



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9593rd meeting

Tuesday, 2 April 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Kazuyuki Yamazaki, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his service as President of the Council for the month of March. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Yamazaki and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: Yesterday the Islamic Republic of Iran transmitted identical letters to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council, stating that Israel had attacked the location of its diplomatic premises in Damascus with missile strikes, killing at least five Iranian personnel, including senior military advisers, and injuring others. There have been subsequent media reports today that the death toll has risen to 13, seven Iranian personnel and six Syrian citizens.

I reiterate the Secretary general's condemnation of the attack. Let me be very clear. The inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel must be respected in all cases in accordance with international law. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States must be respected in accordance with international law. The rules-based international order

is essential for international peace and security, which the Security Council is mandated to maintain.

Special Envoy Geir Pedersen has kept the Council apprised of the unrelenting violence on the ground in Syria (see S/PV.9583), which features six foreign armies operating on its territory, impacting the lives of civilians and moving a peaceful resolution of the conflict further out of reach. Among them, increasingly lethal attacks on Iran-linked targets in Syria have been attributed to Israel, especially since the current conflict with Hamas in Gaza began on 7 October. Open sources have reportedly at least a dozen such attacks since the beginning of this year. While Israel has rarely claimed responsibility for any of those incidents, its officials have repeatedly acknowledged its military operations in Syria and have suggested that more such operations will occur in the future. We appeal to the Council today, as we do every month, to continue to actively engage all parties concerned to prevent further escalation and the worsening of tensions, which undermine regional peace and security.

Allow me to reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all concerned to exercise the utmost restraint and avoid further escalation. I also underline his consistent calls on all parties to respect all their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, as applicable, and to avoid attacks that could harm civilians and damage civilian infrastructure. Any miscalculation could lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region, with devastating consequences for civilians who are already seeing unprecedented suffering in Syria, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory and the broader Middle East.

The President: I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have taken note of the factual briefing by Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari on the latest in a series of attacks by Israel against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. At the same time, we find it strange that a representative of the Secretariat is using such terms as "rules-based international order", which our Western partners love so much to use, instead of referring to the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We thank the Maltese presidency for promptly convening today's extraordinary meeting of the Security Council under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security". We initiated it to discuss the incessant missile and bomb attacks by the Israel Defense Forces against various targets in Syria that took place against the backdrop of the unprecedented scale of casualties caused by the military operation of West Jerusalem in the Gaza Strip, which continues despite the demand of resolution 2728 (2024) for an immediate ceasefire.

We are extremely concerned about such a blatant disregard on the part of the Israeli leadership, with the connivance of the United States, for a legally binding decision of the Council. A striking example is the Israeli attack on a humanitarian convoy, coordinated by the non-governmental organization World Central Kitchen, as it was exiting a warehouse in central Gaza. That air strike killed seven humanitarian workers. The fact that the actions of the Israeli military resulted in the deaths of civilians was something that even the Prime Minister of Israel admitted. We expect that we will discuss this matter separately at another time, as we are now convened to consider another aspect of Israel's reckless actions.

Yesterday, 1 April, the Israeli air force struck the Islamic Republic of Iran's consulate in Damascus. As a result of the attack, the building was completely destroyed. The office of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Syria was damaged. According to incoming information, there is a significant number of dead and wounded among its employees. We condemn that attack in the strongest possible terms. We consider any attacks on diplomatic and consular facilities, the inviolability of which is guaranteed by the relevant Vienna Conventions of 1961 and 1963, to be categorically unacceptable.

We would like to draw special attention to the fact that that was not the first attack carried out by Israel in a densely populated Damascus metropolitan area, entailing high risks of mass civilian casualties. Since the beginning of the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation on 7 October 2023, the number of Israeli attacks on Syrian civilian infrastructure and on neighbouring countries has multiplied. On the night of 29 March, Israeli aircraft launched missile strikes on various sites in the vicinity of Aleppo, killing dozens of people and injuring many others. Earlier, on 28 March, two civilians were injured in an Israeli airstrike in

Damascus governorate. On 17 and 19 March, there was Israeli shelling aimed this time at the north-eastern and southern outskirts of Damascus from the occupied Syrian Golan.

In the past few months alone, the Israeli air force has repeatedly attacked the international airports in Damascus and Aleppo, which serve as the main gateways for the entry of United Nations humanitarian aid into Syria, as well as the areas of Deir ez-Zor and Abu Kemal, where the Syrian military continues its persistent fight against the remaining fighters from the terrorist groups to which our American colleagues, contrary to their loud statements, are in fact providing guardianship and patronage. We will leave that topic for a Security Council meeting devoted to the situation in Syria.

The Russian Federation strongly condemns the ongoing raids against the sovereign territory of Syria, regarding them as gross violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that State. We assume that such aggressive Israeli actions are designed to further inflame the conflict; they are absolutely unacceptable and must stop. We urge West Jerusalem to abandon the practice of provocative military action against the territory of Syria and other neighbouring countries, which bear extremely dangerous risks and consequences for the entire region, a region already destabilized by the six months of escalation of violence around Gaza.

We call on the international community to unequivocally condemn Israel's reckless actions, which violate the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic and the inviolability of diplomatic property. We consider it necessary for all responsible members of the international community to provide an objective legal assessment of Israel's aggression in the Middle East, which ignores not only the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, but also the fundamental principles of the Vienna Conventions on diplomatic and consular relations.

I am counting on the solidarity of the members of the Security Council to assert that attacks on diplomatic institutions are unacceptable. After all, unless we assert that solidarity, the next air raid might target the diplomatic mission of any State. We expect that each of you today will give a fair assessment of Israel's actions against the Iranian diplomatic mission.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Malta for assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. The Chinese delegation will fully cooperate with you, Madam President, and your colleagues. I also commend Japan for all its efforts serving as the presidency of the Council last month.

Yesterday the Iranian diplomatic premises in Damascus were hit by an air strike, resulting in the deaths of seven Iranian personnel and severe destruction to the premises. That is a grave violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and a breach of the sovereignty of both Syria and Iran. The attack is of an extremely vicious nature. China strongly condemns that attack. Some 25 years ago, China's Embassy in Yugoslavia was bombed by a United States-led NATO airstrike, resulting in casualties among staff and damage to the Embassy. We feel the grief and pain of the Iranian Government and people and express our deepest sympathy and condolences to them.

In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the universally recognized basic norms governing international relations, the safety and security of diplomatic missions shall be inviolable. To allow impunity for such reckless acts, which lack any baseline, would send a seriously wrong signal and would encourage even more risky acts. We take note of the solemn protests and condemnation of Israel by Iran, Syria, and other Arab countries. We hope that Israel will respond to them.

Since the Gaza conflict broke out in October last year, we have witnessed attacks on homes, attacks on schools, attacks on hospitals, attacks on humanitarian facilities, attacks on United Nations agencies and, today, attacks on diplomatic premises. The red line of international law and the basic norms of international relations has been crossed time and again. And the moral bottom line of human conscience has been crushed time and again. Such a tragedy must stop immediately. Last week the Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024), calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza (see S/PV.9586). We strongly call on the international community to work together to ensure that that resolution is implemented so that the Muslim community will not have to celebrate the month of Ramadan amid gunfire.

At present, the situation on the ground in Gaza is deteriorating, with increasing risks of spillover, and the situation in the Middle East has grown increasingly

precarious. Israel's frequent cross-border strikes against targets in Syria and Lebanon are a serious violation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and have aggravated tensions throughout the region. Such provocative actions might trigger greater turmoil and jeopardize the security of the entire region. Such actions must stop immediately. China calls on all parties, especially countries with important influence on Israel, to play a constructive role and make concrete efforts to bring about an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, ease tensions and restore peace and stability in the Middle East at an early date.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and to thank the delegation of Japan for its work throughout the month of March. I would also like to thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

Yesterday's strikes in Damascus come amid a continuing escalation of tensions in Syria and the region. Since the Hamas terror attack on 7 October 2023, Iran and its regional proxies have borne a heavy responsibility for that escalation. Civilians are the first victims of the escalation, and the security of the States in the region is directly threatened by it. Our collective responsibility is therefore to do everything we can to ease tensions. It is necessary for all actors in the region to show restraint.

For its part, France continues to work to prevent a regional conflagration. In coordination with its partners, it is mobilized for de-escalation in the Security Council and wherever necessary. That is the case in Lebanon, where it warns against any desire for escalation. The parties must urgently work towards the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Through our dialogue with the parties, we are calling for a cessation of hostilities. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has a crucial role to play in that context, and we commend its work in these difficult conditions. In view of the very worrisome situation in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, France reiterates its commitment to the freedom of navigation. It strongly condemns the destabilizing actions of the Houthis, which must stop. It will continue to shoulder its responsibilities to ensure security in the Red Sea.

Lastly, in Syria, France calls for the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), adopted unanimously by the Council, and deplores the refusal of the Damascus

regime, supported by its Russian and Iranian allies, to engage in a credible and inclusive political process. Syrians continue to pay the price.

France is working to avoid escalation in the region — in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen — and to provide a political and humanitarian response to the crisis in Gaza.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I extend my congratulations to Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and I want to assure you, Madam President, of Algeria's full support. I would also like to congratulate Japan for its successful presidency during the month of March. I thank Mr. Khaled Khiari for his presentation.

First, I want to send our heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Iran following the deadly air strike by the Israeli air force on their diplomatic premises in Damascus yesterday. The attack is a clear violation of international law, particularly the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises as outlined in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Such a grave breach of international obligations by the Israeli occupying Power cannot be justified or tolerated. We must speak out strongly against the dangerous implications of this provocation, which could lead to escalating tensions and wider regional consequences. The timing of the attack, in the face of international pressure for a ceasefire in Gaza through resolution 2728 (2024), indicates a deliberate disregard for the call for a cessation of hostilities coming from the whole international community.

The aim of such a deliberate act is obvious: to respond to international pressures by escalating the conflict, which prolongs the killing of Palestinians for internal political calculations. It is evident that this dangerous act is of a nature to drag the entire region into conflict, reflecting the Israeli occupying Power's belief in its own impunity. The latter considers itself to be above international law, akin to a reckless, unchecked force. That double standard, whereby the Israeli Power disregards the very laws that it expects others to uphold, undermines the very foundation of our international order. Such behaviour falls short of what we expect from a responsible Member of our Organization. We have previously emphasized the need to stop the occupying authorities' violations of international law.

The Security Council must respond firmly and decisively to this challenge to the fundamental principles of State sovereignty, diplomatic sanctity and respect for territorial integrity. The integrity of our international order hangs in the balance, and there must be repercussions for such flagrant disregard of the law so as to reinforce our collective commitment to upholding it. The choice is stark: either uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law or risk plunging into chaos and insecurity with a regional spillover. The time for resolute action is upon us.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I too wish to congratulate you, Madam President, as well as the delegation of Malta, on assuming the presidency. I also thank Japan for leading us through the month of March. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

I would like to express our deepest concern about the new developments in the Middle East, including the recent attack on the diplomatic premises of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus on 1 April, resulting in several casualties. We condemn the attack. Attacks on diplomatic premises are unacceptable and unjustifiable.

I would like to make three points in that regard.

First, Slovenia is profoundly concerned about the escalations and spillover effects across the region. The current devastating situation in Gaza has already had a strong impact on the situation along the Blue Line and in the Red Sea. We continue to see extremely concerning incidents in the region, including the one in Damascus yesterday. We strongly believe that tensions need to be reduced and the situation de-escalated. We appeal to all parties to show restraint. We call for compliance with resolution 2728 (2024). A ceasefire in Gaza would ease tensions across the region.

Secondly, all States Members of the United Nations have an obligation to respect and act in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially Article 2, on settling international disputes by peaceful means and refraining from the use of force.

There is no room for arbitrary interpretations. The same standards apply to all Member States. We call on all to show restraint in the use of proxies, which could further fuel or provoke regional tensions. We are concerned about the escalatory rhetoric utilized by various countries and actors, and we caution that any miscalculation could lead to unimaginable consequences.

Thirdly, we call on all parties to respect international law. We recall that all military activities should be carried out in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. We underline that all the parties concerned need to fully comply with international law governing diplomatic and consular relations.

It should be in no one's interest to have further dangerous escalation in the Middle East. Any of the geographically separated, but ultimately intertwined crises could take on a life of their own. People of the region have suffered enough. That includes people in Palestine, Israel, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iran and elsewhere. We should all place their interests first. That is why it is crucial for the Council to send a clear call for restraint by all, starting with compliance with resolution 2728 (2024), which demands a ceasefire.

Slovenia stands ready to engage in a comprehensive response to the crisis. We underline the need for Council unity in the maintenance of international law, peace and security.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first open meeting of the month, I pledge the full support of Switzerland for your presidency, Madam, and I thank Japan for its excellent leadership during the month of March.

We would like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, for his briefing detailing yesterday's events in Damascus.

Switzerland condemns the air strike against the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, which resulted in several deaths and injuries. The strike considerably increases the risk of a major escalation in the region. The spiral of escalation must stop immediately. That includes a halt to militia attacks in the region and the implementation of resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Switzerland also recalls that resolution 2254 (2015) calls for a national ceasefire in Syria.

We call on all parties and those with influence over them to exercise the utmost restraint. All channels of communication must be used to avoid any misunderstandings. A single miscalculation can have disastrous consequences. Further deterioration of the situation must be avoided, and we collectively have the means to prevent it.

Any use of force must strictly comply with international law, and international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. Given the current climate, the proper conduct of diplomatic activity is of the utmost importance. Diplomatic buildings must not be targeted. In such situations, dialogue is essential, not least to find solutions. The Council and all States must do all they can to facilitate de-escalation. Switzerland is ready to do its part.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): Korea also joins other delegations in expressing its full support to Malta upon the assumption of its Council presidency. We also commend Japan for its excellent leadership during its presidency last month. We would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his very useful briefing.

Yesterday we witnessed another escalatory incident, which resulted in casualties in Damascus. Last week, in response to the situation in Gaza, where more than 32,000 people have been killed — 70 per cent reportedly women and children — the Council finally succeeded in adopting resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and humanitarian access. Nevertheless, amid the high tensions and in the absence of implementation of resolution 2728 (2024), seeing another incident in a neighbouring country yesterday is very concerning.

During the course of our discussions regarding the region since 7 October, the Security Council members have shared the understanding that the Gaza situation should not spill over to neighbouring areas. The incident in Damascus is therefore all the more concerning in the context of larger developments in the region related to Gaza. Yet we also note with concern that such incidents also have the potential to spill over into Lebanon.

It is also deeply appalling that the attack took place on diplomatic and consular premises. I would like to reiterate that such attacks are contrary to international law and global norms and that it is imperative for all members to respect diplomatic and consular missions in times of war and peace.

History tells us that an unexpected event can give way to irrecoverable tragedies. We are increasingly concerned that additional violent flashpoints could escalate into new tragedies in the region. And it is civilians who suffer the most in such tragedies, as we bear witness to in the Gaza Strip.

Reflecting on history, my delegation shares the position of other Council members calling for restraint from all concerned parties, and we express our great concern about any possible escalation. Irrevocable calamities can be prevented if the concerned parties show restraint in the present.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. Let me join my colleagues in congratulating Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We also thank and commend Japan for its successful presidency during the month of March. We welcome the presence and participation of the representative of Iran and Syria in this meeting. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiri for the information provided.

At the outset, Sierra Leone underscores the sacrosanct nature of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 4:

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

Accordingly, Sierra Leone takes note of the identical letters from Iran and the media report of an attack involving missile air strikes on Iranian diplomatic premises in Damascus, which, as reported, resulted in fatalities. That missile attack on diplomatic premises constitutes a breach of the Charter of the United Nations on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, and of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963.

Sierra Leone condemns the use of force in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international law, including on the development and conduct of friendly relations and on diplomatic and consular protections. We also decry conduct in the region that may lead to an escalation or exacerbate tensions in the already volatile situation. The right to life, the protection of civilians and civilian objects and the protection of diplomatic missions are sacrosanct principles enshrined in international law, and any violation of those principles must be condemned. The targeting of diplomatic missions undermines global peace and security. Fundamental protections, including

the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises, must be upheld to ensure the safety of all diplomats and consular agents and to promote peaceful and friendly relations among States.

Turning to the ongoing hostilities in the conflict in Gaza, in spite of the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) by the Security Council, which demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan in Gaza, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, Sierra Leone expresses deep regret that the resolution is not being respected by the parties to the conflict. It is worth repeating that the parties to the conflict have an obligation to respect the clear demands of the Security Council and are urged to fully implement resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), which have been adopted by the Council since the start of the Gaza conflict. States with influence are once again urged to apply the necessary pressure on the parties to implement those resolutions.

We also wish to recall the International Court of Justice’s indication of provisional measures in its 26 January 2024 Order on the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (*South Africa v. Israel*) and the Order of 28 March 2024 on the Request for the modification of the Order of 26 January 2024 indicating provisional measures. The orders of the International Court of Justice, we reiterate, speak to the imperative of an immediate ceasefire respected by all parties, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to, and reinforce the protection of, civilians in the entire Gaza Strip.

With the lack of due compliance by the parties and of full implementation of the Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2728 (2024), we regret to learn of the reports that

“an Israeli air strike killed seven aid workers from World Central Kitchen, leading the charity to suspend delivery Tuesday of vital food aid to Gaza”.

Regrettably, the tragedy in Gaza seems to have no end and know no limits. Civilians, humanitarian workers and journalists have all been tragic victims of this conflict. Without the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council, we are now at the precipice of putting at risk the credibility and legitimacy of the Council.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone urges restraint and de-escalation in order to avoid a further deterioration of the situation in Gaza and the Middle East region. We emphasize the importance of implementing all relevant Security Council resolutions and the importance of cooperation in pursuing diplomatic means to address all threats to peace and security in the region.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): As today is the first open briefing this month, let me take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all Council members for their kind support during Japan's presidency. We wish Ambassador Vanessa Frazier and the able team of Malta the best of luck for the month of April. They may rest assured of the same sincere support from us that we have received from them.

I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

Although we have yet to confirm the facts on the ground, Japan is monitoring with deep concern the situation following the reported air strikes against Iranian diplomatic premises in Damascus that allegedly killed at least 13 people, including Iranian officials.

We are seriously worried about the current volatile situation in the Middle East, in which any additional conflicts could lead to a wider escalation and confrontation. Therefore, Japan calls upon all relevant parties to exercise maximum restraint and not to engage in any further destabilizing actions. What is now desperately needed is stability. Japan remains committed to making every effort, in close cooperation with fellow Council members and other key stakeholders, to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, to restore security and stability and to find sustainable solutions to end the crisis in the region.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency for the month of April and thank Japan for their successful presidency during the month of March. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing on Monday's strike in Damascus.

We underline the importance of respect for the inviolability of diplomatic premises and protection of diplomatic and consular staff for the proper conduct of diplomatic relations. The safety and security of diplomatic premises and staff is a fundamental principle guiding diplomatic relations.

We are clear that Iran's role in destabilizing the region, through its military, financial and political support to groups that have been conducting and threatening attacks, is unacceptable. Among the groups that Iran has continued to support are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, militias in Syria and Iraq and the Houthis. In addition to attacking Israel, these groups have been responsible for the attacks against international shipping, including the deaths of innocent mariners and attacks against international forces in Iraq and Syria. Our Foreign Secretary has raised repeatedly with his Iranian counterpart the need for that support to cease and for Iran to use its influence over the groups to prevent their attacks.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about the potential for escalation in the region and calls on all parties to reduce tensions. We are committed to de-escalation in the Middle East. We have long been calling for an immediate humanitarian pause in Gaza, leading to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life, as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in. The Council sent a clear signal on that just last week when it adopted resolution 2728 (2024).

We stand ready to work with all members of the Council and the international community to promote and protect international peace and security in the region and throughout the world.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Allow me to first congratulate Malta on its assumption of the presidency of the Council and also to thank Japan for the excellent stewardship of the Council last month.

Guyana thanks the presidency for convening today's meeting following reports of an incident involving an air strike against an Iranian diplomatic facility in Damascus yesterday. We thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khaled Khiari, for the update provided and acknowledge the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Iran and Syria in the meeting.

Guyana strongly condemns this attack. We maintain that any attack against a diplomatic facility is unacceptable and contravenes the fundamental safeguards established in international law, including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. Guyana joins other Council members in also reaffirming the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the prohibition on the use of force against

the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and calls upon all States to fully comply with those obligations. We further call for a thorough and swift investigation to determine the circumstances of this incident. We also urge due caution and restraint by all parties and impress upon those involved to avoid any further escalation of tensions in the region that could result in even more tragic consequences.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Before I begin, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency and assure you, Madam, of my Government's full support as you carry out your duties. I would also like to congratulate Japan for its very successful presidency in March. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

As the White House has stated, the United States had no involvement in the reported strike yesterday in Syria, neither did it know about it ahead of time. We have communicated that directly to Iran. We cannot confirm any information about that event. As we gather details, one thing is clear: Iran and its proxy and partner groups need to avoid escalating tensions in the region.

Indeed, since the 7 October terrorist attack on Israel, the United States has repeatedly warned Iran not to take advantage of the situation to escalate its long-standing proxy war against Israel and other actors. Iran has ignored that warning. Terrorists and other armed groups, some backed by the Syrian regime and Iran, have used Syrian territory to plot and launch attacks on Israel and United States facilities and personnel. Along the Blue Line, the Iranian-backed and -armed Hizbullah attacks Israel regularly. In the Red Sea, Iranian-backed Houthis have violated international law and repeatedly attacked commercial and merchant vessels. Iranian-backed groups also have attacked United States diplomatic facilities in Iraq and attacked United States military personnel engaged in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh). Iran's hand is evident in the actions of all of those terrorist and proxy and partner groups. We have repeatedly warned the Syrian regime to curb Iran's destabilizing actions on its territory.

We also have long-standing concerns regarding the use of Syrian territory to launch attacks on neighbouring countries. For example, on 31 March, an Israeli fighter jet reportedly intercepted a suspicious aerial target making its way toward Israel from the direction of

Syria. And on numerous occasions since 7 October, we have seen rockets, armed drones and other weaponry being launched from Syrian territory towards Israeli positions in and around the Golan Heights.

We have taken steps in self-defence to respond to attacks on United States military personnel conducting operations against Da'esh in Syria and Iraq. We will not hesitate to defend our personnel and repeat our prior warnings to Iran and its proxies not to take advantage of this situation — again, an attack in which we had no involvement or advanced knowledge — to resume their attacks on United States personnel.

Even as we continue to learn more about this incident, it seems clear that every member of the Council should reiterate that all States, including Iran and Syria, have a responsibility to avoid the path of escalation, to stop arming and advising terrorist groups and to rein in the actions of proxies who threaten regional peace and security.

I will make two final points.

I want to be clear: we do not yet have confirmation of the status of the building that was struck in Damascus. Any confirmed attack on a property that was in fact a diplomatic facility would be of concern to the United States. Diplomatic missions and their property, as well as official diplomatic residences, must be protected, even and especially in times of armed conflict. As I noted earlier, we also are concerned by reports that terrorist leaders and elements were allegedly present at this facility and condemn Iran's continued coordination, training and arming of terrorists and other violent extremists.

We are saddened and gravely concerned by reports of an Israel Defense Forces air strike on the World Central Kitchen convoy. This incident is yet a further reminder that Israel needs to do much more to protect humanitarian personnel and facilities in Gaza. It is unacceptable and inexplicable that nearly six months into the conflict, Israeli military deconfliction mechanisms are not functioning appropriately. We join other countries who lost citizens in this incident in calling for a transparent and comprehensive investigation. This must not happen again.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to begin by welcoming the presidency of Malta for this month. And at the same time, I wish you, Madam, every success and ensure you

of the support of our delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Japan for its extraordinary leadership in the Security Council during the month of March.

I am grateful for the information provided by the Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari. Ecuador condemns any attack against diplomatic and consular missions and representatives, as well as those that threaten the security and integrity of the missions and representatives of international intergovernmental organizations and the officials of those organizations, and we reject those acts of violence regardless of their origin.

We echo the statements made by the Secretary-General with regard to the attack on the Iranian diplomatic headquarters, an event that not only contravenes the principles enshrined in international law governing behaviour among States, but also has once again claimed the lives of civilians and has destroyed civilian infrastructure. My delegation reiterates its position that nothing justifies that type of attack and reaffirms the obligation that all States, in accordance with international law, must respect the immunity and inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises, as well as the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963. Any violation in that regard is a serious incident that endangers lives, causes damage and negatively affects the promotion of the shared values of the international community. Therefore, Ecuador hopes that those acts will be duly investigated and that the perpetrators will be tried and brought to justice. Moreover, we reiterate our concern that acts such as this, in the midst of an extremely complex global geopolitical situation, exacerbate tensions and could trigger actions with unforeseeable consequences for international peace and security. We therefore continue to call on States to exercise the utmost restraint.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): Allow me to begin by reiterating our warmest congratulations to you, Madam President, and to your country for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We also wish to assure you of our full support during your presidency. To Japan, we express our gratitude for the successful presidency of the Security Council during the month of March. We are also grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Khaled Khiari for providing insights into this grave matter.

Yesterday's air strike, which reportedly resulted in significant loss of life and damage to the Consular Section of Iran's Embassy, constitutes a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises enshrined in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Those fundamental principles and laws must be respected, observed and upheld by all States without any exception. Mozambique strongly condemns this unacceptable attack.

The incident starkly reminds us of the ongoing conflicts and geopolitical complexities in the Middle East, particularly concerning the Palestinian question, and the ongoing tensions between Israel and its neighbours. We believe that such actions could potentially escalate regional tensions and trigger further conflicts involving other countries and could have unimaginable implications for regional and international peace and security.

In the light of that grave situation, it is imperative that all parties involved, especially Israel, strictly adhere to international legal norms and agreements. Upholding those fundamental principles is essential to prevent further military confrontation and maintain stability. The Security Council must closely monitor the situation and take the necessary measures to prevent a further escalation of hostilities resulting from this attack. We reiterate our consistent appeal to Council members to redouble efforts toward a sustainable solution to the Middle East conflict, in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. We commend the ongoing diplomatic efforts by various actors, including certain members of the Council, aimed at re-establishing a path towards peaceful coexistence among neighbouring States and peoples in the Middle East.

Finally, let us collectively and genuinely work towards a peaceful and stable Middle East region, mindful of the legitimate concerns of all parties involved.

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

Let me begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his remarks today.

The Middle East continues to be in a state of turmoil. As we have stated on several occasions, that volatile situation is completely untenable. At a time

during which all sides should be focused on defusing tensions, all we are witnessing are steps in the opposite direction. The air strikes carried out against the Iranian Consulate in Damascus yesterday evening are just the latest episode in a long string of deeply troubling events. We are worried that the attack takes place against a backdrop of death and destruction in the region. We stress that international law, including international humanitarian law, must be respected at all times. That also includes respect for the inviolability of diplomatic missions and the protection of diplomatic staff.

The Council has repeatedly heard the warnings that such strikes only exacerbate tensions and increase the risk of regional conflict. Furthermore, they risk worsening the already dire humanitarian situation of the Syrian population. Regrettably, the regional ramifications of the conflict in Gaza continue to be felt. I repeat and emphasize that de-escalation must remain our highest priority. Maximum restraint must be exercised by all actors in the region at this extremely delicate moment. That starts with the implementation of resolution 2728 (2024), which demands an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all hostages. Just like all other Security Council resolutions, that resolution is binding and must be respected. From Damascus, to Gaza, the Red Sea to the Blue Line, all our diplomatic expertise and collective leverage must be brought to bear to quell the flames of war before they are fanned out of control. Cool heads must prevail, or the consequences will be catastrophic.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened attentively to today's statements by the three Western permanent members of the Security Council and were once again struck by their cynicism and double standards. From their narrative today, one could hardly figure out why we have gathered here today.

The representative of France said everything except the slightest condemnation of yet another violation of international law by Israel. It was an intentional strike on diplomatic premises. If your Embassies or Consulates in the region were attacked, would you react in the same way? That is your "rules-based order" in all its glory.

The United States is always proud to have first-hand information on anything, because thanks to its intelligence capabilities, the United States is always the first to find out about anything. However, surprisingly, the United States still has no confirmed information about the strike on the Iranian Consulate. How unfortunate. I really feel like saying, "I do not believe you". The United Kingdom and the United States did not just hint, but made direct references as if Iran and Syria were to blame for Israel's strike on the Consulate. It is hard to imagine greater cynicism.

Do not call on others to de-escalate and label an attack's victims as aggressors. In that context, any possible escalation will be entirely on your conscience.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

We thank Russia for requesting this urgent meeting, which focuses on the heinous and terrorist attacks committed by the Israeli regime against diplomatic premises in flagrant violation of international law. We also thank China and other members who supported convening the meeting. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing.

Yesterday we urgently notified the Security Council members of yet another flagrant violation of international law committed by the Israeli regime within Syrian territory. As reflected in our letter, on 1 April 2024, our diplomatic premises in Damascus came under terrorist attack carried out by the Israeli regime. Seven missile airstrikes from the occupied Golan Heights, specifically and intentionally targeted the diplomatic premises of Iran, including the consular section building and the Ambassador's residence. Tragically, those heinous attacks resulted in the martyrdom of seven Iranian personnel, including senior military advisors, and several others were injured.

Alongside the complete destruction of the consular building, the Embassy's administrative offices also suffered significant damage owing to the explosions. The final and accurate death toll remains uncertain as the entire diplomatic premises have been destroyed, with individuals trapped under the rubble.

The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns those horrific crimes and cowardly terrorist attacks.

The Israeli regime committed a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The crime committed yesterday by the Israeli regime goes beyond mere criminality — it represents a profound affront to the shared principle of the international community, namely the inviolability of representatives and diplomatic and consular premises. That principle is a cornerstone upon which international relations are built, universally recognized and upheld.

The crime bluntly breaches the fundamental principle of diplomatic and consular immunity and flagrantly violated the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, of 1973.

The Security Council has consistently united in unequivocal condemnation of violent assaults on the Embassies and consular premises of Member States. The Security Council has always reaffirmed that such reprehensible acts, regardless of motive or perpetrator, are unjustifiable. Given the grave repercussions of this reprehensible act, which could escalate tensions in the region and potentially spark further conflict involving other nations, we call on the Security Council to vehemently condemn this unjustified criminal act and terrorist attack.

It is now crystal clear that Israel's ongoing destabilization and irresponsible actions and atrocities against the nations in our region are a real threat to regional and international peace and security. That regime has consistently demonstrated disregard for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and humanitarian and human rights principles. Israel's agenda is obvious: to escalate and perpetuate the conflict while evading accountability. It did not redline the killing of civilians and even used starvation as a method of warfare. Its primary concern is the unlawful use of force to advance its apartheid policies, ethnic cleansing, genocidal acts and military objectives in Gaza at all costs.

Despite repeated calls from Council members, Israel continues in its atrocious and genocidal acts against the defenceless people of Gaza. And despite international pressure and Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire, Israel has defied those resolutions. Rather, its

focus remains on committing more atrocious crimes, showing no regard for international legal obligations. Just today, the regime committed the outrageous act of killing World Central Kitchen aid workers in Gaza. As the Under-Secretary-General highlighted, they were heroes killed while trying to feed starving people. Regrettably, the absence of accountability and the Council's inaction has only encouraged and even emboldened the regime to continue its violation unchecked. It is high time for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and address the real threat to international peace and security. The Security Council must promptly fulfil its duty in response to Israel's reckless defiance. Urgent and enforceable measures must be taken to compel the regime to uphold its obligations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has exercised considerable restraint, but it is imperative to acknowledge that there are limits to such forbearance. The occupying regime must bear full responsibility for its consequences. Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right under international law and the Charter of the United Nations to carry out a decisive response to such reprehensible acts.

The representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom once again tried to deny their responsibility for the current situation in Syria and the broader region by falsely blaming Iran. Iran strongly rejects those allegations. Iran has never sought to contribute to the spillover of the conflict in the region or to escalate or spread the tensions throughout the entire region. Despite expressing concern over the spillover of the tensions in the region, the United States has tried to misuse the situation to destabilize Syria and the region. The United States is responsible for all crimes committed by the Israeli regime. The savage and genocidal acts in Gaza could not have happened without explicit consent and comprehensive political, financial and military support, as well as partnership, from the United States. Ironically, the United States talks too much about protecting civilians in Gaza and expresses its concern about the violation of humanitarian law. At the same time, it has blocked the Security Council for more than six months from taking urgent and appropriate action to stop the war in Gaza. If the United States genuinely cares about civilians and upholds international humanitarian law, it should refrain from blaming Iran and instead compel the Israeli regime to

implement the Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire (resolution 2728 (2024)).

Regarding the United Kingdom's allegations, instead of deflecting blame onto others, the United Kingdom should face up to its mistakes and rectify its detrimental policies, which have adversely affected the people of the region. The long-standing suffering of the Palestinian people, which has persisted for more than seven decades, can be directly traced back to the colonial policies of the United Kingdom.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Japan, and his team for successfully conducting the Council's work over the past month. My country's delegation expresses its thanks to the delegations of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China for their efforts to convene this emergency meeting of the Security Council.

In yet another episode in a string of Israeli attacks against my country, Syria, the Israeli occupation forces launched yesterday, 1 April, at approximately 5 p.m. Damascus time, a barbaric rocket attack from the occupied Syrian Golan in broad daylight. It targeted the building of the Iranian Consulate in the Mezzeh neighbourhood of the Syrian capital, Damascus. The barbaric attack completely destroyed the building and led to the martyrdom or injury of all those inside, including Syrians and Iranians, along with several passers-by. The targeted building of the Iranian Consulate is located in a densely populated area that is full of civilians. It is just a few metres away from the headquarters of foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations, including the World Food Programme, in addition to a private hospital, faculties affiliated with Damascus University and several private banks and companies. That vital area is crossed by thousands of civilians daily, as it is an essential route in the city. Some of the civilians suffered severe injuries from that terrorist attack, which constitutes a dangerous precedent. It is a grave violation of international conventions and norms that guarantee the protection and immunity of diplomatic premises and personnel and the prohibition of any attacks against

them, including the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents.

Over the past few days, frenzied Israeli attacks have also targeted civilian buildings and installations in rural Damascus and a few areas in rural Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor, leading to the martyrdom or injury of several civilians and military personnel, in addition to material damage to public and private property. That is a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Those attacks coincided with others launched by terrorist groups and entities that are active in north-western Syria. They used drones against civilians in the city of Aleppo and its rural area. The Israeli attacks also coincided with terrorist attacks carried out by the terrorist organization Da'esh in the eastern areas of the country. That reaffirms the existing and ongoing coordination and distribution of roles between the Israeli occupation authorities and their tools of terrorist organizations.

The Israeli occupation authorities would not have committed that attack on diplomatic headquarters protected under international law or on any other civilian objects, such as airports, ports and residential neighbourhoods, had it not been for the blind support of the United States. The latter has for decades provided them with an umbrella of sponsorship and impunity that has enabled them to commit the most heinous atrocities, the most recent of which is the genocide and brutal crimes that have been committed against the Palestinian people for nearly six months. Moreover, after resolution 2728 (2024) was adopted by the Council, the United States Administration rushed to claim that the resolution is not binding and does not impose any new commitments in order to absolve Israel from implementing the resolution and the ceasefire. That demonstrated blatant disregard for the bloodshed of more than 33,000 civilian martyrs from the Palestinian people, most of whom were women and children. In addition, more than 173 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and dozens of others from humanitarian organizations were also killed. We all heard today about the Israeli attack that killed seven workers of a non-governmental organization operating in Gaza, which our colleague the representative of the United States failed to condemn. The Israeli aggression has also led to the

killing and martyrdom of a number of journalists and the destruction of thousands of residential buildings, places of worship and health and educational facilities, including United Nations facilities.

My country, Syria, holds the war criminals of the Israeli occupation Government and their partners in the United States Administration fully responsible for those attacks and their repercussions on regional and international peace and security. They are also responsible for pushing the region to unprecedented levels of escalation and instability. Syria warns of the consequences of persisting in such attacks and reckless policies.

Syria calls upon the United Nations to shoulder its primary responsibilities and condemn the repeated Israeli attacks. The United Nations must take immediate action to put an end to such attacks, prevent their recurrence, hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure that they do not go unpunished. Syria stresses

that the failure of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities, due to the obstructive role of the United States, undermines the system of collective security upon which our Organization, the United Nations, was founded. That leads Member States to believe that it is useless to rely on the force of international law and international legitimacy to restore their rights.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that such attacks will not deter it from its national choices or from its firm positions in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. We will also continue our endeavours to recover the occupied Syrian Golan in full, along the 4 June 1967 lines. We will liberate all our territories from illegal foreign military presence and its proxies of terrorist organizations through all the means guaranteed by international law.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.