six years ago, on 26 April 1986, the worst nuclear accident ever occurred at the Chornobyl nuclear power station. The disastrous consequences of that explosion rippled across all of Ukraine, neighbouring countries and far beyond. They still affect the health of people throughout the region. Nobody dares live or farm in the surrounding areas, although there were attempts to dig trenches there by the Russian armed forces just a few weeks ago during the temporary occupation.

At the time of the accident, the Soviet Government tried to conceal the real scale of the tragedy. Crowds of citizens were pushed into the streets of Kyiv for a May Day parade in an apparent attempt to project the message that nothing had happened at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant. We should thank the international community — many of the countries gathered here — because, before long, Moscow was forced to tell at least part of the truth. It took much more time to reveal the entire extent of the tragedy, and I praise the United Nations contribution to that end.

For more than three decades, the international community has invested outstanding efforts in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the disaster in both Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Let us remember, however, that the Chornobyl nuclear power plant is located on the territory of Ukraine, which brings my country to the top of two lists — that of most affected countries and that of responder countries. The delegation of Ukraine is shocked by the attempt to conceal information about the current situation in the facility, which still poses a threat to nuclear safety on a global level.

In short, draft decision A/76/L. 71 is an attempt to prevent reporting by the Secretary-General to the

General Assembly on a huge array of facts established by experts, not politicians. It is also an attempt to prevent the General Assembly from taking well-informed action based on such reporting.

Let me note in that regard that in 2019 the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 74/114, entitled “Persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster”, in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution under a special sub-item, entitled “Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”.

Given the most recent developments around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, it seems to be even more urgent and necessary to secure the right of the General Assembly to receive a timely and credible update on the current situation and its implications for the international efforts to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The right of the General Assembly to consider the sub-item I mentioned within the period agreed by consensus — the same consensus to which the gentleman from Belarus referred — and to take well-informed action should also be guaranteed.

Therefore, we strongly reject the attempt to suspend those rights of the General Assembly. No credible explanation whatsoever as to why the General Assembly should disregard its own consensus decision was given. No consultations with Ukraine — or with practically any other Member State — were held. The real mastermind has not even had the courage to submit the draft decision itself and has used its proxy instead. The same proxy was used a year ago, on 18 June 2021, when the Assembly considered resolution 75/287 on Myanmar (see A/75/PV.83) and we saw only one red dot on the screen — that of Belarus.

I can hardly imagine that responsible Governments, which set the safety of their own citizens as a top priority and realize that radiation has no borders, would support a decision to limit their awareness and right to receive the fullest possible information about a transborder threat of this kind. It would mean an irresponsible attitude towards the real danger to the entire region and beyond coming from the ongoing situation around Chernobyl nuclear power plant. It would also mean an intentional step aimed at depriving peoples of all

nations of knowledge of the truth and of timely updates on the matter.

In the light of that, we have requested a recorded vote on draft decision A/76/L.71 and urge Member States to vote against it. That will secure our right — the right of all of us — to receive credible and timely updates from the Secretary-General, as well as to take well-informed actions on such a critical issue as nuclear safety. Let us protect ourselves. Let us respect the Secretary-General, our citizens and their rights and vote against the draft decision submitted by Belarus.

Mr. Kulhánek (Czechia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

In its resolution 74/114, of 16 December 2019, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution, under the sub-item entitled “Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”.

That resolution was adopted by consensus and we do not see a reason to diverge from it. Moreover, in the light of recent concerning developments around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant due to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, we believe it is critical to receive a timely update from the Secretary-General on the implications of those developments for the international efforts to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The EU and its member States therefore reject the proposal by Belarus in draft decision A/76/L.71 to postpone to the seventy-eighth session the report of the Secretary-General and the consideration of the sub-item.

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

The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/76/L.71, entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Ochalik (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft decision A/76/L.71 and in addition to the delegation listed in the document,

the following country has also become a co-sponsor of draft decision A/76/L.71: the Russian Federation.

The Acting President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Belarus, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay,

Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay

Abstaining:

Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen

Draft decision A/76/L.71 was rejected by 77 votes to 9, with 45 abstentions.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 75.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.