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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 18 (continued)

Sustainable development

Draft resolutions (A/78/L.95 and A/78/L.99)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.95.

Mr. Lapasov (Uzbekistan): I have the honour to present draft resolution A/78/L.95, entitled “Fostering sustainable forest management, including afforestation and reforestation, in degraded lands, including drylands, as an effective solution to environmental challenges”.

I express my gratitude to all Member and Observer States, including some 90 sponsors, for their support and active engagement in the negotiation process. Every single input and recommendation of delegations helped to make the text concise, focused and action-oriented.

As we struggle to minimize the negative impacts of climate change, among others, forests and trees serve as effective, nature-based solutions. They cover nearly 31 per cent of the world and are home to more than 80 per cent of all animals and plants on land. Forests contain over half of the global carbon stock in soils and vegetation. Trees purify our air, help regulate the climate, protect against natural hazards, prevent soil erosion, conserve the water cycle, increase biodiversity, support the economy and improve the health of ecosystems. All of those benefits necessitate making sustainable forest management an important component of responses to

global challenges and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The world is experiencing a tree-planting boom. The vast majority of countries are advancing ambitious forest goals at the national level. Stakeholders, including local communities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and youth, scientific, academic and philanthropic organizations are joining together to promote sustainable forest management.

I am pleased to note that Uzbekistan is also implementing the large-scale afforestation programme Yashil Makon — meaning “Green Space” — put forward by His Excellency President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The programme is aimed at planting 1 billion trees across the country. We have afforested over 2 million hectares on the desiccated seabed of the Aral Sea, once the world’s fourth-largest inland lake, which has lost 90 per cent of its original size due to an environmental catastrophe. Planted trees are contributing to curb harmful sandstorms, improve the ecosystem and create income for local communities, especially women.

In submitting the draft resolution, we were guided by the simple and noble aspiration of promoting sustainable forest management and tree planting for the benefit of people and nature. There is no path to climate neutral without forests and trees. The text builds on the consensual resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, relevant environmental entities and, most significantly, the outcome documents of the nineteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

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). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The draft resolution emphasizes the role of forests and trees in mitigating the effects of air, water and soil pollution, increasing biodiversity, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and providing opportunities for agroforestry and ecotourism. The draft resolution also stresses the importance of strengthening international cooperation, as well as public-private partnerships at all levels.

At the heart of the draft resolution lies the fundamental principle of planting the right tree in the right place for the right reason. Therefore, the draft reaffirms the contribution of nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches to combating desertification, and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss. We believe that, with strong political will and collective efforts, we can tap the vast economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainable forest management, afforestation and reforestation.

The adoption of the draft resolution by the chief policy-making body of the United Nations will send a strong signal to the world community, confirming once again our commitment to protecting nature for current and future generations. We express our sincere gratitude to those countries that have already sponsored the draft and encourage others to do so.

In conclusion, I call on all delegations, once the draft resolution is adopted, to mobilize our efforts to translate our commitments into actions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.99.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour, on behalf of Tajikistan and my country, France, to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.99, by which the General Assembly will proclaim the period from 2025 to 2034 as the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences.

Glaciers and the poles are among the first victims of climate change. Their role in regulating climate and ocean levels and preserving biodiversity is increasingly under threat. Their preservation is a key factor in mitigating global warming; these areas help to stabilize the global climate system, and their disappearance would have unpredictable consequences for life on Earth.

Glaciers and the poles also represent a major challenge for climate adaptation. We know that melting ice and rising sea levels threaten hundreds of millions

of human lives. The disappearance of half the world's glaciers this century represents an immense challenge to the populations that depend on them, particularly the 2 billion people whose access to fresh water comes directly from glacier runoff. Thawing permafrost poses major risks in terms of carbon dioxide release and increased risk of natural disasters. Their preservation is therefore essential.

The cryosphere — the frozen components of the Earth's system, located mainly on and below the surface of land — is an essential resource for our planet's equilibrium. While the phenomenon of melting ice is virtually irreversible, taking the cryosphere as a whole into account can still make the difference in averting catastrophe and enabling ecosystems and populations to adapt.

Hundreds of scientists from around the world, Government representatives and civil society met in Paris at the One Planet - Polar Summit in November 2023 and the Glaciers Forum, which was held during the third High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 to take stock of the accelerating collapse of the cryosphere, to foster cooperation for the successful implementation of the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, 2025, and to bridge the data-knowledge gap, with a focus on the cryosphere.

At the One Planet - Polar Summit, more than 30 countries, with the support of UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and at the impetus of the President of the French Republic, launched an international appeal for the poles and glaciers, with a commitment to launching a decade of cryospheric sciences from 2025 to 2034. The aim is to intensify international scientific cooperation and devote increased financial resources to better protect the environment in those areas and launch new actions to adapt to climate change, for example in the face of rising sea levels.

The United Nations decade will provide the impetus and political resolve needed to make the issue a priority on the multilateral agenda. The International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation, to be held in Tajikistan in 2025, will make an important contribution in that regard. Let us make the decade a demonstration of how the United Nations enables us to move forward in terms of universal cooperation for science and for the environment.

To conclude, let me once again, on behalf of France and Tajikistan, express our sincere gratitude to all delegations for the constructive and valuable proposals and flexibility they demonstrated during the informal negotiations. Our special thanks also go to UNESCO and WMO, as the lead agencies in the implementation of the decade, for their support in this important process. We look forward to working with all Member States, the United Nations agencies, in particular UNESCO and WMO, as well as relevant stakeholders, especially within the Group of Friends of Glaciers, to achieve the goals and objectives of the decade.

We would also thank all the Member States that have sponsored the draft resolution, now numbering 64, and invite others to join the initiative today. The next generations are counting on us. It would also be an honour to be able to count on the Assembly's unanimous support so that draft resolution A/78/L.99 can be adopted by consensus.

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

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/78/L.95, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Chad, China, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Estonia, France, the Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lebanon, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Monaco, Montenegro, Nepal, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/78/L.99, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belize, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, China, Colombia, the Comoros, the Congo, Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Gabon, Georgia, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, India,

Ireland, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, North Macedonia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

The President: We shall now take action on draft resolutions A/78/L.95 and A/78/L.99.

The Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.95, entitled "Fostering sustainable forest management, including afforestation and reforestation, in degraded lands, including drylands, as an effective solution to environmental challenges".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.95?

Draft resolution A/78/L.95 was adopted (resolution 78/320).

The President: The Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.99, entitled "Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences, 2025-2034".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.99?

Draft resolution A/78/L.99 was adopted (resolution 78/321).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18 at its 100th plenary meeting on 16 July 2024. In order for the Assembly to take action on draft resolution A/78/L.98, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 18 (continued)**Sustainable development****(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States****Draft resolution (A/78/L.98)**

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.98.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

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

The requests referred to in paragraphs 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 23 of draft resolution A/78/L.98, entitled “Multidimensional vulnerability index”, would entail new activities in 2025 and subsequent years, including, inter alia, support for the maintenance and future improvements of the multidimensional vulnerability index, including substantive and conferencing services support for the Statistical Commission and an independent expert advisory panel, as well as technical support for the development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles. Adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to budgetary implications for additional resources in the range of \$210,000 to \$260,000 in 2025, and in the range of \$40,000 to \$440,000 annually in subsequent years, with the high end of that range relating to 2027, when the pilot testing of the vulnerability-resilience country profiles is envisaged to take place. Detailed cost estimates would be developed following further internal consultation within the Secretariat.

Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, a revised estimates report would be submitted for consideration by the General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, during the main part of its seventy-ninth session, detailing the requirements for which an additional appropriation would be requested for 2025. Requirements for 2026 and thereafter would be presented

in the proposed programme budgets for consideration by the General Assembly in the applicable years.

The President: The Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.98, entitled “Multidimensional vulnerability index”.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.98?

Draft resolution A/78/L.98 was adopted (resolution 78/322).

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

Mr. Luteru (Samoa): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Our United Nations embarked on a journey four years ago to deliver the empirical grounding for what we know to be true — that a single-layered approach to development is not fit for purpose. The emerging ground-breaking work on the multidimensional vulnerability index was advocated for by the small island developing States (SIDS) and developed by the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, and has now been agreed to by the General Assembly, bringing together years of technical and political considerations.

As the poet Victor Hugo reminded us, “There is nothing else in the world so powerful as an idea whose time has come”. Thus, the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) offers the opportunity, through its whole and its components, to provide context when seeking to deliver sustainable development. It gives a better understanding of our individual and collective vulnerabilities so that we may better position ourselves for decisions we take and, more importantly, those taken on our behalf.

To fully envision the strength of the MVI, one needs only to consider four periods of time. First was the world of 1994, where the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States — the first international conference on SIDS — espoused the agreement that the vulnerabilities faced by that group of countries warranted a fairer approach. Secondly, the height of the coronavirus disease pandemic brought into stark reality the vulnerability of SIDS economies and

livelihoods. In its unfolding, it became the most pressing rationale for embarking on the work to deliver the MVI and motivating the United Nations to act. Third is the present, where justice has not prevailed and challenges seem to have instead expanded, where disasters can delay development, where climate change exacts its toll, and where debt payments overwhelm development spending. Fourth is where the future we desire for all the world's countries and peoples is achieved.

Today offers us another opportunity to fulfil our global commitments to each other. It is here in 2024 that we can, after decades of intransigence, commit to the development of SIDS. It is through the employment of the MVI that we can begin anew.

AOSIS holds no notion of a rose-tinted world. We know that the MVI will not strip away the system we know. AOSIS hopes that it will instead provide dimensionality and context and that it will usher in a broadened and deeper thinking of the limits of vulnerability in development. AOSIS trusts that this hard-won achievement will not be lauded only to be abandoned, as if the development of the MVI were the sole gain. AOSIS, in line with the tenets of resolution 78/322, calls for the immediate testing of the MVI by the United Nations system, donors, development banks and financial institutions. We wish to see the MVI deployed in real-world contexts and, through its testing and eventual refinement, unlock a new way of thinking and acting on development — a new approach that will bring benefits to all of us as we work together to address the common challenges our world faces.

Multilateralism can seem so slow that it is mistaken for negligence. The only way to dispel that notion is to act — to act for the attainment of justice; to act for the development we all seek; to act resolutely for all of us.

AOSIS welcomes this day with much acclaim. We see it as the culmination of advocacy and work by many beyond our fold and a point of departure towards a better future. It is the crescendo and the genesis. We thank the Secretary-General for sharing our vision, the co-Chairs and members of the High-level Panel, who have produced a seminal body of work, and the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process, Antigua and Barbuda and Portugal, which, together with the General Assembly, have ushered in a new era. We thank them all.

Mr. Reynolds (Australia): We are pleased to be here for the adoption of resolution 78/322 today and

to deliver this short statement on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

CANZ has been steadfast in its commitment to the development of the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI). We recognize that decisions about eligibility for international support should not rely solely on income measures, such as gross national income. CANZ will continue to advocate for an improved understanding of vulnerability across the multilateral system and international organizations. We see the adoption of the resolution as an important first step and echo the statement made today on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States about the need to commence piloting of the MVI without delay.

Ms. Williams (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The group aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

This is a defining moment for CARICOM. It is a moment where political will and reality converge, reflecting the shared aspirations for the past three decades of the most vulnerable group of countries. CARICOM stands before the Assembly, humble yet determined as the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) finds its rightful place, anchored in history and agreed upon by consensus within the General Assembly. The adoption of the MVI today is more than symbolic for our countries. Our territories may be small in scale, but our challenges are monumental. We tread a precarious path, constantly at the mercy of climate chaos and nature's relentless forces. As Secretary-General António Guterres poignantly reminds us, the climate emergency is a race that we are losing, but it is a race that we can win.

Our economies remain fragile in the face of our vulnerabilities. For CARICOM, those are not distant concerns. They are the very currents that shape our daily existence and collective destiny. The challenges we face, from rising sea levels to devastating hurricanes to crippling debt, know no borders and our response must be equally holistic and inclusive. The MVI offers a comprehensive and inclusive framework that goes beyond the traditional metrics to capture the true complexity of our vulnerabilities. It allows the international community to look deeper and to understand our plight and the urgent need for tailored support and response.

The MVI should be integrated into the fabric of global decision-making processes, influencing policy and guiding resource allocation. It must serve as a tool for advocacy and a framework for mobilizing international financial support. CARICOM calls upon Member States and all stakeholders to deepen their understanding of and engagement with the MVI. Let us forge partnerships and collaboration that transcend geographical boundaries, rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility. We need to strengthen resilience, enhance adaptive capacities and invest in sustainable, inclusive development. The MVI is one such tool in that approach.

We must also ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are amplified and heard. That includes not only small island developing States, but other vulnerable developing countries. Equity and justice must underpin our collective response to our vulnerabilities, ensuring that no one is left behind. Our journey for collective response measures in the face of our vulnerabilities does not end here at this adoption. The world cannot afford to overlook the vulnerabilities that bind us together. It is through our united efforts that we will pave the way to building resilience, equity and shared prosperity. The adoption of the MVI is but the first step.

We call upon the United Nations development partners, international financial institutions and all relevant stakeholders to expedite the process of testing and the implementation of the MVI. Let us translate this significant milestone into tangible actions, robust policies and targeted interventions that will safeguard our nations and uplift our people. For us to do otherwise would run counter to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In closing, CARICOM extends its heartfelt thanks to the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental process, Antigua and Barbuda and Portugal, for their unwavering leadership and dedication in bringing this transformative initiative to fruition. The efforts of the chair of AOSIS and all Member States have paved the way for a more equitable and resilient future for all vulnerable developing countries.

Ms. Sørensen (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

First of all, we congratulate Antigua and Barbuda and Portugal on their successful work as co-facilitators of the important resolution 78/322. We thank all the members of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, under the leadership of Prime Ministers Browne and Solberg, for their important report.

The EU welcomes the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) endorsed here today. The small island developing States (SIDS) and other vulnerable countries face development challenges and vulnerabilities that are insufficiently reflected in the common national income indexes, such as gross domestic product and gross national income per capita. By collecting more and disaggregated reliable data, the MVI can give a greater understanding to inform decisions. The EU encourages all development institutions to build on that important tool and to better integrate factors for vulnerability into their analysis and action. We hope to work with all partners to ensure that the specific needs of developing countries are recognized and met.

SIDS have waited decades for this day to arrive — for the General Assembly to take note of the final report of the High-level Panel on MVI and to decide to advance the MVI. We note that, as resolution 78/322 says, the index, initially proposed by SIDS, is aimed at capturing the exogenous vulnerabilities and lack of resilience to exogenous shocks of all developing countries. We need the MVI as an analytical instrument to stimulate action. On the all-important climate change issue, the EU will continue to work closely with partners worldwide, in particular with the most vulnerable, including the least developed countries and SIDS. We can take the MVI into account as one analytical tool to further upscale those partnerships. \

To summarize, the MVI is an important step in recognizing structural vulnerability and the lack of structural resilience across different dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. Using the MVI will allow us to gain a more nuanced understanding of a country's development needs and to stimulate pivotal action. The EU and its member States look forward to continue supporting the MVI and its implementation.

Mr. Lages (Portugal): I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda and my own country, Portugal, as co-facilitators of the

intergovernmental process on the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI).

Since our nomination as co-facilitators of the process in February, we have come a long way. The road that took us here was not always easy. And yet, today's adoption by consensus of resolution 78/322 shows that we were able to stand united around the core aspects of the implementation of a tool that can be beneficial to so many of us. As we look back to the mandate that served as a basis for our process, I believe that we were able to find answers to the core tenets that it contained.

The text that was just adopted not only keeps the MVI alive, avoiding the risk of yet another shelved report, but it also gives clear and realistic guidance for its implementation and further strengthening. It gives us intergovernmentally agreed language that does not reopen the report of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States.

In a nutshell, the resolution recognizes that the MVI fills a gap in existing metrics. It welcomes the work of the High-Level Panel and decides to advance the implementation of the index. It confirms that the scope of the MVI encompasses all developing countries, while recognizing the special leadership role played by small island developing States in advocating for the index. It underlines that the use of the MVI is voluntary and guided by the needs of the end-user, while charting a path for its use not only by the United Nations, but also by international financial institutions, other international organizations and development partners. It charts the way forward regarding future improvements of the index, while recognizing the value of the product in its current form. Finally, it establishes a governance mechanism for the MVI with the right balance between technical independence and intergovernmental ownership.

In other words, today's resolution gets the MVI up and running. The international community now has at its disposal an objective definition of structural vulnerability and a tool that is able to measure it. That is the result of a long process that started in 1994 with the call for the development of vulnerability indices in the United Nations Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, precisely 30 years ago.

As States and international organizations prepare to use the MVI for such purposes as policy planning,

development cooperation or access to resources, it is clear that the road does not end here. But we have certainly come a long way.

In my national capacity, allow me to thank, also on behalf of my Permanent Representative, our colleagues from Antigua and Barbuda and from the Secretariat for their excellent cooperation over the past six months. This result could not have been achieved without their tireless engagement and team spirit.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): First, I align my statement with those delivered by the representative of Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS), and by the representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis, on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

I must offer commendation and appreciation to my fellow co-Chairs from Portugal, Ambassador Rui Vinhas and Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias. The success of the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) would not have been possible without the expert advice, guidance and support of our colleagues Mr. Tumasie Blair of Antigua and Barbuda and Mr. Afonso Lages of Portugal; the support of the MVI secretariat, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; and the significant input of the expert negotiators who participated in the process.

It was 30 years ago that this all started. Back then, the call was clear. Small island developing States sensed danger ahead and wanted a mechanism in place that would take into account the perils that they would face. Four years ago, the then Chair of AOSIS, Belize, rekindled that flame in a letter to the Secretary-General, demanding action in the face of the unprecedented situation in which we lived at that time — the global shocks that the small island developing States and the international community were facing — and the need for a multidimensional vulnerability index. It was then that Antigua and Barbuda, in its capacity as Chair of AOSIS, took up the mantle and coalesced political and technical support, driving the need and attention for the MVI to centre stage of the global consciousness. Then came the establishment of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, co-Chaired

by Prime Minister Browne of Antigua and Barbuda and Ms. Erna Solberg, former Prime Minister of Norway.

It is with profound gratitude and a sense of momentous responsibility that Antigua and Barbuda has taken the floor this morning upon the adoption by consensus of the MVI (resolution 78/322). We have just adopted an instrument that authentically captures the true and multifaceted vulnerabilities faced by developing countries. For far too long, conventional metrics fell short of capturing the challenges that our nations navigate: climate change, environmental disasters and global economic, social and health-related shocks. Gross domestic product alone was a narrow lens, obscuring the broader, more nuanced realities that shape our resilience and development.

The adoption of the MVI today speaks to a forward-thinking international community ready to transcend outdated paradigms and embrace a multidimensional approach that mirrors the complexity that our nations face in today's world. In that light, we commend the vision and effort embodied in the MVI, which aligns with our efforts to reform the international financial architecture and provides the type of guidance required in the current discussions of "beyond GDP", which are aimed at recalibrating our collective approach to development and sustainability.

We are acutely aware that the United Nations, in its quest for consensus and inclusivity, has often been perceived as ponderous in its decision-making. However, let me affirm unequivocally that the urgent need for the MVI cannot be overstated. For many vulnerable countries, especially the small island developing States, the stakes are existential. They are too high. The MVI is far too critical to be ensnared and entangled by bureaucratic inertia. It is a vital lifeline, integral to our survival, resilience and dignity.

The creation, adoption and approval today of the MVI by the General Assembly are but the first stride in the long journey ahead. The imperative now is swift and decisive action as we move forward. The MVI is a declaration by the General Assembly for us to accelerate our collective efforts, ensuring that this innovative tool transcends deliberations and translates into tangible, transformative action for all. The adoption today must be matched by the expeditious implementation and active utilization of the MVI by the United Nations agencies, our development partners, international financial institutions and other stakeholders.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda urges all stakeholders to embrace the MVI with the vigour, immediacy and expediency it demands. Let us turn its consensual adoption into a clarion call for swift, coordinated and resolute action. Let us ensure that our most vulnerable do not continue to shoulder the burden of outdated systems but are instead empowered by the new index, which truly reflects the lived realities of those nations.

From the Summit of the Future to the upcoming fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the MVI must be a continued feature, especially as we look forward to and beyond 2030. With collective will and unwavering determination on the part of us all, we can redefine and reshape global development, ensuring equity, justice, resilience and access to finance for all vulnerable countries. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda will remain fully committed to and engaged in all stages of work and all areas of the implementation of that most historic and momentous tool. We remain committed to seeing the MVI as an exciting tool for development and developing countries through to its conclusion.

Mr. Madeleine (Seychelles): Seychelles aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Today is an important day as the General Assembly adopts the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI), four years after the Secretary-General heeded our call for a mechanism that would take into account the vulnerabilities of small island developing States. Be it our susceptibility to a changing climate or mounting debt burden, the vulnerabilities we face cannot be mitigated by our modest means, which leaves us to contend with a challenging economic landscape, ultimately hindering our development and restricting our potential for future growth.

Addressing them requires a more targeted approach. Through the work of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, diligently steered by its co-Chairs, Prime Minister Browne of Antigua and Barbuda and former Prime Minister Solberg of Norway, we have a functional index that measures vulnerability and resilience, introduces relevant indicators into the traditional equations, alongside gross national income per capita, and provides a tool for necessary structural transformation, together with the Antigua and Barbuda

Agenda for Small Island Developing States, which the General Assembly has already adopted (see resolution 78/317). The course is set, and we can embark towards resilience and sustainable development. Seychelles thanks the High-level Panel, co-facilitators Antigua and Barbuda and Portugal, and all delegations for their engagement and willingness to see this through. It represents a triumph of the United Nations endeavour to leave no one behind.

We see this not only as a culmination of hard work and collective effort, but also as a new beginning. It is only when the MVI is applied that some countries will cease to be precluded from opportunities and their economic graduation will cease to be a burden. Our hope is that this path leads to a stronger enabling environment to allow all countries, particularly those that are vulnerable, to serve to secure a prosperous future.

Ms. Soomro (United Kingdom): I should like to begin by thanking Antigua and Barbuda and Portugal for their successful facilitation of resolution 78/322 and their commitment and hard work in pursuing this important agenda.

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI), which reiterates the importance of measuring vulnerability and resilience by highlighting and targeting challenges faced by countries in special situations. The United Kingdom believes that this should help contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have heard in many statements today how important it is for donors to take vulnerability and fragility into consideration when making decisions. I should like to set out that the United Kingdom, as co-Chair of the Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance, supported countries in special situations by simplifying access and allocating \$130 million more to least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. We encourage all providers of finance to implement the Glasgow Climate Pact's principle to consider vulnerability in finance decisions.

I would also like to note that the United Kingdom, in our capacity as co-Chair of the joint task force of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is pleased that at the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States we launched a partnership to deliver solutions to the challenges faced by small

island developing States. That partnership supports commitments made in the MVI resolution, strengthening data and statistics collection, increasing capacity to absorb and use finance effectively, and considering how the MVI can be integrated into donor programming.

In that regard, we support the continued work on the MVI through the United Nations governance arrangements, including the role of an MVI secretariat, the Independent Expert Advisory Panel and the United Nations Statistical Commission, while encouraging the full utilization and expertise relevant to the MVI of all United Nations development agencies. We take note of the High-level Panel's final report and support the MVI as a living tool that will need continued revisions to ensure its relevance. The United Kingdom will continue to engage to enhance the MVI's technical robustness to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Mr. May (Fiji): First and foremost, Fiji would like to thank Ambassador Webson of Antigua and Barbuda and Ambassador Vinhas of Portugal for their stewardship and commitment throughout the arduous intergovernmental process that enabled us to reach this important milestone on an issue that has been evolving for a while. The outcome of our action today will be a fundamental turning point for global governance in ensuring that development finance is tailored equitably in line with the unique vulnerabilities of Member States — a call that is peculiar to our situation and was underscored recently in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States.

We align our statement with that delivered by the representative of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Long has been the debate as to how developing and highly vulnerable Member States, such as the small island developing States (SIDS), can be mainstreamed appropriately in ensuring their access to development finance. Resolution 78/322, which we have adopted today, will go a long way towards realizing the long-standing development aspirations of SIDS like Fiji and many similar countries in the Pacific, due to the pressing global challenges posed by climate change, sea level rise, natural disasters and public health emergencies, in addition to our inherent challenges, such as the size of our economies, which lack the economy of scale, and our distance to market, to name a few, exacerbating both our resilience and our recovery.

In saying that, Fiji recognizes that the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) is not perfect and is not an end in itself. Instead, it is a critical living tool to complement existing indices and metrics, which should contribute to the knowledge gap for a comprehensive understanding of development realities to complement traditional economic indicators, like gross national income and gross domestic product. The MVI will further allow the identification of tailored solutions that should be directly proportional with the level of our vulnerabilities. In that regard, we are open to considering additional indicators to be included in future iterations of the index, as well as indicators for refinement, to effectively capture countries' vulnerabilities.

The MVI will be useful in making a credible case that a country's structural vulnerability justifies enhanced international support. It can help capture those specific vulnerabilities and, by extension, allow countries to advocate for tailored solutions, including international cooperation. With that, the MVI stands a credible chance of being more proactive in building resilience, as opposed to the traditional and less effective reactive ways, which are post-trauma response, relief and recovery.

Moving forward, Fiji will be keen to engage in its practical applications, including as an actionable item in the pact for the future. That includes its wider awareness drive for its implementation by development partners, such as the international financial institutions. We are also open to considering pilot testing the vulnerability-resilience country profiles, in line with the spirit of the resolution.

Finally, Fiji is thankful to the President of the General Assembly, the Alliance of Small Island States, the Secretariat and our development partners for their support. We may be geographically remote, but our problems are not ours to face alone. Global solidarity and cooperation should be at the heart of achieving our Sustainable Development Goals, and we look forward to seeing the MVI make tangible progress to that effect on the ground.

Mr. Heartney (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join consensus on resolution 78/322, on the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI). We appreciate the flexibility shown by delegations throughout the negotiation process. In particular, we appreciate the exhaustive efforts of the

co-facilitators, Portugal and Antigua and Barbuda, to achieve a consensus outcome.

The United States would like to note that the scope of the MVI is intended to capture all developing countries' exposure to risk to exogenous shocks and stressors, as well as exposure over time. We also note the voluntary use of MVI, including by bilateral development partners. We have heard their note about the universal nature of MVI and its applicability to all countries. International financial institutions, including the multilateral development banks, along with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, have their own Government structures, mandates and decision-making processes, independent of the United Nations, to ensure that they remain fiscally solvent and able to support the objectives of their members. It could potentially undermine the intended function of those entities if the United Nations were to make specific recommendations regarding those entities. We refer Members to our full explanation of position posted online, clarifying United States policy positions on the MVI's scope, applicability and the independence of international bodies.

Although we sometimes differ on our preferred approaches, we believe that all of us share the same goals and are committed to working together to address global challenges.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia is improperly designated as a middle-income country with significant challenges in achieving sustainable development. That is why we have stressed in multilateral scenarios the need to better understand the approach to the varied and specific development challenges confronted by countries through an approach that goes beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and that understands the context of each country.

Colombia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Our country has extraordinarily biodiverse ecosystems, including islands that are exposed to the impact of climate change, that in general are exposed to exogenous risks. At the same time, Colombia is also exposed to endogenous factors that condition our ability to advance on the path of sustainable development.

With that in mind, we acknowledge and support the effort that is being undertaken within the United Nations to design multidimensional indicators that serve as criteria for measurement beyond GDP. We

consider the multidimensional vulnerability index to be a first step in the effort to capture and give greater visibility to the multiplicity of factors shaping the development of countries. To that end, Colombia adopted a very constructive and participatory approach in the discussions that took place during the informal consultations of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, as well as in the intergovernmental negotiating process on the index. In any case, we take this opportunity to clearly state our position and specify the following.

Colombia acknowledges the importance of the multidimensional vulnerability index in giving greater visibility to exogenous factors that affect the development of small island developing States. We recognize that the multidimensional vulnerability index is designed to reflect those structural challenges changes. That is why its scope should not be universal or used as a general measurement of the development of countries.

We stress that the use and applicability of the index by countries must be voluntary in nature and informed by national contexts and by indicators and statistics appropriate for each country. We also stress that the index should not be used, directly or indirectly, as a criterion to limit the access of developing countries to development cooperation, condition negotiations that take place in other multilateral forums or reduce the concessional nature of credits. The use of the index in the programmes of the United Nations system should complement existing measures and be guided by the voluntary nature of its use and the interests of each country, inter alia, based on their specific profiles of vulnerability and resilience. International financial institutions and multilateral development banks should apply the index only as a complement to other development measurements and only to countries that voluntarily accept its use.

Regarding the characterization of the country profiles regarding vulnerability and resilience, each country must voluntarily decide whether the index should or should not inform its national development processes or plans. The index takes only exogenous factors into account. Therefore, for countries like Colombia, its application is limited and its vulnerability is not sufficiently or appropriately reflected.

For our country, the index that has been adopted today is a work in progress that will require substantive improvements in an open and intergovernmental process. Therefore, in the process of improving the index, the role played by the United Nations institutions will be very important, as will the promotion of shared experiences and good practices to the development of indices by the United Nations Statistical Commission, which we believe should be the custodian of the index so as to ensure that all developing countries benefit from it.

The President: At this point, allow me to add my own words of thanks and, indeed, commendation to Ambassador Walton Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, and Ambassador Rui Vinhas, Permanent Representative of Portugal, co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process pursuant to resolution 78/232. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias for her critical contribution to the intergovernmental process.

I am pleased that the General Assembly has adopted today a framework that provides concrete guidance on the applicability, scope, custodianship and governance of the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) — all that will be necessary to ensure that developing countries receive the necessary support, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The need for the MVI arises from the necessity to recognize that vulnerability to exogenous shocks is itself an impediment to a country's sustainable development. We know that the exorbitant costs of climate change, debt burden, health emergencies and, especially, disaster prevention, preparation and recovery are an increasing burden on countries that are the most vulnerable to external shock. We now have the framework with which the international community can measure that vulnerability.

I should like to thank all delegations for their dedication and flexibility in ensuring that we have an agreed way forward to finally implement the MVI. I should also take a moment to pay tribute to all small island developing States. Had it not been for their steadfast advocacy many decades ago, we would not have been here today.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

*Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia), Vice-President,
took the Chair.*

Agenda item 69 (continued)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Draft resolution (A/78/L.96)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Francia Márquez Mina, Vice President of the Republic of Colombia, to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.96.

Ms. Márquez Mina (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): I extend warm greetings to you, Sir, and to all the delegations present here.

I should like to begin by telling a story about my country that demonstrates the distinct forms of discrimination that affect Afro-descendant women and that give a sense of the importance of draft resolution A/78/L.96, to be adopted today. In the context of the Colombian armed conflict, a woman of African descent recalled how an armed actor raped and marked her body with a hot iron, just as in the time of slavery. The woman described that she was marked as though she was someone's property. That unfortunate event occurred in 2000. It was included in the report of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition as evidence of the continuing effects of slavery on black or Afro-descendant women.

There is no doubt that this is an example of how intersectional racial, class and gender violence is inflicted on women, young people, teenagers and girls of African descent. I have no doubt that events like this occur in every country around the world. Afro-descendant women continue to be invisible as political objects. They suffer levels of poverty higher than the rest of the population. They are underrepresented in decision-making and they are more vulnerable to violations of human rights and the rights of their communities. They are erased from official statistics. It is therefore important to advance differentiated policies that allow for women and girls of African descent to occupy roles that historically have been denied to them, such as access to education, economic empowerment, political participation and decision-making.

Afro-descendant women are the ongoing victims of racial and sexist stereotypes that do violence to them. States, the media and social organizations must commit themselves to not perpetuating stereotypes and to guaranteeing representation that underscores their dignity and autonomy.

Thirty-two years ago, aware of the global challenges that women of African descent confront, Afro-descendant women met in the city of Santo Domingo to develop an agenda to confront racism, discrimination and inequalities, as well as to give visibility and recognition to the contributions that they had made to achieving a more just, equitable, egalitarian and peaceful world. Since then, the date of 25 July has been recognized as the International Day of Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diaspora Women. I thank them most sincerely.

Today, we have an opportunity to recognize 25 July as International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent within the United Nations system. That path has been made possible thanks to the joint efforts that we have undertaken with the brotherly country of Brazil. I openly acknowledge the fundamental role of Brazil in advancing the racial justice agenda around the world. Furthermore, I want to express my solidarity with the Brazilian people at this very difficult time due to the loss of many lives on 9 August.

I thank those countries that have sponsored the draft resolution for their support and efforts to reach a consensus through their active and transparent participation in the consultation process.

In the future, events will be organized every year on 25 July in many countries to recognize women and girls of African descent. That recognition should be translated into public policies that promote their development and restore their dignity. This is a very important moment because the first International Decade for People of African Descent, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 68/237 of 2013, will come to an end. Taking into account the fact that the historic debt to people of African descent is far from settled, we must work with other countries to achieve the declaration of a second decade.

On another important point, the renewed international agenda for the next few decades must include an in-depth dialogue on historic reparations as a mechanism to bridge racial gaps and combat the consequences of slavery that linger to this day. Colombia

will continue to work strongly and tirelessly until we make sure that dignity becomes an everyday fact.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.96.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/78/L.96, the following countries have also become sponsors: Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Namibia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Niger, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Togo, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

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

Ms. Banaken Elél (Cameroon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group would like to reiterate its attachment to people of African descent all over the world and its unwavering support for all initiatives aimed at combatting racism and racial discrimination and at promoting and protecting the rights and well-being of people of African descent. We therefore welcome draft resolution A/78/L.96 and congratulate the main sponsors, Brazil and Colombia, on initiating the proclamation of an international day of women and girls of African descent. The adoption of the draft resolution will serve as a positive marker for the last

year of the current International Decade for People of African Descent, which ends on 31 December.

The group emphasizes the need to recognize and celebrate the positive contribution of people of African descent, including women, to the development of societies and the importance of ensuring their active and significant involvement in the decision-making process, as underlined in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which is the foundational reference when it comes to African descent issues.

Both resolution 68/237, proclaiming the International Decade for People of African Descent, and resolution 75/314, establishing the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent, contain several references to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The African Group therefore regrets the lack of reference to the DDPA in the draft submitted for adoption. That is particularly concerning as the draft resolution is submitted under agenda item 69, "Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". It is worth recalling that the DDPA considers it essential that all countries recognize the cultural, economic, political and scientific contributions made by people of African descent, including women, and address their long-standing inequality in terms of access to, inter alia, education, health care and housing, which has been a profound cause of the socioeconomic disparities that affect the participation and decision-making of women of African descent in all aspects of society.

We encourage all countries, in celebrating women of African descent every year on 25 July, to use the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action as a road map in designing activities to mark that important day.

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): We, too, would like to congratulate the co-facilitators and main sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.96.

The draft resolution that we are about to adopt today is a significant milestone, as it gives due recognition to the reality that women and girls of African descent face unique and compounded forms of discrimination. It is a fundamental acknowledgement that discrimination is varied and multifaceted. It intersects and creates a unique set of circumstances for those groups that experience the acute nature of such discrimination. South Africa has held this assertion for many years and is pleased to observe the adoption of this symbolic gesture.

As just pointed out in the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of African States, which South Africa supports, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) places strong emphasis on the intersection of race and gender, recognizing that women of African descent face unique and compounded forms of discrimination. It calls for targeted actions to address those challenges, to promote equality and to empower women of African descent to fully participate in all aspects of society. The DDPA remains a critical document for guiding global efforts to combat racism and promote the rights of women of African descent.

As such, South Africa would like to introduce an oral amendment to reflect the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in the seventh preambular paragraph of the draft resolution that is before us. The language that is being proposed is extracted from resolution 75/314, from which the seventh preambular paragraph was taken, but where we saw that the last part of the paragraph that relates to contributing to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was omitted. We therefore call for an oral amendment to that preambular paragraph whereby the phrase “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development” would be followed by the phrase “and in this regard contributing to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action”.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): On the understanding that there has been a request for a vote on the oral amendment proposed by the delegation of South Africa, I would like to make the following statement.

We are very grateful that Colombia invited Brazil to join this initiative, which is fully in line with the traditional priority given to the promotion of the rights of people of African descent, particularly women and girls, in the combat against all forms of discrimination in Brazil’s foreign policy. I also express Brazil’s deep gratitude to the many delegations that have decided to kindly co-sponsor draft resolution A/78/L.96.

As is well known, not only does Brazil support the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, but we also actively and constructively participated in its negotiations. Our position remains the same and we regret that we have come to a point where language referencing it will be put to a vote. At the same time, Brazil and Colombia have been transparent and clear

since the beginning of the process in their willingness to keep the text procedural and consensual. We have also held inclusive and comprehensive negotiations. For those reasons, my delegation will abstain in the voting.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia is making this explanation of vote to the amendment introduced by the delegation of South Africa to draft resolution A/78/L.96, entitled “International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent”.

My delegation will abstain in the voting on the amendment because it does not modify in any way the spirit of the draft resolution. My country has historically supported multilateral frameworks in the area of racial discrimination and has been actively committed to achieving concrete results in implementing the International Decade for People of African Descent. Colombia and Brazil have promoted a process of inclusive, participatory and absolutely transparent consultations.

The draft text that is being presented for the consideration of the General Assembly is the result of a successful silence procedure. We therefore believe that the amendment presented is extemporaneous, given that the draft was presented to delegations in a timely fashion and well in advance. Colombia is committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons of African descent, especially women and girls, and will continue to support all initiatives that genuinely contribute to advancing that agenda.

Mr. Heartney (United States of America): The United States would like to just briefly note our concerns about the procedural process.

We believe that Colombia and Brazil ran a very good process. They held a number of informal discussions. They were wide-ranging. They were open to all countries giving their positions. After that process, there was a consensus document which, as was just noted, passed the silence procedure. That was about a month ago, so there have been ample opportunities to raise these issues before.

It is a difficult process for countries to get instructions when there is an amendment like this presented at the last minute. Because of those procedural concerns, we are going to abstain in the voting. I will also emphasize that the United States strongly supports draft resolution A/78/L.96 and co-sponsored it.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic): We would like to speak both before and after the adoption of draft resolution A/78/L.96, but before the adoption our position is a reflection of what my dear colleague from Brazil said.

Brazil and Colombia did a good job and there is no confusion as to how they did it. We always trusted the way they conducted the procedure. Now the idea is, as my colleague from Brazil said, that they were trying to reach a consensual text. That is the reason why Brazil and Colombia did not include the reference to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in the draft resolution. That is my understanding.

We all know that there is a certain delegation that has a major problem with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and we all know the reason behind that. We are not going to talk about that now, but we will after the voting. What I believe our colleague from Brazil was saying is that he was aiming to achieve a consensual text. We think that we should be aiming for a rightful text, which means that no reference to racial discrimination should be made without reference to the Durban Declaration. For that reason, Syria will of course support the oral amendment presented by South Africa.

Procedurally, the oral amendment was introduced by South Africa and will be voted on. Who asked for a vote on South Africa's oral amendment?

The Acting President: The representative of South Africa has submitted an oral amendment to draft resolution A/78/L.96.

In accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on the oral amendment submitted by the representative of South Africa.

A recorded vote has been requested.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic): On a point of order, I have the same question again, Sir. You said that a recorded vote had been request on the oral amendment. Who asked for the vote? I need you to clarify that point. I apologize for interrupting the process.

The Acting President: For the information of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel requested a recorded vote on the oral amendment.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

The oral amendment was adopted by 61 votes to 1, with 78 abstentions.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.96, entitled "International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent", as orally amended.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.96?

Draft resolution A/78/L.96, as orally amended, was adopted (resolution 78/323).

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

Ms. Mendoza Elguea (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): Mexico thanks Colombia and Brazil for introducing resolution 78/323. We believe that it is extremely important to recognize the contributions of Afro-descendant women and girls to our societies, which is why we co-sponsored the resolution.

Regarding the amendment presented by the delegation of South Africa, Mexico abstained in the voting. Mexico recognizes the important role that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action plays in advancing the promotion, protection and guarantee of the human rights of Afro-descendant people, and in that sense we reiterate our support for the Programme of Action and its implementation.

Although Mexico appreciates the substantive contribution of the amendment's language, we believe that the circumstances of its presentation distorted the transparent and open process conducted by the facilitators from Colombia and Brazil. We regret that the proponents did not present the amendment's language during the negotiations. Mexico maintains a spirit of respect for the principles of good faith and negotiating procedures of the United Nations, and for all those reasons abstained in the voting on the amendment.

Mexico confirms our indelible commitment to the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights for all people, as well as to the overriding objective and spirit of this important resolution.

Mr. Shapir Ben Naftaly (Israel): My delegation recognizes the significance of resolution 78/323 and did not want to impede the process. Having said that, since some countries chose to introduce an oral amendment at the last minute that had not been agreed upon, and did so in a non-constructive manner, Israel called for a recorded vote on the amendment. This method of process is not acceptable to us and it should be noted.

Israel's position on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is well known and we dissociate ourselves from the seventh preambular paragraph and ask that our position be noted in the official records of the meeting. Regardless, we wish to highlight our support for the substance of the resolution. Preventing racial and gender-based discrimination and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls of African descent is crucial to the full enjoyment of their human rights. Israel will continue working with all partners to advance that goal.

Mrs. Arab Bafrani (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts of the co-facilitators, Brazil and Colombia, and their dedication to reaching common ground among a variety of Member States' perspectives on the issue resulting in the consensual resolution 78/323, on the International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent.

While recognizing the significant contribution of women and girls of African descent to the development of their societies, we acknowledge the vitality and relevance of the resolution in commemorating the global fight against slavery and racism. Systematic racism and white supremacy, as rooted in enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism, profoundly affect people of African descent, particularly women and girls. We acknowledge and respect the right of Africans and people of African descent to fight against racism. We stand in solidarity with their struggle and recognize the historical and ongoing impacts of racism and discrimination on their everyday lives. We support their efforts to advocate for their rights, dignity and well-being, and we commit to amplifying their voices.

The International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent should primarily focus on addressing the specific challenges faced by those women and girls, including the systematic racism, discrimination, violence and economic inequality they experience. While fully supporting the oral amendment proposed by South Africa, we would like to highlight the existence of widespread concerns over the lack of political will and resources to effectively implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action two decades after its adoption.

As part of its commitment to combatting racism and racial discrimination, the Islamic Republic of

Iran submitted its combined twentieth to twenty-seventh periodic reports on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2022. However, despite the importance of the resolution, its substance remains of critical importance to my delegation. It should be drafted in a culturally sensitive manner and respect the national, religious and legal backgrounds of Member States. In that regard, while joining the consensus on the text and the amendment, and having voted in favour of the amendment, the Islamic Republic of Iran disassociates itself from any terminology or literature in paragraph 3 that does not align with our national, religious and cultural characteristics.

Mr. Mogyorósi (Hungary): Hungary regrets that South Africa submitted the oral amendment at such a late stage, which did not allow sufficient time for consultation with capitals. However, we applaud upholding the constructive spirit the co-facilitators displayed during the negotiations. Our delegation abstained in the voting on the amendment and joined the consensus on resolution 78/323.

We dissociate ourselves from the seventh preambular paragraph. Furthermore, considering that the new paragraph has changed the text to such an extent that it is no longer supportable for us, we hereby withdraw our co-sponsorship.

Mr. Padilla Gonzalez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to welcome the presence of the Vice President of Colombia, Francia Márquez Mina, at this meeting and congratulate her on the initiative presented today to the General Assembly. Cuba is grateful for her presence.

The delegation of Cuba would like to thank Colombia and Brazil for the very timely resolution 78/323, entitled “International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent”. The initiative calls the attention of the General Assembly to a topic of extreme importance, especially for African countries and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are founded on the rich heritage of Africa. African blood flows in the veins of all the girls and women of Latin America.

We appreciate the open and inclusive process of negotiations of the resolution. At the same time, I want to thank South Africa for presenting the oral amendment, aimed at introducing into the text an issue that we believe to be of extreme importance. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is

a pillar of international efforts to eradicate racism and racial discrimination. Although it is not surprising, it is regrettable that some delegations should question the historic and programmatic value of Durban.

Fortunately, a clear majority of countries is committed to eradicating racism and racial discrimination, using the provisions of Durban as our guide. Cuba will always be proud of its African heritage, without which nothing that is considered Cuban today could be explained. Pursuant to that historic and unchangeable position, Cuba supported the amendment presented by South Africa and expresses its wholehearted support for the resolution adopted at this meeting.

Mr. Escobar (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic reaffirms its commitment to the protection of the individual rights of all persons without distinction. We condemn all forms of discrimination envisioned in the international treaties to which we are a party, including the human rights instruments pertaining to girls and women, which we have raised to constitutional status. We recall that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which Argentina adhered in 2015, is composed of legally non-binding provisions that each State has the right to interpret and implement as it sees fit, given the different capacities and levels of development of each State, and respecting its national priorities and policies as provided for in resolution 70/1, which was adopted by consensus.

Mrs. Jabou Bessadok (Tunisia): I would like to thank the co-facilitators for the good resolution 78/323, and South Africa for the oral amendment.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is very important to Tunisia. Tunisia supports the rights of all women and girls all over the world, but mainly girls and women with African roots and of African descent. We therefore do not think that today we can talk about combating racism without mentioning the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Tunisia strongly supported the amendment and the resolution with the amendment introduced by South Africa, which we deem to be excellent.

Mrs. Asaju (Nigeria): My delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 78/323 and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of Group of African States, and would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

We also welcome the amendment proposed by the representative of South Africa.

Women and girls of African descent are disproportionately impacted by the burden of poverty driven by colonialism, transatlantic slavery, the slave trade and structural and institutional discrimination, including many human rights challenges such as racial discrimination, segregation, limited access to education, health-care service, market, loans, technology and employment. Everywhere around the world and on every day that passes, too many people of African descent, including women and girls, are the victims of countless injustices and human rights violations and abuses.

Nigeria remains concerned over the alarming increase in the phenomena of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, all forms of discrimination and other related intolerance, in particular against women and girls around the world because of their pigmentation or any form of natural affiliation. That warrants the need for the voices of all people of African descent to be heard and acted upon, and for the resolution on the International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent to be observed not just as another day but as one on which to take tangible steps and actions to put an end to all forms of discrimination against women and girls, especially racial and racially related forms of discrimination.

We are convinced that the elaboration of the United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent is vital for a more effective response to systemic racism and racial discrimination. It will also reinvigorate consistent engagements on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

We remain convinced that the United Nations remains the central platform for raising awareness of the multifaceted plights of people of African descent, particularly women and girls. The date of 25 July every year must be dedicated to educating the public on historical facts and issues of concern related to racism and racial discrimination, while mobilizing political will at the national, regional and international levels to address those global problems.

In conclusion, we call on United Nations Member States to consider innovative ways of leveraging equality and equity to achieve accountability and justice for victims of racial discrimination and abuse, thereby

laying formidable foundations for transformational, inclusive and equal societies. Nigeria is committed to ensuring the equality of all human beings, irrespective of their colour, race, religion or tribe. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be a mirage without the free, full, meaningful and equal participation of all human beings, especially women and girls of African descent.

Every moment and right now should be the time to fight and win against all forms of racial discrimination. Every decade should be the international decade of all people of African descent. Every day should be the International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent.

Ms. Rizk (Egypt): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of African States before the adoption of resolution 78/323. We acknowledge the fact that the co-facilitators, Brazil and Colombia, held a transparent and inclusive process of negotiations on the procedural resolution, which was brief given its procedural nature.

My delegation participated in the negotiations and requested the inclusion of a reference to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) in the text. The DDPA remains the document that lies at the heart of the agenda of the elimination of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The General Assembly would have been remiss and we, as the collective membership of the Organization, would have been inconsistent with our political commitments if we had adopted a resolution on women of African descent without referencing that key document. Accordingly, my delegation congratulates South Africa on presenting the amendment, for which we voted in favour.

Mr. Tchalare (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Togo aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States and would like to make the following comments.

Our country has always been committed to promoting the role of the diaspora in the economic development of Africa in particular and to the question of people of African descent. Evidence of that was the African Union's 2021 declaration, at Togo's initiative, of the years 2021-2031 as the Decade of African Roots and Diasporas. I note that, while stressing our commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, we were unable to consult with our capital regarding South Africa's amendment. Similarly, while we remain

committed to the consensus adoption of the resolution, we no longer wish to be a co-sponsor.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic): This is a statement to explain our position after the adoption of resolution 78/323.

Why were we voting just now? For those who have just joined us, we had a resolution with only two components. That was our understanding — a resolution with only two components: women and Africa. Those two components are widely, internationally and unanimously recognized and supported. So why would we vote on a resolution like this, some might ask. I do not believe that any of us actually have a problem with the text itself. That is not the case.

But apparently there was someone hidden around here who had a problem with the content of the text presented by South Africa. Why does a country in the heart of Africa have to present an amendment on a resolution about those who are descended from Africa in order to address its concerns? I am going to earn my PhD on this one, by the way. It is amazing. Who holds the responsibility for this failure? Is it the co-facilitators? I do not believe that this is the case. I believe that there is someone behind the scenes.

Having said that, however, I have heard many of our colleagues say that we did not have time to seek instructions. I think it was my colleague from the United States who said that his delegation had not had time to seek instructions because the amendment was presented an hour or two ago. That is completely legitimate, but what we believe that South Africa was doing was filling the gap in the text. That is why we supported it. The Syrian delegation did not seek instructions because if I went back to my capital seeking instructions on an amendment presented by South Africa on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, I would be jeopardizing my career. We do not need instructions for that. We are a major supporter of the Durban Declaration and we see it as a perfect fit for a text like this. Our concern was not about why the language was presented. Our concern was why it took so long to present the amendment to all of us. Again, there can be no resolution on racial discrimination without mentioning the Durban Declaration.

Now, the second part of my statement concerns what I call the theory of the red dot. It is a theory completely developed by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic. The dot, as we can see, is the only red

dot on the voting record for the amendment presented by South Africa. It is a really small dot, but it tells the whole story about what we are witnessing nowadays. The red dot is the sign of injustice. The red dot is the embodiment of atrocities. The red dot is the black hole of all ages. The red dot is the stain on the forehead of humanity.

We are honoured that we took a stand beside our colleagues from South Africa and voted in favour of the amendment. Even if the resolution had been adopted by a recorded vote, we would have voted in its favour. But what we have witnessed today is, again, what we are seeing every day from those who are committing racial discrimination. Theirs is the only red dot on the voting record. I do not believe that they are committing discrimination because they are killing everyone in Gaza without discrimination. Everyone is being killed in Gaza because of their policies and because of their attack on civilians.

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States and presents these additional remarks in our national capacity.

Resolution 78/323, which we adopted today, is a significant milestone as it gives due recognition to the reality that women and girls of African descent face unique and compounded forms of discrimination. It is a fundamental acknowledgement that discrimination is varied and multifaceted. It intersects and creates a unique set of circumstances for those groups that experience the acute nature of such discrimination. South Africa has held this assertion for many years and is pleased to observe the adoption of this symbolic gesture.

The fight against gender inequality and the empowerment of women and girls is a central focus of the Sustainable Development Goals and a critical component of the deliberations on the pact for the future. Gender inequality is systemic and requires deliberate actions to address the persistent impact of discrimination as a critical component towards the advancement of humanity. Similarly, the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances is also a recognition of the systemic injustices that pervade society. Systemic racism has invaded our societies, and we have witnessed racist acts being committed by authorities against people of differing race groups, from police violence to access

to education and even to urban planning decisions and financial support. The importance of recognizing institutional racism within our societies is another step that could be undertaken by States to address racism within our societies. Yet the scourge continues.

It is therefore an important mark to recognize the convergence of those two deliberate injustices through a commemorative day. South Africa sought to co-sponsor the resolution, yet we could not do so for the simple reason that the resolution that creates the commemorative day did not originally give due recognition to the global master plan to fight racism, namely, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA). The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was developed more than 20 years ago and remains more relevant than ever. South Africa was therefore of the view that the omission of the DDPA undermined the spirit and objective of the resolution.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action places a strong emphasis on the intersection of race and gender, recognizing that women of African descent face unique and compounded forms of discrimination. It calls for targeted actions to address those challenges, promote equality and empower women of African descent to fully participate in all aspects of society. The DDPA remains a critical document for guiding global efforts to combat racism and promote the rights of women of African descent.

The continued racialization of the global agenda remains with us today and it is now more important than ever that we act collectively to address the multiple and intersecting problems facing the world. It is time for the world to take action on gender inequality and the empowerment of all women and girls, as well as racism and racial discrimination, using all of the agreed international frameworks at our disposal. We need to mainstream a gender perspective and pursue an anti-racist agenda with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the DDPA, through their respective commonalities and intersectionality, at the centre of our efforts.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 69?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: I invite the attention of the General Assembly to draft decision A/78/L.102, circulated under sub-item (c) of agenda item 75, entitled “Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction”.

Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 75 at its 73rd plenary meeting on 24 April 2023. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft decision, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 75.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 75?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 75 (continued)

Oceans and the law of the sea

(c) Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction

Draft decision (A/78/L.102)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belize to introduce draft decision A/78/L.102.

Mr. Fuller (Belize): I have the honour to introduce draft decision A/78/L.102, entitled “Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction”, on behalf of Australia and my own country, Belize.

Pursuant to resolution 78/272, establishing the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond

National Jurisdiction, and to prepare for the convening of the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement, an organizational meeting of the Commission was held from 24 to 26 June.

During the meeting, a bureau was constituted and co-Chairs from Australia and Belize were elected. The Preparatory Commission took decisions on organizational matters, which are contained in the co-Chair's statement delivered at the closing of the meeting and presented as document A/AC.296/2024/4. Those decisions include the Commission's decision to convene a first and a second session in 2025 and at least one further session in the first half of 2026, with full conference services for the duration of those substantive sessions.

The draft decision before the Assembly today implements the outcomes of the Preparatory Commission's organizational meeting. It is a simple procedural action, which is required to ensure the facilities and services necessary for the Preparatory Commission to continue its work, as agreed by the Commission.

First, the draft decision requests the Secretary-General to convene the first and second sessions of the preparatory commission from 14 to 25 April and from 18 to 29 August 2025, respectively, and to convene at least one session of 10 working days in 2026, on dates to be determined in consultation with the co-Chairs, with full conference services.

Secondly, it requests the Secretary-General to make proposals in the proposed programme budget for 2025 in order to strengthen the capacity of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat to continue to provide the Commission with the assistance necessary for the performance of its work.

The adoption of the draft decision is fundamental for the work of the Preparatory Commission to commence. We therefore call on all Member States to support the draft decision.

In closing, Belize and Australia welcome the support of all delegations with appreciation as we work to effectively implement the mandate of the Commission.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/78/L.102.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

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

Under the terms of the draft decision, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to convene the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Commission from 14 to 25 April and from 18 to 29 August 2025, respectively, and to convene at least one session of 10 working days in 2026, on dates to be determined in consultation with the co-Chairs, with full conference services, including documentation, provision for parallel meetings and overtime, webcast and press and meeting coverage, for the duration of the substantive sessions; and also request the Secretary-General to make proposals in the context of the proposed programme budget for 2025 in order to strengthen the capacity of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat to continue to provide the Preparatory Commission, including any intersessional work that may be convened by the co-Chairs, with the assistance necessary for the performance of its work, including meeting and secretariat services and the provision of essential background information and relevant documents.

The request contained in the draft decision would constitute an addition to the workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Department of Global Communications, the Department of Operational Support, the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Department of Safety and Security. At this stage, it is estimated that the budget implications for 2025 would be in the range of \$1.8 million to \$2.2 million and for 2026 from \$1.4 million to \$1.7 million. The budget implications would cover both post and non-post resources that would be required until such time that the secretariat to be established under article 50 of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction commences its functions.

With regard to the request for the provision for overtime, as indicated in draft decision A/78/L.102, in line with the decision of the Committee on Conferences as endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 56/242, “meetings normally should be held during regular meeting hours, namely, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.” Accordingly, the Secretariat wishes to inform the Assembly that, when considering conference entitlements for calendar bodies, only regular meeting hours should be included. Arrangements to provide services, including interpretation, after regular hours would be considered by the Secretariat in each individual case, depending on capacity and funding.

Should the General Assembly adopt the draft decision, a revised estimates report would be submitted for consideration by the General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, during the main part of its seventy-ninth session, detailing the requirements for which an additional appropriation would be requested for 2025. Requirements for 2026 and thereafter would be presented in the proposed programme budgets for consideration by the General Assembly in the applicable years.

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

Ms. Antonova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The position of the Russian Federation regarding the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction is well known and has not changed. Our country does not intend to participate in that instrument, since its provisions contradict the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Law of the Sea Convention relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and infringe on the competence and scope of responsibility of existing regional and sectoral international organizations, including regional fisheries. The document seeks to establish a hierarchical structure by placing existing competent intergovernmental organizations in a subordinate position. We will resolutely oppose any such attempts.

In addition, during the development of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity, the task of finding

a fair balance between conservation and sustainable use completely failed. It provides for the possibility of establishing marine protected areas in the world ocean by decisions of a political body — a conference of the parties in isolation from real scientific data and understanding of the specifics of a particular region. Such a scheme of work is suitable for only one purpose — an attempt to divide the high seas into zones of influence of developed States and their blocs. In that regard, we would like to emphasize that we will not allow restrictions on the absolutely legitimate rights and freedoms that States enjoy on the basis of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Returning to the issue of the decision under consideration today, it is based on resolution 78/272. The central idea of the authors of that resolution was clear to us immediately — to cut off from the decision-making process within the Preparatory Commission those States that have not signed the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity. We resolutely oppose such approaches, emphasizing that processes under the auspices of the General Assembly should be inclusive and ensure equal rights for all Members of the world Organization. The establishment of closed clubs of interest is in no way a practice that should be supported in our universal Organization; it has nothing in common with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I recall that the authors of resolution 78/272 assured us that an inclusive and transparent decision-making mechanism would be ensured and that the preparatory process was guaranteed to be completed before the date specified in the resolution, that is, 20 September 2025. Now everyone can see what all those assurances and promises were really worth.

According to draft decision A/78/L.102, which is under consideration today, the Preparatory Commission plans to begin its work only in 2025. At the same time, it is expected to continue at least into 2026. Accordingly, taking into account the provisions of paragraph 8 of resolution 78/272, after 20 September 2025 the Commission, as we assumed, will turn into a closed club for those who, at a minimum, have signed the Agreement. All other United Nations Member States in that body will be assigned the role of extras. We cannot support such approaches, which directly contradict the principles of universality and sovereign equality on which the world Organization is based.

In light of the aforesaid, we ask that the draft decision be put to a vote. We will vote against it and call

on other United Nations Members to do the same. We reiterate that the Russian Federation refuses to consider the Preparatory Commission as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly.

Ms. Vittay (Hungary): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as Monaco, align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its member States commend Australia and Belize for proposing the draft decision contained in document A/78/L.102.

We have always been and will continue to be steadfast supporters of the process towards the swift entry into force and effective implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). It is a priority for the EU and its Member States. The Preparatory Commission is an instrumental part of that process. The draft decision before us today has a simple aim — to allow for the organization of the next meetings of the Preparatory Commission in accordance with the decisions reached at the organizational meeting of the Commission that took place from 24 to 26 June. It is a mere procedural step that reflects the common agreement we reached only a month and a half ago. It should be uncontroversial. For that reason, we strongly support it and call on all States to vote in favour of it. At the same time, we are disappointed that one delegation has called for a vote on it with the clear aim to stall our common efforts.

The EU and its member States would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson, and the Chief Counsel and First Assistant Secretary at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, Mr Adam McCarthy, for their election as co-Chairs of the Preparatory Commission. They have our full support and trust in their ability to guide us in the work that lies ahead of us — a more sustainably managed ocean and its resources for the present and in the long-term, the tackling of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation and, more broadly, our fight against climate change. The adoption with the largest possible

majority of the decision today is a necessary step in that direction.

Ms. Vaea (Tonga): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) with presence at the United Nations, namely, Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my country, Tonga. We acknowledge the guidance and support of the Cook Islands as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum.

At the outset, we thank Australia and Belize for introducing draft decision A/78/L.102 before the General Assembly. The PIF group acknowledges the leadership of the co-Chair at the organizational meeting held in June and is supportive of ensuring that all voices are heard in the process.

Given that the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction recognizes and upholds the special connection we have with our ocean, its entry into force and subsequent implementation is critical to us. It will help safeguard the health of our Blue Pacific for future generations. Accordingly, we are committed to building on this momentum, noting that the Preparatory Commission has a critically important role in the early life of that historical global treaty. The Commission's integral role of preparing the entry into force of the Agreement and for the convening of the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement deserves our unwavering support.

We appreciate the fact that the Preparatory Commission, at its organizational meeting, empowered the co-Chairs, in consultation with the bureau, to consider efficient working methods to progress the Commission's work, including intersessionally. It also asked the co-Chairs to consider documentation needs for the Commission's substantive sessions, supported by the Secretariat. That will be achievable only with adequate resourcing for the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs, which is addressed by the draft decision.

We acknowledge regional efforts to encourage early ratification and to prepare States for the effective implementation of the Agreement, including the regional workshop recently conducted in Suva for the

Pacific Islands region, in collaboration with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner.

The Group will, for those reasons, vote in favour of the draft decision, which captures consensus outcomes of the organizational meeting.

Ms. Williams (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We reaffirm our considered view that the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) provides a credible opportunity to achieve the fair and equitable use of our ocean.

Therefore, CARICOM affirms its unanimous support for draft decision A/78/L.102, which is in accordance with and in fulfilment of the decisions taken by the Preparatory Commission for the BBNJ Agreement at its organizational meeting in June. CARICOM also wishes to thank Belize and Australia, the co-Chairs, for their efforts. While procedural in nature, it is a key step for the Commission to commence its work in accordance with its mandate and to do so with the necessary support of an adequately resourced secretariat. We therefore welcome document A/78/L.102 and will vote in its favour.

CARICOM intends to actively and constructively engage in the further work of the Commission as it prepares for the entry into force of the Agreement and for the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. We strongly encourage sustained additional contributions to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in attending the meetings of the Commission.

Finally, CARICOM will also continue to raise awareness of the BBNJ Agreement across its constituencies, with a view to promoting its signature and ratification. We look forward to rolling out a series of engagements regionally and hope that our efforts can be replicated globally. The global ambition to conserve and, at the same time, sustainably use the resources of the ocean can be achieved only with the universal implementation of the Agreement. CARICOM will work with all to ensure that implementation will serve the just interests of present and future generations.

Mr. Luteru (Samoa): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States, the 39 small island developing States (SIDS) whose livelihoods, economies and culture are deeply tied to the ocean.

We begin by thanking the co-Chairs of the Preparatory Commission, Australia and Belize, for decision A/78/L.102 and thank Ambassador Coye-Felson of Belize for her capable steering of the organizational meeting in June. We encourage the co-Chairs to continue to consult widely and ensure that all voices are heard as we move forward to the Preparatory Commission.

The entry into force and subsequent implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction are critical to protecting our ocean and to sustainably and equitably utilizing its resources. We must increase the momentum and pace of ratifications to ensure that we meet the threshold without delay. SIDS are very certainly doing our part; six of the eight ratifications to date are from SIDS.

To build on that momentum, and given that the draft decision is based on the outcomes of the organizational meeting, which met with no objections, we will vote in favour of the decision. We cannot waste any time in preparing for entry into force. We strongly encourage others to also send that positive signal for our new Agreement. We appreciate the fact that there are already regional efforts to encourage early ratification and to prepare States for the effective implementation of the Agreement. We would encourage such efforts in all regions.

Finally, we encourage our partners to provide support to ensure that all States, in particular SIDS, are able to participate in the upcoming meetings. As we have learned from a half century of oceans negotiations, agreements are more effectively implemented when all interested States participate in their development.

Mrs. Wells (Vanuatu): I have the honour to deliver this explanation of vote on behalf of the 14 members of the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS).

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representative of Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and by the representative of Tonga, on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

The Pacific SIDS would first like to congratulate the co-Chairs, Belize and Australia, and especially Ambassador Coxe-Felson, for their outstanding work and dedication during the Preparatory Commission and on draft decision A/78/L.102, which is before the General Assembly and to which we have all contributed in one way or the other. We encourage continuous consultation to guarantee that all regions have a voice as we work towards the Preparatory Commission for the entry into force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction.

The Pacific SIDS have always been actively engaged in the negotiations and we will continue to actively participate towards the work of the Agreement, as it is our priority as a region to protect our *moana* and its resources. We believe that our region has confirmed its commitment as one of our members was the first to ratify the Agreement. The rest are working hard in that direction to keep the momentum of dedication.

The draft decision is based on outcomes of the organizational meeting and, as such, the Pacific SIDS will vote in its favour. We encourage all other delegations to do likewise, as we believe that an early adoption would allow a region to better plan for our engagement.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/78/L.102, entitled “Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction”.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland,

India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic

Abstaining:

Zimbabwe

Draft decision A/78/L.102 was adopted by 146 votes to 2, with 1 abstention (decision 78/560).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Bangladesh and Dominica informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

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

Mr. Lagatie (Belgium): Belgium welcomes the adoption of decision 78/560, on the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). It is an important step towards the implementation of the Agreement. We thank the co-facilitators, Australia and my neighbour, Belize, as well as the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, for their work in moving this file forward.

Belgium wishes to take this opportunity to make three small comments in relation to the substance of the decision and the forthcoming work of the Preparatory Commission.

First, we welcome the decision to have discussions during the Preparatory Commission in a dedicated cluster on the Clearing-House Mechanism. Indeed, the Clearing-House Mechanism will be the central element of the BBNJ Agreement and it is of utmost importance that it functions smoothly from the moment the Agreement enters into force.

Secondly, we look positively on the inclusive nature of the Preparatory Commission. The decision to have the possibility of parallel meetings with full conference services, including documentation and overtime, will allow for meaningful discussions while taking into account the constraints of smaller delegations. The ocean is a global commons, and it is therefore essential that all States be able to have a say in how it is managed.

Lastly, as Belgium has put forward the candidacy of Brussels to host the future secretariat of the BBNJ Agreement, we will participate constructively in the discussions on the arrangements for the functioning of the secretariat. Despite its modest coastline, Belgium has an excellent track record in ocean advocacy, as well as strong marine expertise, including a pioneer role in marine special planning and green shipping. Some 37 per cent of our waters are already protected today. Our marine research centres, as well as the international institutions lodged in Brussels, will provide useful experience in data-hosting and capacity-building. Additionally, Brussels being one of the most important and connected diplomatic hubs in the world makes it a cost-effective and accessible choice, well acquainted with the privileges, immunities and practicalities needed to allow the future secretariat to be effective from day one.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 75?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

The Acting President: Members will recall that two vacancies from the Asia-Pacific States and one vacancy from the Eastern European States remain to be filled for a term of office beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 20 March 2026. In that regard, the Secretariat has received the nomination of India.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to appoint India as a member of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns for a term beginning on 13 August 2024 and ending on 20 March 2026?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Members are reminded that the following vacancies remain to be filled for a term beginning on the date of the appointment and expiring on 20 March 2026: one member from the Asia-Pacific States and one member from the Eastern European States. The General Assembly will be in a position to act on those vacancies once nominations are received by the Secretariat.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 119

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

Draft resolution (A/78/L.104/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1.

Mr. Garrido Melo (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, entitled "Consideration of decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, entitled 'Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them'", on

behalf of a core group comprised of Argentina, Austria, Canada, Germany, the Philippines, Slovakia, Slovenia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and my own country, Chile.

The core group is introducing the draft resolution in celebration of an unprecedented success. In May, for the first time in 14 years, the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing adopted a resolution — resolution 14/1, entitled “Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them”. The adoption was a milestone in ensuring the rights, dignity and well-being of older adults, especially as we know that the world is ageing. By 2050, the global population of persons 60 years or older will double.

Protecting the rights of older persons is not only a moral imperative, but also an important step in the face of global trends of ageing. That is why the draft resolution seeks to submit recommendations to the General Assembly with the goal of promoting future discussions in the area of the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons, in line with decision 14/1, in particular paragraph 26, by which it decides,

“to present these recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly with a view to promoting further concrete discussions on next steps on the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons”.

In addition to the consensual adoption of a decision 14/1, our group understands that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing has concluded its work in identifying gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and the options of the best way to address them, pursuant to resolution 78/177. In that regard, the content of the draft resolution seeks to open a space for intergovernmental discussions on future steps. To that end, in addition to concluding the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group, it urges other United Nations bodies to further consider the recommendations and requests the President of the General Assembly to hold a high-level meeting to exchange views and share experiences and to define next steps on the challenges and opportunities regarding the rights and well-being of older persons.

Our group has held transparent and constructive official consultations, and we are aware of the issues raised by various delegations during those informal consultations. We have done everything possible to take

them into consideration. We therefore propose a revised draft text that we believe optimally reflects the concerns of delegations while preserving the original intention of the text. I wish to present the oral revisions to draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, which are available in the e-Delegate portal and were circulated yesterday.

(spoke in English)

Operative paragraph 1 should be replaced with the following text:

“Decides that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing has completed its work, in view of the adoption of decision 14/1 by the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in line with its mandate outlined in the resolution 65/182 and all subsequent resolutions on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, including 78/177 of 19 December 2023, and to conclude the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, under agenda item ‘Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family’ of the Third Committee.”

In operative paragraph 2, the words “respecting the relevant mandate” should be inserted after “relevant United Nations bodies”.

(spoke in Spanish)

We hope that with those additions we can strike a balance that takes on board the concerns expressed and that will enjoy the support of the Assembly.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, as orally revised.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/78/L.104/Rev.1, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution, as orally revised: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Myanmar, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Ukraine.

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

Mrs. Arab Bafrani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to promoting and protecting the human rights, dignity and well-being of older persons. Regarding draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, which has taken up several challenging meetings in a very short period of time, I would like to highlight my delegation's dissatisfaction with both the process and the substance and with how the core group has attempted to push for adoption without taking into account the critical concerns of countries.

Despite the many requests made in the Hall, the core group tried to avoid revealing the main goal and objective of submitting the draft resolution. In doing so, it circulated different revisions of the draft text by receiving the comments of delegations. In the final moments and in the last revisions, it was revealed that the main objective was to give priority in a General Assembly resolution to one of the recommendations of decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in a non-equitable and exclusive manner, as well as to complete the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing with no further mention of its ineffectiveness, lack of quorum or any other challenges it had faced in fulfilling its mandate and strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons.

Through the draft resolution, certain members of the Group of 77 (G-77) and China have deliberately compromised the unity and integrity of the Group. They undermined the Group of 77 initiative on ageing in the Third Committee, where the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing was first established through the Group's annual resolution. Any dissatisfaction with the ineffective work of the Working Group and the ending of its work should have been assessed in its appropriate platform, which is the Third Committee, and through the relevant resolution, which is the G-77 resolution on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing. That would have allowed the Third Committee to decide whether the Working Group should continue or cease its work.

We would like to put on record that the entire process was conducted in a hasty manner. The

recommendations in decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing were just released at the end of May. The introduction of the draft resolution did not allow Member States to internalize and elaborate on those recommendations in a rational manner. This short draft resolution, with its many procedural and substantive concerns, was negotiated in less than a month by denying delegations the opportunity to seek clarifications and instructions from their capitals in its important final steps.

My delegation was one of the delegations that broke the silence to bring their concerns regarding the title and paragraphs 1 and 2 to the attention of the core group. We were not accommodated in any way. We were not given time to discuss the proposal with our capitals, undermining transparency and the practice we follow in United Nations processes.

The oral revision and the revised text that have been introduced today in no way reflect the inflexibility of the core group or an accommodation of the concerned countries that broke the silence. In general, the process was contrary to the spirit of multilateralism, while we witnessed a limited number of United Nations Members decide to make decisions on behalf of the universal membership and avoid taking a constructive approach at the concluding stage.

In light of the aforesaid, my delegation urges Member States in their future affairs to respect multilateralism, which is the spirit of on which the United Nations was founded and that should guide our future path.

The Acting President: The Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, entitled "Consideration of decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, entitled 'Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them'", as orally revised.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/78/L.104/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 78/324).

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

Mrs. Mazaeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation joined the consensus on resolution 78/324, “Consideration of decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, entitled ‘Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them’”. However, we believe that it is important to emphasize that the title of the document itself is misleading regarding the essence of the process that preceded its adoption. The General Assembly has never actually met to discuss the options listed in paragraph 25 of decision 14/1, much less further steps in that direction.

The work of the Working Group in the preparation of recommendations, despite the open composition of that body, cannot be considered as a substitute for a meeting of the main deliberative body of the United Nations from either a procedural or a factual point of view. Let us recall that only one-tenth of the States Members of the world Organization have shown interest in participating in the Group throughout its entire existence. That is evidenced, among other things, by the number of responses to the thematic questionnaire used in the preparation of the recommendations.

We share the opinion of the main group of authors that the lack of interest of the overwhelming majority of the world community in the functioning of that body has significantly hampered its work for many years, sometimes making it impossible even to open sessions due to the lack of a quorum. Moreover, as the Secretariat has confirmed to us, the annual reports of the Working Group have never been submitted to the General Assembly for consideration due to the lack of substantive content.

Taking all of that into account, the Russian Federation shares the opinion that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing has exhausted its potential in promoting and protecting the human rights of older persons and that its mandate should be terminated within the framework of the work of the Third Committee at the upcoming seventy-ninth session.

With regard to further consideration of decision 14/1 in accordance with paragraph 2 of the resolution, we express confidence that the options listed in paragraph 25 of the recommendations are equivalent, have the same value and will therefore be considered in conjunction with and with equal attention in any

possible subsequent discussions on that topic within the mandates of the relevant interested bodies.

In conclusion, we would like to say a few words about the process of intergovernmental agreement on the resolution. We respect the priorities of all United Nations Member States without exception. We understand and share the opinion on the need to protect the rights and legitimate interests of older persons. We are aware of the political will of the official authorities of a number of States to complete that process before the end of the current session of the General Assembly. We would be grateful if the core group of authors were in the future to take into account the fact that delegations at the world Organization function in a multitasking mode and must pay equal attention to all diverse and parallel developing initiatives. For that reason, such phenomena as the sudden dissemination of the text via the silence procedure one day before the deadline agreed upon by the authors themselves; the limitation of that procedure to 24 hours, which did not allow delegations to receive feedback from capitals located in other time zones; and the lack of flexibility on the issue of the date of adoption of the document are unacceptable. All this undermines the trust that underlies diplomatic work and creates a very shaky foundation for further productive cooperation.

We express the hope that those shortcomings will be taken into account in the future by all delegations and will not become part of our work practice at the key multilateral platform.

Ms. Banakan Elel (Cameroon): We all agree. The work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing needs to be terminated, not because it has completed its mandate, as indicated in resolution 78/324, but because, for the past 13 years, it has been ineffective with no tangible outcome except for the recommendations adopted earlier this year. However, work still needs to be done to identify the actual normative and implementation gaps amended by resolution 65/182. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the Working Group will deliver on that mandate. We do agree on that.

For the past 14 years, the interest of delegations in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing has always been of concern, with a quorum having always been difficult to reach. We also agree on that. What we do not agree on is on the best way to terminate that mandate without creating a precedent and while respecting the procedures and established practice of

the United Nations. The resolution creates a precedent by allowing a group of countries to initiate a separate process to end a mechanism they did not initiate.

While we joined consensus on the resolution, we are concerned about several procedural and substantive aspects.

(spoke in French)

The resolution has actually created more problems than it has solved. It leaves unanswered a number of questions that my delegation has been asking from the outset:

The first question is: Why initiate a resolution separate from the annual resolution of the Third Committee, which each year deals with the issue of ageing and which created the Working Group?

The second question is: Can the General Assembly consider a document that, procedurally, has not been submitted to it? Indeed, if decision 14/1 requests the General Assembly to consider the recommendations adopted, those recommendations must be submitted to it either by means of a report of the Secretary-General or by a letter from the President of the General Assembly making the said decision available to Member States. Despite the efforts of the co-facilitator and the explanations of the Secretariat, no satisfactory response has been provided to that concern.

The third question is: What does it mean for the General Assembly to consider the recommendations of the Working Group? For my delegation, that review consists of examining in detail each of the recommendations of the Working Group and deciding what action to take. The review does not consist, contrary to the approach adopted by the core group, in arbitrarily selecting a single recommendation and transferring it to a specific body for action.

Beyond all else, the central question remains the following: Why such haste? Why, when the Third Committee is to begin its work in less than two months, short-circuit the resolution on ageing by a hasty process that has not allowed an appropriate consultation of our capitals or in-depth discussions with the delegations that have broken the silence, including that of Cameroon. All of those questions have complicated a process that the General Assembly could have safely skipped.

While joining the consensus, my delegation would like to encourage the members of the core group to

reconnect with the highest standards of transparency, dialogue and respect for the established practices to which they are generally accustomed.

Mr. Padilla Gonzalez (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Cuba has consistently supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. We have done so because we are convinced that all possible political will is necessary to ensure that older adults can exercise all their rights, experience well-being and fully enjoy their golden years. That is why we have supported, in the framework of the Working Group, efforts to achieve a broad and legally binding international instrument to protect the rights, dignity and well-being of older adults.

For a country like ours, with a demographic trend tending towards ageing, having such an instrument is a high priority. It was a good thing that the Group of 77 and China, the largest forum of the South for cooperation and dialogue, led the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing 14 years ago through resolution 65/182, entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing". That resolution was a milestone in the efforts of the United Nations to enhance international debates on ageing from a comprehensive perspective, making the needs and interests of older adults the focus of attention.

In the course of 14 working sessions, Member States have benefited from the intensive debates in the Group, which have contributed to raising the topic of ageing in that multilateral body in New York. Cuba participated actively in those sessions and in the recently concluded intergovernmental negotiations that led to the adoption of decision 14/1, entitled "Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them", at the fourteenth session of the group in 2024. My delegation believes that while the Working Group has achieved positive results, including the adoption of decision 14/1, a forum should still be maintained at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the topic of ageing from a comprehensive perspective. We therefore believe that it is premature to consider that the Group has concluded its work. We note that much remains to be done to protect the human rights of older persons, as established by the mandate of the Group pursuant to resolution 65/182.

We have witnessed a hasty process of negotiations seeking to put an end to the work of the Working Group

without having an opportunity for a substantive and profound discussion in the framework of the Third Committee to consider in-depth whether its mandate has been fully implemented and in what way to complement it in the face of future challenges to the human rights of older adults. We would also have wished to see that assessment initiated by the Group of 77 and China, which was the main promoter of the entire process.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate once again the commitment of Cuba to continuing to participate in international discussions on ageing from a human rights perspective and with a social development focus that ensures a better quality of life, well-being and fullness for our older adults.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.