



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

85th plenary meeting
Thursday, 29 June 2023, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary)

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

Agenda item 13 (continued)

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

Draft resolution (A/77/L.79)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.79.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of 57 sponsors, draft resolution A/77/L.79, entitled “Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic”. The draft resolution was drawn up by an interregional group of Member States, including Albania, Belgium, Cabo Verde, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, North Macedonia and my own country, Luxembourg. We would like to thank all our partners for their contributions, support and outreach efforts. The number of sponsors of the draft resolution testifies to the importance of this subject.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today seeks to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, an independent institution to address the issue of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Before presenting the draft resolution in greater detail, allow me to outline the context in which it is set.

For over a decade, families in all parts of the Syrian Arab Republic have been desperately seeking to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. Every day, families, especially women, face administrative and legal difficulties, financial uncertainties and deep trauma as they continue to search for their missing loved ones.

Official figures point to at least 100,000 missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The real number is probably much higher, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pointed out during the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly that was held in this Hall three months ago, on 28 March.

Given the complexity and magnitude of the issue of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, existing actors do not have the capacity to respond. For that reason, the Secretary-General recommended in his report of 2 August 2022 (A/76/890) that Member States consider establishing, through the General Assembly, a new international institution to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and to provide adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing persons.

The Secretary-General’s report identified two main gaps in current efforts, which justify the creation of a new institution. First, there is insufficient coordination among relevant actors, which results in lists of missing persons that remain partial and are distributed between multiple actors. That leads to the fragmentation and the underutilization of available information. Secondly, the absence of a one-stop shop has created

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uncertainty for families. Not knowing where to submit relevant information, families often have to report the disappearance of their loved ones to multiple actors, which contributes to confusion regarding lists and further traumatizes families.

The new institution recommended by the Secretary-General is designed to fill those gaps, while working in cooperation with other actors. The institution will reinforce complementarity and avoid duplication. It will serve as a single point of entry for collecting and comparing data. It will ensure coordination and communication with all relevant actors and ongoing initiatives.

To complete the context, I would like to pay tribute to the strength and courage of the Syrian families and their representatives. They include Fadwa Mahmoud, Yasmen Almashan, Mariam Alhallak, Khalil al-Haj Saleh and Ahmad Helmi. My colleagues and I had the honour of getting to know them, and I know that many members of the Assembly have been in contact with Syrian families. The families' tireless advocacy and struggle to assert their right to know and clarify the fate of their missing loved ones is the driving force behind this initiative. It was the families who called on the United Nations for help. And it was in response to the families' appeal and the Secretary-General's recommendation that Luxembourg announced, on 28 March, that it would submit a draft resolution with an interregional group of Member States. That draft resolution is before the Assembly today.

The draft resolution is the result of an inclusive and transparent process. A first draft resolution was shared with all Member States on 18 May. On 26 May, we held informal consultations, open to all Member States, on that first draft resolution. On 9 June, we shared a revised version of the draft resolution, which was prepared on the basis of the comments received. The final version of the draft resolution was published on 20 June.

By adopting the draft resolution, the General Assembly will decide to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, the independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The draft resolution specifies that the task of the independent institution will be to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic — and I stress all missing persons — and to provide adequate

support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing, in close cooperation and complementarity with all relevant actors.

The draft resolution stipulates that the independent institution shall have a structural element that ensures the full and meaningful participation and representation of victims, survivors and the families of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic in its operationalization and work and that it shall engage with women's organizations and other civil society organizations in a regular and sustained manner.

The draft resolution provides that the institution shall apply a victim- and survivor-centred approach, shall be inclusive of families and shall be guided by the principles and fundamental features of gender inclusivity, non-discrimination, "do no harm", independence, impartiality, transparency and the confidentiality of sources and information.

Given that it will be created under the auspices of the United Nations, the independent institution will be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. That will ensure its viability and independence.

It is proposed that the Secretary-General, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in consultation with all other relevant actors, including with the full and meaningful participation of victims, survivors and families, develop, within 80 working days of the adoption of the present resolution, the terms of reference of the independent institution. Allow me to emphasize that all Member States will have the opportunity, if they so wish, to contribute by drawing on lessons learned from their own experience. The door has been open since the process began, and it will remain open.

The draft resolution calls upon all States as well as all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the independent institution, in line with their obligations under international law. It also calls upon other relevant actors, including international institutions and civil society organizations, in particular Syrian civil society organizations, to cooperate with the independent institution, and it requests the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the independent institution. Lastly, it requests the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the draft resolution within 100 working days of its adoption, and further to report on the activities of the independent

institution on an annual basis, thereby enabling the General Assembly to follow up the implementation of the independent institution's mandate.

Allow me to stress that the draft resolution does not single out anyone. Its aims are solely humanitarian, namely, to improve the plight of Syrian families who do not know what has become of their siblings, children, parents, spouses or other relatives, and to alleviate the suffering of those victims and families by providing them with the support they need and the response to which they are entitled under international humanitarian law. We hope that the work of the international institution will contribute to efforts to achieve national reconciliation and a lasting peace. The families of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic have not given up, despite the ordeal they have endured for years. We owe it to them to act decisively and to act now.

I thank all Member States that have sponsored the draft resolution and all those that have offered their support for this humanitarian initiative. We call on all Member States to support Syrian families by voting in favour of the draft resolution. A vote in favour sends a message of hope and solidarity to the families. By adopting the draft resolution, we will be telling them that we feel their suffering and have heard their appeal. By adopting the draft resolution, we will be demonstrating that the international community is standing with Syrian families to uphold their right to know the fate of their missing loved ones and to offer them appropriate support.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/77/L.79.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano: (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/77/L.79, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Fiji, Hungary, Kiribati, Monaco, the Republic of Korea, San Marino and the United Kingdom.

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations 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. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again, the General Assembly is invited to consider another politicized draft resolution targeting the Syrian Arab Republic, clearly reflecting blatant interference in its internal affairs and providing further evidence of the persistently hostile approach of certain Western States to Syria, foremost among them the United States of America, which prompted a small group of States that have no understanding of the actual reality in the Syrian Arab Republic to submit draft resolution A/77/L.79 to us today.

As all are aware, the United States of America has been submitting a resolution within the framework of the Third Committee entitled "Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic". The draft resolution is emblematic of the country-specific resolutions that target certain countries under the pretext of protecting human rights of their citizens. Reference is made therein to the issue of missing persons in Syria in order to further target us through the establishment of a new politicized mechanism.

The report of the Secretariat on the issue of missing people in Syria (A/76/890) and the discussions that followed were based on a selective approach to the issue, as those discussions fundamentally ignored Syrian national ownership and the need to consult and engage with Syria and to obtain its formal consent to launch the process of discussing the issue. The countries sponsoring the draft resolution have violated those fundamental bases. They have moved to establish a strange and vaguely defined mechanism that does not provide a specific definition of the term "missing" and that lacks a defined time frame, geographical boundaries, terms of reference, an organizational structure, working methods and partners. Worse still, its funding has yet to be defined, although those countries are known for setting the precedent of imposing on Member States the obligation to fund such mechanisms from the regular budget of the United Nations. The foregoing confirms beyond any doubt the dangerous intentions of those seeking to establish the mechanism, which will be used to cover up their interference in Syria's internal affairs and as a tool to exert more pressure on Syria and its people.

The Syrian Arab Republic has not hesitated to address the issue of missing Syrians, on the basis that it is a national Syrian matter. It has handled all registered requests submitted to the law enforcement authorities on missing persons. In accordance with Syrian laws and regulations, it has conducted independent investigations based on available information and relevant capabilities. The Syrian Arab Republic has also formed specialized medical teams to deal with the issue of mass graves. In cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, it has trained Syrian forensic doctors to carry out the task of exhuming human remains and cooperated within the framework of the Astana format to uncover the fate of missing people held by terrorist groups.

The Syrian Arab Republic is committed to addressing that humanitarian issue. However, we reject the politicized approach that has been adopted in that regard. We underscore that humanitarian issues are indivisible. It is impossible to address them selectively. There are thousands of missing people who are victims of the military aggression launched by the United States of America. What will be done for those people? There are also thousands of missing persons kidnapped and detained by armed terrorist groups and separatist militias that are agents for the United States forces illegally present in north-eastern Syria.

We are fully aware that the States seeking to create that institution will not allow it to consider the issue of persons who have gone missing as a result of those crimes. On the contrary, it will divert the attention of the international community from the true perpetrators of those crimes, which have resulted in thousands of missing persons. That confirms once again the double standards approach that is being adopted.

Certain Western States have carried out systematic campaigns on the issue of missing persons in Syria, such as by organizing side events to launch fabricated and false allegations and circulating inflated figures without documentation. They have also attempted to mislead us by saying that the Syrian Arab Republic took part in consultations on the draft resolution. That is a major concern of a large number of delegations that participated in the discussions. In that regard, Syria affirms that it did not take part in any of those discussions, as it was not invited, nor was it consulted on the establishment of that alleged institution. We

indicated that in a number of letters, notes and other communications that we submitted to the Member States in recent months.

Based on that, the Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejects the full contents of the draft resolution. We condemn attempts to mislead public opinion and falsify our position, making others believe that we took part in the consultations in a desperate attempt to garner support from other States for this devastating initiative. Syria warns against the risks of establishing such a politicized mechanism, which could be considered a precedent to target any United Nations Member State in the future, especially developing countries.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls on Member States that are keen to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations to oppose such attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Syria. We call on them to support the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and to reject selectivity and double standards in dealing with human rights issues. We call on them to oppose any politicized mechanisms created to serve the narrow political agendas of certain States.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, while requesting a vote on the draft resolution, urges all Member States to vote against it in order to preserve the credibility of the General Assembly. Voting against it will mean respecting the fundamentals and principles upon which the United Nations was founded, and which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Ms. Skoglund (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The draft resolution that is before us today will establish an independent institution that will help clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic and provide adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing. The right of families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives is enshrined in international humanitarian law. Therefore, this concerns a purely humanitarian issue that must be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

It is indeed crucial to highlight the clear humanitarian objective of this draft resolution. The proposed victim- and survivor-centred approach and the principles and fundamental features of non-discrimination, do no harm, independence, impartiality, transparency and

confidentiality of sources and information, as well as gender inclusivity, are important to the sustainability and effectiveness of the new institution.

The draft resolution sets out an 80-working-day-period plan in order to prepare the terms of reference of the institution, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It allows for the involvement of victims, survivors and the families of those missing and the design, establishment and operation of the institution. It also includes the regular and sustained engagement of women's and civil society organizations.

The draft resolution is a step towards ensuring that the relatives and the missing obtain the answers they have been seeking for so long. The European Union recognizes the work that has already been carried out by various organizations in order to keep records of those who have gone missing in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is necessary that the new institution brings together and consolidates the extensive work that has already been carried out with a view to ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication.

As a matter of principle, the EU supports all efforts aiming to determine the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, including that of all those missing in the Syrian Arab Republic. That is the spirit of the draft resolution that we are about to adopt today. We hope that this new humanitarian institution can help heal some of the wounds of 12 years of conflict and, in doing so, will play an important role in contributing to efforts towards reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Mr. Poveda Brito (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, which, from the very outset, stresses that its participation in today's meeting should in no way be construed as willingness to cooperate with the so-called institution, bearing in mind that resolution 77/230 was neither adopted by consensus, nor does it adhere to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is important for us to make that clear from the very beginning, taking into account the fact that, since its establishment almost two years ago, our Group of Friends has been insisting on the pressing need to ensure compliance with, and strict adherence to, the tenets of the United Nations Charter, in both letter and spirit, as

a prerequisite for making global peace and sustainable development a reality for all peoples of the world. In this context, we take this opportunity to reiterate both our grave concern over the growing threats to the Charter of the United Nations and the urgent need to reaffirm and defend its purposes and principles as a guarantee of peace, balance in the international order based on a spirit of inclusiveness, respect for diversity, national sovereignty, the legal equality of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and as a motor for social development and the fulfilment of human rights — all within the framework of revitalized, effective and inclusive multilateralism.

The States members of our Group of Friends attach the utmost importance to the promotion and protection of all human rights, both individual and collective, without distinction in terms of level or category. We also consider that the promotion and protection of these rights is strengthened through dialogue and cooperation, in accordance with the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation. We reiterate our concern over the growing politicization of human rights and their instrumentalization against States, including some members of our Group, for the purposes of meddling in their internal affairs and promoting agendas of a dubious nature, a practice that does not correspond to the true spirit of human rights.

In that regard, we stress our serious concern at the continued proliferation of unilateral mechanisms in country-specific situations that purport to carry out a supposedly impartial assessment of the human rights situation in certain States when the true intention behind them is to use human rights to attack sovereign States and national Governments for the purpose of, *inter alia*, meddling in their internal affairs. Such mechanisms, we must say, neither correspond to the true spirit of human rights, nor do they have the consent of the States concerned. These country-specific reports and resolutions are selective, politically motivated and divisive, and they weaken human rights bodies and institutions. That is why we call for an end to such approaches.

The States members of the Group of Friends could not fail to note the state of ambiguity surrounding the various aspects of the text of draft resolution A/77/L.79, which is aimed at creating a dubious institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, whether it be in terms of the parameters of its mandate and

powers, its working methods or the agendas of its partners, not to mention the lack of specifics on the source of its funding, which raises serious doubts about the true intentions of those who intend to create it and contradicts their claims that they wish to assist Syria and promote human rights.

In the light of this reality, we insist on dialogue and cooperation, engagement and national ownership in any process whose real objective is to strengthen human rights, both domestically and internationally. We also consider the issue of missing persons to be purely humanitarian in character and that any relevant cases or concerns should be dealt with through the competent national legal and judicial frameworks.

In the context of the Syrian Arab Republic, if there really was a genuine interest in addressing the issue of the human rights of the Syrian people, we should then first address the root problem, which is that, for the past 40 years, the Syrian people as a whole have been subjected to the illegal imposition of a set of unilateral coercive measures that were even expanded during the worst part of the coronavirus disease pandemic. These measures violated and continue today to massively violate all the Syrian people's human rights, causing great suffering and untold pain, as widely reported by various independent United Nations experts, among others. The immediate, complete and unconditional lifting of these cruel and illegal measures would be a first step in the right direction to remediate human rights in Syria, improve the humanitarian situation in the country and alleviate the prolonged suffering of the Syrian people.

Despite all those challenges and obstacles, we note the efforts of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in this important area — and in many others — aimed at always ensuring the well-being of its people. We call for the continuation of these efforts and affirm the need to ensure proper national ownership of these efforts, while stressing the central role of the Syrian Government and its institutions in all these matters.

For all the foregoing reasons, the States members of our Group of Friends reject the establishment of any mechanism or institution that does not serve the best interests of the Syrian people without the consent of the Syrian Government or in a manner that goes beyond national ownership. That will only result in extending the politicization to which this issue has been and continues to be exposed, through the reports

of agencies and mechanisms that have sought to take it out of the humanitarian dimension and turn it into a way of pressuring the Syrian Government.

In conclusion, the Group of Friends calls for an end to the politicization of human rights and their use to attack a sovereign State or promote petty agendas and interests, as well as an end to any practice of double standards that undermines human rights and prevents a harmonious environment and real progress in the field, while stressing that the continuation of such approaches and practices constitutes a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, through which our nations have committed to promoting respect for and assistance in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Allow me now in my national capacity to briefly reiterate Venezuela's position that the General Assembly should not be instrumentalized for political purposes and without due regard for the basic principles of cooperation, constructive dialogue, universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-confrontation and non-politicization; these should always govern the way in which we approach human rights. The creation of mechanisms designed without the consent of the State, in this case the Syrian Arab Republic, guarantees that it will fail to achieve its supposed objective, since without a transparent dialogue and cooperation with the Government, any result emanating from it would lack a sustainable basis, and, far from contributing to peace, it will fuel conflict and division, which will lead to consequences for the population and the institutional credibility of the United Nations. Moreover, it has been shown that these are being used in a mercenary way by their promoters to continue fomenting and prolonging war as a business venture.

The process of dialogue and constructive cooperation that the Syrian Arab Republic has sustained with the rest of the countries of the Middle East is proof of the will, not only of the Syrian Government but of the entire region, to advance peace above and beyond all foreign interests that are promoting conflict and war, whose bureaucratic and politicized structures are simply boycotting the political efforts made towards peace.

Venezuela once again recognizes the efforts of the brotherly Syrian people and their Government in the promotion and protection of human rights, economic development and peace for the population, despite the relentless efforts of several countries that are today

promoting the draft resolution to generate pain and suffering for the Syrian people through their inhumane and cruel coercive and unilateral measures. We therefore invite responsible members of the international community to vote against draft resolution A/77/L.79.

Ms. Rodriguez Mancía (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the interregional core group that introduced draft resolution A/77/L.79 for conducting an inclusive and transparent process.

Guatemala will vote in favour of draft resolution L.79 entitled “Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic”, in line with the support we have expressed for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 since its creation. The Mechanism allows for the investigation of the experiences of the victims and civilian population most affected in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, a conflict of alarming violence that has been going on for 12 years, which unfortunately has not come to an end. The draft resolution presented today will contribute to effectively ensuring accountability for the sake of the survivors and their families.

In conclusion, we call on delegations to vote in favour of the draft resolution. The international community cannot remain indifferent to the serious humanitarian crisis facing the Syrian population. We must act collectively in supporting the draft resolution.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): We thank Luxembourg, the core group and all the sponsors for this important initiative.

More than 12 years ago, the Syrian people peacefully rose up to demand their freedom and dignity, calling on Damascus to respect their inalienable rights and to stop human rights violations. Yet the conflict continues, with devastating consequences for the Syrian people. The conflict has also led to one of the largest displacement crises since the Second World War, with millions of Syrians displaced from their homes inside Syria or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries or around the globe. There are estimates today that more than 155,000 Syrians are missing, many of them unjustly detained or disappeared by parties to the conflict in Syria. They include individuals believed to be missing at the hands of Daesh and other terrorist groups. Nearly

every Syrian family is affected by that issue. Despite concerted efforts and significant diplomacy over the past 12 years, there has been limited progress on that protracted issue.

Confirming the fate and whereabouts of the missing, securing their release and returning the remains of those who have perished to their families is a moral and humanitarian imperative. People deserve to know the truth about their missing loved ones. That is essential to promoting lasting stability, durable peace and a sustainable political solution to the Syrian conflict. Syrian family associations and victims’ groups have been calling on the international community to act. That is why the Secretary-General and many others have endorsed the new institution proposed in draft resolution A/77/L.79. It rightly addresses an urgent unmet need that has haunted Syrian families and survivors for years. A brave representative of one of the Syrian victim and survivor associations once shared with us that “the cost of waiting is unmatched and unimaginable”.

Ahead of today’s vote, many Syrians have asked us to remember who the institution seeks to defend, namely, the humans missing and detained with a full life yet to live. They are not statistics. They are spouses, children, siblings, parents, friends and colleagues. As their harrowing testimonies show, we must deliver long-overdue answers to the victims and their families, who deserve our support. The draft resolution is humanitarian in nature. It is focused on all missing Syrians, regardless of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. The core group and the United Nations sought to engage with Damascus on the effort, and they were rebuffed. We hope all parties to the conflict will cooperate with the institution and release all unjustly detained people, clarify the fate of those who are missing and return the remains of those who have perished to their families. The core group led an inclusive and transparent negotiation and sought to engage all United Nations Member States, including Syria. They tried to engage Damascus on the effort several times and at different levels, and Damascus chose not to engage.

Even with limited or no initial cooperation from Damascus, we believe that the institution will make meaningful progress. But until that happens, for all Syrian victims, survivors and families, we must do everything in our power to advance the right to truth. That is why the United States strongly supports the

draft resolution. We urge Member States to stand with the many Syrian victims and their families and support the draft resolution by voting in favour of it.

Mr. Amorín (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is grateful for the work done by the core group of countries that introduced draft resolution A/77/L.79, which seeks to create an independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic

The search for missing persons is an issue of the utmost importance in the area of human rights. It must be addressed with urgency and a comprehensive approach that seeks truth, justice and reparation for the victims and their families. In that regard, we believe that the establishment of an independent institution dedicated exclusively to the search for missing persons in Syria is a crucial step towards achieving those goals. To that end, Uruguay will support the draft resolution.

We in Uruguay had our own painful experience not that many years ago. From 1973 to 1985, we endured a military dictatorship under which many people were victims of enforced disappearances. Our country established specialized institutions, in particular the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past. In broad terms, we understand the importance of being able to rely on an independent institution dedicated exclusively to the search for missing persons. Such an entity can play a key role in gathering information, the investigation of cases and the identification of remains. It should serve as a self-explanatory, easily accessible, victim-centred support gateway for survivors and families. Such a clear pathway would be an important step towards regaining the trust of victims and survivors.

In order ensure the reliability of the independent institution dedicated exclusively to finding missing persons, its work must be based on humanitarian principles, completely divorced from all circumstantial political considerations and focused on victims' needs and assistance to their families. Likewise, for Uruguay, its work must not overlap with that of existing mechanisms in the Organization that deal with the Syrian Arab Republic.

In that regard, we understand that the institute to be established under the draft resolution can expect to receive information from the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March

2011 (IIIM), which will be useful in the search for missing persons. However, the terms of reference concerning the confidentiality with which such information will be handled must be unambiguous in order to ensure informants' trust and that the information is effectively passed on, in line with humanitarian goals. The information stream must flow from the IIIM to the institution, not in the other direction, as that would only undermine the humanitarian activities related to the search for missing persons and politicize the process.

Finally, experience has taught us that in order to make progress in the search for missing persons, the support of all parties involved in the conflict is imperative. For that reason, we call on both the institute and the delegations that have spearheaded its establishment to make every possible diplomatic effort to secure the cooperation of the Syrian Government, as search efforts will be inadequate without its support.

We understand that many elements, including complementarity with other existing mechanisms and its potential to work with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, will be made clearer in the terms of reference that the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, will draft in the coming days. For that reason, the provisions of paragraph 10, in which the Secretary-General is requested to report on the implementation of the draft resolution within 100 working days of its adoption, will be key. We underscore that the report must be presented within the framework of a broad consultation process in which the views of all Member States are taken into account.

Mr. Kim Song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea maintains its consistent principled position rejecting all politically motivated initiatives in the field of human rights aimed at targeting individual countries and interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign States. Draft resolution A/77/L.79, submitted by Western countries, is nothing but another example of politicization, selectivity and double standards with respect to human rights, which constitutes a clear violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The draft resolution is nothing but the outcome of a politicized agenda pursued by Western countries that seek the change and overthrow of legitimate Governments of sovereign States under the pretext of human rights.

In that context, we reject such a politicized and unilateral manoeuvre as the possible establishment through the General Assembly of a so-called independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic without the consent of the State concerned, as it is clear that it would be used as another political weapon and means of pressure on the Government of Syria. It is certain that if the politicized mechanism against Syria is forcibly established, it will yield another negative and harmful result of creating confrontation and distrust, rather than facilitating and promoting the process of finding a political solution to the Syrian issue.

My delegation therefore rejects the initiative to establish a new mechanism against the Syrian Arab Republic, and we will vote against draft resolution A/77/L.79.

Mr. Guo Jiakun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China supports the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

On human rights and humanitarian issues, China has always maintained that the principles of objectivity and impartiality should be upheld and opposes the politicization of human rights and humanitarian issues. We have always maintained that the United Nations should fully listen to the views of Member States, be guided by their needs and respect their ownership and leadership when cooperating with them.

Draft resolution A/77/L.79 before us attempts to use United Nations resources to establish a new mechanism on the issue of missing persons in Syria. Regrettably, the sponsors have drafted the draft resolution without consulting the Syrian Government and without fully listening to the wider membership. The draft resolution is not clear about the mechanism's responsibilities, does not identify the sources of funding and is completely opaque. The draft resolution claims to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but it is silent on the indiscriminate unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria by individual countries, the illegal plundering of natural resources in Syria, the illegal presence of foreign troops in Syria and illegal military operations.

The sponsors convened only one informal meeting to introduce the text, without conducting paragraph-by-paragraph consultations, which is not in line with the United Nations usual practice. The sponsors' insistence on pushing for the submission of the draft resolution, despite the clear opposition of many Member States, is

a complete imposition on others. The draft resolution is, in essence, a unilateral means of exerting pressure on the Syrian Government and interference in its sovereignty and internal affairs. It is yet another example of individual countries politicizing and instrumentalizing human rights and humanitarian issues to suppress and contain developing countries. Once the draft resolution is adopted, countries will have to spend a huge amount of money — \$15 million — over the next two years. That money should be spent on supporting capacity-building in Syria rather than on creating a controversial mechanism. Based on the analysis I have provided, China will vote against the draft resolution and calls on other Member States to join us in opposing it.

The Syrian conflict has dragged on for 12 years, and the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process is the fundamental solution to the Syrian issue. We welcome Syria's return to the League of Arab States, congratulate the reunion of the Arab family after 12 years and support the unity and revitalization of Arab countries. Countries outside the region should fully respect the will of the countries and peoples of the region, stop obstructing the dialogue and reconciliation process of the Middle East countries and work to create favourable conditions for a political solution to the Syrian issue.

Mr. Morales Dávila (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is taking the floor in explanation of vote before the voting on draft resolution A/77/L.79, entitled "Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic".

Nicaragua 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.

We regret once again that our General Assembly continues to be the object of double-standard politicization and selectivity promoted by Western countries against sovereign and independent countries. With the proposal to establish that supposedly impartial and independent instrument, without consulting or cooperating with the Syrian Arab Republic, it is clear that the General Assembly is acting beyond the scope of the powers conferred to it by the Charter of the United Nations, in violation of international law and the principle of the sovereignty and sovereign equality of all Member States, as well as that of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. It is essential for the United Nations to preserve its

neutrality and credibility as a facilitator of a process of justice and accountability — one that is led by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, which has demonstrated the full capacity of its legal and judicial institutions — and without external interference or political or financial pressures.

It is worrisome that our Assembly continues to create mechanisms and institutions with United Nations funding. That makes us wonder if the resources of the Organization are being used for the benefit of the Member States or to direct aggression, isolation and hostility against our peoples. Member States should be deeply aware of the serious precedent and the legal, political and budgetary implications of the tendentious attempts to continue promoting such a mechanism.

Nicaragua reaffirms its full solidarity with the people and the Government of the sister Syrian Arab Republic and rejects the ill-named international mechanism. We stress the need to use these spaces for promoting greater cooperation and collaboration with the people and the Government of Syria, while eliminating the policies of imposing terrorist, illegal, criminal and inhumane unilateral coercive measures, which are nothing more than aggressions with catastrophic effects on the lives and livelihoods of the Syrian people, which hinders the work of the United Nations and its agencies in Syria. We reiterate our call for increased efforts at the national, regional and international levels in support of Syria's development and reconstruction and towards living in peace, in accordance with the wishes of the Syrian people.

In conclusion, in line with its principled position, Nicaragua firmly rejects the manipulation and use of the human rights agenda as a pretext to interfere in the internal, sovereign and independent affairs of States. That opportunistic and illegitimate approach is aimed at tarnishing the image of sovereign States and at replacing the universally accepted principles of international law and multilateralism.

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The search for missing persons is a humanitarian issue of great importance for people who have survived terrible armed conflict. When speaking of the fate of missing persons in Syria, we must remember those who went missing as a result of air strikes of the so-called coalition; those who went missing as a result of the coalition's destruction of Raqqa in 2017; those who fell in the territories occupied by the United States and

its allies, especially Al-Hol camp, which is notorious for its high number of missing persons; those who fell victim in terrorist-held Idlib; those who went missing in the illegal military occupation zone in the north of the country; and those who were illegally detained in Al-Tanf by forces sponsored by the United States.

It would seem that it is an issue on which the international community could assist the Syrian Government in truly achieving results and helping its people. However, like any humanitarian endeavour, the search for the missing must be at the request of the affected State and complement its own efforts. It is obvious that, if it is not, such activities will be, at the very least, ineffective and, at most, harmful and illegal. However, the group of States sponsoring draft resolution A/77/L.79, under consideration today, did not bother to consult Damascus. It is submitting a draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly on the establishment of an entity called the "Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic". In fact, that so-called institution, which is mandated by the draft resolution to search for people on Syrian territory, is not designed to cooperate with the Government of that country.

The question arises, how does it intend to act? Does it intend to do so by secretly infiltrating the territory of the State? It is obvious that such activity, as well as the draft resolution triggering it, contradicts the fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations on non-interference in the internal affairs of States. The General Assembly has no authority to impose on any State a mechanism that would operate on its territory or on matters within its domestic jurisdiction, without the consent of that State. Member States are therefore being asked today to take an unlawful decision that will have no legal effect whatsoever.

In other words, the General Assembly is being asked today, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, to create an instrument to put pressure on Syria, under a cynical humanitarian pretext that bears no relation to the true objectives of that enterprise. We have no doubt that the mechanism can be neither independent nor impartial. As with its predecessor, the so-called Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, it can obediently fulfil only the orders of its sponsors.

Russia does not support the idea of creating a so-called independent institution on missing persons in the

Syrian Arab Republic. We support Syria's request to put the draft resolution to a vote. We will vote against the draft text. We call on all States not to support the draft resolution and not to believe its humanitarian title.

We also support the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore that in order to actually resolve the issue of missing persons, we must develop substantive cooperation with Damascus, provide it with effective assistance, lift the illegal unilateral sanctions that negatively affect those efforts and humanitarian work as a whole, end the foreign occupation of the country and repatriate foreign nationals present. All those tools are in the hands of the group of countries that sponsored the draft decision under consideration today, but they do not intend to use them, as their goal is not to help the people of Syria.

Mr. González Behmaras (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation 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, and wishes to make the following statement in its national capacity.

The ongoing bias of politicization and selectivity in addressing human rights and related issues, such as humanitarian affairs, against developing countries remains a major source of concern. There is an urgent need to eliminate selectivity, double standards, punitive approaches and politicization when addressing the issue of human rights — an area in which no country is spared challenges. Such negative practices, which are used only against developing countries, as are unilateral coercive measures, exacerbate political confrontation and do not improve the situation on the ground.

Regrettably, there is ongoing interest in using the issue of human rights, and now humanitarian issues, for political purposes against the Syrian Arab Republic and to exploit the Assembly platform for such purposes. We are particularly concerned about the targeting of Syria and the proliferation of mechanisms and initiatives related to that country, without the consent of its authorities. With the new institution that draft resolution A/77/L.79 seeks to create, there would be three international mechanisms, within the United Nations structure, dedicated to addressing issues related to Syria, all with an undeniable prism of politicization, regardless of the humanitarian and noble guise in which they are presented.

We stress that politicizing the human rights issue against Syria will not help to resolve the conflict. It has not done so for more than a decade, nor will it do so now. It will not help to determine the whereabouts of missing persons. In that regard, we reaffirm our unequivocal support for the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict in Syria. We have full confidence in the ability of the Syrian people and authorities to achieve that goal. The international community must contribute to the realization of that goal. That will not happen so long as politically motivated initiatives against Syria proliferate.

It is imperative to fully respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, take into account the genuine interests and aspirations of its people, stop interventionist and destabilizing measures and foster cooperation with the Syrian authorities. The context in which the initiative is presented does not go unnoticed, as it is more favourable to Syria's reintegration into regional mechanisms and rapprochement with several of its neighbours. That reveals the agenda behind the humanitarian aims of the new mechanism.

We do not agree with, nor do we accept, the General Assembly being manipulated or turned into a platform or instrument against Syria that could, in the future, be replicated against any other developing country. Furthermore, the responsibilities of the Assembly, the Third Committee and the Human Rights Council must be preserved in order to address, in an objective, balanced and non-discriminatory manner, the issue of human rights, in Syria or any other country.

From a technical standpoint, the new international mechanism raises serious concerns, beyond the superficial exercise of sham negotiations. For example, there are concerns about the ambiguities and omissions in the mandate of the new institution; the inevitable overlaps that will occur with the work of existing mechanisms; the fact that its terms of reference are not the result of a consultation exercise with the country concerned or of intergovernmental negotiation; and the criteria for estimating budgetary implications, without the mandate having even been established or its terms of reference determined. Also of concern are the sources of funding for the mechanism, which clearly does not enjoy the support of the country concerned and causes division.

For all those reasons, and on the basis of its principled position against politicization, selectivity, manipulation

and double standards against the South, my delegation will vote against draft resolution A/77/L.79.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I wish to start by congratulating my Muslim brothers and sisters as they celebrate Eid Al-Adha.

On the present agenda item, while reiterating the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, my delegation would like to indicate the following in relation to the draft resolution contained in document A/77/L.79, entitled “Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic”.

Egypt shares the humanitarian concerns related to the fate and whereabouts of missing persons as a result of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, we have the following concerns and observations regarding the draft resolution under consideration.

First, the draft resolution does not specify the exact terms of reference of the proposed institution. Instead, it provides in paragraph 5 an undue mandate to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the establishment and functioning of said institution, in total lack of conformity with the mandate of OHCHR as established in resolution 48/141, with an exclusive focus on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Secondly, the draft resolution contains vague references to the obligations of States under international law to cooperate with the proposed institution.

Thirdly, not only is there a lack of clarity on the vetting process to determine the engagement of victims, survivors and the families of missing persons, but there is also a lack of a clear definition of the missing persons addressed by the draft resolution.

Fourthly, the draft resolution does not indicate the fate and whereabouts of the information and data to be collected for the purposes of the proposed institution and the modalities of data collection, disaggregation, confidentiality and future use.

It is regrettable that, despite conveying the above observations and concerns to the main proponents of the draft resolution, satisfactory answers have not been provided. In view of all this, Egypt will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

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

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/77/L.79, entitled “Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present oral statement is made in the context of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. It has also been distributed to Member States.

The activities referred to in paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10 of draft resolution A/77/L.79 would entail new activities in 2024 and onwards related to the establishment and operation of the independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as an additional documentation workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

The adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to budgetary implications of up to \$3 million in 2024 and in the range of \$10 million to \$12 million in 2025 once the institution is fully operational, including post resources, to cover the activities of the newly established independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as for the translation of documentation in all official languages by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

However, as further internal consultations are necessary, the Secretariat is not currently in a position to provide detailed cost estimates for 2024 and 2025.

Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution on the establishment of the independent institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, a revised estimates report would be submitted to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee during the first resumed part of its seventy-eighth session, detailing the requirements for which an additional regular budget appropriation would be requested for 2024. Resources for 2025 and beyond would be included in the respective proposed programme budget.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tonga, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic Of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen

Draft resolution A/77/L.79 was adopted by 83 votes to 11, with 62 abstentions (resolution 77/301).

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

Ms. Tickner (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia has suffered first-hand the scourge of the disappearance of persons. It is a wound that our country has struggled to heal and that lies at the heart of our transitional justice system. Truth is a crucial element of reconciliation, social reparation and peace. We feel the pain of the victims' families and their outcry for information on the fate of their loved ones. It is that pain that led us to vote in favour of resolution 77/301 today, in the understanding that the proposed mechanism serves humanitarian purposes and not political interests.

However, our own experience in the search for missing persons leads us to call for continued efforts to seek the participation of the Syrian Government and the other parties involved, not only out of respect for the principle of State sovereignty, but also to ensure the mechanism's effectiveness.

Finally, for Colombia it is important that the terms of reference for such an initiative be drawn up with the technical support of the competent human rights offices of the United Nations system.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The word "missing" shakes Argentina to its core. We have endured the tragedy of massive human rights violations and know the suffering it entails. The pain of absence and endless mourning have been engraved in our society. There is a before and an after. That is why the fight against enforced disappearances is one of our top priorities.

We have created and actively participated in some of the most important initiatives on the subject, and we have brought to justice those responsible for enforced disappearances in our country. We are committed, together with France, to promoting the widest possible ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 (resolution 61/177). Those of us who ratified the Convention recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances in accordance with articles 31 and 32, so as to ensure that those responsible for this crime are prosecuted and convicted.

In accordance with the aforementioned, we voted in favour of resolution 77/301, reaffirming our historic commitment to this matter.

In his report on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic of 2 August 2022 (A/76/890), the Secretary-General concluded that the status quo with regard to the issue of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic is not sustainable.

Argentina has a very firm position on the need to promote respect for human rights and to clarify any situation involving them on the basis of truth and justice. That includes our view of the complex reality in Syria. In that context, the cooperation of the Syrian authorities is essential. That is why we would have preferred that the negotiations on this resolution to have been more participatory with a view to transparency and greater consensus. In particular, we would have wished that greater efforts had been made to ensure the participation of Syria, the country concerned, in order to secure its cooperation in the future and thereby ensure that the mechanism does not become ineffective, which has happened with other international mechanisms established in recent years.

In the report of the Secretary-General that I referred to previously, it was recommended that Member States consider establishing a new international institution dedicated to clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in that country. However, it also called for the improvement of existing mechanisms. With regard to that initiative, we are concerned that it is not clear from the text of the resolution what the time frame would be for investigating the disappearance of persons in Syria, nor does it specify what its contribution would be to existing mechanisms, resulting in a significant degree of uncertainty.

We are also concerned that there is a proliferation of initiatives and follow-up mechanisms on the Syrian human rights situation in various international forums, at the risk of duplication and contradictions. At the same time, we note that similar mechanisms have not been established for other serious and widespread situations of enforced disappearances.

The resolution requests that within 80 working days the terms of reference of the independent institution be developed. In the light of that, we hope that in doing so it will take into account in all its dimensions the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/46/55)

of 11 March 2021, presented at the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, which details in all its complexity the issue of enforced disappearances in that country.

We therefore request that the Secretary-General submit those terms of reference to all Member States for consultation.

Mr. Garrido Melo (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to refer to resolution 77/301, entitled “Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic”, presented by Albania, Belgium, Cabo Verde, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Luxembourg and North Macedonia.

Chile voted in favour of the resolution, as it considers that the search for missing persons should be a priority for States facing situations of conflict or social tension, as in the case of Syria. Chile is especially concerned about reports from independent organizations estimating the number of missing persons to be close to 100,000. Those facts, attributable to the various actors and groups involved in that conflict, have serious humanitarian consequences and a profound impact on the society. The forced disappearance of persons, as a multi-faceted crime, leads to a social breakdown that is difficult to repair, but whose recovery is necessary to achieve the prospect of a future mediated by peace.

Our country has first-hand knowledge of the impact of forced disappearance of persons on societies, based on its unfortunate experience during the civilian-military dictatorship. It is an unfinished process, despite the fact that more than 30 years have passed since the return to democracy. During that time, we have had to work with various national and international actors in order to clarify the whereabouts of our compatriots and make it possible to return their remains to their loved ones. Progress has been slower and more difficult than expected with successes and failures.

Along the same lines, Chile considers that the search for the missing persons in Syria should be a priority for all actors involved in the conflict and that it should be carried out in close cooperation with the Syrian authorities. That is consistent with what was stated by the Security Council in 2019 when it called on all parties to armed conflict to take all appropriate measures to actively search for missing persons without adverse distinction.

In the framework of the most recent universal periodic review, several countries, including Chile, recommended that Syria facilitate the establishment of an independent mechanism with an international mandate to coordinate and consolidate reports of missing persons, including persons who have been subjected to enforced disappearance. The search for missing persons must be a priority guiding the actions of all actors who want to achieve lasting peace.

Therefore, Chile urges those who will be involved in the Independent Institution, the Secretary-General and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to actively engage in dialogue with the Syrian authorities to enable the institution to fulfil its mandate. Clarifying the whereabouts of the missing Syrians can be achieved only with the cooperation of the Syrian authorities. Therefore, to the extent that the institution has a strictly humanitarian objective and has cross-cutting support, it will be possible to respond to the thousands of families searching for their loved ones.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): Brazil voted in favour of resolution 77/301 on the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Our vote was strictly motivated by concerns related to human rights. It reflects Brazil's long-time commitment to promoting the right to memory and truth, both at the domestic and international levels, with special consideration for the concerns of the families of all missing persons.

We also voted in favour because, in our view, the resolution points to the responsibilities of all parties involved in the conflict, and not only one or a few of them, all. Without prejudice to the foregoing, my delegation regrets that the negotiating process was not sufficiently inclusive.

In implementing the resolution, the United Nations must be firmly guided by such balance and comprehensiveness, as well as the victim- and survivor-centred approach enshrined in the resolution.

That will be critical for the successful functioning of the Independent Institution and to win over the indispensable collaboration of the Syrian Government.

Multilateral efforts should focus on finding a political solution to that long-lasting crisis, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Such efforts should be able to engage the Syrian Government and acknowledge the enormous challenges the country has faced for years.

Only a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led, United Nations-facilitated political process that respects Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity will bring lasting peace and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to align my delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, and to add the following points in my national capacity.

The Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its serious concerns regarding the continued proliferation of country-specific mechanisms that claim to address the human rights situation in specific States, while the real intention of such mechanisms is to weaponize human rights and humanitarian issues against sovereign States and national Governments, with the purpose of meddling in their internal affairs. The insatiable appetite for the proliferation of country-specific mandates in pursuit of the selective, politicized and malign goals of certain actors undermines the cause of human rights. It has only contributed to division, distrust and confrontation. Moreover, the instrumentalization of the United Nations undermines its credibility as an international body established with the aim of protecting and promoting its prominent goals through dialogue and international cooperation, based on the principles of non-selectivity, neutrality and objectivity.

The Islamic Republic of Iran shares its deepest sympathy with the persons and families who have been affected by the negative consequences of the long-lasting war and terrorism waged against the Government and the people of the Syrian Arab Republic by hostile foreign actors. Meanwhile, we regret that the humanitarian issue is being misused by Western Governments for political objectives. The fact is that the Government of Syria, despite tough unilateral sanctions, continues to struggle with terrorism and foreign occupation. The Government is striving to restore peaceful life in its liberated territories, enable refugees to return home and bring about economic recovery. However, the initiators of numerous anti-Syrian campaigns make no contribution to that process in any way.

We regret that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted by the United Nations bodies and the members of the core group of delegations sponsoring resolution 77/301 at any stage of the process of establishing the mechanism. Given the fact that the

mechanism is intended to work without the consent of the Syrian Government, we believe that ignoring the national ownership principle not only violates and undermines the sovereignty of the country, but also limits the effectiveness and sustainability of any initiative aimed at assisting the Syrian people.

The Syrian Government has not requested technical or legal assistance from the United Nations and has already rejected the establishment of such a body without its consent. We believe that if there is any genuine will to address the humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly issues related to missing persons initiatives or any specific plan to intensify efforts, it must be conducted with the full consent and coordination of Damascus. Otherwise, it will be pointless and ineffective. We regret that the resolution does not even contain any references to the importance of cooperation with the Government of Syria. We also share the concerns about squandering a significant amount of United Nations resources and budget on that ineffective mechanism.

The Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its full commitment to tackling any humanitarian issue, including the issue of missing persons in Syria, within a proper, legitimate and practical format. In that regard, we would continue to work with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the relevant working group established under the Astana format as a very practical and legal means of addressing the issue. We are grateful to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the work it has done so far to address the issue of missing persons. In that regard, we encourage the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to strengthen its cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in consideration of the question related to missing persons. We encourage the finalization of a bilateral memorandum of understanding between the Syrian Government and the ICRC. My Government further underlines that any effort to reveal the fate of the missing in Syria requires revealing the fate of the victims of the acts of aggression and atrocities committed by the so-called international coalition and the crimes committed by armed terrorist organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that, in the absence of full respect for the sovereignty and independence of the Syrian Arab Republic and of the full consent of its Government, the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be able to support the initiative and will not recognize the legitimacy of the work of such

a body. We stress that safeguarding the credibility of the United Nations necessitates the strong rejection of any attempt to manipulate it as a means to pursue narrow national political interests and agendas under the guise of protecting human rights or addressing humanitarian situations.

Mr. Magosaki (Japan): Japan would have wished to co-sponsor resolution 77/301 and would like to make a general statement. However, as is evident from our intention to co-sponsor, Japan fully supports the resolution, which is aimed at clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in Syria and at providing adequate support to victims, survivors and their families. We therefore call on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the activities of the now established Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, rather than reject the international community's efforts to help the country's own citizens.

We also note that the oral statement by the Secretariat on the budgetary implications, in the range of \$10 million to \$12 million for 2025, is contingent on its full operation, which should be accessible in Syria with the cooperation of Syria. In that context, we request that the new Institution carry out the mandated activities in good faith, so as to prepare for its full operation. We further request that the new institution provide adequate details on its budgeted activities in the annual report requested by the resolution, in full awareness of the accountability that comes from the use of the regular budget, including the avoidance of duplication, and in a clean break from the hitherto opportunistic planning.

I would like to conclude by expressing our hope that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee will recommend and approve an appropriate budget, in line with the actual activities of the new institution.

Mr. Marzooq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country abstained in the voting on resolution A/77/301 out of its firm belief in the principles of the United Nations, in particular the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. The success of any international mechanism hinges on its cooperation with the concerned State. Improving the humanitarian situation in any country requires the support of the capacities and competence of the relevant national institutions, alongside the humanitarian efforts of the

international community, thereby delivering justice and equity for the victims' families. Addressing the issue requires effective cooperation between the relevant entities and the competent Syrian authorities in the search for missing persons in order to ensure a productive search that helps to uncover the fate of all missing persons.

Mr. Pilipenko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Republic of Belarus did not participate in the consultations on the resolution as a matter of principle and voted against it because we categorically reject the very concept behind the document, which is based on a biased country-specific approach. For many years and in all similar situations, we have consistently stated this position, including at the informal meeting of the General Assembly on 28 February on this topic.

What prevented the sponsors from establishing a universal mechanism to search for missing persons? Why is it that a specific group of countries is so concerned about that topic only when it comes to Syria? Recent hearings in the United States House of Representatives, for instance, revealed that some 85,000 children have gone missing on the country's southern border. In the United Kingdom, according to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, 400 Albanian children have gone missing, only 150 of whom have been located in the past year. The fate of 250 children remains unknown. And what about the missing women and children in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, the Congo, Iraq, Colombia, Mozambique, Palestine, Libya and two dozen other conflict hotspots?

On a separate note, we would like to state our objections to the sponsors' approach to the work on the text. There were open consultations, which were not really open at all and the result of which had no significant impact on the content of the document whatsoever, and secret negotiations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and its representatives in Syria, to which a large number of delegations were mistakenly invited, only to have those invitations withdrawn in embarrassment. All of that took place and is completely contrary to the principles of transparency and objectivity.

The saddest part of this whole surreal story is that neither the sponsors of the resolution, nor OHCHR or its representatives in Damascus, nor the High Commissioner himself were able to establish a dialogue on that important topic with the leadership of Syria itself. The Syrian Arab Republic has unequivocally stated today that it will see the mechanism as interference in its internal affairs and will not engage with it. In that regard, the question about the effectiveness of the future structure, which will not be able to gain access to the country's territory and with which Syrian authorities are unwilling to work, can be considered rhetorical.

There is also the issue of the working methods and financing of the new mechanism. The approach proposed in the resolution would essentially mean purchasing a black box, the contents of which, as well as the costs of those contents, are unknown to anyone except the seller. Those parameters will be determined sometime later, somehow, by someone. But the bill will have to be paid by all of us — or perhaps not us. Despite the oral explanations of the sponsors, the resolution does not give a clear answer to that question either, and all of this is taking place in the context of a critical underfunding in the United Nations system, a fact that we are constantly reminded of by every single division of the Secretariat, without exception, from the Department of Global Communications to the Department of Peace Operations.

In conclusion, we believe it necessary to note that the Republic of Belarus recognizes the importance of the issue of searching for missing persons. We respect the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law, which are designed to prevent cases of missing persons, and which require the fate of the missing to be established. These norms are closely linked to the right of the families to know about the fate of missing family members. Such work can and should be carried out at the national level, including through the adoption and updating of relevant legislation, as well as by ensuring the implementation thereof, including through possible cooperation on those issues with other States. All of that is the prerogative of the national Governments of sovereign States, not an arbitrarily defined circle of third parties with dubious political interests.

Ms. Mrad (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Before addressing resolution 77/301, its advantages, shortcomings and drawbacks including preparation and submission, allow me to express my sincere greetings from this rostrum to all the families of missing persons

in Lebanon. This dossier remains a bleeding wound in the collective memory of our country. Lebanon has had bitter experience of persons missing during the wars and conflicts that tore the country apart and dispersed its people. In our capital, Beirut, every exhibition features photos of missing persons, documenting 40 years of exhaustive search for those loved ones without shrines since 1982.

From this rostrum, I wish to send a message to the mothers, spouses and families to let them know that Lebanon is not standing on the sidelines when it comes to that just cause and is not indifferent to the suffering of families. On the contrary, Lebanon stresses its commitment to shedding light on the fate of missing persons in Lebanon during the civil war. We are committed to healing the bleeding wound that has been open for 40 years and remains a cause of sustained suffering for the entire country and the families. I recall that Lebanon seeks to ensure the well-being of all its citizens. We have attempted, through an exchange deal, to repatriate all living Lebanese detainees in Israeli prisons, as well as to receive the remains of all of those among them who lost their lives.

Lebanon abstained in the voting today due to the unclear nature of the mechanism. The resolution continues to be unclear regarding the nature of the mechanism and its terms of reference. Lebanon abstained in addressing that extremely important issue because it would be used as a means for settling political scores, which would undermine the very meaning behind the resolution and its purely humanitarian motives.

No United Nations mechanism for missing persons can be effective unless it is transformed into a national committee that cooperates, carries out dialogue and consultations and coordinates closely with the Syrian Government. If the mechanism to be established is meant to support families and maintain attention on that important dossier in order to ensure that the expected results are obtained and that wounds can be healed, it must be transformed into a national one in order to carry out dialogue and establish partnership with the Syrian Government under the auspices and supervision of the United Nations. This initiative could be a ray of hope for all missing persons, whether in Syria or elsewhere. However, it needs to be well prepared and coordinated with all the parties concerned in order to reach the desired objective and give hope to the families so they can carry on with their lives despite their missing loved ones.

The dossier of missing persons in Syria, in particular those who have been missing since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, cannot be addressed separately from the dossier of Syrian refugees and their inevitable return. Certain persons considered missing could in fact be refugees in neighbouring or third States. It is impossible to address humanitarian dossiers in isolation or *à la carte*; to do otherwise would cause the international community to lose its credibility in addressing those humanitarian dossiers.

Lebanon is the only Arab State facing two thorny issues: the issue of Lebanese missing persons, on the one hand, and the issue of Syrian displaced people, on the other. We do not intend to sacrifice either of those issues in favour of the other. We are committed to resolving both issues through partnership, dialogue and understanding among all relevant Arab or international stakeholders. We call on the sponsors of the resolution and the international community to develop the mechanism in cooperation with Syria so that it does not remain dead letter and so that such an important humanitarian dossier is not politicized, dispelling the hopes of all those families.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to conclude my statement with the words of Nayfeh Najjar Hamadeh before she passed away, addressed to her son, since 1984, with respect for the suffering of mothers and spouses touched by this issue.

“My son, I keep waiting for your present on mother’s day. I will keep waiting for your return until the end of my life. I look for you everywhere in the hopes of finding you. I am living only thanks to a ray of hope that makes my life worth living until I see you again.”

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador expresses its solidarity with all families that have suffered the loss of family members during the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. We also express our concern at the humanitarian situation facing the Syrian people. That notwithstanding, the Republic of El Salvador abstained in the voting on resolution 77/301, on the establishment of a new international institution on missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, because we believe that it does not provide sufficient information as to the institution’s operation and methods of work. In addition, El Salvador reiterates its appeal and its commitment to ensuring

greater efficiency in the use of resources in multilateral forums. We believe that the mechanism adopted is an added burden to the budget of the Organization.

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

The exercise of the right of reply has been requested. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation has asked for the floor to exercise its right of reply to the statement by the representative of the United States of America.

It is regrettable that his statement was full of false allegations. He said that the core group or the small group attempted to contact Damascus but that the Syrian Government refused to deal with it. In our statement before the voting, we stressed that this did not happen and that the small group neither consulted nor contacted us. The representative of the United States therefore presented misleading information that reflects lies and shows how far he is from reality. In that regard, I would like to add that his shedding of tears for the Syrian people represents the pinnacle of hypocrisy. His country is responsible for the killing and missing of tens of thousands of Syrians.

My delegation expresses its deep regret at the adoption of the politicized and non-consensual resolution 77/301. It has established a mechanism supported by fewer than half the Members of the United Nations and allows interference in the internal affairs of a Member State of the United Nations.

We express our thanks and appreciation to all the delegations that supported the position of Syria and rejected that devastating initiative. Syria stresses that it will not cooperate with any future activities of that institution, particularly given that it turns a blind eye to the role of terrorism in killing Syrians.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 48 (continued)

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/77/401/Add.1)

The President: The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fourth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. Therefore, if there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Committee that is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401,

“When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee.”

I should also like to remind members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the report of the Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we will proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance.

The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Committee in its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 77/302).

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Listenberg (Israel): I would like to clarify that my statement is not related to the draft resolution just adopted, but to resolution 77/297, which was adopted

under agenda item 48 on 14 June. I note with great regret that, even though the General Assembly adopted resolution 77/297 on the Memorial Wall for fallen United Nations peacekeepers, the Palestinian delegation breached procedures, politicized the discussion and co-sponsored the resolution.

According to paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 52/250, entitled “Participation of Palestine in the work of the United Nations”, dated 7 July 1998, Palestinians have the right to co-sponsor draft resolutions and decisions on Palestinian and Middle East issues. The subject matter of resolution 77/297 does not fall within the parameters given in resolution 52/250.

I would like to stress the importance of abiding by the procedural rules of the Organization. Co-sponsorship guidelines are explicitly clear in the rules and regulations governing the Organization and any decision to circumvent these rules would severely undermine this institution. We regret that once again the Palestinians chose to divert a General Assembly meeting for their own one-sided political interests. We ask that members not allow the derailment of procedures to take place in an attempt to advance a political agenda detached from the normal order of business.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 48?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 125 (continued)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council

The President: Members will recall that, pursuant to decision 76/572, of 12 July 2022, the Assembly continued intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary meetings during the current session. In a letter dated 22 June 2023, I circulated a draft oral decision on that issue, as follows:

“The General Assembly,

“Decides to reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly concerning the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council; and the commitment of Heads of State and Government

representing the peoples of the world to instil new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council;

“Decides to immediately continue intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) on Security Council reform in informal plenary of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, as mandated by decisions 62/557, of 15 September 2008, 63/565 B, of 14 September 2009, 64/568, of 13 September 2010, 65/554, of 12 September 2011, 66/566, of 13 September 2012, 67/561, of 29 August 2013, 68/557, of 8 September 2014, 69/560, of 14 September 2015, 70/559, of 27 July 2016, 71/553, of 19 July 2017, 72/557, of 29 June 2018, 73/554, of 25 June 2019, 74/569, of 31 August 2020, 75/569, of 22 June 2021, and 76/572, of 12 July 2022, building on the informal meetings held during its seventy-seventh session, as reflected in the letter dated 2 June 2023 from the Co-Chairs, and on the document entitled ‘Revised Co-Chairs’ Elements Paper on Convergences and Divergences on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters’, circulated on 5 June 2023, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States, reflected in the text and its annex circulated on 31 July 2015, to help to inform its future work;

“Welcomes the active engagement, initiatives and intensive efforts of the President of the General Assembly, and notes with appreciation the active role and concrete efforts of the co-Chairs undertaken in a consultative manner with a view to an early comprehensive reform of the Security Council;

“Welcomes the agreement among Member States to enhance transparency and inclusivity of the process by introducing webcast for the first segment (debate) of the IGN meetings while the second segment (interactive discussion) remains closed, as well as the establishment of a specific website to act as a repository of the recordings of the webcasts, letters, decisions, and other related documents related to the IGN process as well as links to the Member States’ statements, as referred in the co-Chairs’ letter dated 3 March 2023;

“Decides to convene the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security

Council during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, if Member States so decide;

“Also decides to include in the agenda of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly the item entitled ‘Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council’.”

Allow me to add some notions and words of my own.

When the General Assembly met last November, I highlighted the changed dynamic around the issue of Security Council reform. I pointed out the complex crises that have placed our multilateral system under pressure. I recalled that growing numbers of members have demanded an urgent focus on that question. I asked how members would ensure that the process advanced in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. And I asked whether members were ready to seek practical solutions.

As we meet today, it is clear that Member States have understood the call of our day and have instilled new life in the intergovernmental negotiations. After so many years, we have seen positive momentum at this session. Measurable progress has been achieved — progress that has also helped to enhance the transparency, inclusivity and institutional memory of this important process. The co-Chairs have done an impressive job. I express my deep gratitude to them — Ambassador Tareq Albanai of Kuwait and Ambassador Alexander Marschik of Austria and their teams — for their unwavering focus on success. I also express my thanks to all Member States for their active and constructive engagement.

For the first time in the history of these negotiations, the first segment of the intergovernmental negotiations meetings is now webcast, as has just been mentioned. Let me also reconfirm that a dedicated website on Security Council reform has been established as a repository for the intergovernmental negotiations process.

Let me also commend the other two innovative ideas introduced by the co-Chairs to advance the discussions this session, the recommendation to combine annual meetings between the Chair of the Council’s informal working group on documentation and the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations, and an open house discussion on Security Council reform — also known as the Taxel talks — with representatives from thinktanks.

Are those decisive breakthroughs? No, they are not, but they are practical steps in the right direction and quite useful ones. As the Greek orator Demosthenes once said, small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises. It is my sincere hope that members will carry those good experiences into the seventy-eighth session and continue to build confidence in the intergovernmental negotiations process.

Ultimately, the intergovernmental negotiations are driven by Member States. It is therefore up to them to show political will for the reform they want to see. True political commitments are key to rebuilding trust and reviving the spirit of cooperation in the United Nations and beyond. The 8 billion people outside these walls do not see the United Nations as a conglomerate of separate bodies. They see the United Nations as one. Amid these unprecedented crises, their expectations for us to deliver are at their highest. Let us work in good faith to meet that expectation. We do not have the luxury to spend another 17 years on this issue.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft oral decision. In that regard, may I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Miguel (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the L.69 group, a diverse, pro-reform group of cross-regional developing countries united by a common desire for reform of the Security Council that safeguards its credibility, representativeness, transparency, democracy and effectiveness.

As this is our final time convening within this format for the seventy-seventh session, allow me to take this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to our co-Chairs, for the steadfast leadership throughout this process. They have not only steered our discussions in a constructive and innovative manner, but have also fulfilled a key ask of many delegations, including the L.69, namely, the introduction of webcasting and the establishment of a repository. Being able to view the discussions on the first day of the intergovernmental negotiations has already had a tangible effect on the way small missions, in particular, are able to balance the demands of competing processes at the United Nations, as we are now able to closely follow the discussions as they take place, thereby ensuring that there are no gaps in our knowledge of what is happening within the intergovernmental negotiations. That is reinforced by the existence of the repository, which makes it possible to

access the recordings of the webcasts, links to Member States' statements, letters, decisions and all other documents related to the intergovernmental negotiations.

The rollover decision is an opportunity for us to transform the next session of the intergovernmental negotiations. Cognizant that it is the only formal outcome of the intergovernmental negotiations, we reiterate our belief that, to reduce it strictly to a technical rollover is to deprive ourselves of a strong foundation for our next session. We welcome the fact that this year's rollover decision reflects the improved working methods, ultimately preserving the agreement that was reached by Member States as to the utility of webcasting and the repository. To that end, we hope that, within the context of this Member State-driven process, the agreement will continue to be honoured.

While we have undoubtedly made steps in the right direction, we remain concerned about the slow progress on substantive issues. If we continue to fail to produce tangible results that can move us closer to the widest possible political acceptance on the issue of Security Council reform, then we risk the possibility of the international community finding another forum within which it can arrive at an alternative solution. Failure to make progress on Security Council reform continues to pose a real threat to our credibility and legitimacy and indirectly perpetuates the Security Council's inability to transform situations on the ground in a manner that maintains international peace and security. We therefore reiterate that it is time that we move past merely ventilating well-established positions. We must begin the process of negotiating based on a text with attribution. To quell the stated concerns of Member States, allow me to underscore three brief points.

First, text-based negotiations are in line with standard United Nations practice and procedure. That approach is consistently employed as a tool to find common ground, despite deep divides. The rationale behind that lies within the very purpose of negotiations, which is to find the most acceptable outcome that addresses all interests and concerns.

Secondly, negotiations on the basis of a text with attribution will identify more clearly the areas of convergence and illuminate the areas of divergence, as well as low-hanging fruit, that require greater attention in order to move us closer to common ground.

Finally, we reject once again the argument that text-based negotiations will lock Member States into their

positions. In spite of the divergences that exist, text-based negotiations will operate as the give-and-take mechanism necessary to help us bridge our divides. As such, it is natural to expect positions to shift as all Member States and delegations will have to compromise to find the widest possible political acceptance on this issue. If Security Council reform is our intended outcome, then we must prioritize it by being willing to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and openness to try a different approach that has proven its ability to yield concrete results.

As we close this session, the L.69 group reiterates its commitment to this process. We will remain open and flexible to approaches that can bring us closer to finding the widest political acceptance on the issue of Security Council reform. While we do not believe that this is a process that should be rushed for the sake of arriving at an outcome, we also recognize that it is crucial for us to orient ourselves in such a manner that we can begin seeing tangible results. The world needs a Security Council that can adequately address the rapidly evolving challenges to international peace and security.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I take the floor to explain our position on the adoption of the oral decision rolling over the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform to the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly.

India aligns itself fully with the statement that has been delivered by the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the L.69 group, and with that to be delivered by the representative of Japan on behalf of the Group of Four. In addition, I would like to make the following three points in my national capacity.

First, we would like to place on record our appreciation for the proactive and consultative approach demonstrated by the co-Chairs, which has resulted in some improvements in the elements paper compared to last year, including a greater number of convergences and some additional attributions. Throughout the process, we have participated constructively and shared our suggestions for improvement in the elements paper, even though that approach was not followed by some groups and some delegations. The process culminated in the co-Chairs clearly recommending that our work in the next session be continued, based on the latest

iteration of the elements paper to which we have all had the chance to contribute.

Secondly, we have been consistent in our position that the rollover decision of the intergovernmental negotiations simply cannot be reduced to a mindless technical exercise. As the only formal General Assembly outcome that emerges from the process each year, it must also evolve and reflect the progress achieved during our deliberations. We were therefore encouraged by your efforts, Mr. President, to introduce in the decision a small reflection of that evolution, based on your wide-ranging consultations and the recommendation of the co-Chairs with regard to webcasting and the beginning of a digital repository. I must say, however, that even with those so-called changes, there has been no breakthrough whatsoever that may be described as progress. That state of affairs is clearly in the interest of those who seek a status quo to keep the process frozen in repetitive cycles.

Thirdly and finally, we see the technical rollover decision as yet another wasted opportunity to instil a breath of life into a process that has shown no signs of life or growth in over four decades. We join consensus in adoption of the draft presented simply to acknowledge your personal efforts.

Further, it is now apparent to us that in its current form and modalities — that is, without application of the General Assembly rules of procedure and without a single negotiating text — the intergovernmental negotiations could well go on for yet another 75 years without any progress whatsoever in the direction of genuine reform. That notwithstanding, and as a responsible and constructive Member of the United Nations, India will of course continue to engage in the process alongside our reform-minded partners and persist in our efforts to move from repetitive speeches to text-based negotiations. However, for those of us who truly wish to fulfil our leaders' commitment towards an early and comprehensive reform of the Security Council, looking beyond the intergovernmental negotiations looks increasingly to us as the only viable pathway to a future Security Council that would better reflect the world of today.

The President: I extend my particular thanks to the representative of India for her personal acknowledgement of all those who contributed to this result, albeit modest.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting.

We highly appreciate your active support for and your strong leadership of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform at this session. We also appreciate your transparent, open, inclusive and constructive spirit. Under your leadership, the two co-Chairs, Ambassador Albanai of Kuwait and Ambassador Marschik of Austria, have done effective work and achieved positive outcomes in this year's negotiations. China sincerely thanks the two co-Chairs for their tremendous efforts and their outstanding contributions.

The draft oral decision on the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform circulated by you, Sir, in accordance with established practice, is aimed at ensuring that the negotiations continue to be advanced at the next session. China fully supports the draft and hopes that Assembly will adopt it by consensus. I believe that this is also the expectation and hope of all Member States.

The intergovernmental negotiations process is the only legitimate forum to discuss the issue of Council reform. In this year's negotiations, the co-Chairs have adopted many innovative approaches to help Member States broaden their perspectives and conduct in-depth discussions, thereby reinvigorating the negotiation process. Based on the consensus of Member States, the co-Chairs have established a webcast of the first segment and, with the support of the President of the General Assembly, a dedicated website has been developed to store negotiation material so that small and understaffed permanent missions can also follow the process.

Member States have reflected upon major issues in the current round of negotiations, such as the goals and the directions of Security Council reform, and conducted full, frank and pragmatic discussions on how to address the root causes of the problems faced by the Council, as well as on how to correct the unfairness of its composition. The convergence is expanding while the divergence is narrowing. This year's co-Chairs elements paper fully reflects the progress of the discussion and also provides a reference for all parties to participate in the next round of negotiations. China welcomes the positive progress made in this year's negotiations and hopes that all parties will continue to advance the reform process of the Council through the intergovernmental negotiations track at the next session. Maintaining the Assembly's tradition of adopting a decision on negotiation rollover by consensus is crucial to maintaining the unity of Member States.

Council reform concerns war and peace, and there is no room for trial and error. Therefore, advancing Security Council reform necessitates continuous efforts to gather

and consolidate consensus and narrow differences, as well as to ensure that this track is advancing in the right direction rather than regressing. We must ensure that all Member States can benefit from the reform rather than seeing a mere handful of countries satisfy their desire to elevate their own status. We should effectively increase the representation of developing countries, in particular to correct the historical injustice against Africa and to give more opportunities to small and medium-sized countries to join the Security Council so that its composition is more fair, just and balanced and its decision-making more democratic.

The world today faces multiple challenges. China hopes to see the Council earnestly fulfil its obligation to maintain international peace and security. China also supports the necessary and reasonable reform of the Security Council. China stands ready to work with all parties to maintain the intergovernmental negotiations track, as well as the unity of Member States, and to promote Security Council reform with a view to moving towards the broadest consensus, reflecting the common interest of all Member States, and also in line with the long-term interests of the United Nations.

The President: I wish to express thanks for the references to all those who led the negotiations. I also thank the representative of China for his constructive approach and promised support to carry on the negotiations on the basis of the achieved progress on this issue.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank you, Mr. President, for the draft oral decision to roll over the consideration of the issue of Security Council reform to the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. In our opinion, it adequately reflects the content of this year's discussions on reform issues. Two documents are being rolled over to the next General Assembly session: an updated co-Chairs paper and a framework document, both of which reflect the aspirations of most Member States. We support the adoption of the oral decision as is, unchanged.

We are convinced that the current session of intergovernmental negotiations has introduced new elements that are important for understanding the outline of an eventual reform. The discussion that has taken place has made it possible to identify issues where further convergence of positions is possible. At the same time, there remain fundamental differences among Member States on many aspects. Those appear to be at the root of the problems faced by the intergovernmental negotiations. The time has come to protect the intergovernmental

negotiations format and support the oral draft decision in the form in which it has been presented by the President of the General Assembly. Only in that way can we maintain consensus in this process that is so important to us all. What is at stake is preserving not only this year's achievements but those of all previous years. It is important that disagreements on the reform not lead us to lose something even more important, which is the format itself. We call on all to join consensus and count on their support.

The political significance of Security Council reform is beyond doubt. It is clear that in this context, it is extremely important to continue seeking a solution that would enjoy significantly more support from Member States than the formally required two-thirds of the vote. Ideally, it would be supported by consensus. Previous sessions have convincingly shown the futility and danger of attempts to find a solution without taking the whole range of positions into account.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Kuwait and Austria, Mr. Tareq Albanai and Mr. Alexander Marschik, for the work accomplished.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the African Union.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to adopting the draft oral decision under agenda item 125, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council". We take note of your introductory remarks and applaud your commendable leadership of the seventy-seventh session, including your support for and commitment to instilling new life into the intergovernmental negotiations process.

I would like to reiterate the strong commitment of Africa to advancing the reform of the Security Council to better reflect the current geopolitical realities and to correct the acknowledged injustice that Africa continues to suffer. We therefore remain steadfastly devoted to the reform process. In this regard, we commend the stewardship and dedication of the co-Chairs, Mr. Tareq Albanai, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait, and Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of Austria, in facilitating the reform process and for providing us with their revised elements paper on convergences and divergences on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

We would like to reiterate that although the aforementioned document reflects the co-Chairs' understanding of what has emerged during this session of intergovernmental negotiations, some of our preliminary comments were addressed in the revised co-Chairs' elements paper. Some of the critical points in relation to the co-Chairs' elements paper were reflected in our statement during the fifth session of intergovernmental negotiations for further appropriate consideration.

We further continue to implore the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations to encourage Member States to build on the framework document as the most appropriate document to move the intergovernmental negotiations process forward, as it already accurately reflects the positions and views of the larger United Nations membership, including the Common African Position in its entirety. Therefore, we urge Members that did not populate the framework document to do so. We cannot overemphasize that. Hence, at the next session of the General Assembly, we would encourage the co-Chairs to further develop the framework document by incorporating the elements reflected in the elements paper, including what is already captured regarding the wide support that Africa enjoys among the United Nations membership to rectify the historical injustice done to the African continent.

Also, Africa welcomes the progress made at this session, and let me seize this opportunity to acknowledge with satisfaction, Mr. President, the indication in your oral decision of the efforts of the co-Chairs to facilitate agreement among Member States for webcasting of the first segment of each of the intergovernmental negotiations meetings, which we believe will enhance transparency and inclusivity in the intergovernmental negotiations process. Africa is appreciative of the efforts of the co-Chairs to establish a website that acts as a repository of the webcasts, as well as of the letters, decisions and other documents related to the intergovernmental negotiations process and the links to Member States' statements. That is very significant for Member States, especially for small-sized delegations, many of which form part of the Group of African States.

Furthermore, we note with appreciation the effectiveness of interactive informal conversations and we call for their continuation in the next intergovernmental negotiations sessions. Likewise, we believe that the discussions with think tanks should be maintained with very competent, experienced and diverse panels.

Mr. President, let me also seize this opportunity to commend you for indicating in the draft oral decision that the positions of and proposals made by Member States, as reflected in the framework document and its annex circulated by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and the co-Chairs' elements paper on convergences and divergences, be rolled over to the seventy-eighth session.

The African Group remains committed to a comprehensive reform of the Security Council based on all five clusters outlined in decision 62/557, and we will continue to engage in the intergovernmental negotiations process in building consensus that is in accord with decision 62/557 and favourable to the Common African Position, as enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Mr. Pilipenko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus supports the proposed draft oral decision. The reform of the Security Council is an extremely important topic that directly affects the national interests of all States Members of the United Nations without exception. We believe that it is necessary to find a package solution to the existing contradictions on this issue that takes into account the interests and concerns of all parties through dialogue and consultations and on the basis of consensus. We continue to welcome an incremental and systematic consideration of the key thematic clusters, which cover, in our view, the full spectrum of the most relevant issues of the topic under consideration. The given areas of discussion are closely interrelated and should not be considered in isolation. We note the importance of preventing certain elements from gaining primacy over others and of not discussing certain elements at the expense of others.

We call for the preservation of the existing format of intergovernmental negotiations. We must finally admit that there is no alternative to that today. We recall that the format is enshrined in decision 62/557, which is supported by Member States and that arbitrarily changing the modalities of the agreed process of intergovernmental negotiations would have serious negative impacts both on the reform itself and the integrity of the United Nations system as a whole. Because Security Council reform affects the long-term development of the Organization and the interests of all Member States without exception, it should also be implemented exclusively on the basis of general dialogue, broad consensus and, as we have already said, a package decision that would take all views into consideration.

We continue to see major divergences in Member States' views regarding categories of membership in the context of Council reform, as well as the issue of the veto right. Those differences in State approaches to the format of the reform are of key importance. We note that none of the proposed solutions enjoys tangible support. That sends the clear message that, in order to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution, we must continue moving forward incrementally on the basis of mutual respect and trust.

On the issue of the veto, we note that it should not be seen as the privilege of certain States. That right is an exclusive element of the responsibility of permanent members when considering issues of international peace and security. The veto mechanism is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and is an important tool for developing balanced decisions that will determine peace and security on our planet.

We have consistently called for greater representation of developing countries within the Council. We would welcome the expansion of that primary organ for the maintenance of international peace and security, inter alia through an additional seat for the Eastern European regional group. However, we believe that in a context where the outcome of the negotiation process is immature, it would still be premature to carry out text-based negotiations. As has already been noted, such a step would lead to even greater confrontation and significantly complicate the intergovernmental negotiations. Sooner or later, the reform will enter the realm of practicalities, and it would be unreasonable to ignore the opportunities provided by that process.

But everything has its own time. At present, all countries are facing a number of global challenges, and the most important thing is to maintain and preserve unity. Belarus is ready and calls on all countries to take incremental steps towards each other, including in the context of Security Council reform in the framework of the General Assembly, in order to create an environment conducive to cooperation for the constructive and creative implementation of the current agenda. Belarus stands ready to continue its cooperation with all Member States on that issue.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Group of African States and that to be delivered by the representative of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Allow me to seize this opportunity to sincerely thank you, Mr. President, and the members of your team for the

efforts you have exerted throughout the session, especially in the past few weeks, to bring us to this timely and consensual conclusion on this very important agenda item. I wish also to congratulate my dear friends, Ambassador Tareq Albanai of Kuwait and Ambassador Alexander Marschik of Austria, co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations process, for their leadership, good spirit, ingenuity and willingness to innovate and build trust and common understandings among the intergovernmental negotiations membership. Egypt commends their efforts, without which our agreement today would not have been possible.

Egypt supports and is extremely happy with the draft oral decision on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council as proposed, rolling over the deliberations of the intergovernmental negotiations to the seventy-eighth session. Egypt also welcomes the progress the intergovernmental negotiations has achieved in this session. The agreement on the webcast and the creation of the web page was no easy feat. It is a testament to the collective will and determination of the United Nations membership to enhance the inclusiveness and transparency of the intergovernmental negotiations process, in a clear demonstration of the possibility of agreement and arriving at balanced outcomes. It is only through dialogue, common understanding and trust that the intergovernmental negotiations will be able to achieve an outcome that garners the widest possible political acceptance, ensures rectification of the historical injustice that Africa has had to endure for decades and delivers a Security Council that is effective, democratic, representative and better positioned to make informed decisions for the benefit of international peace and security.

We believe that any call to contemplate a piecemeal approach, setting arbitrary timelines or forcing textual proposals on the intergovernmental negotiations process will most certainly lead to unravelling the delicate balance and progress that we have managed to achieve thus far. Egypt has been and will remain strongly opposed to any such calls. We look forward to engaging constructively during next session's intergovernmental negotiations meetings, formal and informal, on the basis of the five key questions of decision 62/557, and to working with the entire United Nations membership on that crucially important and consequential matter towards its appropriate and eventual conclusion.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like, first of all, to align myself with the statement to be made by the

Permanent Representative of Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group.

Pakistan fully supports the oral decision you, Mr. President, have submitted for a rollover of the Security Council reform process. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your firm guidance of the intergovernmental negotiations process, which has demonstrated your commitment to and sincerity concerning the objective, as well as clarity in the process.

We would also like to pay tribute to the co-Chairs, Ambassador Tareq Albanai and Ambassador Alexander Marschik, for their able, active and imaginative guidance of the intergovernmental negotiations process at this session. We especially welcome the innovation to the working methods of the intergovernmental negotiations proposed by the co-Chairs, accepted by Member States and reflected in the draft decision to be adopted today. The webcasting of the opening segments of each intergovernmental negotiations meeting and the creation of a website as a repository of the recordings of the webcast and other documents related to the intergovernmental negotiations have increased the transparency and inclusivity of the process, as desired by so many small and medium-sized States.

There have been constructive discussions in the framework of the intergovernmental negotiations this year on all five interlinked clusters of issues on Security Council reform, as identified in decision 62/557. As evident from the co-Chairs' revised elements paper, the areas of convergence have been broadened and divergences have been further reduced through the intergovernmental negotiations process this year. The Uniting for Consensus Group continues to believe, together with other groups, that we need to reach agreement on the principles of reform in all five clusters in order to begin formulating a text on Security Council reform that has a chance of securing the widest possible political acceptance of Member States.

Pakistan looks forward to continuing its constructive participation in the intergovernmental negotiations process at the next session. That is the only agreed and accepted modality to promote Security Council reform. It would be unwise to disrupt the intergovernmental negotiations process by advancing new modalities and precipitate initiatives. We will oppose any such move.

Certainly, we all agreed at the seventy-fifth session to breathe new life into the process for the reform of the Security Council, and I believe that this year we have done so. We have breathed new life into the process. However, a breakthrough on Security Council reform can be achieved

only through patient negotiations, reciprocal flexibility and mutual accommodation. The Uniting for Consensus group has demonstrated the greatest flexibility and accommodation, including our compromise proposals. We are convinced that our approach will achieve the widest possible support of Member States through further consultations and negotiations, but what we need to avoid on Security Council reform is to allow that process to be utilized for narrow national objectives. First, the lack of progress that is so advertised by some should not become an alibi to explain the current global tensions and great Power rivalries. It is not due to a lack of agreement on Security Council reform. Secondly, it should not serve as an avenue to build new political and military blocs by offering privileges to ambitious allies and friends. Thirdly, it should not become a vehicle to satisfy the national egos of a few large States.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): Brazil associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the L.69 group and that to be delivered by the representative of Japan on behalf of the Group of Four.

In my national capacity, I congratulate you, Mr. President, and the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations for your persistent efforts in identifying areas of convergence and in fostering potential progress. We particularly commend your leadership in taking the first steps to improve the rules of procedure of the intergovernmental negotiations by introducing webcasting and establishing a specific website to act as a repository of all intergovernmental negotiations process-related documents.

Those enhancements have long been sought by Member States, especially those with smaller delegations. They represent a modest but significant advancement for the intergovernmental negotiations, and we hope they will herald further transformative improvements in the intergovernmental negotiations process. In order to deliver the much-needed reform, the intergovernmental negotiations process must break free from its cyclic, repetitive and even monotonous routine. That is why Brazil supports the recommendations outlined by the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations in their letter of 2 June. Preserving the intergovernmental negotiations as our primary framework will require that Member States finally take control of the process. A concrete document, serving as a foundation for substantive negotiations, is both indispensable and long overdue.

During the intergovernmental negotiations cycle, the urgent need for Security Council reform has been acknowledged more explicitly than ever, by more Member States than ever. That includes developing and developed countries alike from all corners of the world, including permanent members of the Council. The future of international governance structures rests on their capacity to adapt and remain fit for purpose. The time of reform is upon us. The longer we delay action, the larger and graver the challenges we have been facing will become.

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

The Assembly will now take action on the draft oral decision.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt it?

The draft oral decision was adopted (decision 77/559).

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

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I speak on behalf of the members of the Group of Four (G-4): Brazil, Germany, India and my own country, Japan.

Mr. Wallace (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We stand at a watershed moment. International peace and security are being seriously challenged on many fronts and the credibility of the Security Council's ability to fulfil its mandate is being tested. The Council must be at the centre of our collective response to those challenges. It must function, guide and facilitate meaningful discussions, thereby making necessary decisions to address difficult issues. For that purpose, the Council needs to be reformed and strengthened in a way that reflects today's realities, not those of almost 80 years ago.

The G-4 would like to echo others in expressing our deep respect and appreciation to President Csaba Kőrösi and to the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations for the sincere and tireless efforts at this session.

As referred to in decision 77/559, which we have just adopted, we welcome the positive, tangible improvements to the process, including the introduction of the webcast, the establishment of a repository website and other initiatives to move us forward. The revised co-Chairs' elements paper is a good summary of the current status of our convergences and divergences. At the same time,

however, we believe that most Member States are eager to go further by redoubling our efforts to actually negotiate on such important issues as categories of membership, regional representation and the question of the veto.

We have been updating the co-Chairs' elements paper for many years and have already identified quite a few convergences. The remaining issues are contentious. We all know that it is only through negotiation that we can reach an agreement on those difficult matters. Such negotiations requires a text or language in writing to advance. In that regard, we support the co-Chairs' suggestion, in their letter dated 2 June, for a structured dialogue on concrete proposals submitted by Member States and groups. Such focused discussion would surely deepen our understanding of each other's positions and hopefully foster greater convergence. It will also naturally contribute to the Summit of the Future and beyond. The G-4 looks forward to actively and constructively participating in that dialogue. We will continue our engagement with fellow Member States for the early realization of Security Council reform — for both the present and future generations.

Mr. Massari (Italy): On behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group, we thank the President of the General Assembly for his steadfast leadership during the seventy-seventh session and for his proposal of oral decision 77/559, as adopted a few moments ago. We also wish to commend the co-Chairs, Ambassador Albanai and Ambassador Marschik, for their dynamic guidance of the negotiations this year.

Uniting for Consensus joined the consensual adoption of the oral decision as we believe that it adequately reflects the discussions that occurred this year in the intergovernmental negotiations. In that regard, we have welcomed the innovations introduced by the co-Chairs following the agreement among Member States on the working methods of the intergovernmental negotiations at the current session, duly reflected in the decision adopted today. We are of the opinion that those innovations — namely, the webcasting of the open segment of the meetings and the creation of a website to act as a repository of the recordings of the webcast and other documents related to the intergovernmental negotiations — have not only increased the transparency and inclusivity of the process but have also contributed to making the discussions at this session of the intergovernmental negotiations livelier and more actively participated in by a large number of groups and individual Member States.

Our group has always operated in favour of a consensual approach, and we welcome the fact that the Assembly was able once again to rally around that approach and approve an orderly transition of negotiations to the seventy-eighth session. This session of the intergovernmental negotiations has also confirmed the sense of urgency felt by the wider membership for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, especially during last year's high-level week, and for the intergovernmental negotiations to achieve progress. The current context requires reform that turns the Security Council into a more efficient organ with a greater number of non-permanent members. Uniting for Consensus remains committed to the intergovernmental negotiations as the platform to do so, and we are convinced that a general agreement among the membership on the fundamental principles and contents of the reform can be found in that context. In our view, true compromise, political will and time are crucial to achieving concrete results on a comprehensive Security Council reform. In that spirit, we are looking forward to resuming the discussions on the reform of the Security Council in the context of the next intergovernmental negotiations. The General Assembly may rest assured that Uniting for Consensus shall continue to be a positive, constructive and fully engaged actor.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States. I would like at the outset to thank President Csaba Kőrösi for convening this meeting and for his continued support to the intergovernmental negotiations process while pushing towards the desired reform of the Security Council. I also thank the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations, Mr. Tareq Albanai, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait, and Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Austria, for their fruitful efforts in leading the negotiations.

There is no doubt that the five meetings of the intergovernmental negotiations held at this session have enriched our discussions on that important topic. Moreover, the procedural steps taken at this session, based on meetings held by the co-Chairs and their extensive exchanges with delegations — namely, the live transmission of the first segment of the meetings and the launching of a dedicated website for the intergovernmental negotiations — are important for making the working methods of the negotiations process more transparent and inclusive.

The Arab Group therefore welcomes the consensus adoption today of oral decision 77/559, which will ensure

a smooth transition to the next session and allow Member States to continue working collectively with the aim of reaching a common understanding that provides the necessary groundwork for a consensual solution leading to a real and comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

The Arab Group reiterates that the intergovernmental negotiations process is the only forum for reaching an agreement on the expansion and reform of the Security Council, in accordance with decision 62/557, which calls for, among other things, a solution that enjoys broadest political acceptance on the part of the Member States, and in order to preserve the principle of Member States' ownership of the negotiations.

The Arab Group appreciates the efforts made at this session to update the co-Chairs' amended elements paper on convergences and divergences. While that paper shows a convergence of positions towards many elements regarding the reform of the Council, it confirms at the same time that we have more work to do in order to bring the views closer and reduce the gap with regard to many other elements.

I reaffirm the position of the Arab Group demanding permanent Arab representation with full powers in the category of permanent seats in the event of any future expansion of the Council. In addition, fair representation requires proportionate Arab representation in the category of non-permanent seats in the expanded Security Council.

In conclusion, the Arab Group looks forward to continuing the discussions of the intergovernmental negotiations at the next session and stresses its determination to continue participating actively and positively with the aim of reaching a real and comprehensive reform of the Security Council in a transparent and constructive spirit.

Mr. Phann (Cambodia): My delegation takes the floor to express its full support for the adoption of oral decision 77/559, on Security Council reform. We believe that this is an important step towards ensuring the continuity of the reform process at the seventy-eighth session.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the co-Chairs for their leadership and tireless efforts, which made positive progress possible, through the co-Chairs' elements paper on convergences and divergences on the question of equitable representation and increase in membership of the Security Council and related matters.

My delegation is pleased with the progress made in advancing the intergovernmental negotiations process

during the seventy-seventh session. That includes webcasting of the first segment of meetings of the intergovernmental negotiations and the establishment of a website to serve as a repository of important information, ensuring the transparency and inclusivity of the process. It is vital to achieve Security Council reform through a process that is inclusive and allows all Member States to have a voice. We urge all Member States to continue constructive engagement in the intergovernmental negotiations process and to work together to achieve a more representative and effective Security Council. The adoption of the oral decision by consensus serves as an excellent example for us to achieve the objective of

Security Council reform. In future, we must prioritize that consensus approach when negotiating Council reform.

Finally, my delegation is confident that Member States will be able to bridge differences in all clusters and make tangible progress during the next cycle of the intergovernmental negotiations process.

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

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda item 125?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.