



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9397th meeting

Wednesday, 16 August 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Boateng
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki

Agenda

Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, to today's meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Silvio Gonzato, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: I thank the members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to brief them today.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is not currently in a position to independently verify information regarding the movement of people or goods through routes that include the Lachin corridor, or on the well-being of civilians in the areas where Russian peacekeepers have been deployed. We are aware, however, of ongoing reports on those issues, including with regard to shortages of food and medicines and disruptions to energy supplies that are required to maintain critical infrastructure and services, such as health and water facilities. We are also aware of reports that some essential health-care interventions, including surgeries, may have had to be suspended.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is in regular contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which remains the only international humanitarian body that has access to the area. As the ICRC reported in a statement on 25 July, it has been unable to transport humanitarian assistance through the Lachin corridor to the civilian population in the area, or by any other route, including Aghdam, for several weeks. Although medical evacuations continue, the ICRC has not been able to bring medical items into the area since 7 July, and its food deliveries stopped on 14 June. The ICRC has highlighted worrying shortages of essential food items and life-saving medical supplies.

The international humanitarian law is very clear. The parties to conflicts must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for all civilians in need. They must ensure that humanitarian relief personnel have the freedom of movement required for their functions. What matters is that passage for that relief is as rapid as possible in the circumstances. It is therefore critical for the ICRC's delivery of humanitarian relief that it be allowed to resume through any available routes.

The ICRC is doing everything it can, but as a single organization, it can only cover the most urgent needs. Other impartial humanitarian relief must also be allowed to reach civilians who need it, and a sustainable solution for the safe and regular transit of people and goods must be found. In that regard, I would like to reference the Secretary-General's statement from 2 August (SG/SM/21896), in which he expressed particular concern about the reports of the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground and called for urgent steps to facilitate access. It is incumbent on the parties not to impede or politicize any principled humanitarian effort. Responding to humanitarian needs is not an act of legitimization or recognition. It does not take sides or yield to political influence. OCHA will continue to engage with the parties on humanitarian access aimed at meeting the essential needs of civilians in the area. The United Nations country teams in both Armenia and Azerbaijan also maintain open channels with the authorities in those countries and are fully ready to do everything they can to ensure a response to the humanitarian needs.

The President: I thank Ms. Wosornu for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Wosornu for her briefing and welcome the presence in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, as well as the representatives of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union.

We are concerned about the humanitarian situation of the civilian populations living in the Karabakh region. According to the latest report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, they are facing shortages of food, medicines and medical equipment, basic hygiene products and essential services. The situation is particularly urgent for vulnerable people — children, the sick, pregnant women and the elderly — whose survival depends almost exclusively on humanitarian aid. My country reiterates that the humanitarian situation must be addressed as a matter of priority, urgently and without any politicization. The parties must adhere strictly to their obligations under international humanitarian law and in particular should not hinder the access of humanitarian personnel or the movement of people and goods. Access to the Karabakh region must absolutely be guaranteed in order to prevent the daily lives of its residents from becoming even more precarious. It is also essential to ensure that the sick are able to receive their treatments without any break in care, and that all medical evacuations, where necessary, are carried out under satisfactory conditions.

My country remains convinced that the crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia must be resolved through dialogue, in compliance with international law. To that end, discussions aimed at a political settlement must continue with a view to preventing any resurgence of large-scale armed conflict and ultimately achieving a complete, definitive and irreversible resolution of the conflict.

We call on the parties to implement the existing agreements and to continue their negotiations on the basis of the framework set out in the tripartite agreement of 10 November 2021, as well as subsequent joint declarations, in order to reach agreement on crucial outstanding issues, in particular the signing of a peace treaty and the demarcation of borders. Whatever happens, there is clearly an urgent need to reduce tensions along the border and pave the way for successful results from the forthcoming negotiations in Brussels. That will require the parties to demonstrate

responsibility by refraining from resorting to military threats, inflammatory rhetoric or hate speech aimed at stirring up historical fears.

In conclusion, I want to call on all parties to capitalize on the positive developments in May and July in order to move resolutely towards peace and a normalization of relations between the two countries. My country commends all the facilitators involved in the process and encourages the regional initiatives aimed at promoting the construction of a lasting peace.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Ms. Wosornu for her update on the situation in the Lachin corridor. I also welcome the delegations of Armenia, led by its Foreign Minister, and of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union to this meeting.

We are concerned about the reports of a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Karabakh. The reports of a further tightening of the roadblock in June, preventing assistance to the civilian population, including vulnerable individuals and those in poor health conditions, are particularly worrying.

Brazil reaffirms its commitment to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan within their internationally recognized borders. Measures to reinforce border controls, however, must take into account the basic principles of humanitarian law in order to prevent or limit the suffering of innocent civilians. We want to emphasize that the persistence of the current stalemate, regardless of its causes, threatens the well-being and lives of thousands of people. We urge the parties to explore mechanisms to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to Karabakh, including the feasibility of the Aghdam-Khankendi route. We consider it essential to find an urgent solution to the crisis, which may become even worse in the coming months as winter approaches.

Brazil understands that the conflict originates from a complex situation that extends over generations. Thousands of people have lost their lives. We believe it is essential to stop the cycle of violence, and that means abandoning the aggressive rhetoric adopted by some of those involved and strengthening confidence-building measures. Brazil, which has a vibrant community of Armenian descent, encourages the preservation of dialogue channels between the parties and underscores its support for the terms of the ceasefire agreement. The trilateral declaration of 9 November 2020 offers a road map for peacebuilding. It will be essential for

the parties to adhere to the commitments they made at that time and remain engaged in the pursuit of a definitive solution to the conflict. The Council should follow developments there with close attention and a committed willingness to help where possible.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for her briefing. I also welcome the presence among us today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia. I want to stress three points.

First, the restrictions and total blockade of traffic on the corridor linking Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which have now lasted for more than eight months, are causing a humanitarian crisis. Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor continues to isolate the population of Nagorno-Karabakh from the rest of the world without any legitimate justification for a situation that runs counter to the principles of international humanitarian law. Combined with the interruption of gas and electricity supplies, the drying up of water resources, the difficulties that the population has encountered in obtaining seeds and the shortage of fuel, all of which are hampering agricultural work, that situation is now degenerating into a humanitarian crisis. The risk of famine and widespread shortages, including of medicines, is imminent.

France deplores the blocking of the humanitarian aid convoy that the Armenian authorities sent in July in an attempt to remedy a tragic situation. The restrictions and obstacles imposed on the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and humanitarian actors in violation of international law are unacceptable. In view of the gravity of the humanitarian situation, France calls for the unconditional and immediate restoration of the free movement of goods, persons and merchandise along the Lachin corridor in both directions, and for an uninterrupted supply of gas and electricity to the population.

After our last open meeting (see S/PV.9228), the International Court of Justice issued an order on 22 February 2023 indicating provisional measures that are binding and require Azerbaijan, in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to take all possible measures available to it to ensure the unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and goods along the Lachin corridor in both directions. In its order

of 6 July 2023, noting the precariousness of the situation between the parties, the Court confirmed the need for effective implementation of the measures indicated in its February order. Echoing the statement issued by the Secretary-General on 2 August (SG/SM/21896), France once again calls on Azerbaijan to comply with its international obligations and in particular to implement the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice.

Given the seriousness of the situation, France commends the action of the ICRC on the ground. We will step up our support for its activities, and we call for immediate, free and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies to the populations concerned and for a reopening of the Lachin corridor. France also remains fully committed to promoting a lasting and just peace in the region. We therefore call for a resumption of negotiations aimed at resolving all outstanding issues, including rights and guarantees for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. That can be achieved only through dialogue without any use or threats of force. Alongside the European Union, France will continue to contribute to efforts to promote dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We fully support and actively participate in the mediation efforts led by the European Union to promote a normalization process.

We will support the quest for progress on all the subjects under negotiation, particularly the draft peace treaty, border demarcation, humanitarian issues and the opening of communication routes. France is at the disposal of the parties to contribute to those goals, in liaison with all partners and stakeholders.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Ms. Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for her briefing.

We have taken note of the letters from Armenia and Azerbaijan distributed to the Security Council. The arguments of the two sides offer different explanations. However, safeguarding local livelihoods must be the top priority. The lives of the most vulnerable — including those who are sick and chronically ill, infirm or elderly and women and children — must not be threatened.

We would like to emphasize the Secretary-General's concern about the reports of continued challenges to freedom of movement along the Lachin corridor and the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is currently facing difficulties in bringing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population through the Lachin corridor or any other routes.

It is calling on the relevant decision-makers to let it resume its essential humanitarian operations in the area. There must be no impediments to humanitarian access for international organizations. We urge all the parties to grant access as soon as possible. In addition, the International Court of Justice indicated provisional measures on 22 February related to ensuring the unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions. We reiterate our consistent position that the rule of law must be upheld and that every nation must abide by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

A final settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia is crucial to peace and stability in the Caucasus region. The Security Council, which is tasked with maintaining international peace and security, should be committed to the issue. Dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan is important. We hope that it will allow the issues related to their dispute to be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law.

Mr. Boateng (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. We listened carefully to the briefing provided by Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and we want to encourage an enhanced United Nations engagement to support the parties in finding a durable solution to the long-standing conflict that continues to ravage peace in the region.

Against a backdrop of fresh tensions, hate speech and dangerous rhetoric regarding the situation, we welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia and the representative of Azerbaijan and look forward to hearing their views, which we hope will help the Council in its efforts to address the main challenges. We also welcome the participation in the meeting of the representative of Türkiye and the representative of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations. It is imperative that our messages today enjoin the parties to engage meaningfully with all regional and multilateral

processes in order to resolve the conflict peacefully, based on established, mutually acceptable principles. In that regard, we would like to point to previous efforts by regional actors, including the ceasefire declared in the trilateral statement agreed to by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation on 9 November 2020, and we emphasize the urgent need for the parties to recommit to its full implementation.

As we have previously underlined, we encourage strong international mediation efforts, appropriately framed and supported, to help douse the flames of intense animosity, mutual distrust and discontent between the parties and facilitate an effective political process for peace. We encourage the Secretary-General's good-offices role, urge the reactivated engagement of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and note the positive role that has been played by the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Moreover, we encourage the parties to fully embrace the ongoing mediation efforts and talks under the auspices of the Council of the European Union. We believe that the outcomes of those discussions, including the demarcation and delimitation of borders, will help to reduce tensions, facilitate the normalization of relations and set the stage for negotiating a future peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We hold that open military confrontation and war serve no one's interests, including those of the parties, but rather exacerbate the suffering of civilians, particularly women, children, the elderly and other vulnerable segments of the population.

On that score, it is paramount that we work with all the parties and actors concerned to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to the population in the region as well as the people's access to goods and services. The Lachin corridor and other acceptable, viable routes are vital in that endeavour and serve as a critical link in ensuring the right of access to health care and essential services and goods, and to freedom of movement. We therefore urge the effective implementation of the orders of the International Court of Justice, including that issued on 22 February and reaffirmed on 6 July, related to measures to ensure the unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions. We reiterate that actions that could potentially create a humanitarian catastrophe and needlessly put civilians at risk undercut our shared values and violate international

norms, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

For the sake of international peace and security, we call on the parties to immediately de-escalate the situation and to guarantee the security, rights and freedoms of all ethnic populations and the right of all others who have been displaced to return. Finally, both parties must respect their obligations by refraining from actions that foster mistrust, erode confidence and complicate efforts to find an amicable settlement to this cyclical conflict.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Allow me to thank Ms. Wosornu for her briefing.

Since the last Security Council meeting on this issue in December of last year (see S/PV.9228), there have been new developments, some of them positive and very encouraging. We welcome and applaud the intensification of the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process. Following the negotiations on a peace treaty held in the United States in early May, leaders of both countries have had meetings in Brussels and other European capitals. The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have publicly reaffirmed their firm commitment to the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991 and the territorial integrity of their countries. Given their difficult past, that firm commitment by both countries to respecting each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity as neighbours and their readiness to deal with and resolve their disputes by peaceful means, on the basis of respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law, are of paramount importance.

We welcome the commitment of both parties to a long-term negotiation plan for a comprehensive peace agreement, and as stated by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, only a month ago, the current efforts represent "one of the most comprehensive and vigorous stages of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan". In that respect, we welcome the plans for the construction of a railway connection, which should take place without delay. We want to believe that the parties will be swift to accept the offer and the readiness of the European Union to contribute financially to the project. Establishing a rail link could prove a strong confidence-building measure and symbolize cooperation in advancing shared interests, laying the groundwork for further diplomatic and economic cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In

our view, that is what both countries need, what their populations deserve and what the region must have.

We are well aware that the road is still uphill and bumpy and that a number of problems persist. As we have seen in various reports and as we heard from Ms. Wosornu, the parties continue to express serious concerns, tensions have continued near the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and there are important pending issues that need particular and continued attention. We have been following the recent developments concerning the Lachin road very closely. We note that the positions of the two countries on the issue differ sharply. From January to August of this year, there have been close to 60 letters addressed by both parties to the Security Council. While each side develops its own narrative on the situation, one aspect is more striking than any other — a profound lack of trust between the parties on the best ways to deal with the situation of the Azerbaijani citizens of Armenian descent living in the country, and the urgent need for the parties to get together and work seriously to resolve all related issues.

We reiterate our principled position that humanitarian needs must not be politicized or used to echo other grievances. Humanitarian needs anywhere, including in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, should only be met.

We are absolutely confident that there is enough room to discuss openly and seriously all the issues related to the expressed humanitarian concerns and the freedom of movement through the Lachin road, including by exploring other possibilities, on the one hand, and any legitimate security concerns, on the other hand. We believe that when humanitarian issues are at stake, everything must be done, and every option explored, including, in this respect, the use of other roads, such as the proposed one from Aghdam to Khankandi, for the same and only purpose, namely, to respond quickly and responsibly and provide delivery of goods to the region. We strongly encourage efforts from both sides to ensure that the needs of the population are met.

More broadly, we think that the parties should work with the same sense of urgency to deal with all other issues — to delimit the border and de-mine and demilitarize it — through good-faith cooperation, in order to provide the necessary sense of security and avoid accidents and incidents, which, given the volatility of the situation, could quickly lead to

heightened tensions and clashes. The parties should avoid unnecessary speculation and heightened rhetoric and, above all, serve the main purpose, which is to make progress towards building a future in cooperation and friendship.

We know that the legacy of 30 years of a painful frozen conflict will not be overcome overnight, but the new realities and the determination shown recently by the parties must be fully exploited. In the most friendly and sincere way, we urge both parties to, instead of competing on the communication front in an unproductive blame game, get together to work to establish greater cooperation, make more contacts at various levels, take steps to increase confidence and help address all issues. Nothing should impede such an approach, which in our view is the only way conducive to bringing about a new and positive reality in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. In this respect, we also encourage direct talks between the representatives of the Armenian community in Azerbaijan and the Government.

Let me reiterate the importance of pursuing the path of diplomacy as the best way to move forward and overcome the bitter legacy of a conflict that has kept the people of two neighbouring countries apart with huge consequences. It is high time to invest in shared benefits.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Director Wosornu for her briefing. I also welcome the His Excellency Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, and the representative of Azerbaijan, to today's meeting.

China takes note of the recent letters from Armenia to the President of the Security Council and from Azerbaijan to the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lachin corridor. We also take note of the recent statement by the spokesperson for the Secretary-General (SG/SM/21896).

China has been closely following the developments in the situation and consistently advocates that disputes concerning the Lachin corridor should be settled through dialogue and consultation. We hope and believe that the parties concerned will properly settle all issues, including the humanitarian situation, through diplomatic efforts.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are neighbours. It is in the fundamental interest of both countries to achieve common security and common development through

cooperation. In recent years, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia have successively issued four joint statements, making arrangements, inter alia, for the cessation of hostilities, economic and transport cooperation and border issues, respectively. Recently, Armenia and Azerbaijan carried out a series of engagements and dialogues through the mediation of relevant parties, demonstrating the political will and concrete actions of both countries to resolve issues in dispute peacefully through diplomatic means.

We encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue to meet each other halfway on the basis of the four joint statements and the efforts made in the recent period and under the mediation of relevant parties, including Russia, and to properly settle the disputes between them in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the norms governing international relations. China supports any diplomatic efforts conducive to realizing this goal and will play a constructive role in this regard.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Director Wosornu for her briefing.

Malta is deeply concerned about the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, including the humanitarian situation aggravated by the blockade of the Lachin corridor. It is deplorable that citizens in the region continue to be deprived of such essential goods as food, medicine and fuel, which has affected the functioning of medical and educational institutions. Malta calls for the immediate and unconditional end to this blockade.

The implications of this situation on the local population and the lack of humanitarian access to the region are serious and will only worsen as time goes by if there is no form of redress or remedy. Unimpeded humanitarian access must be given. We appeal to the Azerbaijani authorities to restore free access to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and refrain from further violations of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, international humanitarian law and orders of the International Court of Justice. We also take note of the expressed readiness of the Azerbaijani authorities to supply goods via the city of Aghdam. Nevertheless, this should not be seen as an alternative to the reopening of the Lachin corridor.

Malta calls for an immediate de-escalation of the situation and highlights the importance of reconciliation between both parties in order to prevent unnecessary hardship and loss of life. Everyone, especially society's

most vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly and persons with disability, who should be effectively protected and whose well-being should be prioritized, must have easy access to basic and essential goods. Women and girls who are internally displaced or are in refugee-like situations often face intersecting forms of discrimination, have limited access to education, employment, health care and housing and are inadequately protected from gender-based violence. Malta strongly believes that humanitarian access must not be politicized under any circumstance by any of the actors involved and continues to support and commend the work carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross in the region, and by local women's organizations that have provided services to victims of domestic violence, psychosocial support, and sanitary and hygiene products.

Malta remains fully committed to constructive dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to long-lasting peace and stability in the South Caucasus. We encourage confidence-building measures by both the Armenian and Azerbaijani leadership to overcome differences and guarantee the safety and security of citizens in the region. Armenian women in all their diversity continue to be marginalized in all stages of peace and reconstruction processes. Only inclusive dialogue and diplomacy can ensure a peaceful settlement to the situation and guarantee an outcome that is beneficial for the people. In this context, Malta encourages the direct engagement between both sides in order to reach a quick resolution to the conflict.

Malta reaffirms its support for a negotiated and comprehensive solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and is supportive of the efforts by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group in pursuing this objective. The continued engagement by the European Union in facilitating the peaceful resolution of issues between both sides is strongly commended. There is no other viable way forward but to continue working together to overcome the differences and guarantee the safety and security of citizens in the region.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates its call for the immediate removal of the blockade imposed in the Lachin corridor and for the restoration of freedom of movement of people and goods in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in both directions. We continue to fully support efforts leading to sustainable peace, security and prosperity.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks Ms. Wosornu for her briefing and expresses its appreciation for the indispensable work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We welcome His Excellency Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, and the representatives of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union, to today's meeting.

Switzerland supports a peaceful settlement of the differences between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and it commends the efforts made by the parties and several diplomatic players in this respect. We regret the renewed tension that has been observed over the last few months. In this context, we are deeply concerned by the growing deterioration of the humanitarian situation following the restrictions on access through the Lachin corridor. Women, men and children are finding themselves in an increasingly difficult position, faced with a shortage of medicines and products essential to their survival. Restrictions on access have a profound impact on the most vulnerable, especially children, the sick, the elderly, people with disabilities and pregnant women. The situation is untenable and must be resolved without delay.

It is vital to restore the free passage of civilians and essential goods. We call on the parties to respect the commitments made, notably in the trilateral statement of November 2020. The International Court of Justice has called on Azerbaijan to take all measures at its disposal to ensure the unimpeded movement of people, vehicles and goods along the Lachin corridor in both directions. We call for compliance with the Court's decisions.

In addition, the parties must take urgent steps to facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to civilians in need, as required by international humanitarian law. We join in the call of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the parties on 25 July to find a humanitarian consensus to ensure that impartial humanitarian aid reaches those who depend on it. The ICRC must be able to resume its humanitarian operations in the region without impediments.

We recognize the diplomatic efforts undertaken to achieve a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The pursuit of constructive dialogue and the implementation of agreements on the ground, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity,

as well as the protection of minority rights, remain fundamental to building confidence for a long-term solution. We call on the parties to take de-escalation measures and intensify their efforts to normalize relations and reach a peace treaty. Switzerland remains ready to promote those efforts through its good offices if both parties so wish.

As a Council, we must do everything in our power to support the efforts to resolve the remaining differences peacefully and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe from developing.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Edem Wosornu, for her briefing. I acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia and the representatives of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union.

Ecuador takes note of the letters from Armenia and Azerbaijan on the situation in the Lachin corridor, circulated in the Security Council on 11 and 14 August, respectively. We note with concern the briefings on the problems related to freedom of movement in the Lachin corridor, which seriously affects the humanitarian situation and threatens to destabilize the region.

The implications of this situation for the supply of basic necessities, such as food and medicine, to the local population are of great concern. We call on the parties to comply with the agreements expressed in the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, starting with the Russian-mediated ceasefire, and to take urgent steps to facilitate access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilian population.

We reiterate Ecuador's position that in all cases the parties must comply with the orders and decisions of the principal judicial organ of this Organization. We therefore recall the orders of the International Court of Justice on this case, including those of February and July, related to measures to ensure the unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions.

We urge the parties to accelerate peace efforts anchored in human rights and to refrain from any actions that could exacerbate tensions and deteriorate the humanitarian and security situation of the civilian population.

Ecuador hopes that negotiation efforts will continue in search of a sustainable solution to the conflict that will allow for the de-escalation of tensions, will fulfil the agreements reached in 2020 and will ensure the free and safe movement through the Lachin corridor. To that end, we reiterate our support for the revitalization and strengthening of peace efforts in the framework of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in all available frameworks, initiatives and tools for peaceful settlement, including the peace efforts of the European Union.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Edem Wosornu for her thorough briefing, and I welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, and the representatives of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union in this meeting.

The United Arab Emirates is closely following the evolving situation along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and took note of the letters sent in the past week on developments in the region, both from Armenia to the President of the Security Council and from Azerbaijan to the Secretary-General. We also took note of the Secretary-General's statement dated 2 August (SG/SM/21896) and appreciate his call to facilitate the passage of humanitarian aid to those in dire need. Furthermore, we acknowledge the role of the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance as stipulated in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the necessity of providing basic goods — such as food, medicine and fuel — and ensuring that they reach those in need, as well as the necessity of providing medical assistance and care in a timely manner. Moreover, we commend the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and we welcome the resumption of medical evacuations.

We remain concerned about the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and we call once again on all parties to de-escalate and exercise restraint by avoiding unilateral measures or rhetoric that could result in dire humanitarian consequences or impede the achievement of a lasting peace. We therefore call on the two parties to continue resolving their differences peacefully through dialogue and diplomatic means, in line with

the principles of international law, international norms and the Charter of the United Nations.

In that context, the United Arab Emirates encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue engaging constructively and in good faith in the ongoing mediation efforts. We welcome the ongoing talks, including those held recently in Brussels, Moscow and Washington, as such efforts are important to establish lasting peace. We look forward to seeing concrete progress in that regard that leads to meeting the aspirations and interests of both peoples.

Now is the time for peace. Through its active engagement with Armenia and Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates will continue its support for all efforts that promote stability, dialogue and peaceful coexistence between the two countries.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks the United States presidency for convening this important meeting. Our gratitude is extended to the Director of Operations and Advocacy of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Edem Wosornu, for the updates she just shared with us. They provide further insight into the difficult humanitarian situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

We welcome the participation in this meeting of His Excellency Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. We also welcome the presence of the representatives of Azerbaijan and Türkiye and the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

We have taken note of the content of the letter dated 11 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia and the letter dated 14 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan, both addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. In that regard, Mozambique would like to express its deep concern about the reported difficulties faced in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We believe that it is the primary responsibility of all States under international humanitarian law to protect civilians in conflict situations by ensuring, inter alia, the provision of essential services, including food and health care. We therefore urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to ensure that the vulnerable population has unimpeded access to humanitarian aid.

We also call on the parties involved to remain committed to the agreements reached thus far, including the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. More importantly, we appeal to the parties to abide by the relevant decisions of the International Court of Justice on the matter. It is our strong belief that the bilateral issues between the two countries must be resolved through diplomatic means so as to foster mutual trust and achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in full respect of their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

Mozambique attaches great importance to the role of the regional and international actors that have been actively involved in supporting and facilitating the peace process between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In that regard, we encourage their continuous and active engagement in seeking that the parties return to negotiations and avoid hostilities in the supreme interests of peace and for the benefit of good neighbourliness between their two peoples and countries. We highly value the continuation of the good offices of the Secretary-General. In the same vein, we strongly encourage the peace mediation efforts of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Ms. Wosornu for the helpful update. I also welcome the participation of Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan and the representatives of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the European Union at this meeting.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the ongoing disruption to the Lachin corridor, which threatens the supply of life-saving medication, health care and other essential goods and services, resulting in humanitarian consequences for the local population. It is therefore crucial that the order of the International Court of Justice of February 2023 be respected to ensure unimpeded movement along the Lachin corridor in both directions. We strongly urge the parties to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access along all available routes, including via the Lachin corridor, for the organization to be able to undertake its vital work. All parties must refrain from the politicization of humanitarian aid in order to meet the needs of the civilian population.

We warmly welcome the ongoing, internationally mediated negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan towards a peace agreement, hosted most recently by European Council President Michel last month. We also welcome the efforts of the United States in that regard, with the high-level engagement from Secretary Blinken. We urge all parties to redouble their efforts in those talks towards a lasting settlement. It is only diplomacy, in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, that will bring both sides closer to peace.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Wosornu, for her briefing.

We are concerned about the continuing blockade of the Lachin corridor. Measures on the ground are now needed more than ever to de-escalate the situation surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh as soon as possible, including lifting the blockade of the Lachin corridor and using other humanitarian routes. With the support of both sides, the Russian Federation is making every effort to resolve the current crisis situation as soon as possible and to facilitate the normalization of relations between our friendly countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia and in general. We are doing everything possible through political and diplomatic channels at all levels and through the Russian peacekeeping force on the ground to avert a humanitarian disaster in the region. We continue to remain actively engaged with all parties involved to rapidly resume the stable provision of food, medicine, other essential goods, electricity and gas to Nagorno-Karabakh.

The series of statements by the President of Russia, the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia made from 2020 to 2022 remain the only road map for reconciliation between Baku and Yerevan. The potential of the trilateral agreements has hardly been exhausted. Their key aspects consist in the delimitation and subsequent demarcation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border with Russia's expert assistance; unblocking transport links within the framework of the trilateral working group, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia; paving the way towards the negotiation of a Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty; and promoting dialogue between parliamentarians and opinion leaders. In each of those areas, there has been some progress. Russia is determined to continue working to that end.

Achieving Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation will be inconceivable until there are clear and reliable security guarantees and respect for the rights of the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh, based on universally recognized international principles in line with the laws of Azerbaijan. That rationale is predicated upon the repeated confirmation of recent agreements between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan on both sides' mutual recognition of one another's territorial integrity in accordance with the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991. During the talks among the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow on 25 July, we proposed realistic compromises to de-escalate the tension, which both sides took under consideration. This would entail the parallel opening of corridors through Aghdam and Lachin to allow for the movement of civilians and non-military goods. That would create the necessary preconditions for the early launch of direct talks between the authorized representatives of the official Baku and the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. The mutual commitments of the parties to refrain from politicizing purely humanitarian issues are no less imperative. We trust that all participants in the process will find the political will to overcome their differences in order to alleviate the plight of the tens of thousands people living in Nagorno-Karabakh and establish lasting dialogue in the Baku-Stepanakert format.

We stand ready to work with all responsible actors interested in the normalization of the situation of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation, in general. Those who truly support that scenario, based on the fundamental interests of the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples, should set aside all geopolitical and domestic political considerations. We also call for a responsible approach to the use of the Security Council as a platform in this context. In any case, these problems should be resolved between Baku and Yerevan, and no externally imposed plans and solutions can replace dialogue between them. For our part, we will continue to encourage that and work to bring the parties closer to a genuine good-neighbourly solution, including by using the capabilities of the Russian peacekeeping contingent.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States of America.

Let me start by thanking Director Wosornu for being here with us this afternoon.

The United States is concerned about the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. We are deeply troubled by the closure of the Lachin corridor, which has cut off people's access to essential goods and exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Access to food, medicine, baby formula and energy should never be held hostage. We urge the Government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement through the corridor so that commercial, humanitarian and private vehicles can reach the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. We also note the possibility of compromise on additional routes for humanitarian supplies and understand that since December, the International Committee of the Red Cross has facilitated medical transfers for more than 700 people in need of medical care, thanks to a critical lifeline for medically vulnerable individuals through the Lachin corridor. Neutral, impartial, humane and independent humanitarian access and assistance, including medical transfers, must not be hindered, full stop.

I want to stress the need for the parties to continue talks aimed at a lasting, peaceful resolution to the conflict and the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Those peace discussions require all the parties to exercise creativity, flexibility and compromise. Let me be clear. Peace in the region must include protections for the rights and security of individuals in Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States urges restraint and the immediate cessation of any activities that undermine the peace process and calls on all sides to fully meet their obligations under international humanitarian law. The international community must continue to engage diplomatically to facilitate dialogue and a durable, dignified peace. Negotiations are vital to a lasting peace, and we support any format that enables Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue dialogue towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We encourage all the parties to engage in direct talks, including between officials in Baku and representatives of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States is committed to promoting a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for the South Caucasus region, and we will continue to engage bilaterally and multilaterally with all partners to help build that brighter future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Mirzoyan (Armenia): I would like to thank the Security Council for convening this urgent meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh that has resulted from the eight-month-long blockade of the Lachin corridor, the vital road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and the outer world. I am here today to seek the support of the Council in maintaining the prospect of reaching just and comprehensive peace and stability in our region, which has been seriously undermined by Azerbaijan in the context of the humanitarian calamity on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Over the past two years, with the help of the international community, Armenia has spared no effort to establish peace and stability in our region, and I believe that today we still have the opportunity to reach that aim. But the current humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has the full potential to worsen the prospects for peace in the entire South Caucasus region and beyond. Today I would like to elaborate on that situation, and I ask Council members to make judgments based not on justifications that they may consider to be true or false but on values and facts.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Regardless of where they live, all human beings are entitled to their human rights and dignity and should be treated with the greatest possible respect and care even in times of war. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh have unfortunately been deprived of that and have found themselves in a situation of total siege. I would now like to present the events, facts and figures that show the current realities in blockaded Nagorno-Karabakh.

On 9 November 2020, a trilateral statement was signed by the leaders of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan. According to its paragraph 6:

“The Lachin corridor (5 kilometres wide), which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia [...] shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peacemaking forces.”

On 12 December 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin corridor on a fake pretext of environmental concerns. Since then, the gradual exhaustion of the area's limited domestic stocks has resulted in an acute

food shortage and closures of stores. Prior to the blockade, around 90 per cent of all the food consumed was imported from Armenia. With each passing day the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are therefore deprived of 400 tons of essential goods. There is currently a severe lack of food, including nutrition for children and staples such as flour and sugar, as well as medicine and fuel. Moreover, due to the lack of fuel and Azerbaijan's targeting of workers, almost all agricultural work has halted. As a result, approximately 10,000 hectares of land adjacent to the contact line have remained uncultivated. On 20 December 2022 the Council discussed the issue for the first time (see S/PV.9228), and the great majority of Council members called on Azerbaijan to lift the blockade.

Since December 2022, periodically, and since March 2023, completely — about 180 days in total — Azerbaijan has disrupted the only supply of natural gas to Nagorno-Karabakh. That has already had a number of adverse humanitarian consequences, such as disruptions to the work of hospitals, to the educational process in schools and kindergartens and the work of vitally important institutions and social services, the inability of many to heat their homes by gas and of many households to access hot water, as well as a lack of fuel for vehicles. Since 9 January, more than 210 days now, Azerbaijan has disrupted the supply of electricity through the sole high-voltage line between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. With limited local sources of electricity to rely on since then, Nagorno-Karabakh has had to implement rolling power outages with only a few hours of energy supply.

On 22 February, the International Court of Justice indicated a provisional measure in the ongoing case concerning *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan)*, according to which Azerbaijan shall:

“take all measures to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions”.

On 23 April, Azerbaijan, in violation of the Court's decision and the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, installed a checkpoint at the Lachin corridor. On 15 June, Azerbaijan went further, fully blocking the Lachin corridor by banning any access to Nagorno-Karabakh, even humanitarian access, including for the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC), which could have provided some food, medicine and fuel, among other things.

On 6 July 2023, the International Court of Justice reaffirmed its provisional measure of 22 February 2023.

On 25 July, the ICRC — the only international humanitarian organization that has been operating in Nagorno-Karabakh for more than 30 years — stated:

“Despite persistent efforts, the ICRC is not currently able to bring humanitarian assistance to the civilian population through the Lachin corridor or through any other routes.”

On 26 July, the Republic of Armenia sent a humanitarian convoy which, even now, remains at the entrance of the Lachin corridor, as the Azerbaijani side denies it access.

On 2 August, the Secretary-General reiterated his deep concern over the challenges related to the freedom of movement along the Lachin corridor, recalling the previous statement on the need to implement the orders of the ICJ, “including the orders issued on 22 February 2023 and reaffirmed on 6 July 2023, related to measures to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions” (SG/SM/21896). The Secretary-General further expressed particular concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground and called for “urgent steps to facilitate access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need” (*ibid.*).

On 7 August, a group of United Nations human rights experts — the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities — expressed alarm over the ongoing blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan and the dire humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, which “has left the population facing acute shortages” and “placed the lives of the residents — especially children, persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women and the sick — at significant risk”.

To sum up, owing to the blockade, there is no longer any economic activity in Nagorno-Karabakh. Thousands of people are left unemployed, as there is no possibility of paying their salaries. Even those people with money are unable to buy anything, as shelves in stores are empty. Women, children and elderly persons

stand in long queues in order to be able to buy some bread or fruit and vegetables. Sometimes they must travel dozens of kilometres on foot to reach empty shops and pharmacies. The authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh had to issue ration coupons for certain food products, including rice, porridge and sugar. There is a real of threat of hunger.

Here are some other figures: there are 120,000 people living in Nagorno-Karabakh deprived of the ability to exercise their basic human rights. There are 20,000 elderly people who are unable even to move owing to the absence of public transportation. There are 30,000 children living in Nagorno-Karabakh who are struggling owing to malnutrition and the lack of food. There are 270 children who are unable to return and reunite with their families in Nagorno-Karabakh. There are 2,000 pregnant women residing in Nagorno-Karabakh who do not have even basic access to health care. There are 9,000 people with disabilities who are deprived of proper medical care. There are 4,700 people with diabetes and 8,450 people with circulatory diseases, all of whom are running out of essential medicine.

All those events have doubled the rate of deaths in Nagorno-Karabakh in the past 8 months. Furthermore, the absence of medicine, sanitizers and other hygiene items is giving rise to the risk of epidemics. Throughout the blockade period, there were 710 patients and their accompanying persons evacuated by the ICRC who had to go through a humiliating procedure of proving their health condition in order to obtain permission for evacuation. One was a man with a very concrete name and surname — Vagif Khachatryan, who was abducted at the checkpoint during his transportation by the ICRC to Armenia for heart surgery. He was abducted while under international humanitarian protection. It is certainly not the only incident in which Azerbaijan has intentionally obstructed the work of the ICRC. There was another man with a very concrete name and surname — Karo Hovhannisyan — passed away yesterday. According to the autopsy report, he died because of starvation and lasting malnutrition. Two children — 3-year-old Leo and 6-year-old Gita — died in Martakert after their mother had to leave them alone to travel on foot to the nearby town with the hope of finding some food for them.

In recent months, many Council members have tried to address the issue of opening the Lachin corridor. However, despite all their calls, the commitments

undertaken in line with the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 and the legally binding orders of the ICJ, the situation on the ground has not improved. On the contrary, Azerbaijan incrementally yet consistently intensified the blockade to the degree of a complete siege of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia raised its concerns on the deepening humanitarian crisis as a result of the closure of the Lachin corridor in all negotiations with Azerbaijan, which were separately facilitated and mediated by the United States of America, the European Union and Russia, to no avail.

Throughout that time, Azerbaijan's engagement has been anything but in good faith. Going back to the first discussions on the issue in the Security Council, Azerbaijan has denied any responsibility for its actions and even claimed that it was not controlling the Lachin corridor. Over the past eight months, Azerbaijan has offered a number of pretexts aimed at justifying its actions. First, it blamed so-called eco-activists with environmental concerns, then it levelled baseless allegations of the transportation of arms through the Lachin corridor and then it cited military provocations, and so on.

The Lachin corridor has been agreed as a link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and has no alternative. The Lachin corridor should be opened and, when it comes to other possible communications, that should be addressed through an international mechanism through the Baku-Stepanakert dialogue.

Therefore, I am here today to seek the Council's support in addressing issues of a humanitarian nature. We expect the Council to condemn the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, as prohibited by international humanitarian law; to condemn the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and deprivation of the civilian population in Nagorno-Karabakh of objects indispensable to their survival, including by wilfully impeding relief supply and access for responses to conflict-induced food insecurity; and to demand full compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law, including those related to the protection of civilians, in particular women and children, and critical civilian infrastructure. We also expect the Council to call for the immediate restoration of freedom and security pertaining to the movement of persons, vehicles and cargo, in line with previously reached agreements, through the Lachin corridor; to ensure the full cooperation of the parties in good faith with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the safe

and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance; and to dispatch an independent inter-agency needs assessment mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

Those humanitarian issues clearly need to be resolved with the international community's strong intervention before the negative consequences result in the ethnic cleansing of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh:

“This is a deliberately engineered crime, driven by evident genocidal intent. The Azerbaijani authorities purposefully instigated the blockade of the Lachin corridor with the knowledge that it would subject the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh to a gradual demise, yet they chose to persist with this course of action”.

At the same time, the report by Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, reflects that a genocide is already happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Mr. Ocampo:

“The blockade of the Lachin corridor by the Azerbaijani security forces impeding access to any food, medical supplies and other essentials should be considered a genocide under article II (c) of the Genocide Convention: ‘Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction’. Starvation is the invisible genocide weapon. Without immediate and dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks.”

The prevention of such a catastrophe is a core duty of the United Nations and the Council. I believe that this body, in spite of its geopolitical differences, has the capacity to act to prevent genocide and not to commemorate it, when it might be too late.

In conclusion, I would like to come back to the very beginning of my statement. One of the most important principles of the United Nations is leaving no one behind, and Edwin, aged four, Anastasia, aged six, Maria, aged seven, David, aged five, Tatev, aged five, Samvel, aged eight, and many others still have the hope that they will not be left behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Given the statement I have just heard, I will start by categorically rejecting all the unfounded and groundless allegations about blockades and humanitarian crises propagated by Armenia against my country. What Armenia is trying to present as a humanitarian matter is in fact a provocative and irresponsible political campaign to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. It was Armenia that for almost 30 years blatantly disregarded the relevant four resolutions and the series of presidential statements of the Security Council unequivocally demanding Armenia's full, immediate and unconditional of its occupying forces from the territory of Azerbaijan. Against that backdrop, Armenia's actions are nothing but the embodiment of purposeful political hypocrisy, and its appeal to the Security Council is part of a campaign that it has been pursuing for months to manipulate and mislead the international community.

Had Armenia been sincere in its quest to help, it would have happened immediately. It was indeed within practical reach very recently, only days ago, as a result of the active involvement of international actors, including some Security Council members. The reason it did not materialize was due only to Armenia's own refusal. Following a series of intensive consultations and shuttle diplomacy, agreements were finally reached on the delivery of humanitarian cargo to the Karabakh region through various routes, as well as on the organization of a meeting between a special representative of the Government and representatives of local Armenian residents.

In the first instance, concrete blocks and all the other physical barriers installed by the Armenian side on the Aghdam-Khankendi road should have been removed in order to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to deliver humanitarian cargo to the local residents. That should have been followed by scaling up the usage of the Lachin road by the ICRC within 24 hours. All of the parties involved, including the Russian peacekeeping contingent and the ICRC, were prepared to commence the implementation of the deal more or less within an hour. Unfortunately, during the briefing by the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, we heard many references to the ICRC, so I would like to hear about these particular details from the ICRC and see them proved through further communications.

In the second case, it was agreed to hold a meeting between representatives of the central authorities and local Armenian residents in the nearby city of Yevlakh. Regrettably, on 5 August, Armenia, through its illegally installed regime, reneged on both agreements at the very last moment by introducing politically motivated and illegitimate preconditions and various pretexts. There should be no doubt that notwithstanding Azerbaijan's intensive engagement with the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the ICRC to find ways out of the situation, Armenia has been deliberately obstructing the diplomatic efforts. There is only one explanation for that, which is that Armenia is not willing to be a part of the solution. Instead, it is artificially igniting tensions in the region with a view to continuing to manipulate and mislead at the international level.

The breach of the agreement on the ICRC's delivery of humanitarian goods on 5 August is not the only obstruction. In fact, it is a continuation of Armenia's politicization of the presence and activities of that humanitarian organization and its reckless attempt to exploit humanitarian matters for political purposes by challenging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and preventing the reintegration of local ethnic Armenian residents. The facts speak for themselves. Immediately after the war ended in 2020, Azerbaijan offered its logistics and infrastructure to the ICRC for the delivery of goods to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. In 2021, those goods were transported to the ICRC's field office in the city of Barda to be delivered to the area. The Armenians rejected it and prevented the ICRC from delivering humanitarian assistance.

Immediately after the start of protests by eco-activists on a section of the Lachin-Khankendi route, Azerbaijan asked the ICRC to present the list of goods that the local residents needed and expressed its readiness to provide all the logistical and infrastructural support for their delivery. The ICRC came back with the response that the Armenian side did not want any supplies through Azerbaijan. Armenia resorted to the unprecedented action of abusing the ICRC for smuggling dual-use technologies and other items such as microchips to the Karabakh region. The ICRC had to acknowledge that, which is a serious blow to its humanitarian mandate and its reputation. Armenia refused to accept the deployment of the ICRC's Baku-based international medical personnel to Khankendi, which the ICRC itself had proposed in order to facilitate

medical evacuations and help deal with the medical issues on the ground, and which was supported by my country. Armenia's abuse of the ICRC for its political purposes also makes it crystal clear that the calls for an increased international presence, including of United Nations-affiliated organizations, have nothing to do with humanitarian concerns. Instead, the aim is to obtain more tools for manipulation.

The Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is an internationally recognized territory of my country, and the ethnic Armenians living there are considered residents of my country — the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Government of Azerbaijan is strongly committed to guaranteeing and securing the access of these residents to the goods they need and establishing appropriate living conditions for them. These objectives are fully in line with principles of international law and international humanitarian law, underscoring Azerbaijan's unwavering dedication to upholding these standards.

The so-called Lachin corridor is a road within the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan without any extraterritorial status. It is primarily intended for the movement of citizens, vehicles and goods under the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020. Adhering to its commitments under this statement, my country has allowed movement along this road, which remains intact since Azerbaijan's establishment of the checkpoint on its border with Armenia. The border checkpoint was established in exercise of Azerbaijan's inherent right to safeguard its sovereignty and security and to prevent the consistent and blatant abuse by Armenia of this route for illegal military and other activities.

Let me repeat that: the border checkpoint was established to prevent the consistent and blatant abuse by Armenia of this route for illegal military and other activities. Examples of such illegal activities are the rotation of its approximately 10,000 military personnel illegally stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan, transfer of weaponry, munitions and land mines, the presence of foreign nationals and terrorists on Azerbaijani territory and the unlawful extraction and transfer of natural resources from this territory. Is this humanitarian assistance?

The unanimous decision by the International Court of Justice on 6 July this year to dismiss Armenia's request for an internal measure to remove the checkpoint definitively rejected Armenia's allegations

that the Lachin checkpoint is illegal. The establishment of the border checkpoint has not impeded civilian movement along the Lachin road. In fact, there was a notable increase in such movement before 15 June this year. On that date, another unwarranted provocation by Armenia unfolded when its armed forces attacked Azerbaijani border guards and Russian peacekeeping forces accompanying them. This attack resulted in an Azerbaijani border guard being severely injured and concurrently poses a direct threat to the ICRC staff and civilians passing through the checkpoint.

If Armenia were genuinely concerned about the ordinary residents of the Karabakh region, it would never have objected to the use of the Aghdam-Khankandi the roads for the delivery of goods to the region. This road is connected to one of Azerbaijan's major transportation routes, known as Silk Road or M2 Azerbaijan highway, which provides a reliable connection to international markets. Compared to the 59-kilometre-long Lachin-Khankandi road passing through mountainous and serpentine terrain, the road between Aghdam and Khankandi is only 18 kilometres long. Today, in their visit to Aghdam, representatives of diplomatic corps accredited by Azerbaijan, including the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office and other United Nations entities, have also had a chance to see that the road was functional and ready for the transportation of goods. In this regard, I would refer Council members to the map that has been distributed to them, which clearly shows the logistics hubs, in particular international airports, on the territory of Azerbaijan that can be used to secure and provide all required assistance to populations in need.

Equally unfounded are the false allegations on genocide. At this point, Armenia's manipulative and deceptive campaign has involved the so-called opinion by Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, who presents himself as an independent expert. The flaws in Mr. Ocampo's assertions have been detailed by a prominent international law expert, Mr. Rodney Dixon, in his preliminary report that underlines that Ocampo's opinion lacks substantiation, is incomplete and displays numerous inaccuracies. Accordingly, there is no foundation for claiming that a genocide is currently being perpetrated. Specifically, Mr. Dixon finds that Ocampo's opinion is patently selective in the facts, in particular with his failure to mention Armenia's rejection of Azerbaijan's proposal of alternative routes to supply local Armenian residents.

Such manipulations under humanitarian pretexts are not separate from the increased illegal and provocative military activities. In recent weeks, the Armenian armed forces illegally remaining in the territory of Azerbaijan, in blatant violation of international law and its commitment under paragraph 4 of the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Armenia, have intensified the military engineering works and other military build-up.

The use of radio electronic-warfare equipment illegally deployed in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan is of particular concern. Not only have civilian aircraft of the Azerbaijani airlines been subjected to radio electronic interference in recent weeks, but also the civilian aircraft of foreign countries, which poses a serious risk to their safety. Today, a reconnaissance group of Armenian armed forces attempted to infiltrate the territory of Azerbaijan and carry out diversion operations in the Kalbajar District was prevented from doing so, and a member of this group, Voskanyan Gagik Ashotovich, born in 1983 and armed with a machine gun and ammunition, was detained.

Armenia must refrain from provocations, cease actions that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country, abstain from meddling in our internal affairs and genuinely engage in post-conflict normalization negotiations. It is vitally important that the historic opportunity for durable peace in the region is not missed. Verbal statements by the leadership of Armenia on the recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including the Karabakh region, has established grounds for cautious optimism that peace is indeed within reach. Now Armenia has to transform this statement into real deeds and refrain from questioning the sovereignty of Azerbaijan, including under the pretext of the humanitarian needs of the local Armenians, residents of the Karabakh region of my country.

Over the past few months, concerted efforts to intensify the normalization process with active engagement of international partners have yielded promising results. These diplomatic dialogues have played a crucial role in bridging differences and achieving tangible progress on several articles of the future bilateral agreement aimed at establishing a lasting peace and inter-State relations between the two countries. Azerbaijan is pursuing a policy of integration of ethnic Armenian residents of the Karabakh region as equal citizens, guaranteeing to them all the rights and

freedoms envisaged in the Constitution of Azerbaijan and all relevant international human rights mechanisms to which Azerbaijan is signatory. Our adherence to both these tracks is firm, just as we are firm in protecting our sovereignty and territorial integrity by all legitimate means enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law. We are confident that the international community and, above all, the Security Council will support this approach based on equal and reciprocal respect for the legitimate interests of both countries through mutual recognition and respect for each country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders.

I also have something to show to the Security Council. Social media outlets are full of numerous video clips and photos of local Armenian residents in Khankendi celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and every good occasion, and indeed, we wish them well. That photo and video evidence convincingly refutes the allegations of starvation, famine and humanitarian crisis. People are happy. They are dancing at their wedding party. That is a celebration involving very tasty cookies and so forth. I am happy to share this information with my neighbour to my right. I ask that Council members use it in their work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Önal (Türkiye): I thank you, Madam President, for inviting us to this meeting.

As a country with vested interests in regional peace and stability and actively engaged in initiatives towards that objective, Türkiye is concerned about the attempts of Armenia to exploit international platforms, including the Security Council, to express politically motivated and unsubstantiated allegations regarding the Lachin road.

We need to address that issue in its proper context.

First and foremost, the legitimate concerns of Azerbaijan have to be taken into account and its inherent sovereign rights have to be respected.

Azerbaijan has been expressing concerns about the abuse of the Lachin road for supplying armed groups and illegal mine exploitation in Karabakh for a long time. However, those concerns and sensitivities were not taken into account, and Azerbaijan felt obliged to take measures on its own territory as it deemed appropriate within the framework of its sovereign rights.

We know that Azerbaijan has exercised care to observe humanitarian considerations while those measures were implemented. As a matter of fact, medical evacuations through the Lachin road are possible, and Azerbaijan has already allocated the Aghdam-Khankendi route for use in delivering supplies to meet the needs of the Armenian residents in Karabakh. Moreover, Azerbaijan has demonstrated its willingness to establish dialogue with the representatives of the local Armenian people to address the issue in a substantial manner. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan's sincere efforts have not been reciprocated.

We, as Türkiye, remain convinced that there is a historical opportunity for comprehensive peace, stability and cooperation in the region. To that end, we expressed our commitment to a full normalization process with Armenia and took steps in that direction. We continue to strongly support peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

It is our firm belief that regional normalization can be attained only through dialogue and goodwill. We will continue to take part in, encourage and support efforts towards that goal.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Gonzato.

Mr. Gonzato: I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to take the floor, and I also thank Ms. Wosornu for her briefing.

The European Union (EU) is following with great concern the serious humanitarian situation affecting the local population in the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast. Movement through the Lachin corridor has been obstructed for more than eight months, despite orders by the International Court of Justice to reopen it. Since 15 June, there has been a blockage of the Lachin corridor, with the exception of occasional medical evacuations. Medical supplies and essential goods are reportedly in critically short supply or have already run out with dire consequences for the local population.

The EU deplores the fact that the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the region have been heavily impacted and calls for their full resumption, including medical evacuations and humanitarian supplies. Humanitarian access must not be politicized by any actors.

Movement through the Lachin corridor must be reopened immediately. Based on the November 2020

trilateral statement and the February 2023 order of the International Court of Justice, the Azerbaijani authorities bear the responsibility for guaranteeing safety and freedom of movement along the Lachin corridor and ensuring that the crisis does not escalate further. We have taken note of the expressed readiness of the Azerbaijani authorities to also supply goods via the city of Aghdam. That should, however, not be seen as an alternative to the reopening of the Lachin corridor.

The population on the ground needs reassurances, first and foremost, regarding their rights and security. The EU reiterates its call for direct dialogue between Baku and Karabakh Armenians. That dialogue should build much-needed confidence for all those involved.

The EU has also been following the growing tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the past month along their international border, with shooting incidents reported on almost a daily basis. The EU monitoring mission in Armenia is conducting patrols along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan to observe and report on the situation. The objective of the mission is to contribute to conflict resolution and build confidence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We call on all sides to avoid further incidents and return to dialogue.

The European Union and in particular the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, have been heavily engaged in supporting the normalization

process between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the end of 2021. At the most recent trilateral meeting hosted by President Charles Michel with President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia on 15 July, the leaders of the two countries reiterated their strong commitment to the peace process. They notably reconfirmed their full respect for the other country's territorial integrity and sovereignty and their unequivocal commitment to the 1991 Almata-Ata Declaration as a political framework for the delimitation.

As a matter of priority, violence, harsh rhetoric and the spreading of disinformation should stop in order to provide a conducive environment for peace and normalization talks. A return to dialogue in good faith remains as urgent as ever. That requires the genuine commitment of all sides to negotiated outcomes and a future built on common interests and mutual trust. Unfortunately, the current deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Karabakh Armenians is harming the peace process. Humanitarian issues need to be resolved and concrete steps should urgently be taken to build trust.

The European Union remains fully committed to facilitating dialogue between both sides in order to ensure long-lasting peace for the benefit of all people of the region.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.