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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Gabi (Congo),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

Agenda item 63 (continued)

Use of the veto

Special report of the Security Council (A/78/832)

Mr. Kim Song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The Security Council is the principal organ of the United Nations that has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the Council has been unable to take any action over the past six months to ensure peace and stability in Gaza despite the growing number of civilian casualties, the continuing suffering of the Palestinian people and the spread of escalating tensions in Gaza across the entire Middle East region.

The responsibility for all of that lies entirely with the United States. To date, the United States has used its veto power three times in the Security Council to block all draft resolutions calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, citing some absurd and hypocritical pretext. Under the circumstances, it is nothing but hypocrisy for the United States to submit a draft resolution on the imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire in Gaza (S/2024/239). That hypocrisy on the part of the United States has reduced the Security Council to an arena of showdown, incitement to war, instability,

dispute and confrontation and to a place of injustice in which illegal double standards are rampant.

If the United States truly wanted peace and stability in Gaza, it should not have vetoed all the draft resolutions calling for an immediate and humanitarian ceasefire, submitted by Algeria, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates, respectively (S/2023/773, S/2023/970 and S/2024/173). If the United States were truly interested in a sustained ceasefire in Gaza, it should not have supplied weapons to Israel. But the United States has continuously supplied Israel with weapons since the outbreak of the conflict between Hamas and Israel. In particular, the recent decision by the United States to send more weapons to Israel amid the ground operation in Rafah is deeply troubling and deserving of the international community's condemnation. By enabling military aggression and human rights abuses, the United States is complicit in perpetuating the suffering of innocent civilians and undermining prospects for peace and stability in Gaza.

The Palestinian issue today is not a simple matter of armed conflict, but rather a critical issue directly linked to peace and stability in the Middle East and in the rest of the world. The humanitarian disaster in Gaza must be ended without delay through an immediate ceasefire, and the Palestinian issue must be urgently resolved, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders.

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In conclusion, my delegation once again expresses its unwavering support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their legitimate national rights.

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President very much for convening this meeting.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/78/PV.66), and I am honoured to deliver this statement in my national capacity.

Jordan appreciates the Security Council's recent adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an end to the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, the protection of innocent civilians, the unimpeded and immediate delivery of humanitarian aid and the delivery of that aid to the entire Strip. We condemn Israel's violation of that binding United Nations resolution and its disregard for the Charter of the United Nations, as Israel continues to commit the most heinous crimes against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Since it began half a year ago, Israel's war has claimed more than 33,000 martyrs, most of whom are women and children, not to mention Israel's use of starvation as a weapon of war.

We emphasize that those heinous acts constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law, for which Israel must bear full legal and moral responsibility. We also condemn the killing of more than 200 aid workers by the Israeli occupation army, including approximately 177 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and seven employees of the World Central Kitchen a few days ago.

The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza that we are witnessing today is the result of Israel's prevention of United Nations and relief organizations from providing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip in a way that meets the minimum basic needs of the population. We call upon Israel to open the borders and land crossings to bring in aid in a sustainable manner in order to meet the humanitarian needs of the Gaza Strip.

We reiterate our call on international partners to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which represents a lifeline for more than 2 million Palestinians facing the ravages of the catastrophic war in Gaza. We appreciate the decisions taken by a group of friendly countries to

resume support for UNRWA and the positive impact of that on the Agency's ability to fulfil its central role in Gaza and to support refugees in the Agency's five areas of operation. We emphasize once again that UNRWA plays an indispensable and irreplaceable role. In that regard, we reject Israel's attempts to tarnish the Agency's reputation and cut off financial and political support for it.

In line with the position of the Arab Group, Jordan rejects any draft resolution that would justify Israel's brutal aggression or explicitly or implicitly give it a green light to proceed with a ground offensive and continue its massacres and forced displacement against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Security Council must condemn such violations and hold Israel fully accountable. The Council must prevent such violations using all the means available under the United Nations Charter when international peace and security are threatened.

We reaffirm the need for Israel to fully and completely implement Council resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 2728 (2024), and to comply with the measures taken by the International Court of Justice. That will lead to stopping the brutal aggression on Gaza and the destruction, killing and starvation of Palestinians, as well as disregard of international, legal, humanitarian and moral values and principles. We stress that the only way to ensure comprehensive and durable peace is to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital within 4 June 1967 borders, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We thank President Dennis Francis for calling this General Assembly meeting pursuant to resolution 76/262, which mandates the Assembly President to convene a meeting when a veto is cast in the Security Council.

The vetoed draft resolution (S/2024/239), submitted by the United States, included several positive elements. First, it emphasizes the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to civilians in the entire Gaza Strip and reiterates the demand for the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale, in line with Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). Secondly, it rejects any forced displacement of the civilian population in Gaza in violation of international law, including international

humanitarian law and international human rights law. Thirdly, it emphasizes that humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities must be respected and protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. And fourthly, it reaffirms an unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-State solution.

However, the draft resolution had significant deficiencies. Foremost among them, it did not call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. That is imperative. Israel has conducted a relentless and brutal military onslaught on the people of Gaza from the air, land and sea. It has mercilessly killed over 33,000 Palestinians in Gaza, 70 per cent of whom were innocent women and children. Israel's military campaign has targeted hospitals, homes, schools and aid convoys and displaced 2 million in Gaza. Israel has impeded humanitarian assistance and attacked humanitarian personnel and aid convoys, literally annihilating the means for human survival in Gaza. It has mounted a slander campaign to shut down the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the main lifeline for the people of Gaza. The International Court of Justice has framed this brutal Israeli campaign as "plausible genocide". It was thus inconceivable that any decision by the Security Council would refrain from calling for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of the Israeli military campaign and its besieged and devastated people.

The vetoed draft resolution also had several other shortcomings. First, it condemned Hamas only, failing to address Israel's indiscriminate and inhumane military actions and killing of over 30,000 innocent Palestinians. Secondly, it did not include a reference to the preliminary findings and recommendations of the International Court of Justice, which are binding obligations. Thirdly, it did not clearly reject or oppose the threatened Israeli ground offensive in Rafah. It is heartening that the failure of this draft resolution was followed by the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2728 (2024), sponsored by the non-permanent members of the Security Council, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, Israel continues to defy that call to observe a ceasefire by the Security Council, whose resolutions are binding and obligatory in accordance with Article 25 of the United Nations Charter.

The Security Council must ensure the implementation of its resolution 2728 (2024) through appropriate steps. That could include some of the

measures approved by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit in Riyadh, such as imposing a ban on the export of weapons and ammunition to Israel and holding the officials of the Israeli occupation authorities responsible for their crimes against the Palestinians.

Pakistan supports the international consensus that the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital is the only plausible path to durable peace in the Middle East. The peace process for the two-State solution must be revived. Apart from members of the Security Council, the process should include the participation of key Arab and OIC countries. Pakistan also supports the application submitted to the Security Council by Palestine for its admission as a full Member of the United Nations. That step will make a Palestinian State a political reality and an inevitability. The brutality and bloodshed in Gaza have persisted for too long. They must end now, and their recurrence must be prevented through a durable two-State solution.

Mr. Prabowo (Indonesia): The situation in Gaza demands our immediate attention and action. Over 180 days have passed. The human tragedy has cost more than 32,000 lives, with 75,000 injured and 75 per cent of the population forcibly displaced. Without food and aid, Gaza is on the edge of famine. How many more lives lost does it have to take? The urgency of this moment is crystal clear. We must prioritize a swift and immediate ceasefire, for which the Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of on two occasions (resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22).

Today we are here to demonstrate such urgency. The Security Council, entrusted with the mandate to maintain international peace and security, must act decisively on the core issue of Gaza. The fighting needs to stop. Aid must be scaled up. Forced displacement must be avoided. It is imperative that the Security Council's resolution be unequivocal and resolute. Ambiguity is not an option. Not adopting draft resolution S/2024/239 paved the way for the adoption of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), submitted by the 10 elected members of the Council. After six months, the Security Council finally adopted resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for an immediate ceasefire to end the bloodshed. Indonesia welcomes its adoption and calls on all parties to abide by that legally binding resolution, in line with Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. Any claims to the contrary would be undermining the

principles of the multilateral system and international law. Now our focus must shift to the full implementation of the resolution and bringing about real changes on the ground. For its part, Indonesia dispatched a relief package worth \$1 million earlier this month, adding to the total aid of 4,400 tons that Indonesia has provided since the onset of the crisis. We hope there will be no more obstacles in reaching those who are in desperate need of assistance.

Finally, it is crucial to address the root cause of the Gaza conflict, which lies in the occupation of Palestine. A peaceful and stable future in the Middle East fundamentally depends on embracing the vision of a two-State solution. Supporting Palestine's full membership to the United Nations will be a crucial first step. Indonesia fully supports Palestine's full membership to the United Nations and urges all nations to stand with us in supporting that endeavour. Recognizing Palestine's full membership is not just about acknowledging its people's right to self-determination but a pivotal move towards fairness and balance in the peace process.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): With this meeting, we are marking another unfortunate milestone. The war in Gaza has been ongoing for more than six months. Allow me to emphasize that Slovenia, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, regrets the use of the veto by China and Russia on 22 March (see S/PV.9584). In that regard, I would like to make the following three points.

First, Slovenia underlines its profound concern about the deteriorating situation in Gaza. The unacceptable humanitarian conditions, marked by shortages and restricted access to essential aid, demand our urgent attention. We are particularly alarmed by the continued threat of a ground military operation in Rafah and we urge Israel not to proceed with it. We continue to condemn the terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and call for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all hostages. We are also concerned about the arbitrary arrests and treatment of Palestinian detainees by Israeli security forces in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition, we are alarmed by reports of human rights violations against Palestinian civilians, including women and children. We stress our condemnation of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and call for credible investigations of them all. With regard to attacks on United Nations, humanitarian and medical workers, Slovenia strongly condemns

them. We are appalled by the ongoing disregard of and disrespect for international humanitarian law, international human rights law on the ground and the deconfliction mechanism. Given the imminent threat of famine, we underscore the urgency of Israel easing the delivery of humanitarian aid and opening additional corridors to Gaza. We call for full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and emphasize the critical need for accountability. We welcome the International Court of Justice's provisional measures of 26 January and 28 March and we call on Israel to fully implement them. Only an immediate ceasefire can prevent the continuation of the current alarming levels of killing, suffering and destruction.

Secondly, the situation in Gaza also serves to underscore the looming danger of the conflict spilling over to the wider region, which leads me to the next point that I wish to address: the need for unity within the Security Council. The Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and its role in addressing this crisis is evident. We commend the Council for finding a united voice in calling for a ceasefire through resolution 2728 (2024). By doing so, the Council has answered the call of the General Assembly and the global public for a ceasefire. We wish to remind members that Security Council resolutions are binding, and we urge the full implementation of resolutions 2728 (2024), 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023).

Thirdly, such unity must lead the Council to addressing more than the dire humanitarian situation on the ground. With its clear mandate, the Security Council must assume a leadership role in providing a clear political vision that leads towards a two-State solution. Only a two-State solution can ensure a just and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and the Security Council needs to strive for progress in achieving that.

In conclusion, I would like to express Slovenia's appreciation for the work of the United Nations under the leadership of the Secretary-General. We value the efforts of United Nations staff and agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, on the ground. We stand by them.

Ms. Zacarias (Portugal): I thank the President for convening this meeting.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) (see A/78/PV.66).

Six months after the brutal Hamas attack against Israel, we underline once again our strongest condemnation and call for the immediate release of all hostages. At the same time, we are appalled and deeply concerned about the unprecedented loss of civilian lives, the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza and the immense suffering of civilians, particularly children, during the past six months. The need for a ceasefire and the immediate provision of humanitarian assistance at scale are dire. Starvation is looming. As such, we fully support the EU's call for immediate improvements in land access and the opening of additional routes and crossings. The lack of respect for civilian lives is appalling. The attacks against humanitarian workers are simply unacceptable. We condemn the attack against World Central Kitchen that resulted in the killing of seven humanitarian workers, who were bravely providing food to civilians in the middle of a war. Unfortunately, many other humanitarian workers have been killed. We therefore demand accountability and full compliance with international humanitarian law.

As a co-sponsor of the veto initiative, Portugal regrets the repeated use of the veto in contexts of crisis such as this one, which only exacerbates the suffering of civilians and delays crucial humanitarian efforts. We therefore commend the adoption of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024) on 25 March, calling for an immediate ceasefire during Ramadan, the release of all hostages and unimpeded humanitarian access. We urge all parties to promptly implement resolution 2728 (2024), along with Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2722 (2024). We join others in urging the Israeli Government not to undertake a ground operation in Rafah and take immediate measures to protect civilians and prevent further displacement.

The essential services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza are critical. While looking forward to the publication of the conclusions and the adoption of any necessary measures into the allegations against UNRWA staff, we reiterate the importance of ensuring that the necessary measures and means are mobilized to ensure the Agency's work in all areas in which it operates. We are also gravely concerned about the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We call on Israel to reverse its recent decisions on settlement expansions and land confiscation, which are illegal under international law and hinder peace efforts.

In conclusion, Portugal reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two-State Solution. We stand ready to support efforts towards a lasting and sustainable peace, ensuring the safety, dignity and peace of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Ms. Shino (Japan): It is regrettable that we once again gather in the General Assembly Hall following the double veto against the draft resolution (S/2024/239) submitted by the United States in the Security Council (see S/PV.9584), which would have unequivocally supported ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire, rapidly scaled-up humanitarian aid and the release of all remaining hostages. Moreover, had it been adopted, the Security Council could have finally condemned for the first time the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and other groups on 7 October 2023.

The situation on the ground is desperate. Every delay brings further suffering. We are pleased that the Council was subsequently able to adopt resolution 2728 (2024), proposed by the 10 elected members of the Security Council and demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Yet, although Ramadan concludes this week, the ceasefire has not been realized. That must change and soon.

We once again express our strong support for the continued diplomatic efforts led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt and urge all parties to reach an agreement for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages. Japan will continue to work strenuously so that the Council can actively fulfil its responsibility.

The air strikes on 1 April that killed seven World Central Kitchen staff members caused global outrage and a suspension of aid deliveries to those most in need. Japan commends the brave work of non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies and hopes that they can swiftly and safely resume their work.

The role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains essential, and for that reason Japan has decided to resume our funding to the Agency. Two thirds of Gaza's inhabitants, many of whom have been displaced repeatedly, continue to shelter in Rafah. An Israeli ground offensive there would dramatically worsen an already catastrophic humanitarian situation and must not proceed under such circumstances.

A ceasefire is urgently needed. Yet that is not enough. A political horizon must be in place. Only the two-State solution with Israel and an independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security, can finally resolve that decades-long conflict.

Mr. Gómez Hernández (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of today's debate following the vetoes cast at the Security Council meeting on 22 March (see S/PV.9584). We welcome the adoption, three days later, of resolution 2728 (2024), an example of the contribution of the elected members of the Council to greater efficiency in the Council's work.

We can hardly find the words to talk about Gaza. We deeply regret and strongly and unreservedly condemn the death of seven aid workers from the non-governmental organization World Central Kitchen, following the Israeli army's bombing of their vehicles in Gaza. We demand that the facts be clarified and accountability established. Those deaths are proof that international humanitarian law is not being respected in Gaza and are on top of the more than 170 United Nations and other humanitarian workers who have died in the Gaza Strip since 7 October. Those responsible must be held accountable and brought to justice.

Given the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, we support the work of the United Nations and humanitarian agencies. We pay tribute to their work, which provides a modicum of dignity and hope to the civilian population in Gaza. Spain's position is well known. We call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which is now clearly supported by Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), which also calls for an expansion of the flow of humanitarian assistance and demands that all barriers to that assistance be lifted. The resolution is binding, as are the provisional measures adopted by the International Court of Justice. We have demanded that the parties comply with those measures.

We welcome the steps taken by Israel on 5 April, including the opening of the Erez crossing and increased assistance through Kerem Shalom. Those are steps in the right direction but they are still not enough given the magnitude of the humanitarian disaster.

The President of the Government of Spain, Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain, Albares Bueno, saw at first hand the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other humanitarian

agencies during their recent visits to the region. In 2023, our contribution to UNRWA reached €19.5 million. This year, we have already announced €23.5 million to support the critical and invaluable work carried out by the Agency to assist millions of Palestinian refugees in the region and ensure humanitarian action in Gaza in the current situation.

We reiterate once again our full condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and demand the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

Spain has welcomed the new Government, headed by Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa. The Palestinian Authority is our partner for peace and will need the support of the international community to stabilize Gaza, restore basic services and carry out the reform and reconstruction agenda that it has set out.

We are at a critical juncture. The United Nations and its Members must be up to the task to respond to the circumstances. The only way to prevent the violence and the onset of another crisis in Gaza and the region is to end the conflict once and for all.

Spain has been defending the need for the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. To that end, Spain proposes convening an international peace conference with the parties and the international community as soon as possible. The conference will serve as the framework for recognizing a sovereign, viable and realistic Palestinian State, with territorial contiguity, defined borders and its capital in East Jerusalem, as a full Member State of the United Nations. We must move in that direction without delay.

Mr. Ndoye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Dennis Francis, for convening today's important meeting and for his ever-responsible remarks on the exercise of the right of veto and the question of Palestine.

Senegal remains steadfast on its position on the issue of the veto. Whether it is used wisely or irresponsibly, my delegation believes that it is an illegitimate instrument from a different era that no longer reflects the reality of international relations, much less the aspirations of the international community. Indeed, it is always regrettable to see the paralysis of the Security Council that arises because five Member States have the option of taking cover behind the wall of the veto — when

international peace is broken, the safety of populations is threatened and human lives are at stake, as is the case with the humanitarian disaster under way in the Palestinian territories.

That is why my delegation would like to call on the Council, in particular the permanent members, to stop using the situation in Palestine as a pretext for their internal differences and their own national policies. They must always bear in mind that they have the mandate of the entire international community to maintain international security. In that regard, they should fully assume that responsibility.

My delegation commends the approach of the 10 elected members of the Security Council, which submitted resolution 2728 (2024) and, through their proactive stance, enabled the Council to overcome its divisions and achieve a ceasefire after several months of prevarication. Admittedly, the adoption of the resolution represents a first step, but my delegation is hardly optimistic about the Council's ability to force Israel to implement the resolution on the ground.

The situation in Gaza is getting worse by the day. The death toll now exceeds 33,000. In addition to the lives lost, more than 75,000 people have been wounded, 12,000 people are living with disabilities and the humanitarian situation is alarming. Against that backdrop, Senegal once again urges Israel, the occupying Power, to show restraint, scrupulously respect the ceasefire and implement the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice.

My delegation takes this opportunity to call on the international community to mobilize to definitively turn the bloody page on this tragedy, which has gone on for far too long. By crystallizing all energies in international forums, it runs the risk of distracting us from the many other development challenges we face. We must direct our efforts towards a political solution — a two-State solution, with Palestinians and Israelis living side by side within secure and clearly defined borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. That is the only guarantee of lasting security for both peoples, as well as an end to Israeli colonization and persecution. At the same time, given the active role played by Palestine in the United Nations and its recognition by more than 140 Member States, it seems legitimate that the country should be recognized as a full Member State of our Organization, in line with the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): The President of the General Assembly has convened debates of this nature following vetoes in the Security Council on six occasions since the 7 October 2023 attacks and the subsequent retaliatory military operations of Israel on Palestinians in Gaza. Six months on, a permanent ceasefire has yet to be agreed to by all Security Council members. A political solution is also not yet in sight. Meanwhile, the relentless military operations by Israel and its genocidal acts have aggravated the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Yesterday Rwanda marked the 30-year remembrance of the 1994 genocide under the overarching theme that genocide must never happen again. Reflecting on the remembrance of the Rwandan genocide, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa wrote today that it is because of our stated commitment to never again allow such atrocities that the world cannot stand idly by as another genocide is carried out, this time against the people of Palestine in the besieged Gaza Strip. No one can claim ignorance about what is happening in Gaza because, unlike in Rwanda in 1994, those atrocities are being televised, written about, tweeted and live-streamed. President Ramaphosa added that it should never and must never be that atrocities, gross human rights violations and genocide somehow carry less weight because of the race, ethnicity or religious affiliation of the victims. We owe it to the victims of all the world's genocides to not betray their memories by looking away, failing to act — or worst of all, claiming we did not know.

Accordingly, South Africa stresses that the Security Council must adopt a resolution demanding a permanent ceasefire. South Africa welcomed the Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan. Unfortunately, Israel did not comply with that resolution, in breach of Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, which clearly articulates the binding nature of Security Council resolutions.

South Africa is gravely concerned that Israel continues with its plausible genocidal acts in complete disregard of the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice. The ongoing bombardment of Gaza by Israel has resulted in more civilian casualties — almost half of whom are children — and created an unspeakable humanmade humanitarian catastrophe. The threat of famine is imminent, with disastrous consequences. Those engaged in active warfare must be reminded

that the targeting of civilians, humanitarian workers, journalists and United Nations personnel, as well as the destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure, are illegal under international law. Those attacks should be investigated by an independent mechanism led by the United Nations, because for too long Israel has perpetuated its unjust policies against Palestinians with impunity. It is those catastrophic acts that prompted South Africa to approach the International Court of Justice to request further measures to protect civilians and prevent further contraventions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Israel must abide by its international law obligations.

South Africa fully supports the application of the State of Palestine for full membership of the United Nations in fulfilment of the right to self-determination of its people. The Security Council must consider that matter expeditiously. South Africa believes that addressing the root cause of the Israel-Palestine conflict is vital for a lasting political solution. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024) was an important first step to build and agree on further steps towards a permanent ceasefire. The Security Council bears the responsibility to show its commitment to international peace and security and to go beyond its rhetorical statements by ensuring that it enforces the resolutions it adopts. South Africa supports Security Council efforts and all diplomatic initiatives to secure an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza to protect civilians on all sides, allow for the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance at scale and alleviate humanitarian suffering. The resumption of ceasefire negotiations is crucial to putting an end to the ongoing hostilities in Gaza. Accordingly, the parties should approach those talks in a spirit of compromise and put the lives of all Palestinians and Israelis at the centre of the negotiations. It is hoped that the successful conclusion of those negotiations will create momentum for the resumption of a comprehensive peace process and a negotiated settlement towards a two-State solution, which the General Assembly and the Security Council have recognized in their resolutions.

The system of global governance as we know it is facing serious challenges. As members of the international community, we cannot be spectators of impunity and blatant disregard for international law and the Charter of the United Nations by some States Members of this Organization while civilians perish.

Turning a blind eye to the deteriorating global peace and security situation weakens the very international norms and standards to which all United Nations Member States have committed themselves. Prolonging that would present serious consequences for the multilateral system, undermining the credibility of the global peace and security architecture and threatening to reverse the gains made over the past 78 years towards bringing about peace.

Mrs. Güven (Türkiye): Türkiye, as a co-sponsor of resolution 76/262, on the veto initiative, appreciates the convening of this debate. We once again stress the importance of the General Assembly as our Organization's most representative organ, in which the collective will of the international community is freely voiced. Thanks to the veto initiative, the General Assembly has an enhanced convening power and normative impact. In a world marked by uncertainty and crises, the Assembly stands as a platform for dialogue and collective action. In that context, the wider membership of the General Assembly has adopted two resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza (resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22), yet the Security Council has repeatedly failed to follow suit.

For the past six months, we have witnessed horrific crimes against the civilian population in Gaza. The death toll in Gaza has surpassed 32,000 people, the vast majority of them women and children, while those spared from the bombs face displacement, hunger and disease. Gaza's population has been deliberately deprived of the essentials of life. Children are starving to death in the twenty-first century. Aid convoys are being targeted. Hospitals are being raided. More than 200 aid workers in Gaza have been killed, the vast majority of whom were personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which is the backbone of humanitarian operations in Gaza. The magnitude of casualties, destruction and displacement is catastrophic and unprecedented.

In the face of those horrific scenes of human tragedy, we would like to make the following clear demands.

First, we reiterate our call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. While we welcome the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) as a first step, we regret that the attacks targeting civilians and aid workers have continued.

Secondly, the unhindered, sufficient and safe delivery of humanitarian assistance must be ensured. That basic principle of international law is also enshrined

in the three Security Council resolutions adopted to date on Gaza (resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024)). New entry points must be opened immediately. Land routes remain the fastest and most effective means of delivering aid into Gaza, with no viable alternative. UNRWA is indispensable in its vital role of providing services and relief to the Palestine refugees. The Agency is under intentional physical and political attack. The international community must ensure that it is appropriately funded.

Thirdly, the forcible displacement of persons must cease and conditions for safe returns must be guaranteed. We firmly reject any ground offensive into densely populated Rafah.

Fourthly, a political solution based on the two-State vision has to be part and parcel of our efforts to resolve this conflict in a sustainable manner. Palestine deserves to be a full Member State of the United Nations and to be treated as an equal member of the international community. That would enable the Palestinian people to realize their aspirations for statehood, sovereignty and independence and lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. The ongoing illegal settlement activities, demolitions and settler violence are deeply alarming. Escalations in the Red Sea, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria could lead to a conflict affecting the entire region.

The Security Council is the main organ tasked with the maintenance of peace and security. The Council must prioritize compliance with international law. That cannot be conditional. No State is above the law. The full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council, as well as the provisional measures on Gaza issued by the International Court of Justice, must be ensured. The current impasse in the Council constitutes a serious setback to the founding principles of the United Nations and common efforts to build a peaceful world. We can no longer allow individual national interests to prevail over the common good of humankind. My country will continue its efforts towards reforming the Security Council to ensure an efficient, transparent, democratic and accountable multilateral governance system.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): After just one month (see A/78/PV.59), we are here today to debate this topic once again. For more than 180 days, Israel has been attacking Gaza with an unprecedented and disproportionate amount of force. To date, more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70 per cent of

whom were women and children. More than 75,000 Palestinians have been injured, many of whom will be permanently disabled. But still, we are witnessing a Member State of the United Nations continuing unabated to commit one of the gravest massacres in the history of the world and repeatedly violate the Charter of the United Nations and international norms, practice and law. We are now unfortunately facing a dilemma: the selective approaches by some of us to critical issues of global concern are indeed contributing to the erosion of trust in the United Nations, and therefore when our house is not in order, we tend to place high hopes on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, securing an action-oriented pact for the future and ensuring a safe, better and more sustainable environment for succeeding generations.

The Security Council, after repeated failures, finally adopted resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for maintaining international peace and security and demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. However, the fact is that there is only one day left of Ramadan and we have seen no sign of stopping the killing of innocent Palestinians. The question today is, who will implement the Council's resolution, and if any Member State rejects implementation of the resolution, who will take action against them?

We have been witnessing the continuation of the deliberate and planned killing of civilians, the unprecedented killing of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers, the destruction of hospitals and shelters, forced starvation and the blocking of humanitarian assistance, while millions of people are in dire need of emergency life-saving assistance.

The tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly has adopted two resolutions (resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22) calling for an immediate ceasefire, and the Security Council has demanded an immediate ceasefire through resolution 2728 (2024). We also welcome the recent adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 55/28, which calls on States to cease the sale, transfer and diversion to Israel of arms, munitions and other military equipment — which is being used to kill innocent civilians, especially children. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice has once again ordered Israel to ensure urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance. Regrettably, all those resolutions and decisions are being blatantly disregarded by Israel and its allies.

Bangladesh, which has a strong value-based position against mass atrocity crimes, was one of the five Member States that referred the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in November 2023. We call on the Prosecutor of the ICC to expedite its investigation of the situation of the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in the context of the ongoing atrocities in Gaza, including, among others, the indiscriminate killing of civilians, the destruction of civilian objects, the forcible displacement of persons, the denial of humanitarian aid and the use of starvation as a weapon of war. We commend the current President of the Security Council, Malta, for calling on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to expeditiously complete its ongoing investigation, and we fully support and echo that call.

We thank Ms. Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, for her report *Anatomy of a Genocide*, which was recently presented at the fifty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, illustrating the ongoing gruesome acts of genocide and crimes against humanity being perpetrated in Gaza. We condemn in the strongest possible terms all attacks and slanders directed against the Special Rapporteur. In addition, we call on the ICC Prosecutor and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to use their voices and authority to prevent and deter further deteriorations in the violation of international law by the Israeli forces in Palestine.

Finally, Bangladesh firmly believes that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza, is the result of the international community's failure to implement the two-State solution by establishing an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. Clearly the occupying Power is illegally resisting that and continuing its apartheid policies against the Palestinians, without any meaningful resistance from the international community and with unconditional support from some powerful nations. We believe that the Palestinians have waited for their independent country for very long, and now it is our collective responsibility to accept Palestine as a full Member State of the United Nations. That would be a significant step towards implementing the two-State solution and thereby ensuring a lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg would like to thank the President for convening this debate in accordance with resolution 76/262, in application of the veto initiative launched by Liechtenstein. The veto is not a privilege; it is a responsibility. Luxembourg regrets any exercise of the veto, including the vetoes cast on 22 March by China and Russia on Security Council draft resolution S/2024/239, submitted by the United States (see S/PV.9584).

Luxembourg commends the initiative of the 10 elected members of the Council that led to the adoption three days later, on 25 March, of resolution 2728 (2024), which was supported by most of the Council's permanent members, the United States having abstained in the voting (see S/PV.9586). Resolution 2728 (2024) calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties and leading to a lasting ceasefire. It also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access to meet their medical and other humanitarian needs. But with the end of Ramadan fast approaching, the ceasefire demanded by resolution 2728 (2024) has yet to be achieved.

Since 7 October, we have repeatedly condemned in the strongest terms our condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. Nothing can justify those attacks. At the same time, we stress that the humanitarian catastrophe affecting civilians in the Gaza Strip is unacceptable and that is crucial to implement resolution 2728 (2024) in order to help them. Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations is clear.

"The Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter."

Both the resolutions of the Security Council and the orders issued by the International Court of Justice are binding.

Today nothing and no one is safe in Gaza. The death toll continues to rise. Women and children are the main victims. The risk of famine is increasing. Humanitarian actors are not spared. Luxembourg condemns the Israeli strikes that killed seven World Central Kitchen aid workers on 1 April. Those courageous humanitarians would still be with us if a ceasefire had been put in place. We call for the full investigation of those strikes and all attacks on humanitarian aid workers. Luxembourg recalls that intentionally directing attacks against personnel, facilities, material, units or vehicles

involved in a humanitarian assistance mission is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and all humanitarian actors on the ground must urgently receive the support they need to fulfil their mandates. The role of UNRWA is indispensable. The restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on the Agency's work must be lifted. Safe, unhindered and expanded humanitarian access must be guaranteed without delay and aid must be delivered in sufficient quantities to the affected people throughout the Gaza Strip, including the north. In that regard, Luxembourg calls for the full implementation of the Council's resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice against the State of Israel on 26 January and 28 March.

We take note of the measures announced on 4 April by the Israeli authorities with a view to improving humanitarian access. Those measures must be implemented without delay. We call for full respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances. We urge the Israeli Government not to launch an offensive in Rafah.

Luxembourg demands an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages. Only a ceasefire will make it possible to save lives — the lives of Palestinian civilians and of the hostages. Only a ceasefire will make it possible to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and open up a political horizon. The objective is clear — to reach a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that ensures the right of Israelis to live in security and the right of Palestinians to self-determination and a life of dignity in their own State. Only a two-State solution will make it possible to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. We welcome the work under way in the Security Council, at the initiative of France, to relaunch diplomatic efforts in favour of the two-State solution.

Mr. Soberón Guzmán (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself 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 (see A/78/PV.66).

Our views with respect to the mechanism established under resolution 76/262, entitled "Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council", remain unchanged.

There is an urgent need to stop the genocide in Gaza. Israel continues to massacre the Palestinian population with total impunity, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and numerous resolutions of the United Nations — because it is enabled by the complicity and support of the United States. The United States Government has prevented any attempt by the Security Council to impose an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, which is most urgently required.

There is no credibility in the hypocritical rhetoric of the United States Government, which claims to express its concern about the unprecedented number of Palestinian civilian deaths, the humanitarian catastrophe, the famine and the critical health situation in Gaza as a result of the Israeli offensive. The genocide will continue as long as the United States continues to support and protect the occupying Power by supplying it with weapons, military aid and exercising its veto in the Council. The United States was the only country that did not even vote in favour of resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza during the month of Ramadan.

A comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is urgently needed, on the basis of the two-State solution, that allows the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and have an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in addition to guaranteeing the right of return of refugees. We reiterate our call for the convening of a peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations aimed at preserving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We strongly support the accession of the State of Palestine as a full Member State of the United Nations, a decision that cannot continue to be postponed. We reaffirm Cuba's unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause, as well as its desire for peace and stability throughout the entire Middle East. The sisterly Arab nations can count on Cuba's unwavering support in that noble endeavour.

Mr. Løvold (Norway): The adoption of resolution 76/262, on the veto initiative, was important and represents a significant step in making the Security

Council more transparent and accountable. The repeated use of the veto undermines the effectiveness of the Council, but the increased engagement of the General Assembly in matters of international peace and security is in our view important. Maintaining peace and security is fundamental to all Member States. Norway regrets that vetoes were cast on 22 March by two permanent members of the Council (see S/PV.9584) on Security Council draft resolution S/2024/239.

With the situation in Gaza deteriorating at an alarming speed, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), on 25 March, demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages and humanitarian access to Gaza. That long-awaited resolution must now be implemented. The demands made by the Council in the resolution are legally binding on the parties and we expect them to act accordingly.

Norway's position is crystal clear. We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire. All hostages must immediately be released. And we call for a drastic increase in humanitarian aid that can access Gaza. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has deteriorated to an unprecedented level. A famine is now imminent and according to experts is most probably under way. Palestinians are already dying from hunger and lack of nutrition. A heavy responsibility rests on Israel to allow significantly higher quantities of aid to reach those in need, especially in the north. The opening of the Erez crossing is very positive if it leads to large quantities of assistance reaching the most affected people. We refer to the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 28 March, with which we expect Israel to comply.

Humanitarian actors must be allowed to fulfil their tasks, without fearing for their lives. The recent Israeli attack on the World Central Kitchen aid convoy is totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, that was not an isolated incident. At least 196 humanitarians have been killed in the occupied Palestinian territory since October 2023. That must stop.

Looking ahead, allow me to repeat Norway's firm position that only a two-State solution can guarantee peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. We will continue to work with all relevant partners to ensure the realization of that much-needed outcome.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): We are deeply troubled by the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The humanitarian crisis has deepened and instability has been increasing in

the region and beyond. In that context, we view the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), on 25 March, as a positive step. The resolution, as we all recall, called for an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan to be respected by all the parties, leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. As far as my country is concerned, India's position on the conflict has been clearly articulated on more than one occasion by its leadership. I would like to make four key points in that regard.

First, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas has led to the large-scale loss of civilian lives, especially those of women and children. The resulting humanitarian crisis is simply unacceptable. We have strongly condemned the deaths of civilians in the conflict. It is imperative to avoid the loss of civilian lives in any conflict situation. International law and international humanitarian law must be respected by everyone under all circumstances.

Secondly, the terror attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023 were shocking and they deserve our unequivocal condemnation. There can be no justification for terrorism and hostage-taking. India has taken a long-standing and uncompromising position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we demand the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire. It is imperative that humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza be scaled up immediately in order to avert a further deterioration of the situation. We urge all the parties to come together in that endeavour. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations and the international community in that regard. India has provided humanitarian aid to the people of Palestine and will continue to do so.

Fourthly, my country's leadership has repeatedly emphasized that only a two-State solution, achieved through direct and meaningful negotiations between both sides on final-status issues, will deliver an enduring peace. We are committed to supporting a two-State solution whereby the Palestinian people can be free in an independent country within secure borders, with due regard for the security needs of Israel. In order to arrive at a lasting solution, we urge all the parties to foster conditions that are conducive to resuming direct peace negotiations as soon as possible.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the President for convening this meeting pursuant to the provisions of resolution 76/262, following the vetoes cast by Russia and China on 22 March on Security Council draft resolution S/2024/239 submitted by the United States on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/PV.9584). Ecuador has regularly participated in these debates, even before it became an elected member of the Council, because we believe that it is a useful practice for the General Assembly to be consistently informed about the meetings of the Council in which draft resolutions were not adopted owing to the exercise of the veto.

In the case at hand and beyond the analysis of converging or diverging positions with regard to what motivated the use of the veto, the fact that it has been used, in accordance with the first part of paragraph 3 of Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations, is evidence that once again the opinion of the majority has been ignored and the Council has been prevented from acting via the use of that undemocratic privilege. That is the reality — the veto is opposed to the majority view expressed on a given situation.

It is therefore striking that contemptible arguments are put forward against that majority, depending on whether or not it suits the interests of one of the countries that exercised the veto, in an attempt to pass its consequences on to those who do not agree with that minority view. Not only that, but in certain cases, it seeks to normalize the disrespect for the position expressed by the countries with a condescending interpretation of that position and, therefore, is contrary to the principle of sovereign equality of the Member States on which this Organization is based.

Ecuador, in voting in favour of the draft resolution contained in document S/2024/239, expressed the reasons for its decision, shared by 11 countries, including eight elected members of the Security Council, and also stated its conviction that this organ cannot be a forum for geopolitical rivalries, but should be a forum for reconciliation and peace, in accordance with the mandate clearly established in the Charter of the United Nations.

Ecuador's position on the Palestinian question is well known and is based on international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Ecuador, with its principled positions, has expressed a genuine and unalterable commitment to peace, which will be

possible only through a negotiated and just solution, with the existence of two States: Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions.

These kinds of meetings are being convened with increasing frequency because, unfortunately, the veto is being used with increasing frequency. And in a few more days, the Assembly will have to meet again to hear about another veto cast by the Russian Federation, which leads me to recall that, in April 2022, when the resolution that we are addressing was adopted (see A/76/PV.69), my delegation expressed that these debates are not an end but a starting point.

In conclusion, Ecuador reiterates its conviction that the mechanism created by resolution 76/262 contributes to transparency and accountability, strengthens the authority of the General Assembly and its relationship with the Council and, consequently, strengthens the United Nations system. That is why we must examine its development to evaluate how the veto influences the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia reiterates its strong rejection of the escalation of violence and destruction unleashed in the Gaza Strip by the State of Israel, following the horrific attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023. The bloody manner in which the conflict has been conducted and the inability of the international community to take action in the face of the atrocities committed has devastating consequences for the Palestinian and Israeli people and the entire world.

As of 1 April, as a result of Israel's actions, more than 32,600 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza — 70 per cent of whom were women and children — as well as 176 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Along with that, another 438 Palestinians, among them more than 100 children, were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, it is reported that more than 75,000 people have been injured in Gaza, 1.7 million people have been displaced and a famine is looming.

With more than 70 per cent of the civilian infrastructure destroyed or severely affected, Gaza has become unliveable. We are also appalled by the Israeli air strike that led to the deaths of several workers of the humanitarian organization World Central Kitchen a week ago.

For Colombia, the convening of this plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the use of the veto in the Security Council in the voting on draft resolution S/2024/239, which sought to address the serious humanitarian crisis currently being experienced in Gaza, allows us to highlight two approaches. First, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the adoption of measures by Israel to prevent acts of genocide are urgent and necessary in order to begin to seek a lasting solution to the conflict. Secondly, the veto is an imperial, undemocratic and unjust prerogative that limits the effectiveness of the Security Council in fulfilling its mandate to maintain international peace and security, as we have seen in its repeated failure to take decisive action in the face of the barbaric acts that are occurring in Gaza.

Since the San Francisco Conference in 1945, Colombia's position on the veto has been clear and consistent. My country not only voted against granting the right of veto because we considered it an instrument contrary to the principle of sovereign equality at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations, but also anticipated the negative effects that the prerogative would have in future. For Colombia, the abolition of the veto is necessary to ensure that the Security Council adequately fulfils its mandate.

In the meantime, we insist on the need to strengthen and broaden the adherence of Member States to all mechanisms that limit the use of the veto and increase accountability when invoked, in particular in cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity — atrocities in the face of which we have a duty to protect. We refer specifically to the French-Mexican initiative, the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, the “Uniting for Peace” resolution (resolution 377 A (V)), the veto initiative and Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, and as we have stated in various international forums, the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations is imperative. The recognition of the overwhelming majority of the Assembly can no longer be subjected to the interests of a minority with special prerogatives.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank the President for convening this meeting.

We gather once again to address the appalling situation in Gaza and the use of the veto power against proposed actions in the Security Council (see S/PV.9584). It is with a heavy heart that we recall the repeated failure of the Council to come to an agreement in the face of untold human suffering and extremely serious breaches of international peace and security and ensuing threats.

Yesterday marked six months since the outbreak of the current crisis in Gaza. How differently events could have unfolded had the opportunities to stop those horrors been seized by the Security Council early on — opportunities such as draft resolution S/2023/773, submitted during our presidency of the Council last October. If adopted, thousands of lives and much suffering could have been spared. Once again, we must recall that immediate and decisive action is key to fulfilling the Council's mission.

Fortunately, resolution 2728 (2024), penned by the 10 elected members of the Security Council and calling for an immediate ceasefire during Ramadan, could finally be adopted. However, the loss of human life and time that passed until its adoption can never be recovered. Even now, resolution 2728 (2024) has not been implemented.

Here, let us be very clear. As with all other resolutions adopted by the Security Council, resolution 2728 (2024) is binding in nature and must be respected and fully implemented by all sides, without further and unacceptable delays.

We must not be satisfied with desirable but temporary measures. Just as the Council should have acted back in October, it must act now and go beyond the provisions of resolution 2728 (2024). The situation on the ground is nothing short of catastrophic. The Gaza Strip lies in ruins. The very future and the well-being of entire generations of Gazans truly hang in the balance.

We therefore urge Security Council members, in particular its permanent members, to live up to its grave responsibilities in the Charter of the United Nations and take meaningful and resolute steps to pave the way for lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the two-State solution. They will bear the immense political and moral cost of inaction or delayed and insufficient action.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank the President for convening today's meeting.

We recall, at the outset, our opposition to all uses of the veto and our consistent calls for it to be abolished.

The situation in Gaza is simply catastrophic. Civilian casualties continue to mount daily. And despite stark warnings of imminent famine, humanitarian aid into Gaza continues to be restricted by Israel.

We recall with horror the deaths of World Central Kitchen staff last week, killed by an Israeli strike while delivering desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. We demand accountability and a full, independent investigation.

More than 200 humanitarians have now been killed in Gaza since 7 October. That is a truly shocking death toll. We pay tribute to all the precious lives that have been lost, and we offer our sincere condolences to their families.

Humanitarian workers, including staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), are providing life-saving assistance under intolerable conditions. We are deeply concerned by reports that aid groups have been forced to halt operations. Those workers must be respected and protected in full accordance with international humanitarian law.

In addition, we call upon Israel to immediately lift all restrictions it has placed on the work of UNRWA. UNRWA is the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza. The blocking of deliveries into northern Gaza constitutes the intentional obstruction of life-saving assistance.

In that regard, we welcome the decision by the International Court of Justice to order additional provisional measures in the case of *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*. It is particularly significant that the March order requires Israel to take all necessary and effective measures to ensure — in full cooperation with the United Nations — the unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points. The order made by the Court in January reflected Israel's responsibility under international humanitarian law to facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access into and

throughout the Gaza Strip. While that responsibility of course still stands, the most recent legally binding order from the World court goes further. In our view, it requires Israel to assist in the distribution of aid. That reflects the increasingly dire situation on the ground. We call upon Israel to urgently implement the Court's Orders. In that regard, the message from the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Gaza rings crystal clear: either surge or starvation.

We welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), on 25 March, which demands an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and unimpeded humanitarian access. That resolution — though long overdue — was a step in the right direction. It represented clear international consensus on what needs to be done to avert further catastrophe.

However, we have not seen action. We have not seen any cessation in the deaths of innocent civilians, any stop to the destruction of civilian infrastructure, nor any substantive scaling up in humanitarian access. Famine is ever closer in the north of Gaza. That resolution is binding and must be implemented immediately.

Yesterday marked six months since Hamas launched its reprehensible attacks on 7 October 2023. We condemned those appalling attacks in the strongest possible terms then, and we do so again today. However, recognizing the trauma and terror of 7 October does not blind us to the reality of Israel's disproportionate military response, which has caused death and destruction in Gaza on a catastrophic scale. Israel's use of force in Gaza far exceeds what is permitted by international law. After six months of violence and atrocities, the situation is only becoming more precarious, with risks of regional escalation increasing daily.

The attack on the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus underlines the need for a significant and immediate de-escalation of the conflict, which is threatening to spread across the entire Middle East. The principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel must be respected in all circumstances, in accordance with international law. The Secretary-General has been clear on that, and we support him fully.

Ireland calls on all parties to the conflict to show maximum restraint in the interest of peace.

The Security Council has previously reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-

State solution — a solution in which two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We once again recall that vision and the hope that, despite the chaos and suffering of the past six months, there remains an opportunity for lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians.

Our Arab partners have been working tirelessly in recent weeks on a peace initiative that provides the framework for a comprehensive regional solution. The international community must get behind that plan.

The decision by the new Palestinian Government to formally seek full membership of the United Nations is an important step also and one which will be wholeheartedly supported by Ireland.

Mr. Vichankaiyakij (Thailand): The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza is an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. That cannot continue. An immediate ceasefire is absolutely vital as is the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. It is also essential to take the necessary steps to prevent further escalation and miscalculation which may lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region. And it is necessary and high time that concrete steps be taken to realize a viable and enduring peaceful settlement based on the two-State solution.

Thailand thus welcomes the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), on 25 March, demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as emphasizing the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to civilians. That is an important step in a series of additional steps that need to be taken to realize lasting peace and security in the region. We thus commend the Security Council for that achievement. But that resolution needs to be implemented on the ground immediately. People's lives depend on it. The Muslim holy month of Ramadan is nearing its end, but still the resolution has not been implemented in full by the parties concerned. We thus join other Member States in calling for an immediate implementation of the relevant resolutions.

Therefore, in welcoming the Council's actions, we hope that the Council will continue to follow through by not only ensuring the implementation of the resolution but also in undertaking other steps that will be necessary to further ease the plight of all people, particularly those

in Gaza, who have been suffering tremendously because of the fighting.

To that end, we urge all parties to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. We also call on all sides to respect and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law.

As Thailand has reiterated in several meetings of the United Nations, allow me to once again appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, including the remaining Thai nationals. We call for the continuation of proper treatment and care for those hostages. We thus support the ongoing negotiations by relevant parties that would secure the release of those hostages.

The protection of civilians must be a priority at all times. Thailand therefore condemns in the strongest terms all forms of violence and attacks against innocent civilians, regardless of their nationalities. We also oppose actions that would result in further forced displacement or transfer of civilians from Gaza.

We are deeply concerned about the tragic news of the recent incidents at the medical centre in Gaza, as well as with regard to the humanitarian convoy in Deir Al-Balah. The protection and safety of humanitarian aid workers must be ensured.

Thailand concurs that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza. We need to ensure funding for relief efforts, as well as rapid, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access for those in need in Gaza. In that regard, we appeal to the international community to resume funding for UNRWA and express our appreciation for those who have already done so.

Thailand reiterates its support for the collective efforts towards genuine dialogue, diplomacy, de-escalation and the use of peaceful means, with a view to finding a mutually agreed solution to the issue, in accordance with the two-State solution, with the States of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, within secured and recognized borders, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We are of the view that a veto right is not a privilege but a responsibility of the Security Council in the discharge of its primary role for the maintenance

of international peace and security. A united Council would surely make a significant improvement to the humanitarian situation in the Middle East. Please work together. All those affected by this tragic situation deserves no less.

Mr. Feruță (Romania): We welcome this debate under the veto initiative.

What happened on 7 October 2023 was not business as usual. That, alongside a condemnation of the Hamas attacks, was clearly reflected in draft resolution S/2024/239, which was put forward by the United States and vetoed by Russia and China on 22 March.

Six months later and shortly before the end of Ramadan, despite the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), on 25 March, the conflict in Gaza continues and the tremendous suffering of civilians continues as well.

My delegation welcomes the ongoing diplomatic efforts, led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt, to bring about a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza, secure the immediate release of all hostages and provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Romania still has dual-national citizens who are being kept hostage by Hamas. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages. We also call for compliance with obligations under international law in relation to all persons detained, including obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

My delegation also welcomes the wide-ranging efforts to allow more humanitarian aid to reach the Palestinian population. Last month, my Government dispatched a new batch of humanitarian assistance to a Jordanian field hospital in Gaza. And we are exploring other options to increase our support.

Humanitarian personnel and assets must be respected and protected. All parties should comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, to protect civilians and civilian objects. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as any violence and hostilities against civilians.

Romania welcomes the setting up of the humanitarian maritime corridor to Gaza and the departure of the first ship, under Cyprus's leadership. That should

complement the opening of more checkpoints by Israel to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian civilians.

Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people. Its actions can harm the Palestinian cause and the prospects of the two-State solution, which remains indispensable and the only option available for a lasting resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The two-State solution remains also indispensable for bringing just and lasting peace to the Middle East based on international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. In our view, the two-State solution will prevent the spillover of the conflict and stop other actors from fuelling it. We reiterate the call on all parties to refrain from actions that undermine the principle of the two-State solution and the viability of a future Palestinian State alongside a secure Israel.

Mr. Vasconcelos y Cruz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In just the first quarter of this year, four vetoes have been recorded in the Security Council. If that trend continues, by the end of 2024, that number could reach levels we have not seen in decades.

Mexico deplores this situation, which paralyses the United Nations in the face of particularly serious issues, such as the conflict in Gaza. Recourse to the veto invariably represents a diplomatic failure, since it reveals that the representatives that cast the veto were unable to persuade their peers during negotiations. The veto exacerbates polarization and thereby undermines our collective ability to reach agreements to preserve or restore peace.

That is why Mexico is calling again on Member States to join the French-Mexican initiative to restrict the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities. The greater the number of signatory countries, the clearer and more compelling the message will be to the permanent members of the Security Council. When the lives of thousands of people are at stake, the paralysis of the Council is unjustifiable and undermines confidence in the United Nations.

Mexico regrets the recourse to the veto by China and the Russian Federation on 22 March (see S/PV.9584). At the same time, my country recognizes the work of the elected members of the Security Council that made the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) possible. That resolution clearly and unequivocally demanded a ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, the immediate

and unconditional release of the hostages and the removal of obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. All Member States now have the duty to comply with those provisions, because the Charter of the United Nations compels us to accept and to comply with all Security Council decisions. We cannot tolerate exceptions.

Mexico renews its call for the definitive cessation of hostilities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. We remind the parties to the conflict that indiscriminate attacks and violence against the civilian population by Hamas and other extremist organizations, as well as by the Israeli army, are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Attacks directed at humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure also run counter to international law. As such, Mexico condemns the Israeli army's air strikes that caused the death of seven World Central Kitchen staff members on 1 April. We agree with other delegations that have expressed their views on the importance of an independent investigation into attacks against humanitarian personnel, regardless of their nationality, in order to determine responsibility. International humanitarian law is binding on all parties to an armed conflict, including non-State groups. To accept the selective application of international humanitarian law would be to open the door to barbarism.

Mexico strongly rejects the ongoing violent conflict in the Gaza Strip, which has cost the lives of approximately 33,000 Palestinians. That situation is particularly unacceptable during the month of Ramadan, a sacred time for millions of Muslims around the world. It should be a time of peace and reflection.

Finally, we reaffirm our support for a definitive solution to the conflict, under the premise of two States, which addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns and allows for the consolidation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State that coexists with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with international law, in particular the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): Czechia grieves for every civilian life lost and strongly supports any realistic efforts to end the civilian suffering in the conflict and prevent its recurrence in the future. The people of the region need and deserve sustainable solutions. Czechia regrets the use of veto, which prevents the Security Council from taking action in crisis situations — in which

every hour counts. Had draft resolution S/2024/239 been adopted (see S/PV.9584), it could have expedited important diplomatic efforts, including those led by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, towards the release of hostages and the establishment of a humanitarian pause to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

We recognize the efforts that subsequently led to the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) by the Security Council. We are nevertheless disappointed that the Council once again failed to condemn Hamas's horrifying acts of terror against Israel, which triggered the war and its tragic consequences. The atrocities committed by Hamas and other terrorists must leave no room for justification. We reiterate our call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any preconditions. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, where the fighting has subsequently moved. The people in Gaza have been facing a deep humanitarian crisis, with half of the population at imminent risk of famine and critical services collapsing. Full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access into and throughout the Gaza Strip is essential to provide the civilian population with life-saving assistance and basic services at scale. Therefore, Czechia has joined humanitarian efforts to avert the worsening of the already immensely dire situation in Gaza through our contributions to the World Food Programme in January and again in April. We urge all parties to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to ensure humanitarian access for the urgent provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.

The crisis in Gaza should be resolved as a matter of urgency. In the long run, Czechia remains committed to reviving a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and emphasizes that only a two-State solution can ensure the security needs of Israel and the Palestinian people's political aspirations.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President of the General Assembly for his efforts in presiding over the work of the General Assembly.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/78/PV.66).

My country's delegation thanks the delegations of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for voting against Security Council draft resolution S/2024/239, on the Israeli aggression on Gaza, submitted by the United States of America (see S/PV.9584), which disregarded the concerns and proposals of the Arab Group that were stressed during the negotiations. It also went against the wish of the majority of United Nations Member States, who have called for and continue to call for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire.

The objective of the draft resolution proposed by the United States was not to address the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza or end the genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity that continue to be perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces, which have led to the martyrdom of more than 33,000 Palestinians — mostly women and children — and injured tens of thousands of others. It was a political manoeuvre by the United States Administration, which aimed to buy additional time for the Israeli occupation to continue to perpetrate its brutal crimes against the Palestinian people and humanitarian workers. That is clear because the draft resolution does not include any demand for an immediate ceasefire. The draft resolution linked any possible ending of the aggression with an attempt to equate the Israeli occupier with the Palestinian people, who are suffering under the yoke of occupation. That is an attempt to equate the killer with the victim. The United States Administration included language in the draft resolution that allows the occupation authorities to continue their war on the Palestinian people and launch an attack on Rafah, the last resort of Gaza population, despite the warnings and calls of United Nations States Members not to do so.

The votes of the delegations of the Russian Federation and China against the draft resolution proposed by the United States reflected the values of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the international calls for a ceasefire and the need for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the prevention of the forced displacement of Palestinians and the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States Administration continues to disregard such calls. It continues to provide unlimited, carte blanche support to the Israeli authorities, protecting them from any accountability or punishment. That encourages the occupation forces to continue their

crimes and aggression, dragging the entire region into a cycle of violence and threatening regional and international peace and security — most recently by launching the Israeli terrorist aggression on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus.

Syria stresses the need for the United Nations to shoulder its responsibilities, end Israeli crimes and ensure accountability for them. Syria reaffirms that we stand with the brotherly Palestinian people in their struggle for their legitimate rights to establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and to become a full Member State of the United Nations.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Dennis Francis, for convening today's meeting of the General Assembly to discuss once again the Security Council's handling of the continued aggression by the occupying authorities against the Gaza Strip.

The Council has adopted three binding resolutions on the situation in Gaza — resolution 2712 (2023), resolution 2720 (2023) and most recently 2728 (2024) — demanding a ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, which is nearing its end. The occupying Power continues to flout international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions. It also persists in committing genocide against the Palestinian people while threatening to invade Rafah. In that context, we call upon the Security Council once again to shoulder its responsibility and reject the political considerations that clearly affected its credibility and ability to discharge its main mandate under the Charter, namely maintaining international peace and security on behalf of us all.

Such political considerations send a flawed message to the occupying Power to continue its crimes and violations of international law and international humanitarian law, without any accountability. The international community and all Security Council members should stop the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people, which has been going on for six months and has resulted in more than 33,000 civilian martyrs, predominantly women and children, as well as the unprecedented and horrific humanitarian situation caused by the occupation's aggressive military operations, which block humanitarian assistance, medicines, fuel and water while using hunger as a weapon of war, in addition to targeting humanitarian aid workers.

All those losses could have been avoided. Thousands of lives and all the related human suffering could have been spared if the Security Council had discharged its responsibility and rejected selective political considerations and double standards and if priority had been given to the principles of international law and human rights had been upheld, in particular the rights to life and self-determination. The current situation is unacceptable and flouts all universal and human values, as well as the principles on which the United Nations was founded.

In that context, my country's delegation would like to underscore the following points.

First, the occupying Power must be compelled to immediately and unconditionally implement United Nations resolutions. It must be held responsible and accountable for all its crimes against the Palestinian people.

Secondly, we need an immediate and lasting ceasefire. We must prevent the forced transfer of populations and provide international protection to Palestinians throughout the Palestinian occupied territory. We must resist the attempts of the occupying Power to invade Rafah and cause human disaster for more than 1.5 million Palestinians.

Thirdly, we must bring an end to the suffering, the starvation by blockade and the silent genocide being committed against the Palestinian people by the occupation authorities. All measures must be taken to ensure the entry of humanitarian assistance quickly and without hindrance.

We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and reject all attempts to dismantle the Agency or end its existence. We support the request of Palestine to become a full-fledged Member State of the United Nations. We stress that supporting the Palestinian rights is the moral and legal responsibility of the entire international community.

In conclusion, we reaffirm Tunisia's unwavering support for the brotherly Palestinian people in their fight against occupation and genocide. We support their struggle to have their own independent State on all Palestinian land, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital. My country's delegation reiterates its full appreciation and support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and United Nations entities to arrive at a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Lagorio (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The convening of today's plenary meeting in accordance with resolution 76/262 is a demonstration of the willingness of the States Members of the United Nations to address and attempt to respond to issues that endanger international peace and security, while seeking greater responsibility in the conduct of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The veto is a measure of last resort, and when it is used the permanent members of the Council are expected to provide exhaustive explanations to the General Assembly, which does not undermine the Security Council's authority but on the contrary reinforces the complementary relationship that the two organs must have. In that vein, Argentina supported the adoption of resolution 76/262 and considers it an important step forward in strengthening the functionality of the United Nations. The use of the veto affects the work of the Security Council and that of the Organization as a whole. According to Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council acts on behalf of the entire membership. It therefore has the legal, political and moral responsibility to act appropriately and responsibly, and its members must make decisions based on the common interests of all United Nations Member States.

First, my country would like to refer to the importance of abolishing the veto or otherwise limiting its use. The veto, in accordance with the provisions of Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, was designed as an accountability mechanism intended for the maintenance of international peace and security, reflecting a long-outdated reality and context. Argentina wants to be clear on that point: the use of the veto not only puts the efficiency of the Charter of the United Nations at risk but also casts a shadow of doubt on the future of the United Nations and its credibility. That is why the Argentine Republic has historically expressed its opposition to the use of the veto, a position taken by my country in a number of forums, such as the General Assembly — particularly in the debates on Security Council reform — and in the Security Council itself when we were a non-permanent member. The use of the veto has become a blocking mechanism that takes away the efficiency and management capacity of the United Nations with regard to one of its primary responsibilities — the maintenance of international peace and security. It therefore contributes to the increasing lack of trust in the United Nations.

Continuing to think about the current circumstances using a paradigm anchored in the aftermath of the Second World War generates more inequality and injustice for “we the peoples”, as we are named in the opening words of the Charter of the United Nations. It is for that reason that the General Assembly, through its resolution 76/262, seeks to mitigate an inexplicable and unjustified institutional vacuum.

Secondly, Argentina reiterates its condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023 against Israel and the taking of hostages. It recognizes Israel’s right to self-defence, within the framework of respect for international law, in particular international humanitarian law. It also demands the unconditional release of the hostages still held by Hamas. At the same time, Argentina deeply regrets the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in Gaza, and calls for an immediate ceasefire to allow the entry of humanitarian assistance to the affected people. The situation in Gaza is also a good example of the time and processes involved in the Security Council’s engagement with situations that pose a direct threat to international peace and security. After more than five months, the Security Council has just adopted resolution 2728 (2024), finally calling for a ceasefire — limited to the month of Ramadan — as well as the release of all hostages, humanitarian aid access and compliance with international law. That is too much time when we are talking about lives, many of them children’s lives.

In conclusion, Argentina, as it has maintained since our Organization’s beginnings, calls for a two-State solution in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): When the Security Council was created to replace the League of Nations in maintaining world peace due to the failure of the latter, it was expected that the Security Council would deal with the proliferation of global crises. Over the years, we have witnessed an imbalanced dynamic in the Council that has sometimes impeded its effectiveness, resulting in dire consequences for the civilian populations of countries and exacerbating threats to international peace and security.

As mandated by resolution 76/262, which requires the President of the General Assembly to convene a plenary meeting when a veto is cast in the Security Council, we are here for the second time during our

tenure as an elected member of the Security Council to explain the rationale behind our action when draft resolution S/2024/239 was considered (see S/PV.9584). In fulfilling the mandate of the Security Council as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, a series of attempts have been made to address the situation in the Gaza Strip following the heinous attack and taking of Israeli civilian hostages by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and in the context of Israel’s continuing military operation, which has led to the death and injury of thousands and the displacement of millions of Palestinians. Noting how difficult it has been for the Council to agree on a text calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages held by Hamas on 7 October 2023, the delegation of Sierra Leone voted in favour of draft resolution S/2024/239, which was submitted by the United States and considered by the Council on 22 March 2024, to demonstrate Sierra Leone’s commitment to achieving a sustainable cessation of hostilities, even if incremental in approach and dependent on diplomatic negotiations outside of the United Nations.

In our explanation of vote delivered in the Security Council, my delegation acknowledged that the draft resolution submitted by the penholder did not call for an unambiguous immediate ceasefire and an unconditional release of the hostages. However, given the unfolding catastrophe and the tragic and massive scale of killings and human suffering in Gaza, Sierra Leone expressed its commitment to supporting any initiatives that would lead to a ceasefire. Our vote was therefore informed by the need to support actions that could lead to an immediate and sustained ceasefire, alleviate human suffering, stop the forced displacements of Palestinians and allow for the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, water, food, bedding and shelter. Our vote was also indicative of the urgent need for all hostages held by Hamas to be released immediately. While we regret that draft resolution S/2024/239 was not adopted due to the incorporation of elements that could be misinterpreted and the lack of a consensus in the Council, we are still of the view that a Council without the privilege of a veto could have acted in a strategic and very instrumental way to amplify the demands of the majority of its members on various issues. With that, we emphasize the need for a reformed Security Council that will redefine the use of the veto, especially in situations in which the protection of civilians and humanitarian issues are of high priority.

Let me conclude by recalling the minutes, seconds, hours and days that have added up to six months of suffering, pain and anguish for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli hostages held by Hamas since 7 October 2023. I reiterate the need for parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, and to respect the provisions of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and provisional orders of the International Court of Justice.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is regrettable that, despite the grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, we find ourselves once again gathered in the General Assembly to discuss the exercise of the veto in the Security Council (see S/PV.9584). El Salvador once again calls on the Security Council to act in accordance with its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations is clear in establishing that in order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, Member States confer on the Security Council the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Charter is also clear that Member States agree to accept and comply with the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter. That is why I take this opportunity to recognize the leadership of the 10 elected members of the Security Council in the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demands an immediate ceasefire respected by all parties to the conflict. The adoption of that resolution is yet another example of the enormous value of the contributions of the elected Security Council members. My country demands that, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, that resolution and all its mandates be fully respected and implemented, including by expanding the flow of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip and strengthening its protection.

El Salvador continues to follow the situation on the ground with deep concern. We call on the parties once again to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We deplore all attacks, acts of violence and hostilities against the civilian population and civilian objects, as well as all acts of terrorism. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as guaranteed humanitarian access to address their

needs. We ask that the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to the population in the Gaza Strip be addressed and that their protection be strengthened.

We demand that account be taken of the alarming levels of acute food insecurity faced by the majority of the population. We note that famine in Gaza is imminent and that according to the most recent report of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Famine Review Committee, the main drivers of the food insecurity situation are the intensity of the conflict and the very limited or restricted access for the delivery of necessary supplies and services to the most vulnerable. Yet that is a tragedy that could be prevented or alleviated. Only an immediate and sustainable cessation of hostilities, accompanied by a sustained supply of food, water, medicine, protection services and the provision of health and sanitation services to the population, can reduce malnutrition and excess mortality. Unfortunately, if that does not happen the impact of famine on the lives of the Palestinian population now and on future generations will increase significantly every day. In that context and given the catastrophic consequences that would ensue for the Palestinian civilian population, my country joins the voices that firmly reject any ground offensive in Rafah.

El Salvador expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the more than 170 men and women who have lost their lives serving in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — the highest number of deaths of United Nations personnel in history — as well as the families of all humanitarian organizations that have suffered losses in the conflict. In that context, we emphasize the Agency's indispensable and stabilizing role, as well as the importance of resuming its funding, which must be sufficient to guarantee that the Agency can implement the mandate given to it by the General Assembly. My country rejects statements that impede its operations, create risks for its staff and hinder its ability to implement its mandate.

A two-State solution is the only way to end the long-standing conflict, as well as the only way to address the legitimate concerns of both parties, leading to reconciliation and peace in the Middle East. El Salvador wishes to remind the Security Council that it has the responsibility to ensure the implementation of the provisions of its resolutions. We therefore call on the Council to continue to actively address the

situation on the ground, monitor the implementation of its resolutions and take the necessary measures to end hostilities, release all hostages and increase the distribution of humanitarian aid. It is also necessary to ensure accountability for the countless victims of the conflict. Independent and transparent investigations must be carried out in accordance with international standards. Efforts must be made to end impunity, ensure justice and deter further violations.

Given the recent events, my country joins the call for all parties to act with the utmost restraint. Today more than ever, it is important to avoid further instability and an escalation of violence in the region. We also call on the international community to act swiftly to prevent the loss of more innocent lives, including the lives of thousands of children. Above all, efforts must be redoubled to break the cycles of violence, pain and destruction and reset the political horizon in order to promote and expedite a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict.

Mrs. Asaju (Nigeria): At the outset, my delegation would like to commend the President for convening this important meeting.

While the Charter of the United Nations is crystal clear on the promotion and protection of international law and international humanitarian law with regard to abuse of human rights and loss of lives and properties, Nigeria reiterates its position condemning the current wanton destruction of lives and properties in the State of Palestine, which has assumed a very critical dimension. Nigeria supports the call for an immediate, durable and sustainable humanitarian truce in that region. Many lives, including the lives of children and women, have been lost since the commencement of the crisis between the States of Israel and Palestine, while a great many people have been displaced. The daily increase in the numbers of displaced persons, and the shortages of humanitarian supplies due to impeded access, have had a huge impact on the people, exacerbated the disastrous humanitarian situation in the region and added to the civilian casualties.

As a promoter and protector of human rights, Nigeria urges the parties to the conflict to uphold the fundamental values of international humanitarian law, which places a premium on civilian safety and welfare. That should go beyond mere politics. The destruction of lives and property, including hospitals, refugee camps, and religious and cultural sites, is a

violation of international law. We therefore call for a full, comprehensive ceasefire and a quick de-escalation of the hostilities on both sides, which is the minimum requirement for the humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip to succeed. Nigeria also calls for a durable ceasefire, which should help us to get to a two-State solution. The seemingly permanent cycle of violence must be broken.

The Security Council finally adopted a resolution (resolution 2728 (2024)) calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of the hostages held by Hamas. All Member States should therefore do everything in their power to ensure that the resolution is implemented in full as soon as possible. Furthermore, Nigeria calls on the permanent members of the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and to rise above sectional politics in finding a solution to the current crisis between the States of Israel and Palestine by implementing a two-State formula. Nigeria supports the process for Palestine's attainment of statehood and full membership in the United Nations. In that regard, any attempt by any party to the conflict to refuse to accept a two-State solution should be firmly rejected and deemed totally unacceptable. It is imperative to understand that denying Palestine the right to statehood will prolong the conflict indefinitely. A one-State solution, with huge Palestinian populations existing without any real sense of freedom, rights or dignity, is inconceivable. The only way to address the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians is through a two-State formula. Nigeria commends the efforts of all stakeholders engaged in trying to arrive at a feasible diplomatic and political solution to the crisis based on such a formula.

In conclusion, Nigeria urges Member States to intensify their efforts to find a lasting solution to this crisis through a peace process.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): On Sunday we marked six months since Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history. For six months more than 100 innocent hostages have continued to be held by Hamas in Gaza. The United Kingdom condemns the 7 October 2023 attacks unequivocally and calls for the unconditional and immediate release of all the hostages. Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in line with international humanitarian law, as we have said from the outset. But more than 200 aid workers have died. More than 33,000 Palestinian civilians, including

12,000 children, have died. The civilians in Gaza are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. There must be a reduction in civilian casualties. I want to make three points.

First, we need to see an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. That is the fastest way to get the hostages out and much-needed aid in. Security Council resolution 2728 (2024) called for that, and we call on all the parties to implement its provisions urgently. We welcome the ongoing negotiations led by Qatar, Egypt and the United States to that end.

Secondly, more must be done to ensure that significantly more life-saving aid reaches people in need in Gaza. We have reiterated the need for Israel to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately and to urgently scale up humanitarian access. Israel has committed to taking significant steps to increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza, including allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid through the port of Ashdod and the Erez checkpoint. The United Kingdom has been urging Israel to take those steps for a long time, and they are welcome. We also need to see an improvement in the operating environment within Gaza, so that as more aid gets in, it can be distributed quickly and effectively. We call on Israel to make progress on the minimal operating requirements for the United Nations, including more visas and driver approvals and more trucks permitted to cross into Gaza. For its part, the United Kingdom has trebled its aid commitment for this financial year. We will keep doing everything we can to get more aid in by land, sea and air to reach the people in desperate need in Gaza.

Thirdly and finally, we have to focus on the vital elements for a lasting peace. They include releasing all hostages, forming a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza accompanied by an international support package, removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks on Israel, ensuring that Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and establishing a political horizon that provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-State solution.

Mrs. Segobin Maulloo (Mauritius): It is deeply regrettable that the Security Council has once again failed to fulfil its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Six months have now

passed since the outbreak of a horrific chapter in the conflict between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The world has witnessed six months of destruction, death and deprivation. After months of illegal blockades of humanitarian aid, children are now dying of malnutrition and dehydration. If we continue down that path of inaction, with parties breaching the rules of international law and international humanitarian law, in the absence of accountability and with powerful nations refusing to use their leverage, the next set of deaths will be from starvation.

Mauritius remains deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of Palestinian civilians, who are being used as a weapon of war. Two weeks ago, through its adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), the Security Council demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the holy month of Ramadan, hoping that it would create an appropriate environment for the expansion of aid and pave the way for a lasting ceasefire. Regrettably, that resolution is being blatantly disregarded as the humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorates. The fighting has continued and food insecurity has worsened. In the wake of the resolution's adoption we witnessed a particularly harrowing incident, a merciless assault on a convoy of aid workers belonging to the World Central Kitchen. The incident, which Israel has termed an accident in the fog of war, nevertheless claimed the lives of seven individuals. To echo the sentiments of the Secretary-General, it is evident that such events are the lamentable outcome of the ongoing conduct of the war. Regrettably, the death toll has continued to rise, as we are now mourning the loss of 220 humanitarian workers so far. Mauritius pays solemn tribute to those dedicated professionals who valiantly served amid conflict, offering unwavering assistance to those in need. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) and for all the parties to comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. We urge for the unconditional release of hostages and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, and we welcome the ongoing mediation efforts to achieve a cessation of hostilities.

Mauritius considers that through its illegal occupation, Israel has denied and continues to deny the basic human rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. Israel must therefore cease forthwith its unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory so that the Palestinian people

can exercise their right to an independent and viable State of their own. Mauritius reiterates its unwavering support for a two-State solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and on international law, which envisages the establishment of an independent, viable and prosperous Palestinian State, with secure and recognized borders, living in peace alongside the State of Israel. A two-State solution represents the only viable option for bringing an end to the conflict and paving the way for lasting peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting pursuant to resolution 76/262, on the use of the veto, following the Security Council's meeting of 22 March (see S/PV.9584) concerning the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The international community, in particular the Security Council, must shoulder its responsibility with respect to implementing the international resolutions related to ensuring the unimpeded supply of necessary humanitarian services and assistance to our brother Palestinian people throughout the Gaza Strip. That is essential to alleviating their suffering and their catastrophic living conditions, and to protecting civilians and preventing their forced displacement, pursuant to international law and international humanitarian law, including the Security Council's recently adopted resolution 2728 (2024). Bahrain welcomed that resolution, which demanded an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip for the holy month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting ceasefire, the expansion of unhindered humanitarian assistance to civilians, the strengthened protection of civilians in the Gaza Strip as a whole and the immediate and unconditional release of hostages. It also urges all parties to comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its call to the international community to ensure that the resolution is implemented. We appreciate the efforts of the 10 elected Council members in introducing and adopting it, particularly our sister nation of Algeria. We also welcome the additional provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice calling for accelerating the entry of humanitarian relief and medical assistance into the Gaza Strip, as well as for

increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points, which should be kept open as long as possible, in full cooperation with the United Nations.

In conclusion, Bahrain reiterates its firm position on the need for an effective international effort to end the war, prevent further deterioration of the catastrophic humanitarian situation, admit the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and revive a just, comprehensive peace process by granting our brother people of Palestine their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on a two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and resolutions of international legitimacy, in a way that brings security, stability and peace for all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Al-Khaqani (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and giving us the opportunity to once again convey to the international community our vision for the question of Palestine and our opinion of the attacks and crimes being committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the long-suffering Palestinian people.

Israel's destructive war machine has been ongoing for more than six months in the Gaza Strip. It has taken the lives of more than 32,000 Palestinians and injured more than 75,000 people. It has destroyed more than 70 per cent of infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, places of worship, homes and other civilian installations. The Security Council has been unable to exercise its legal responsibility to maintain peace and security despite the fact that the international community has welcomed its adoption of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024). The Security Council should take responsibility by implementing clear, explicit resolutions for an immediate, durable ceasefire and saving what remains of civilian lives, rather than adopting resolutions that prolong the war through weak pretexts and justifications that give the Israeli occupation forces licence to continue their systemic, brutal killing of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, while absolving the occupation forces of responsibility for the atrocious crimes that they are committing against defenceless civilians. I want to express our appreciation for the role played by the 10 elected members of the Council, in particular our sister nation of Algeria, for their efforts in introducing Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), with a view to affirming the principles of peace, respect for

international law and international humanitarian law. We also value the role of the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has been making exceptional and significant efforts under fire. We condemn the attacks and accusations against UNRWA and call on the donor countries that have suspended their financial contributions to the Agency to reconsider their decision.

Iraq supports the diplomatic work aimed at granting the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations and supporting the Palestinian people in their efforts to achieve their aspirations and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the Palestinian people, and we reject and denounce all policies and measures hostile to them. We reiterate our support for all efforts and endeavours aimed at achieving an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its long-suffering residents and finding a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/78/PV.66).

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting following the Security Council's inability to adopt draft resolution S/2024/239 owing to the use of the veto on 22 March. Today's discussion is an important opportunity for Member States to continue to address situations in which the veto is used in the Council and to discuss whether that use is appropriate or if it runs counter to the will of the international community and the needs on the ground. The holding of several such meetings in a short period of time shows how frequently the veto has been used and therefore the urgent need to conduct targeted discussions on its use to ensure that the Council can uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As we have said before, the Palestinian question may be the most appropriate agenda item for such discussions. An unprecedented humanitarian

catastrophe has been unfolding in Gaza in the past six months because of the ongoing war, which has killed tens of thousands of civilians. Today the people of Gaza are on the brink of famine. The healthcare system is on the brink of collapse, especially in the wake of Israel's destruction of most health centres, including Al-Shifa Hospital, which is the biggest healthcare institution in the Gaza Strip. There are increasing concerns about the humanitarian crisis, following Israel's widely condemned targeting of a World Central Kitchen aid convoy, which resulted in the deaths of seven workers and forced it and other humanitarian organizations to halt their operations, which are a lifeline for the people of Gaza. This catastrophic situation cannot be addressed sustainably without ending the destructive war, as a majority of Member States have acknowledged. They continue to urge the Council to adopt a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Although the draft resolution under discussion today had important elements that Council members agreed on, they did not include an explicit call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which is essential and crucial to ending the hostilities without expanding the scope of the conflict. That is why my country welcomed the Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which for the first time called for an immediate and long-awaited ceasefire, even if just for the holy month of Ramadan, and which reflected the will of a majority of the international community. We note that it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that all the parties concerned fully implement its legally binding resolution, as is also the case with resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). That requires further effort.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms the need for an urgent and durable ceasefire. It is important that the parties comply with the ceasefire, and we hope that the mediation efforts will have a fruitful outcome. Work needs to continue to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the Gaza Strip in an urgent, sustainable and unhindered way. It is important to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and release the hostages. In that context, as we are days away from Eid al-Fitr, I want to stress the need for restraint and de-escalation across the occupied Palestinian territory. It is important to allow worshippers to reach Al-Aqsa Mosque, in line with the legal and historic status of Al-Quds. Israel must respect the Hashemite custodian of sacred places in the city. It is clearer than ever that the way to end the violence is to reach a just, comprehensive and durable

settlement of the conflict. The United Arab Emirates supports Palestine's request for full membership at the United Nations. That step will send a strong message that the international community supports a two-State solution and the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Babo Soares (Timor-Leste): On 25 March, Timor-Leste welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and an urgent expansion of the flow of aid to Gaza.

Six months ago, on 7 October 2023, we were saddened by Hamas's terrorist attack on the Israeli people, which killed more than 1,000 innocent civilians, and by its taking of about 200 hostages, including women and children. On the same day, President José Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste stated that Timor-Leste strongly condemns indiscriminate attacks and the kidnapping and killing of non-combatant civilians, including women and children, whoever and wherever the perpetrators may be. There can be no justification whatsoever, political or religious, for the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Timor-Leste's position on that remains unchanged. We stress that Israel has the right to defend itself, like any other State. But we also stress that the right to self-defence must be exercised in full compliance with international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Self-defence must not result in the killing of innocent people, including women and children.

While the Security Council has adopted resolution 2728 (2024), it remains to be seen if the challenges in implementing it can be overcome. Israel's acts in self-defence have so far taken the lives of more than 32,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children. The fact that an Israeli air strike on 1 April killed seven humanitarian workers from the World Central Kitchen is deplorable, and we express our sincere condolences to their families and friends. More than 220 humanitarian workers have been killed in the past six months, the highest number of humanitarian casualties in modern times. Attacks on humanitarian workers are absolutely unacceptable.

We welcome Israel's endorsement of the proposal for a ceasefire, as announced yesterday through media reports, and we hope that Hamas will also

respond positively to it. We hope that step could be the beginning of the full implementation of resolution 2728 (2024), and we call on both parties to comply fully with international humanitarian law and with the immediate ceasefire, including through the unconditional release of hostages. Once the resolution has been endorsed, Timor-Leste proposes the following steps. All the parties must adhere to the ceasefire agreement and halt hostilities immediately. The United Nations and international organizations should be allowed to provide urgent humanitarian aid throughout the areas affected in Gaza and address the urgent needs of the civilians, including medical care, food and shelter. The United Nations should conduct an independent investigation into the continued violence and civilian fatalities to identify and register all the destruction and casualties. That includes scrutinizing the flow of aid into Gaza, in order to prevent it from being diverted elsewhere.

The international community, including the United Nations, the European Union and other organizations, should apply diplomatic pressure on both sides of the conflict with a view to ensuring respect for the ceasefire, the protection of civilians and the release of the hostages taken on 7 October. The United Nations and the international community should work to ensure the protection of civilians in Gaza, including by deploying observers or peacekeeping forces if necessary. A comprehensive political settlement based on a two-State solution should be sought. It will be crucial to prioritize the protection of civilians, release all hostages without conditions and ensure accountability for any violations of international law. The international community must work hard and together to end the violence and promote a lasting peace.

Mr. Bouthé (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Six months have passed since the terrible terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas. Since then, we have witnessed a conflict of unusual intensity, in which the civilian population, including the hostages, are the primary victims. Humanitarian workers are paying with their lives for desperately inadequate aid. That is unacceptable.

War has rules. Yet in recent days, before our eyes, and despite the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), those rules are being flouted in Gaza. Civilians are dying, including from hunger, humanitarian workers are being targeted and hospitals are being destroyed. Resolution 2728 (2024) must be implemented. In accordance with Article 25 of the

Charter of the United Nations, all Member States have agreed “to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council”. Belgium would also like to point to the obligation to implement interim measures indicated by the International Court of Justice, including the measure requesting the State of Israel to

“take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance [...] including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary”.

We must focus on two absolute priorities. The first is the protection of civilians on both sides, especially women and children, in order to relieve the immeasurable suffering that they are enduring. The second is the quest for a political solution, particularly in the face of the persistent risk of escalation and the deteriorating situation. Respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, must be our guiding principle for action.

A majority of General Assembly members condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and have since called for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the achievement of a two-State solution.

However, we are gathered here today to once again acknowledge the Security Council’s inability to make progress on those points, despite the tireless efforts of many of us. We have a collective responsibility to give life to a political process that can provide short-term solutions for all parties as well as preparing medium- and long-term agreements. Such agreements, and the security arrangements that would result from them, should both provide security guarantees for Israel and lead to the self-determination of the Palestinian people within an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State. Belgium fully supports initiatives in that regard — which include the efforts, especially those of the European Union, to establish a return to the peace process; the work on the ground led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt; the draft resolution submitted by France to the Security Council, addressing the various phases of a comprehensive solution, as well as the root causes of the conflict; and the voices of civil society, both Israeli and Palestinian, calling for dialogue and proposing concrete solutions to the extent possible. Belgium stands ready to host a dialogue for peace in order to contribute to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 63.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.