



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

**71<sup>st</sup>** plenary meeting  
Tuesday, 23 April 2024, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Francis . . . . . (Trinidad and Tobago)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Seah (Singapore), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 63 (continued)

### Use of the veto

**Mr. Massari (Italy):** Italy welcomes this opportunity to discuss resolution 76/262 and its implementation two years after its adoption under the agenda item “Use of the veto”.

This discussion is particularly timely given the continuing attacks against the United Nations multilateral system and the multiple crises that the world is facing. In that context, we wish to reiterate that the veto power of permanent members in the Security Council remains part of the problem, and this year’s record of nine vetoes cast in the Council in the period under consideration, which is three times the vetoes cast in the same period last year, confirms our convictions in that regard.

Italy was among the co-sponsors of resolution 76/262. We are of the view that the mechanism established by the resolution has contributed to strengthening the United Nations system. Convening the General Assembly automatically every time a veto is cast increases transparency and accountability. Its activation over the past 12 months, in particular with regard to vetoes cast in relation to three of the situations that most endanger international peace and security, confirms its importance. We also welcome its subsidiary

nature with respect to the Uniting for Peace resolution (resolution 377 (V)) mechanism, which continues to be a valuable instrument in ensuring political action by the United Nations with regard to the complex security crises under its consideration.

The veto power is anachronistic. While understandable in the specific historical context of 1945, nowadays it blatantly contradicts one of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations — the sovereign equality of States. On too many occasions, it has prevented the Security Council from discharging its vital responsibilities with regard to situations endangering international peace and security, in which the United Nations could have made a real difference on the ground. Any credible reform of the Security Council must depart from that awareness and build a system that is more democratic, representative, transparent, effective and accountable.

I was struck to hear this morning (see A/78/PV.70) one delegation suggesting that, on the reform of the Security Council, the negotiating group that I coordinate and represent is using a sort of hidden veto in order to obstruct the passage to text-based negotiations. I take issue with that allegation, which is both misleading and hypocritical on at least three counts. First, the Uniting for Consensus group is in favour of text-based negotiations, as soon as a convergence on the reform model matures. Secondly, many negotiating groups believe that conditions are not there yet for text-based negotiations. And thirdly, the delegation that argued that we are using a hidden veto on text-based negotiations is asking for a permanent seat with veto power for itself.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 ([verbatimrecords@un.org](mailto:verbatimrecords@un.org)). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



For the time being, we are under no illusion that the permanent five will renounce that privilege under the Charter, and their position in that respect is fully guaranteed by the amendment procedure under Article 108. However, we ask and expect them to act responsibly and to provide a full explanation to the whole membership represented in the General Assembly when they cast a veto. That expectation is largely shared by the United Nations membership, judging from the consensual adoption of the resolution and by the large participation in the meetings that have been convened on its basis.

We also call for the proper and long-overdue implementation of Article 27, paragraph 3 of the Charter, which provides for the obligation to abstain in a vote dealing with a dispute to which the member of the Council is party. That obligation applies to permanent and non-permanent members alike.

We also wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for the current initiatives seeking to limit the exercise of the veto, in particular the French-Mexican initiative and the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group.

The global challenges ahead of us — be it in the field of peace and security, sustainable development, climate action or human rights and the rule of law — need a strong multilateral response based on the rules-based international order that, all too often, is misinterpreted and disrespected. Let us take today's opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to an effective, democratic and inclusive multilateral system in which effective decision-making is not undermined by the narrow national political agendas of a few.

**Mr. Hachem** (Lebanon): We meet today at a time of increased attention to, but also of increased frustration towards, the United Nations. Recently, with each impending Security Council vote on Gaza, the eyes of the world have been drawn to this building, yearning for a long-overdue resolution to this unspeakable tragedy. Unfortunately, this building is not delivering. The United Nations has its hands tied. The Security Council is paralysed. And we are in a constant deadlock.

It is against that backdrop that the veto initiative came into being two years ago, offering a small window within which all countries, whether large or small, have a say when a veto is cast. It is with that conviction that Lebanon co-sponsored resolution 76/262, which reaffirms the important role of this universal body

and recalls that the General Assembly has a say in matters of international peace and security. We believe that the resolution is an added value to the existing code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, which calls on Security Council members not to vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt atrocity crimes, or to the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint, which Lebanon supports.

As notable as those initiatives may be, it is important to keep in mind that a comprehensive reform of the Security Council remains essential if we are to move towards a more effective and credible United Nations. Attention should be given to small States in that process, as they have served with significant distinction on the Council.

People often ask, and rightly so: What is the relevance of the United Nations? And one must admit that providing them with a satisfactory answer is not always an easy task. Yes, the multilateral edifice has its cracks. Yes, the United Nations is far from being flawless. Yet to whom should we turn? To many of us, especially small States, we turn to this very building, to the Charter of the United Nations and to international law as a shield of protection for humanity, morality and legality.

Since its inception, the United Nations has been crucial for countries like mine. As a founding Member of the United Nations, Lebanon has always considered the Organization a long-standing partner. We respect the United Nations. We believe in the United Nations. And we support a strong United Nations.

**Mr. Al-Ali** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President, for convening this important annual debate on the use of the veto in the Security Council, which we regard as a favourable opportunity to have a constructive dialogue on situations in which the veto is used.

We would like to express our grave concern about the sharp increase in the use of the veto in the Security Council over the past 12 months. Since April 2023, the veto has been used 13 times, an exceptional increase as compared to previous years. Even more worrisome is the fact that nine of those cases, namely, approximately 70 per cent, relate to issues in our region, particularly the Palestinian cause.

The Council has repeatedly been prevented from taking necessary actions, such as calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and considering Palestine's application for full membership, despite the fact that the vast majority of Member States support those steps. That worrisome pattern underscores the urgent need to reform the Security Council and ensure that the veto is not abused to undermine the will of the international community. We commend the pivotal role of the 10 elected members of the Security Council and the significant role they play in addressing urgent humanitarian issues, even in the face of divisions among the permanent members. That was evidenced by their recent success in bringing about the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip for the holy month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. We express our deep concern about Israel's failure to implement that resolution.

The frequent use of the veto and the deep divisions within the Security Council, which are caused by prioritizing geopolitical interests, undermine the international community's efforts to achieve political solutions, paralyse the Council's efforts to address many important issues and weaken the legitimacy and credibility of Security Council resolutions. Even when the veto is not used, resolutions are often adopted without consensus, limiting their impact and effectiveness.

To address that unacceptable state of affairs, we emphasize the need to establish clear and specific criteria for the use of the veto, in line with international law, the will of the vast majority of Member States and the impartial opinion of the Secretariat. We support calls to restrict the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocity crimes, including the initiative launched by France and Mexico and supported by more than 100 Member States. The veto must not stand in the way of the international community's action to prevent atrocities against defenceless civilians.

We also welcome the accountability and transparency mechanism established by resolution 76/262, pursuant to which we are meeting today. That mechanism is a step in the right direction towards limiting the excessive use of the veto and strengthening the role of the General Assembly as the conscience of the international community. However, there is still an urgent need for further efforts to reform the Security Council, especially with regard to regulating the use of the veto. In that regard, we thank the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations, His Excellency

Ambassador Tareq Albanai, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait, and His Excellency Ambassador Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Austria, for their tireless work in leading the negotiations.

The United Arab Emirates has always believed in the pivotal role of the United Nations in establishing security, peace and prosperity around the world. However, the continued abuse of the veto power undermines the confidence and hopes of people in the current international system, especially in our Arab region, which continues to suffer greatly due to wars and instability.

In conclusion, we stress the need to step up efforts to reform the Security Council and improve its methods of work.

**Mr. Young** (United Kingdom): As part of the vow in 1945 to protect future generations from the scourge of war, the founding Members of the United Nations conferred primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security upon the Security Council. As part of that, permanent members of the Council were given veto power. That is a heavy responsibility and should be used to avoid and resolve conflict. The veto should be used responsibly, and with accountability. That is why we co-sponsored resolution 76/262 in this Hall in 2022, enabling scrutiny of the use of the veto. Since then, the General Assembly has met repeatedly in response to uses of the veto — on Ukraine, twice on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on Mali, on the blocking of humanitarian assistance to north-west Syria, and on Gaza. And we listened carefully to the views of the wider membership on those occasions.

For its part, the United Kingdom has not exercised its veto since 1989 (see S/PV.2841 and S/PV.2902), and we remain committed to never voting against a credible draft resolution on preventing or ending a mass atrocity, as a proud signatory of the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence, and Transparency group. We encourage all Member States, including the other permanent members of the Council, to support this initiative.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Two years after the adoption of resolution 76/262, the importance of the mechanism created to hold the Security Council accountable to the General Assembly when the use of the veto is exercised is clear.

That demonstrates the resolution's continued relevance. In the past year, whenever the mechanism established by the resolution has been activated, the level of participation of the membership has been very high, which also demonstrates the enormous interest of all Member States in the mandate of the Security Council, which — we must not forget — acts, or fails to act, on behalf of all Member States. Let us always remember that the use of the veto is not a right, but the exercise of a great responsibility. Far from defending the collective interest through arguments to reach a consensus among Council members, the veto has hindered and perverted acting in the common interest and has fostered division among members. Those obstacles are hard to comprehend in the face of the high human cost that the international community is witnessing in situations like Gaza and Ukraine. Recently, the exercise of the veto also blocked Palestine's aspiration to become a full Member of the United Nations (see S/PV.9609), despite having the broad support of Council members and the membership of the Organization, including of my country, Mexico.

For Mexico, preventing Security Council action through the use of the veto when mass atrocities are being committed is not only an abuse and a failure of the collective security system, but also seriously contravenes the very purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and violates international law, the immediate consequence of which is none other than to leave entire populations in an absolute state of defencelessness. Resolution 76/262 undoubtedly represents an improvement in the process of strengthening the Organization and the role of the General Assembly in the area of international peace and security.

Notwithstanding the unquestionable progress that we have made, today's debate provides us the opportunity to reflect on other areas or actions that would enable us to go further. Unfortunately, we continue to witness similar cases, which is why the Franco-Mexican initiative to restrict the use of the veto, which counts 106 signatories, remains as relevant today as it was more than nine years ago when it was launched. We once again call on those who have not yet done so to join the initiative. As has been said, the initiative is fully complementary to others with the same intent, such as the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group. Mexico believes that, in order to complement those efforts, we should explore other

actions that could be taken by the General Assembly on the use of the veto in situations of mass atrocities that would give renewed impetus to the initiatives that we just mentioned and contribute to strengthening the path that resolution 76/262 has already begun to blaze.

In that regard, one aspect on which we should reflect is how to give full effect to the provisions of Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter, in particular with regard to the clause that,

“[i]n decisions under Chapter VI, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting”.

Despite being part of the Charter, the provision is consistently violated. Bearing in mind that the Council acts or fails to act on behalf of all of us, it is undeniable that the Assembly can and must have a greater say in compliance with the rules, such as paragraph 3, Article 27, of the Charter.

There are no easy solutions to the peace and security challenges facing the international community today. A genuine commitment is needed to uphold and respect the rule of law. To that end, we must begin by ensuring compliance with and upholding the integrity of the Charter; the 193 Member States of the Organization have a duty to act with less indifference, greater responsibility and in harmony with the evolution of international law so as to improve the effectiveness of the Council, revitalize the role of the General Assembly and universally ensure the protection of human rights.

**Mrs. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia is grateful for the call to discuss the use of the veto, a decisive issue that affects the functioning of the multilateral system, especially in relation to the maintenance of international peace and security. Two years ago, Member States adopted by consensus resolution 76/262, which provides for an accountability mechanism that obliges the permanent members of the Security Council that exercise their veto right to report to the General Assembly on the circumstances and considerations that have given rise to its use in order to enable the entire membership to express its views on the matter. The fact that, in 2024, the veto has already been used five times only reaffirms its importance.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Colombia defends the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the



sovereign equality of States. Consequently, my country's historical position on the veto has remained consistent and clear. Colombia stresses the need to abolish the veto, as it is a colonial and anti-democratic mechanism that limits the Security Council's legitimacy and effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate to maintain international peace and security, as demonstrated by the Council's repeated inability to take decisive action in the face of the critical situation in Gaza. For that same reason, we also do not support the Security Council reform process extending the right of veto to presumptive new permanent members.

While the conditions are being created to eliminate the veto from the Security Council's practices, we will continue to stress the need to strengthen and widen the application of existing instruments that have sought to restrict the use of the veto, especially in cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity — atrocities that we have a collective responsibility to act against. Such instruments include the French-Mexican initiative, the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, the uniting for peace principle, the veto initiative and paragraph 3, Article 27, of the Charter. In developing transparency and accountability mechanisms, we should ensure that they also reflect the rules of procedure of the Security Council, specifically rule 20, according to which the State holding the presidency during the consideration of a particular question with which is directly connected must cede that function to another member for the consideration of that question.

Colombia firmly believes that the task of reforming the Security Council requires a proactive and constructive approach — and not a defensive one — that prioritizes respect for human rights, the principles of international law and the collaborative approach outlined in Article 24 of the Charter, which states that Council members must act on behalf of all members of the Organization rather than in their individual capacity.

**Mr. Dvornyk (Ukraine):** Two years ago, Ukraine was among the initial co-sponsors of resolution 76/262. We welcome the fact that this initiative now seems to be well embedded in our working practices.

The issue of the use of the veto has always been of particular importance for Ukraine and other Member States that uphold the Charter of the United Nations and its principles. Against the backdrop of Russia's invasion

of my country, with the deliberate immobilization of the Security Council as a part of Russia's aggressive strategy, the issue has become more relevant than ever before. Nearly every draft resolution that the Security Council has attempted to adopt in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, beginning in 2014, has been blocked due to the abuse of veto by the country that once occupied the seat of the Soviet Union in the Security Council — the Russian Federation.

In particular, Russia cast a veto in 2014 on draft resolution S/2014/189, on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, when it launched an armed aggression and started its temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol; in 2015 on draft resolution S/2015/562 on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, after it shot the flight down in 2014 over the territory of Ukraine; in 2022 on draft resolution S/2022/155, condemning its aggression after it began its full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022; and, again in 2022, on draft resolution S/2022/720, on its attempted annexation of sovereign territories of Ukraine in September 2022 when, despite Russia casting the only vote against it, the Council was blocked from exercising its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

Ukraine reiterates that the veto power was designed not as a privilege but responsibility. It runs counter to the spirit of the Charter that Russia has, in recent years, misused the veto power to block draft resolutions and other measures designed to address its aggression and war crimes. Ukraine is therefore a staunch supporter of existing initiatives aiming at limiting the use of the veto and increasing accountability for States that exercise it, notably the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, drafted by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, as well as the French-Mexican initiative on the suspension of the veto in cases of mass atrocities.

In addition, we should not tolerate ongoing ignorance of the principle contained in Article 27, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter, envisaging that, in decisions under Chapter VI and under Article 52, paragraph 3, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting. Moreover, we are convinced that the use of the veto should also be restricted when a permanent member is directly involved in a conflict under the Council's consideration and therefore cannot be

expected to exercise its voting rights and privileges in an impartial manner.

The United Nations membership cannot further tolerate the abuse of the veto and should seek to strengthen accountability in that regard. We encourage the General Assembly to translate our commitment into action by strengthening existing mechanisms and implementing existing initiatives to prevent the aggressor from taking the Security Council hostage and turning it into a mere observer of the aggressor's crimes.

**Mr. Lagorio** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the establishment of the United Nations, the veto has been a form of privilege for the five permanent members of the Security Council, resulting not only in marked inequality in the functioning of the organ, but also rendering it ineffective in dealing with threats to international peace and security. It is a paradox that the veto, entrusted to the five permanent members to safeguard international peace and security, has ended up undermining the primary function of the Council.

Since the negotiations at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, Argentina has maintained a very firm position against the veto on the grounds that such a privilege violates the principle of sovereign equality among States and implies, in practice, that any State holding that privilege has the right to override the will of the other members of the Organization. The veto is an inefficient tool for the functioning of the Security Council. The Council is meant to maintain international peace and security, which it cannot do when conflicts involving any of the five permanent members frequently lead to vetoes.

In the short term, that sometimes means that the United Nations cannot intervene in situations in which international peace and security is threatened. In the long-term, that damages the image, predictability and mandate of the Security Council and the confidence in the collective security system designed by the Charter of the United Nations. For example, throughout the history of the United Nations, there have been a number of circumstances in which the Council was unable to act or its participation was limited by one of its permanent members.

When the veto is used, the permanent members of the Council are expected to provide comprehensive clarification on its use. Providing such an explanation to the General Assembly does not undermine the authority of the Security Council but, on the contrary,

reinforces the complementary relationship that the two organs should share. In that spirit, Argentina supported the adoption of resolution 76/262 and considers it an important step forward in strengthening the functioning of the United Nations.

Notwithstanding our support for the mechanism established in resolution 76/262, we understand it to be without prejudice to the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. The issue of the veto is one of the five clusters that are part of the discussions established in the intergovernmental negotiations and cannot be dealt with separately.

A credible and viable reform of the Security Council requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses all five clusters, as set out in decision 62/557. Any piecemeal approach that does not take due account of the linkages between the different clusters would be partial and would probably lead to a continuation of the Council's current inefficiency. In that connection, Argentina cannot accept formulas that seek to extend the veto to new members. It goes without saying that a Security Council with more veto possibilities will be a more inefficient Council. Efficiency and the veto are mutually exclusive.

We believe that the Security Council must be reformed in order to maximize its transparency, legitimacy and proper functioning in the eyes of the entire membership of the United Nations and of we the peoples — the very first words of the Charter of the United Nations. For that reason, Argentina wishes to underscore that the proposal for reform of the Security Council promoted by the Uniting for Consensus group, of which Argentina is a member, seeks, in the context of intergovernmental negotiations, to increase the number of non-permanent members only while suggesting, at the very least, limiting the use of the veto.

Argentina has no doubt that the veto must be abolished if the Security Council is to respond to the multiple crises facing the world. Therefore, in the short term, we must strive to find ways to limit its use, especially in circumstances such as situations involving the most serious crimes of international concern. In that regard, the Franco-Mexican initiative and the code of conduct presented by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group should be taken into account.

**Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's important debate on the use of the veto under agenda item 63.

This is important in the context of the ongoing serious polarization in the Council, resulting in an unfortunate stalemate on a number of issues that are major threats to international peace and security.

Bangladesh continues to reiterate that the General Assembly, as the most representative, inclusive and democratic organ of the United Nations, embodies international solidarity and serves as the cornerstone of multilateralism. Its work better reflects the will of the world's peoples than any other principal organ of the United Nations, including the Security Council.

We believe that it is important for the Security Council to be held accountable by the General Assembly. Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations makes it clear that

“Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf”.

Therefore, the Council's accountability to the general membership is an implicit logical expectation.

As the custodian of international peace and security, the permanent members of the Council have been endowed with the privilege of the veto. However, that privilege comes with great responsibility. We also need to realize the fact that the geopolitical realities of the world have substantially changed in comparison to the post-Second World War era, when the United Nations was established. Indeed, the composition of the Council and its workings methods, including the veto power granted to only the five permanent members, are not commensurate with the changing global political and economic dynamics of today.

The veto should not be used to disable the Council from taking important decisions, including the inclusion of new Member States. Recently we have seen the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States to accept Palestine as a full States Members of the United Nations of the United Nations nullified by a veto in the Security Council (see S/PV.9609).

The veto should also not be used to shield the violators of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, norms and practices. We have recently witnessed, on repeated occasions, how the demand for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza could not be agreed upon due to an unjustified use of the veto in

the Council. Owing to that veto, the brutal onslaught perpetrated against the Palestinians has only continued unabated, resulting in the killing of more than 35,000 civilians, 70 per cent of whom were women and girls; the starvation of millions; the obstruction of humanitarian assistance; and the destruction of houses, schools, hospitals and mosques en masse.

The veto and its undemocratic nature run counter to the very principles upon which the United Nations was built. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a continuing, inclusive and in-depth dialogue among Member States on the question of the veto. Bangladesh is ready to join the consensus that is emerging on that question. Pending that, we call for the judicious application of the veto for as long as it exists by limiting its application in certain compelling situations, such as to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and grave violations of international law.

My delegation welcomes resolution 76/262, on a standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council. This is a step forward for accountability within the United Nations system in addressing the issue of the balance of power among the principal organs of the Organization, particularly between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Indeed, the adoption of that resolution has, to some extent, strengthened the role of the General Assembly. That could discourage — at least in some cases — the excessive or unjustified use of the veto in the Security Council and could contribute to creating public awareness on the matter. Furthermore, we hope the initiative promotes a culture of dialogue, transparency and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council — ultimately leading to increased caution in the application of the veto.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that Bangladesh will continue to work constructively with other Member States, including through the intergovernmental negotiations, on Security Council reform. We believe that the process will eventually contribute positively towards improving the United Nations system, making it more efficient, transparent, inclusive and, most importantly, credible and will help preserve its Member State-driven nature in the context of the twenty-first century. Honest and frank discourse and subsequent consensus-based actions can only take us in this positive direction.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting on the second anniversary of the adoption of resolution 76/262, also known as the veto initiative, through which the General Assembly established a permanent mandate for a debate to be convened every time a veto is cast in the Security Council.

This is a central debate, not a pro forma one or a ceremonial celebration. It must therefore be included as an item on the General Assembly's agenda, without requiring a specific request for it to be held annually, since it is an indispensable deterrent tool that must be developed into a practical instrument, as the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein stated on behalf of a group of countries, including Ecuador — a statement with which we fully align ourselves (see A/78/PV.70). It is a matter of supporting the central pillar of multilateralism, that is, the role and authority of the General Assembly as the principal organ of the Organization — the most democratic, inclusive and deliberative organ of the United Nations. For that reason, I would like to acknowledge the effective implementation of resolution 76/262, with the timely convening of the necessary debates over the past two years and the Security Council's submission of its special reports, as established by the resolution's mandate.

It is imperative to note that Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations states that,

“[t]he Security Council shall submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration”.

That provision is therefore integral to the process of accountability of the Security Council to the Assembly. Accordingly, I underscore that the special reports of the Security Council, mentioned in resolution 76/262, are required regardless of whether or not a special session of the General Assembly has been convened on the issue of the veto. I stress that the veto initiative contributes to strengthening synergies and interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council. That is all the more important as the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, does not imply that it has exclusive authority in that area, except with regard to the adoption of coercive measures. Matters relating to peace and security may involve the shared authority of the Security Council

and the General Assembly, for example, in the area of disarmament.

In fact, as pertains to the interpretation of resolution 76/262, we can consider several issues. For example, if a party exercises the right of the veto in cases related to Chapter VI or Article 52, paragraph 3, of the Charter, and members of the General Assembly consider that party to be involved in the dispute concerned, it should explain why it failed to take into account the final clause of Article 27, paragraph 3, requiring it to abstain in the voting.

In that regard, in January 2023, as soon as Ecuador assumed its responsibility as an elected member of the Security Council, it stated that the partial application of the article enshrining the veto is questionable. It must also be borne in mind that Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter is not the only one that establishes a veto without mentioning it. Article 108, by which any reform requires the ratification of all the permanent members of the Security Council, also does so, as does Article 109. Nor are those the only existing veto mechanisms. We often forget the veto available to the permanent members in the process of selecting the Secretary-General. The permanent members can also block and therefore veto the distribution of the chairmanships to the Council's subsidiary bodies. The truth is that the elected members can do the same, but the dynamics are such that it generally does not happen. We must also note that it takes the vetoes of the 15 members of the Council to block a presidential or press statement or any other product of the Council, even in cases where there is a consensus within the international community, as in the case of non-proliferation.

The history of the Organization has shown us time and again that the use of the veto has not made the world safer, but less safe. For that reason, in the process of reforming the Security Council, Ecuador does not support but rather opposes the expansion of the right of the veto. We urge for limiting its use. That is why Ecuador, like the majority of delegations, believes that the Security Council must reflect the reality of the world today. However, we are not advocating that privileges in perpetuity should be expanded in accordance with the balance of power in today's world, but rather the concept and ethical model of our times, such as democracy based on the principles of rotation of powers and accountability. I trust that the reflection on mechanisms to limit the use of the veto will continue in order to develop them through creative diplomacy.



In conclusion, I reiterate Ecuador's invitation, together with Portugal and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, to attend the second annual workshop, on 13 May, to build on the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, including the use of the veto.

**Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka):** Examining the use of the veto power is not an easy undertaking. First of all, objective analysis is hampered by the fact that States often fail to provide clarification on their exact motives for casting a vote. Even when States give a public explanation, it does not necessarily correspond to the real reason. There is also the problem of the use of the so-called hidden veto, whereby a permanent member threatens to use its veto if a certain measure or statement is put to the vote. That mechanism is used mainly in closed-door informal consultations rather than in open meetings, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain information on its use and assess its effects on the work of the Security Council.

Our task today, however, is to shed some light on the exercise of the veto power in the context of the wording and, more importantly, the spirit of Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations. Looking beyond permanency itself, the veto power is probably the Charter's most significant distinction between permanent and non-permanent members. Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter, establishes that all substantive decisions of the Council must be made with "the concurring votes of the permanent members". The veto has therefore been discussed many times, regularly so during the annual working methods debates, and is among the topics more frequently raised in the context of almost all discussions of the Council's working methods.

We know that permanent members use the veto to defend their national interests, to uphold a tenet of their foreign policy or, sometimes, to promote a single issue of significant importance to a Member State. It might be interesting to note that, since the first use of the veto on a draft resolution regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops (see S/PV.23), the veto has been recorded 293 times.

It has been observed that, since the end of the Cold War, in 1991, new practices have been introduced in the use of the veto by different permanent members. I must, however, mention that those methods of use have not been altogether beneficial to Member States

and the international community, at large. Members will appreciate that the veto affects the work of the Council in numerous ways that go beyond the actual use of the veto in the course of voting. We have seen the practice of a draft resolution not being formally submitted because of the threat of the use of the veto by one or more permanent members. The Assembly will appreciate that it is not easy to document if a paper trail can be followed only if a draft is circulated as a Council document, which ordinarily happens when there is a strong expectation of the draft resolution being adopted. We have also seen that, on some occasions, a Member State sponsoring a draft resolution may put it to a vote, knowing full well that it will be vetoed, with the sole intention of recording symbolic support for a particular issue within the Council.

It is an interesting matter of record that, following the 2000 Millennium Summit, which led to the 2005 World Summit, the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes urged the permanent members, in their personal capacities, to seriously consider and commit to refraining from the use of veto in cases of genocide, serious violations of human rights and large-scale human rights abuses. After the Summit, several Governments moved the permanent members to refrain from using a veto to block any Council action that would prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Subsequently, in 2013, a group of members formed an informal caucus to promote improved Security Council working methods. That mechanism, introduced on 2 May 2013 as the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group (ACT)—a cross-regional group of 27 States that sought to increase the Council's effectiveness by improving its methods, including by introducing checks and balances pertaining to the use of the veto. The ACT mechanism worked on a code of conduct for members of the Council who are examining matters of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The code endeavours to persuade them to refrain from using their veto power in situations involving mass atrocity crimes and invites them — and any State that might aspire to become a member of the Council — to accede to the code.

Fortunately, the response was rather encouraging, with 120 Member States supporting the code of conduct, including two members of the Council and eight of the elected members who served on the Council in 2020. It is of interest to note, therefore, that starting in the 2000s, certain members have advocated

voluntary restraint by the permanent members on the exercise of the veto. There was even a ministerial event on the issue in September 2014 on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, at which the High Commissioner for Human Rights made a statement in support of that initiative, which called on the permanent five members of the Council (P5), voluntarily and collectively, not to use the veto in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes on a large scale. It is regrettable that only one of the permanent members supported the initiative.

This morning we heard the opening statement, delivered by the President of the General Assembly, followed by the statement made by His Excellency the Ambassador for Liechtenstein (see A/78/PV.70), calling for strengthening the Council's accountability through the General Assembly procedure for discussing the use of the veto. That was a salutary reminder that the veto no longer marks the end of the conversation and that we have to safeguard the credibility of the General Assembly and use its collective political will to address that serious issue.

How then should one evaluate the exercise of the veto and the numerous proposals for reform? As one academic puts it, in the view of most Member States, Article 27 is a codification of the stark reality that some States are more equal than others, whereas that proposition, of course, does not reflect the ethos of Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations, which aims to develop friendly relations between nations on the basis of respect for the hallowed principle of equal rights of peoples, or the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 1, which, in unequivocal terms, establishes the principle of sovereign equality — one of the basic pillars of the present day United Nations.

Let us not forget, however, that in 1945, the founding States were motivated by the requirement to guarantee the maintenance of peaceful relations between the principal global Powers and to garner their support in the maintenance of world peace, which could be achieved only by the adoption of a mechanism that would safeguard the important national interests of the principal Member States of the United Nations, while recognizing the fact that it would be the responsibility of those important Member States to maintain international peace and security throughout the United Nations. It is a matter of historical fact that the reasons that underpin the inclusion of Article 27 were well founded in the context of the demise of the

League of Nations. It would appear, therefore, that over the last 75 years, the P5 has banded together, ostensibly with greater accommodation on several issues of global interest. It has, however, been observed that, notwithstanding the fact that the rationale for the right of veto is not wholly unfounded, it does not mean that its use has not been problematic.

May I conclude by reminding us of the need to prevent the most worrisome type of exercise of the veto — one that impedes the Security Council from taking action in relation to international crimes and the large-scale killings of civilians, on the ground that such acts are irreconcilable with the objectives of the United Nations Charter and with the importance of basic human rights in the context of the present state of international relations. May I conclude by making the observation that although these veto debates are emotionally charged, with both parties — the P5 and other Member States — pursuing their views and paying little attention to the rationale of each other's arguments, it is Sri Lanka's view that any reform of the Charter must revisit the issue of the exercise of the veto and that it is time for all Member States, including the P5, to engage in an open and frank discussion on recent developments that compel us to pay serious attention to the requirement of the maintenance of international peace and security.

**Mr. Abesadze (Georgia):** Allow me first to thank the organizers of today's debate and express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of Liechtenstein for its continuous leadership on this matter.

We are glad to see that the general debate on the veto initiative will be scheduled automatically in future. The provisions of the veto initiative remain as relevant as they were on 26 April 2022, when resolution 76/262 was adopted by consensus. I would even say that they are even more relevant today, given the increasing number of vetoes used in the past two years.

The power of veto is not a privilege, but a responsibility that derives from the Charter of the United Nations. A detailed and comprehensive explanation of the reasons why a veto is used is an essential element for building accountable and efficient coordination between the two main organs of the United Nations. Whenever the Council fails, the General Assembly provides a platform to expose instances in which the veto was not used for its original purpose, but merely for narrow political interests. Non-Council members

now have the opportunity to respond to explanations by those who have cast a veto. Whether those explanations are plausible or not, the General Assembly continues deliberations on the issue and draws final conclusions.

That leads me to the following point: abuse of the veto power. Georgia's position on the limitation of the veto power has been clear. We fully support the political statement on the suspension of the veto in case of mass atrocities, put forward by France and Mexico during the seventieth session of the General Assembly, as well as the code of conduct concerning Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes presented by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group. At the same time, we believe that the right of veto should be restricted in those cases in which a Council member is involved in the conflict under consideration and therefore cannot impartially exercise its right. Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations states that in a series of specific important decisions, "a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting". The principles of the United Nations Charter must be upheld.

Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine has been yet another example of the inability of the Council to effectively fulfil its mandate to stop the war and prevent the bloodshed. Before Ukraine, there was Georgia. In 2008, we experienced the same fate — the failure of the Council to adequately address Russia's aggression against its sovereign neighbour. As a matter of fact, that has continued until today through the illegal occupation of two regions in Georgia, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. Addressing the misuse of veto power is therefore paramount for us.

In the meantime, we remain committed to the intergovernmental negotiations process and will address that issue in an appropriate format. It is without prejudice to the role of the Security Council in maintaining peace and security, however, that we should continue taking steps to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in cases in which there is a threat to peace or an act of aggression. Over the past two years, we have proven that the veto initiative is a significant tool at our disposal to gradually reshape the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly and ultimately increase the accountability of the Council to the wider membership.

As one of the main sponsors of the veto initiative, Georgia will do its part to contribute to that collective endeavour.

**Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz (Spain)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of today's debate on the use of the veto, which is clearly a key element of the reform of the Security Council.

Spain aligns itself with the widespread sentiment of the Member States that propose to completely abolish the veto, as it is one of the fundamental causes of the Council's current shortcomings.

There has been an exponential increase in the use of the veto in recent years. In 2021, it was used once. It was used four times in 2022, five times in 2023 and this year has already been used four times in just four months. Until we achieve the goal of eliminating the veto, we need to establish clear rules to ensure that it is used responsibly and not due to vested interest. The veto is both a privilege and a responsibility to Member States and the citizens of the world. Every time the Security Council fails to adopt a decision about international peace and security due to the use of the veto, it is a failure of our collective security architecture, resulting in specific widespread consequences in the real world and multilateralism being undermined.

Spain reiterates its support for the five permanent members committing themselves, through specific measures, to not using the veto under certain circumstances, such as in cases of mass atrocities and war crimes, in keeping with the French-Mexican initiative and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Accountability in exercising the veto is also important. In that regard, we support resolution 76/262, which also contributes to enhanced cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Spain is firmly committed to continuing to work to move towards greater convergence on those topics.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

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

**Mr. Kim Song** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to exercise its right of reply in response to the absurd claim of the representative of the Republic of Korea. To make it clear once again, we have never recognized Security Council sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which directly run counter to the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, and to the spirit of respect for the right of a sovereign State to self-defence. In fact, the sanctions resolutions of the Security Council are products of the heinous, hostile policy of the United States to trample underfoot the sovereignty and right to development and existence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As such, they are the rejects of history that should never have been born in the world. The anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea sanctions resolutions are based on extremely biased double standards and the hostile theory that the constant political and military threat and war provocations of the United States and its followers against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are considered to be self-defensive and reasonable, while the exercise of the right to self-defence by a sovereign State defending itself against the world's largest nuclear-weapon State is considered to be a threat to peace.

There are a number of nuclear-weapon States across the world, apart from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Yet only the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is subjected to the most vicious sanctions resolutions. That is attributable to connivance and the tolerance of the high-handedness and arbitrariness of the United States, which antagonizes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the unreasonable grounds that it has different ideas and systems and takes a different stance against its unjust policy. History has shown that the coercive attempts to threaten the exercise of sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been met with stronger defiance and resistance instead of solutions to the problem at hand. Even if the United States and its followers imposed sanctions for hundreds or thousands of years, they would never obstruct the independent development and build-up of deterrence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Currently, the military confrontation of the United States and the Republic of Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has become

increasingly provocative and aggressive, as never before. As is widely known, United States and Republic of Korea military warmongers staged a combined joint formation drill, with more than 100 war planes of various kinds above the Korean peninsula, starting on 12 April. They have even gone further to incite extreme war fever, while completely taking off their masks of defence and deterrence and openly clamouring for an advance against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Not content with frequently introducing nuclear strategic assets into the surrounding areas of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and staging war drills, the United States and the Republic of Korea are giving greater publicity to the fact that the drill is aimed directly at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Worse still, the United States and the Republic of Korea special unit staged a joint airborne infiltration drill for the purpose of rapidly infiltrating any region of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in order to remove a target.

In the face of the fact that the security environment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is seriously threatened by the hostile forces' ceaseless military provocations to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by force, we will more overwhelmingly and more rapidly bolster our strongest military capabilities, which are capable of proactively controlling the situation to ensure the security of the country and peace in the region.

**Ms. Tak** (Republic of Korea): I would like to briefly respond to the groundless allegations just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding the so-called Republic of Korea-United States hostile policy towards Pyongyang.

We would first like to emphasize that such allegations are groundless and deceptive. We should not put the cart before the horse. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ever-growing unlawful nuclear and missile threats are the very reason that we are strengthening extended deterrence cooperation with the United States, and not the other way around. It is a legitimate response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued escalatory and dangerous behaviour, including its overt threat to use nuclear weapons.

We firmly believe that our efforts to enhance deterrence on the Korean Peninsula will contribute to regional peace and stability. My country's Government,



as a responsible Government, has a duty to protect the lives and safety of our people from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's military threats. The combined defence and deterrence posture, including our combined exercises and training, is in response to the ever-growing military threat by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such exercises and training are long-standing, routine and defensive in nature. They are announced in advance and conducted based on existing plans, of which the fundamental objective is to defend our homeland against aggression.

**The Acting President:** I ask the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to limit his second intervention to five minutes.

**Mr. Kim Song** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I feel compelled to take the floor again in response to the provocative statement by the representative of the Republic of Korea, who I would duly advise to carefully read the Charter of the United Nations. All activities of the United Nations system, including the Security Council, are built on the cardinal principles enshrined in the Charter, namely,

the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of States.

The frequent deployment of United States nuclear assets and joint military drills aimed at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in and around the Korean Peninsula are the root causes of a vicious cycle of tensions, and nobody would deny that. Worse still, the United States and the Republic of Korea dare to speak about regime change. Frightened dogs bark louder. The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on. An increase in provocations will only incur a more resolute response from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea's self-destructive policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will only worsen its security crisis.

**The Acting President:** There being no further requests for the floor, the General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 63.

*The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*