



Security Council

Eightieth year

9889

th meeting

Wednesday, 2 April 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bonnafont	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Ms. Persaud
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. Kelley

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *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 meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Her Excellency Ms. Christina Markus Lassen, the Permanent Representative of Denmark for her service as President of the Council for the month of March. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Lassen and her team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Switzerland to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; and Mr. Nic Lee, Executive Director of the International NGO Safety Organisation.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: Allow me to go straight to the point. Attacks on aid workers must end. Perpetrators must be held to account. Humanitarian workers are being killed in unprecedented numbers. According to available data, 2024 was the worst year on record, with 377 aid workers killed across 20 countries. This was almost 100 more fatalities than in 2023, which already saw a 137 per cent increase from 2022. Many more were injured, kidnapped, attacked and arbitrarily detained.

The last two years have been particularly brutal. In the Sudan, at least 84 humanitarian workers — all Sudanese nationals — have been killed since the current conflict began in April 2023.

And just three days ago, on 30 March in Rafah, teams from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society recovered from a mass grave the bodies of 15 emergency and aid workers from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the civil defence and the United Nations, killed several days earlier by Israeli forces while trying to save lives. Their clearly marked vehicles were found destroyed and crushed. The OCHA team also witnessed civilians being shot while fleeing. This tragedy comes just 11 days after another deadly incident, on 19 March, when yet another United Nations colleague was killed, and six others were injured in Gaza. These deaths bring the number of aid workers killed in the Strip since 7 October 2023 to more than 408. Gaza is the most dangerous place for humanitarians ever. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims. We demand answers and call for justice.

Since we are here today to discuss the protection of aid workers, I must ask the Security Council: what are you going to do to help us find those answers and achieve justice and avoid more killings?

Let us be clear: there is no shortage of robust international legal frameworks to protect humanitarian and United Nations workers. Human rights law and standards,

conventions relating to United Nations activities and personnel, and international humanitarian law together provide clear obligations to safeguard humanitarian personnel, assets and operations. What is lacking is the political will to comply. The vast majority of those killed — approximately 95 per cent — are local aid workers, the cornerstone of relief efforts. Any humanitarian response would collapse without them.

Since coming into this role, I have met local colleagues whose worlds have been destroyed; whose families have been displaced multiple times; who lost loved ones; who are unable to feed their children properly; and who have survived harrowing security incidents; but who nonetheless bravely go to work every day to assist their communities and, in some cases, implement the mandate Member States gave them. Those colleagues deserve our highest respect. Yet conduct harming our local staff rarely elicits reactions or makes the news. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies found that the killing of a local aid worker receives 500 times less media coverage than that of an international staff member. We have become numb to that violence. Being shot at is not part of our job.

As if death, injury and kidnapping were not enough, humanitarian workers also face the criminalization of their work. More and more of them are detained, interrogated and accused of supporting terrorism simply for delivering aid to people in need. There is more. Disinformation and misinformation campaigns targeting aid organizations have surged, as has been the case in Haiti, the occupied Palestinian territory and Yemen. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, disinformation campaigns have undermined the credibility of the United Nations, fuelled public unrest and strained the Organization's relationship with local communities. In the Sudan, since April 2023 false claims of partiality have led to aid workers being attacked at checkpoints or prevented from carrying out their work. Recent reports show aid workers and volunteers being targeted in Khartoum and beyond. In Haiti, armed gangs have publicly threatened humanitarian workers, and many organizations are unable to reach their offices or are forced to suspend operations. Funding shortfalls risk making matters worse, forcing us to make impossible choices between our mandate to serve the most affected people and the safety of our teams.

The adoption of resolution 2730 (2024) was an important step in the right direction, and the Secretary-General's recommendations show a way forward. I come to Council members and the broader United Nations membership with three asks.

First, I ask that Member States act to ensure respect for international law and to protect humanitarian and United Nations workers. From Security Council visits to fact-finding missions and withholding of arms transfers, to name only those, there are many tangible steps that the Council and Member States can take to protect humanitarian workers. We count on their leadership.

Secondly, I ask that Member States speak out. We need the voice of the Council and the broader United Nations membership to be loud, clear and consistent in condemning harm to United Nations and humanitarian personnel, including local staff. Silence, inconsistency and selective outrage only embolden perpetrators. We also need the Council and the broader United Nations membership to come to the defence of United Nations and humanitarian organizations when they come under attack or are targeted by smear campaigns.

Thirdly, I ask that Member States request accountability. Perpetrators of violations must face the consequences of their actions — without exception. Member States must strengthen domestic and international legal frameworks to investigate and prosecute international crimes. The Security Council should play a key role in pushing for accountability — for instance, by asking the Governments concerned to pursue justice and by following up with them. When national jurisdictions fail, the

Council can use international mechanisms, including by referring situations to the International Criminal Court.

But accountability is not only about prosecution. It must also centre on those who survive. I want to reiterate the Secretary-General's recommendation to adopt a survivor-centred approach, while ensuring that those affected have a voice in global discussions. Survivors and their families urgently need legal aid, reparations and access to services, such as mental health support and trauma counselling.

Today, as we mourn the loss of our colleagues, we must demand that concrete action be taken to ensure that our teams can work safely. We owe it to the families of the victims and survivors, to the communities we serve and to all humanitarian colleagues risking their lives every day.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Msuya for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Michaud.

Mr. Michaud (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this new opportunity to report on the security risks facing the humanitarian community. I am grateful for the Council's commitment and for its interest in this issue, which embodies the principle of international solidarity that lies at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today more than ever, human lives depend on the Council's actions, as does the hope that unites us all: that a concern for human dignity and an imperative of decency will prevail over brute force and senseless violence and that international law, built on the ruins of historic tragedies, will once again take precedence over the law of the strongest.

(*spoke in English*)

In my first briefing (see S/PV.9795), I urged the Council to translate words of support for the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel into meaningful action, using the mechanisms that Member States have at their disposal. I asked all Member States to join the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol. I also called for genuine, courageous action to ensure accountability for attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Since that briefing, I regret to inform the Council that progress has been elusive. No additional Member State has taken meaningful steps to join the Convention. Attacks on humanitarian workers have continued unabated. Since the ceasefire collapsed in Gaza, 11 United Nations personnel have been killed, bringing the total number of United Nations staff killed during this conflict to 288. The breakdown of the ceasefire has been particularly brutal. On 19 March, a clearly identified United Nations building came under direct attack. One colleague was killed and six others were seriously injured. On 23 March, a colleague from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, along with eight Palestinian Red Crescent and six civil defence staff, were killed while providing life-saving assistance, their bodies left for days before they could be retrieved.

In many other contexts, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, the Sudan and Yemen, humanitarian and United Nations personnel are regularly attacked, assaulted and harassed. As always, our national colleagues bear the brunt of the violence. Those attacks are designed to prevent the United Nations from helping the most vulnerable and to prevent it from bearing witness. Impunity for attacks on humanitarian personnel has become the new normal — a pervasive normal, an accepted normal and one perpetuated not only by non-State actors, but also by Governments and their proxies. Let us be clear: those who target humanitarian and

United Nations personnel may have many motives, but above all, they do it because they can get away with it. That must end.

Against a backdrop of widespread disregard for international humanitarian law, United Nations agencies are now forced to significantly reduce assistance owing to budget cuts imposed by several Member States. Our humanitarian agencies are among the most affected. We should expect cuts in humanitarian assistance to drive further insecurity. I hope to be proven wrong, but there is only so much deprivation, despair and sense of abandonment that communities can endure before violence erupts. And if, where and when the United Nations and its partners are forced to deliver less aid, the risk to United Nations and humanitarian personnel will grow. We are already seeing signs of that in Gaza and elsewhere. Humanitarian personnel may become the first target of peoples' despair. In such contexts, the United Nations must and will adapt.

Budgetary pressures on the United Nations will impact the level of security support available. We will need to adjust our footprint. And in some areas, we may even be compelled by resource constraints to completely withdraw.

But United Nations security will do its part through these turbulent times. We will be present wherever our humanitarian partners need us. It is what Council members expect. It is what we the peoples of the United Nations demand. And we will continue to engage with the Security Council and with Member States: first, to seek common solutions and build support for a United Nations security system that enables the delivery of the mandates the Council has given us; secondly, to protect the humanitarian, peace and security, as well as development, investments many Council members have made through the United Nations. That will be particularly important in places where the Council chooses to adjust the United Nations presence through the deployment, reconfiguration or withdrawal of peace operations. Adequate and timely security capabilities and capacities, both during and after the presence of peace operations, are critical. In those contexts and beyond, and through these perilous times, Council members have my unwavering commitment that United Nations security will remain a steadfast, reliable partner to the humanitarian and development community and Member States. But we need attacks on United Nations and humanitarian personnel to stop.

In recent years, we have been so busy breaking things that we have almost forgotten that we can fix them as well. It is a choice we can make individually and collectively. In his letter to the Security Council dated 22 November 2024, the Secretary-General outlined concrete recommendations to protect United Nations and humanitarian personnel from such attacks and, in doing so, to preserve our shared dignity in the face of dehumanizing violence (see S/2024/852). Those recommendations represent a pathway to a better, stronger and safe international humanitarian system.

In conclusion, a Member State recently asked me whether we should be concerned that the climate of impunity will discourage people from pursuing humanitarian work. Allow me to be blunt: that is the least of my concerns. I am very confident that there are and always will be many people with the passion and courage to help the most vulnerable — even in the most dangerous places. They represent the best of our shared humanity. They embody the Charter of the United Nations. Their courage should inspire us. My real concern is this: will we — the United Nations security system, the international community and the Council — find the same courage and conviction to protect them; to speak the truth when international humanitarian law is violated, regardless of who the perpetrators are; and to show the will to hold all perpetrators accountable for their actions? I urge each and every Council member to lead the way.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Michaud for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lee.

Mr. Lee: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council and for your attention to this topic.

By way of a brief introduction, the International NGO Safety Organisation is an independent non-profit serving as the safety and security coordinating body for the non-governmental organization (NGO) community. We are supporting more than 1,400 local and international NGOs in 22 of the highest risk contexts, and we work very closely with Mr. Gilles Michaud and Ms. Joyce Msuya through the United Nations security management system and in particular the Saving Lives Together initiative.

I have three objectives today: first, to update Council members on the current trends affecting humanitarian safety, which Ms. Msuya eloquently covered also; secondly, to brief Council members on some of the progress that has been made; and, finally, to make our recommendations as to what could be done next.

Seen through the eyes of a humanitarian, the world is a volatile and dangerous place. On a daily basis we navigate national and international armed conflicts that are conducted without respect for international humanitarian law and generally with a blatant disregard for the lives of the civilians caught up in them. The proliferation of armed actors can leave us negotiating access on a village-by-village basis, while States and Governments increasingly view aid as a partisan act to be directed, controlled and criminalized.

On average, at least one aid worker is killed, injured or abducted every single day. Among other causes, in 2024, they have lost their lives to air strikes in Palestine, improvised explosive devices in Somalia, ambushes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and intercommunal violence in South Sudan. As others have said, those deaths are rarely investigated, and their perpetrators are never held accountable.

National and locally recruited personnel are particularly vulnerable, accounting for more than 90 per cent of victims in all contexts, and yet international recognition of and response to their deaths is often lacking.

At 30 per cent of incidents and for the second year in a row, Government forces posed more of a threat to humanitarians than non-State armed groups, with the leading cause of death being explosive weapons in urban environments, most notably in Gaza, Ukraine and the Sudan.

Violence at the hands of non-State armed groups remained prevalent, at 20 per cent, but has diminished significantly with the winding up of conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the most common incidents now occurring across West, Central and Eastern Africa.

Crime is endemic in conflict zones and remains a key driver of insecurity, accounting for 40 per cent of all incidents in 2024, while the criminalization of aid itself has emerged as a major challenge, with more than 400 aid workers arrested throughout the year for delivering assistance and an explosive growth in NGO bans and restrictions. Those are frequently combined with disinformation campaigns against the fundamental legitimacy of aid and have led in some cases to the suspension of life-saving medical assistance, the removal of senior humanitarian leaders and the closure of common services.

While the situation is undoubtedly challenging, we cannot overlook the many positive initiatives that have emerged at all levels.

At the operational level, the highest risk countries are now covered by a network of field safety platforms providing round-the-clock support that is equally accessible to national and international NGOs. The community has access to an unprecedented

volume and quality of data and a wide range of training opportunities in everything from first aid to access negotiations. The various international councils and forums have helped cooperation between NGOs become routine, while cooperation between NGOs and the United Nations, particularly under the Saving Lives Together initiative, is improving, and I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Michaud for his commitment to that initiative. More recently, new projects have emerged offering financial, legal and psychosocial support to victims of violence, and filling an important gap in accountability and duty of care.

At the policy level, humanitarian safety has also taken centre stage, from the European Union Call to Action in 2021, to the Ministerial Group action to protect aid workers, convened by the Australian Foreign Minister in 2024, and now the welcome adoption of resolution 2730 (2024). Taken together, those developments represent a robust and comprehensive response and highlight the importance of operational agencies taking the lead in devising solutions to their own problems.

While recognizing that many of the risks facing humanitarians fall outside the power of the Council to address them, there remain several areas in which it can take meaningful action.

First, the Council could encourage donor States to also stay and deliver, especially during times of crisis and transition. The voluntary withdrawal of in-country representation, as occurred wholesale in Afghanistan in 2022, leaves NGOs vulnerable and makes it harder to develop the common operating picture that is so vital. Other options could include the deployment of special humanitarian envoys or the encouragement of multi-State initiatives to facilitate continued diplomatic engagement on humanitarian issues, even during times of acute crisis.

Secondly, we believe that more can — and should — be done to protect humanitarian space and challenge the worrisome trend of the criminalization of aid. At the core of that issue is the principle of impartial contact with all parties to a conflict, and the Council must ensure that organizations can accomplish that without fear of harassment, sanction or punishment. That includes supporting the mandate of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to open and maintain humanitarian space and ensuring a strong collective response when it is victimized for doing so. It also includes ensuring that the carveouts of resolution 2664 (2022) are replicated in both domestic and international legislation to further protect independent, impartial and neutral humanitarian action.

Thirdly and finally, we suggest that the protection of aid workers should always be approached through the more inclusive lens of the protection of civilians. While we welcome the attention, the fact is that violence against aid workers is more commonly linked to their identity as civilians rather than as aid workers, and by isolating us there is a risk of wider impacts being neglected. When we see gross violations of international humanitarian law, the Council must act decisively and address the double standards of Member States that continue to support those responsible for civilian and aid worker deaths alike.

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

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Denmark for its successful presidency in March. We also extend our congratulations to France for assuming the presidency of the Council this month and assure them of Algeria's full support and cooperation. We are grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michaud for their insightful briefings. We also listened carefully to the civil society briefer.

This is a timely meeting to discuss the implementation of resolution 2730 (2024), which calls for the respect and protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. In Gaza, just a few days ago, 15 emergency and aid workers from the Red Crescent, Palestinian civil defence and the United Nations were found buried in a mass grave. They had been buried near destroyed ambulances and near clearly marked vehicles. Those individuals were killed — assassinated — by Israeli occupying forces, while attempting to save lives. They deserve justice, as Assistant Secretary-General Msuya stated. We should speak out. We need the voice of the Security Council and the broader United Nations membership to be loud and clear.

Almost a year after the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), it is unfortunate to note that, despite its ambitions, that resolution, that decision of the Security Council, has had very little impact on the ground. The year 2024 was the deadliest one on record for humanitarian personnel, with 377 aid workers killed — nearly 100 more fatalities than in 2023, and more than three times more than in 2022. Of those humanitarian personnel killed in 2024, 207 were in the occupied Palestinian territory. That tragic reality compels us to question the relevance of resolution 2730 (2024), the relevance of international humanitarian law and even the relevance of the Security Council itself.

To address that situation, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, thorough investigations and accountability are fundamental elements of resolution 2730 (2024). Since 7 October 2023, more than 400 aid workers have been killed in Gaza, including eight international personnel. We demand justice for all of them. It is unacceptable that the killing of a staff member of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is being investigated by the United Nations, while hundreds of innocent Palestinian lives are not afforded the same attention and the same justice.

Secondly, we must guarantee effective protection. Resolution 2730 (2024) affirms that attacks directed at humanitarian personnel, the United Nations and their premises and assets are considered war crimes under international law. However, that basic principle does not seem to apply to the Israeli occupying Power. All people and all infrastructure appear to be deemed legitimate targets — whether it is United Nations facilities, such as United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East buildings or UNOPS accommodations, or humanitarian deconflicted facilities, like those of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins sans frontières. No one and nowhere is safe in Gaza. This behaviour of the Israeli occupying Power cannot continue. Humanitarian personnel and their assets must receive the effective protection to which they are entitled.

Thirdly, we must ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Resolution 2730 (2024),

“[c]alls upon all States and parties to armed conflict to respect and to ensure respect for applicable international humanitarian law in all circumstances” (*para.2*).

From the very beginning of the negotiation process, Algeria was clear: without a robust mechanism to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and end impunity, all efforts would be in vain. Continued violations of international humanitarian law, as we witness in Gaza today, represent our collective failure.

The international community is not fulfilling its obligations. In fact, the behaviour of parties to conflicts is no longer shaped by Security Council resolutions or international humanitarian law. Instead, it is driven by impunity, from which the Israeli occupying Power has benefited. What we are witnessing today in Gaza sets a dangerous precedent for current and future conflicts, where no rules are respected.

Adopted amid the ongoing Israeli aggression against Gaza, resolution 2730 (2024) was an urgent and timely reminder of our obligations to respect and protect humanitarian personnel. However, it has had no real impact on the ground, and humanitarian workers continue to be targeted, with impunity. It is time to end this cycle of impunity through effective accountability mechanisms. It is time to move beyond double standards and the selective application of resolutions. It is time to honour our collective commitment to the dignity and worth of every human being.

Mr. Mohamed Yusuf (Somalia): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month, and I wish you every success. I also take this opportunity to commend the able manner in which the Danish presidency guided the work of the Council last month. I extend my deepest gratitude to Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Michaud for their sobering briefings on the grave situation facing civilian and humanitarian workers worldwide. We have listened carefully to the remarks made by Mr. Lee.

Let me begin by paying tribute to the brave humanitarian workers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of humankind. Their unwavering dedication in the face of danger represents the very best of our shared human spirit. Their courage inspires us all, and their loss diminishes us profoundly.

As we have heard from the briefers, the global landscape for humanitarian workers has become increasingly lethal. Since last year, more than 500 aid workers have been killed, injured, detained or kidnapped worldwide, painting a devastating picture of the risks these dedicated individuals face daily.

The situation in Gaza, the deadliest place for humanitarian workers, stands as a stark testament to that development, with 408 humanitarian personnel, including 280 United Nations staff members, having paid the ultimate price. The recent discovery of 15 emergency workers in a mass grave near Rafah — still wearing their protective gear — represents one of the most devastating attacks on humanitarian personnel in recent history. The killing of those dedicated individuals as they were attempting to save lives represents a stark violation of every principle we hold sacred. This constitutes a war crime and demands immediate investigation and accountability.

The pattern of violence against humanitarian workers extends across multiple conflict zones. In the Sudan, more than 100 aid workers have been killed since April 2023, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have witnessed a sharp rise in targeted assaults, with 42 aid workers killed while serving in some of the most challenging environments. Those deliberate attacks on medical facilities and aid convoys have severely compromised our ability to reach millions in desperate need.

In the light of these unprecedented challenges, we propose the following four points.

First, we must reinforce and commit to unwavering adherence to international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we must enhance humanitarian funding, with a specific focus on personnel security, mental health and support for aid workers.

Thirdly, we must integrate robust measures to counter misinformation and hate speech targeting humanitarian missions within United Nations operations.

Fourthly, we must make greater efforts towards high-level diplomatic engagements with conflict parties in order to achieve permanent ceasefires, with a view to realizing sustainable peace and development in active conflict zones.

The implementation of resolution 2730 (2024) must be strengthened through enhanced protection mechanisms, guaranteed humanitarian access and reinforced

accountability for violations at the national and international levels. As we mark the seventy-sixth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, we must remember that protecting aid workers is not merely a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative essential for preserving humankind in times of conflict. Every day without action means more aid workers lost, more critical operations suspended and more vulnerable populations left without essential assistance.

As I conclude, I emphasize that it is critical for all of us to act with unprecedented resolve. We must honour the sacrifices of fallen humanitarian workers through concrete action and protect those who continue their vital work on the ground by ensuring commitment to the principles of international law and justice for those who have perished while serving humankind.

Mr. Kelley (United States of America) (*spoke in French*): I welcome you, Mr. President.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Lee for their informative briefings. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Denmark for its well-handled presidency last month.

The United States remains committed to protecting United Nations and humanitarian personnel and civilians around the world. Humanitarian workers put themselves at risk to support people in dire need, often in active conflict zones. It is a violation of international humanitarian law to target those civilians who assist and protect the most vulnerable. In February, the Security Council came together to condemn the tragic death of a World Food Programme worker in Houthi captivity and demanded the immediate release of all those unjustly detained by the Houthis (see SC/15995). The United States once again demands that the Houthis — who the United States has designated a foreign terrorist organization — release the dozens of staff members from the United Nations, international non-governmental organizations and diplomatic missions they have detained. We condemn the Houthis' sham so-called judicial proceedings against detainees as a potential pretext for politically motivated killings. The United States will continue to hold the Houthis to account and expects the Security Council to do the same.

We remain similarly concerned for the security of humanitarian staff in the Sudan. Early February saw a surge in civilian deaths, with at least 275 killed in a six-day span. We iterate the call for the parties to immediately cease hostilities, allow unhindered humanitarian access and protect civilians. We call on the parties — both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces — to hold those committing acts of violence against humanitarian workers accountable and to ensure the protection of civilians, consistent with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

We see the same threats to humanitarian workers in South Sudan, which remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for aid workers. Access constraints across the country, including targeted violence and bureaucratic impediments, hamper efforts to deliver urgent, life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable populations.

The Russia-Ukraine war has had especially devastating effects on civilians and civilian infrastructure. President Trump has made clear that that violence must end.

Then there is the toll in Gaza. For far too long, Hamas has cynically misused civilian infrastructure to shield themselves. That misuse has caused civilians to be caught up in the crossfire. Let us not forget that the use of civilians to shield or impede military operations is itself a violation of international humanitarian law. We expect all parties to comply with international humanitarian law.

It is important for the United Nations to speak out against repeated misuses of its facilities by Hamas, each of which has made the safety of humanitarian workers more precarious. The Geneva Conventions remain as critical now as ever — the year 2024 saw the highest death toll among humanitarian workers on record. That sobering record should compel the United Nations and the Council to redouble their efforts to protect humanitarian personnel everywhere.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the Permanent Representative of Denmark for the successful conduct of her admirable presidency throughout the month of March, and we extend our best wishes to the delegation of France, with the assurance of our enthusiastic and constructive support for its leadership during its presidency this month. We are grateful for the valuable and informative briefings by Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; and Mr. Nic Lee, on behalf of civil society.

Panama sees today's meeting as an opportune moment to once again reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which must always prevail, based on respect for international humanitarian law and the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations. Resolution 2730 (2024) was an important step in the right direction and remains in full force, as it urges all States and parties to armed conflicts to protect humanitarian personnel, United Nations personnel and associated personnel, and compliance with it is essential everywhere and at all times.

During armed conflicts, the civilian population — particularly women — has increasingly fallen victim to violence and insecurity. In line with resolution 2730 (2024), Panama reaffirms the importance of the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women in humanitarian and United Nations activities and stresses the importance of the protection and safeguarding of their integrity and fundamental rights.

In that regard, we note with alarm the increased number of attacks on the ground against humanitarian personnel — in many cases local aid workers — who are indispensable for the effective distribution of humanitarian aid and risk their lives carrying out their humanitarian work, with the noble purpose to help and protect civilians who are — often innocent — victims of armed conflict, everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances.

It is a cause for concern to hear — too frequently and from too many different places — news such as that circulated on 31 March that more than a dozen victims had been found in Gaza under rubble and mounds of sand, who have been identified as members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Palestinian civil defence, among other organizations, including one United Nations staff member, all of whom had been reported missing since 23 March. Serious events such as those always call for exhaustive investigations that make it possible to confirm what happened and in what circumstances and to determine the corresponding responsibilities, as they constitute regrettable examples of incidents that should not occur and that dramatically highlight the parties' need and obligation to protect civilians and especially humanitarian personnel in areas of armed conflict.

We join the Secretary-General's call for the safety of humanitarian personnel and the inviolability of their premises to be guaranteed by all parties and at all times. That fundamental principle must be implemented alongside conditions on the ground that allow for safe and effective operations. We underscore that attacks against them, peacekeepers and civilian infrastructure constitute war crimes. Accordingly, we urge all parties to conflicts, which are continuing to increase in terms of impact

and number, to ensure that in all cases the facts be investigated, accountability be promoted and no room be left for impunity.

We take this opportunity to honour the memory of the victims and acknowledge the efforts that humanitarian workers make day in day out to protect the most vulnerable. We issue an urgent appeal to all parties to guarantee their security, as laid down in the Geneva Conventions. To them and to those who work for peace, we reaffirm our admiration and respect. May their dedication inspire us all not to lose sight of that which is most essential: to protect civilians, to alleviate human suffering and to open up space for understanding, even in the midst of tragedy.

Panama urges all parties to conflict to step up efforts to facilitate humanitarian access and the protection of all civilians and to create conditions on the ground that allow humanitarian personnel to operate safely and effectively, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I convey to the French presidency our best wishes for the month of April, and I wish to assure you, Mr. President, of our full cooperation. I would also like to congratulate Denmark on the successful conclusion of its presidency in March. I also thank our briefers for their detailed and interesting presentations.

(*spoke in English*)

The protection of civilians in armed conflict remains a cornerstone of the Security Council's agenda and a core obligation of the international community under international humanitarian law. An increasingly contested, violent and dangerous world for civilians caught in armed conflict requires collective action in order to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and address implementation challenges.

Twenty-six years ago, in 1999, in a briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.3977), former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Cornelio Sommaruga spoke of 20 active conflicts. Today more than 120 conflicts are recorded by the ICRC. Worldwide, and particularly in certain parts of the African continent, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Latin America, the nature of armed conflicts has undergone profound changes, creating a new landscape of conflict. Contemporary armed conflicts have become more protracted and complex, marked by the involvement of non-State actors, urban warfare, cyberthreats and the use of new technologies of warfare. Moreover, the growing use of digital technologies can amplify the spread of harmful information and incite violence. Those changes significantly exacerbate the risks to civilians and pose challenges to humanitarian action, as well as threats to humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Resolution 2730 (2024), which was drafted by Switzerland, adopted last year and co-sponsored by a large number of other Member States — 90, including my own country, Greece — has already become an indispensable part of the United Nations normative framework pertaining to the protection of civilians. The resolution emphasizes the protection of humanitarian, United Nations and associated personnel, including nationally and locally recruited personnel, and their premises and assets. It also highlights misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, especially on digital platforms, as a growing challenge that undermines trust in United Nations and humanitarian organizations and exposes humanitarian, United Nations and associated personnel, including nationally and locally recruited personnel, to risk. The resolution underlines the centrality of accountability in protection-of-civilians efforts and reaffirms the need to end impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law and other international crimes, including those involving attacks against humanitarian, United Nations and associated personnel.

As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported in November 2024, the death toll of humanitarian workers in 2024 became the deadliest on record, with 377 killed worldwide. That is the grim reality on the ground. Resolution 2730 (2024) delivers a strong message, not just of a moral imperative but also of the need to have the operational agility to prevent and mitigate the risks threatening humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Humanitarian personnel are a beacon of hope and a source of relief to people suffering in conflict zones. They fulfil their duty in the face of immense constraints, including attacks on their lives, bureaucratic impediments and the impact of public perceptions based on misinformation, disinformation and hate speech pertaining to humanitarian actors and their work. Despite all those dangers, humanitarian and United Nations personnel persevere, remain and deliver life-saving support to millions of people in armed conflicts worldwide. It is our duty, therefore, as members of the Security Council, to ensure that they can fulfil their duty in safety and dignity and are given the credit that they deserve.

We need concerted efforts, including in the Security Council, to safeguard compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law, highlight current trends, adopt a more comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, break the pattern of violations and ensure the accountability of perpetrators of harm. The protection of civilians in armed conflicts is a fundamental prerequisite for lasting peace and security. It is our hope that the upcoming Protection of Civilians Week and the Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians, to be held in May, will contribute to decisive action being taken to safeguard the lives and dignity of civilians caught in armed conflicts.

In conclusion, let me stress that, for eight decades now, the United Nations has constituted common ground for maintaining peace and security. We have to live up to our commitments to protect civilians and to ensure that humanitarian and United Nations personnel carry out their work within a conducive legal, administrative and security framework.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Joyce Msuya, and the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Mr. Gilles Michaud, for the report on the implementation of resolution 2730 (2024), which concerns the protection of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel. We have taken note of the statement delivered by the civil society representative, Mr. Nic Lee.

In an armed conflict context, humanitarian assistance is undoubtedly a lifeline for thousands, not to say hundreds of thousands and, in some instances, millions of innocent civilians, whose survival depends directly on the support provided by humanitarian organizations. At the same time, humanitarian activities are fraught with colossal risks. Humanitarian, medical and rescue workers, volunteers and United Nations personnel frequently find themselves caught between life and death and between the need to offer relief and the threats to their own safety. Their labour is more than just a job: it is a feat. Today we wish to pay tribute to those who, under the most perilous and unpredictable of circumstances, risk their lives to save those of others. Their courage, sacrifice and unstinting resilience deserve particular recognition.

Over the past two years, we have all been made fully aware of just how perilous the profession of humanitarian worker remains. The year 2024 was the deadliest year on record, having claimed the lives of at least 377 members of the humanitarian community. This year could surpass that grim record, and we must do our utmost to prevent that from occurring. The lion's share of those fatalities resulted from Israel's

military campaign in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which has been conducted with egregious violations of international humanitarian law. We discussed that matter in detail on 28 March, during a closed Council meeting (see S/PV.9888). Unfortunately, new reports of ongoing casualties among humanitarian workers, including United Nations representatives, continue to emerge. On 18 March, an Al-Awda Health Association staff member was killed; that same day, a representative of Médecins sans frontières was killed, becoming the tenth employee from that organization to fall victim to the Gaza conflict. Following a strike on the United Nations compound in Deir Al-Balah on 19 March, a United Nations Office for Project Services staff member was killed, and six of his colleagues, three of whom work for the Mine Action Service of the United Nations, were seriously wounded. Over the past days in March, five staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), including a teacher, a doctor and a nurse, were killed. Just recently, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini reported two new casualties among the staff of the Agency under his authority.

Unfortunately, as we heard once again from Ms. Msuya today, the most horrific fears about the fate of the Palestinian Red Crescent emergency medical workers have come to pass — those humanitarians were in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military operation zone attempting to evacuate wounded Palestinians, but they themselves were subject to shelling. Up until recently, there was still a hope that those people were alive. But on 31 March, it was reported that the eight bodies had been found.

On a separate note, we would like to touch upon the situation faced by UNRWA staff in the Palestinian territories. Since 7 October 2023, the number of fallen UNRWA staff exceeded 280 people. According to incoming reports, this morning the IDF carried out yet another strike targeting an UNRWA medical facility in Jabaliya, which was being used as a refuge for 700 civilians. There are dead and wounded. Once again, we wish to recall the unacceptability of attacks on United Nations premises, which, unfortunately, are carried out on a regular basis in Gaza. The situation surrounding UNRWA clearly illustrates that the protection of humanitarian personnel should not be limited to preventing acts of physical violence, but it should also include combating many other forms of pressure, including psychological pressure. An unprecedented disinformation campaign has been unleashed against the Agency; that has triggered harassment, persecution and intimidation of UNRWA staff. It is they who are compelled to work on the ground under enormous pressure, fearing for their own lives as well as for the lives of their families and loved ones.

Once again, we reiterate our support for UNRWA. We believe that the Agency's efforts are indispensable, especially amid the current catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip, which continues to be gripped by a complete humanitarian blockade.

We are increasingly hearing calls from the representatives of certain States and various structures for new approaches to be crafted to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and accountability for the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law. However, in our view, the existing international obligations are more than sufficient — what matters now is scrupulous compliance therewith. We are referring primarily to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 and the Protocols Additional thereto, which were adopted more than 75 years ago. It is with disappointment that we observe that, even among the five permanent members of the Security Council, there are States that have not acceded to those instruments. We are convinced that universal accession to those instruments and compliance with the provisions thereof are the key to ensuring the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers. There are other instruments, including the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel; however, unfortunately, that convention has not been universally acceded to either. What new instruments can we talk about if the

Security Council or the General Assembly is unable to enforce previous ones, which remain fully relevant with the passage of time?

And neither should we lose sight of numerous specialized resolutions, through which the aforementioned United Nations bodies regularly update approaches to ensuring the protection of humanitarian workers and United Nations staff. Resolution 2730 (2024), adopted last May, reaffirms the imperative of adhering to the norms of international humanitarian law, including those set out in the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols Additional thereto. Russia fully supports this premise and a number of other provisions stipulated in resolution 2730 (2024). However, when the resolution was being adopted, we were compelled to abstain, since the document contained some language that is not fully accurate and that, in some cases, may even lead to distorted interpretations.

Turning to the recommendations drafted by the Secretary-General on the protection of humanitarian personnel, we already commented on them last November during the relevant Security Council meeting (see S/PV.9795). Some of those recommendations deserve support, while others, frankly speaking, we find contentious. Moreover, in our view, the report of the Secretary-General (see S/2024/852) has a number of shortcomings — for example, when listing the principles for delivering humanitarian assistance contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182, no mention is made of the principle of consent and coordination with national Governments. And yet that is precisely one of the key factors for mitigating risks to the safety of humanitarian personnel. We believe that humanitarian agencies should bear maximum responsibility when it comes to the protection of their staff, and they need to foster close cooperation with the official authorities of the host country in order to minimize risks and develop the most efficient formats for providing assistance to those in need.

In conclusion, I wish to note that none of us has any doubt that we need to do our utmost to prevent attacks and acts of violence against civilians, including humanitarian workers, during armed conflict. At the same time, we must bear in mind that the soundest way to achieve that goal is to ensure a ceasefire and prioritize the quest for political and diplomatic solutions to conflicts.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I wish to extend our warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, and to France on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Rest assured of our fullest support. I also take this opportunity to commend Denmark for its successful and effective presidency of the Council in March. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michaud for their comprehensive and sobering briefings and their call to action. I also thank Mr. Nic Lee for his contribution to these discussions.

We agree with the briefers: attacks on United Nations and humanitarian personnel must end. As Assistant Secretary-General Msuya said, being shot at is not part of their job. Sierra Leone approaches that important issue with a strong conviction and lived experience. We recall with humility and resolve our history, when civilians in Sierra Leone suffered grave atrocities during the civil conflict. It was through a combination of national will, unwavering humanitarian work, international solidarity and robust peacekeeping, with a focus on justice and reconciliation, that we emerged from that dark chapter. We therefore remain steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that no community endures such suffering again, as we urgently call for the full protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

Almost 26 years since the Security Council first considered the protection of civilians as a formal agenda item, millions of civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict, with indiscriminate violence, displacement and humanitarian suffering persisting across conflict theatres. Despite the robust legal frameworks

of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and repeated calls by the Council, belligerents continue to disregard their obligations to protect civilian populations, in this case humanitarian workers. For instance, the 2024 report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/385) is a stark reminder of the prevailing challenges. Civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remains devastating, with more than 67,000 casualties recorded in 2024 alone, a majority of whom were killed or injured in urban settings. Those figures are not just statistics, they are individual lives, families torn apart and communities destabilized. In that regard, Sierra Leone reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's call on States to endorse and implement the 2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, as well as to protect humanitarian workers. We continue reaffirm the principles and provisions of resolution 2730 (2024).

The protection of humanitarian personnel is part of a broader bleak picture. Sierra Leone is deeply concerned about the continuing breaches of the protection of civilians obligations by parties to conflict across various situations before the Security Council. In Gaza, we continue to witness alarming reports of indiscriminate bombardments, destruction of civilian infrastructure and attacks on humanitarian personnel, which contravene the basic tenets of international humanitarian law. In the Sudan, the conflict has generated one of the worst displacement crises globally, with systematic targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers, sexual violence and obstruction of humanitarian access. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, civilians are caught in the crossfire of armed groups' activities, often driven by competition over natural resources and frequently subject to forced recruitment and gender-based violence. In Haiti, violence from armed gangs has engulfed urban centres and displaced thousands, leaving civilians at the mercy of lawlessness. The security and humanitarian toll in Ukraine and Syria continue to be marked by extensive civilian suffering amid ongoing hostilities. Those examples point to an urgent need for greater accountability and compliance by all parties and a reinvigoration of the Security Council's protection mandate.

By reason of the foregoing, allow me to highlight three points to reinforce the protection of civilians agenda.

First, the protection of civilians must be anchored in respect for international law, particularly international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Both State and non-State actors must be reminded that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian objects or humanitarian personnel and humanitarian property or the failure to take precautions constitute a violation of international law and may amount to war crimes. Compliance must be matched with accountability, ensuring that violators are brought to justice through national or international mechanisms.

Secondly, we welcome and support initiatives that galvanize political commitment to uphold international humanitarian law. In that regard, Sierra Leone welcomes the global initiative to galvanize political commitment to international humanitarian law, launched in September 2024 by Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Sierra Leone is pleased to serve as co-Chair of the workstream on protecting civilian infrastructure. And we remain committed to contributing actively to its implementation.

Thirdly, the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance is a fundamental component of civilian protection. Humanitarian personnel must be protected from attacks, threats and obstruction. The disturbing increase in targeted attacks on aid workers, including in Gaza, the Sudan and Haiti, undermines not only assistance delivery but also the very values that underpin the Charter of the United Nations. Parties to conflict must take concrete steps to enable safe humanitarian access and uphold the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone urges all parties to conflict to distinguish at all times between civilians and combatants, to refrain from direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects and to take all feasible precautions to avoid or in any event minimize incidental loss of civilian life and damage. Particular attention must be paid to the protection of vulnerable populations — women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities — who often face compounded risks in conflict situations.

Finally, we pay tribute to all humanitarian workers who represent the very best of humankind, and we honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on France's assumption of the presidency and commend Denmark for a successful presidency in the month of March. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Michaud for the briefings and reiterate Guyana's gratitude to them and their teams for their dedication and for the work they continue to do to alleviate human suffering worldwide. We have also listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Nic Lee, Executive Director of the International NGO Safety Organisation.

The adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), last May, was a firm acknowledgement by the Security Council of the indispensable role of humanitarian personnel. Its adoption represented our collective commitment to their safety and security as they risk their lives each day to provide humanitarian aid and support to those in need.

The resolution also reiterated the need to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, including commitments universally made in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols thereto.

Guyana remains deeply concerned about increased attacks against humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel, including national and locally recruited staff and their premises and assets. Even as they dedicate their lives to alleviating human suffering, we are increasingly seeing humanitarians facing greater risks, becoming targets of attacks, suffering bodily harm and even death.

2024 was reported as the deadliest year on record for humanitarian aid workers. As we heard from Assistant Secretary-General Msuya, 377 humanitarians were killed in 20 countries. Moreover, since October 2023, more than 400 aid workers have been killed in Gaza alone. That horrific figure represents the highest number of aid workers who have died in a single conflict. We are deeply concerned that Gaza is now the epicentre for the deaths of humanitarian workers. We demand that the parties to the conflict uphold their legal obligations to protect United Nations and humanitarian aid workers and grant them unimpeded access to those in need.

Guyana pays tribute to those humanitarian personnel who lost their lives in service and expresses condolences to their families and colleagues.

Addressing that issue requires a multifaceted, coordinated and robust international response. Allow me to make a few points in that regard.

Accountability is a key pillar of the protection of civilians and central to the provisions of resolution 2730 (2024). The killing of and attacks on humanitarian personnel are violations of international humanitarian law and require a robust response from the Security Council. It is imperative that the perpetrators of those attacks be held to account. Ensuring an independent and impartial investigation and the prosecution of those crimes are necessary steps to deter future violations. In that regard, Guyana supports the Secretary-General's recommendation for the Council to systematically request the concerned State authorities to conduct prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into incidents and to report to the Security Council about the progress in and the outcomes of those investigations, including on measures to prevent the reoccurrence of such harm, as well as for the Council to consider referrals to the International Criminal Court or other international

tribunals in situations in which State authorities prove unable or unwilling to act. Guyana also supports efforts to strengthen objective accountability mechanisms, at all levels, which can provide a pathway for justice and reinforce the rule of law.

Secondly, resolution 2730 (2024) underscores the critical importance of unhindered access of humanitarian personnel in the execution of their mandates, without intimidation, interference or violence. The deliberate obstruction of the delivery of the humanitarian aid to conflict zones, coupled with bureaucratic barriers, is not only a violation of international humanitarian law, but also hinders the important work of humanitarian personnel and exacerbates the suffering of civilian populations. Guyana reiterates its call to all parties to conflicts to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure safe, timely and unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

Pursuant to resolution 2730 (2024), the Secretary-General has put forward several recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel, premises and assets, adding to the road map, to ensure that those on the front lines of humanitarian crises are protected from harm. Guyana urges all Council members to engage in constructive dialogue on those recommendations and to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2730 (2024). We must take urgent and decisive action if we are to stem the current devastating trajectory and guarantee the safety and protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to begin by congratulating France on its assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month and congratulate Denmark on its successful completion of its presidency last month. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Michaud for their briefings. I also listened carefully to the statement of the representative of civil society, Mr. Nic Lee.

China supports the Council's discussion on the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the humanitarian and United Nations personnel on the front lines of conflicts and to express our deep condolences to those who have lost their lives.

In 2024, an unprecedented 377 humanitarian workers lost their lives in conflicts. The Council adopted resolution 2730 (2024), which sets out clear requirements for the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, and the Secretariat has undertaken arduous efforts in that regard. However, we are saddened to see that attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel are still frequent occurrences. The basic principles of international humanitarian law are still being violated, and the humanitarian situation in conflict zones continues to deteriorate. In Gaza, the hard-won ceasefire has been breached, and access to supplies and electricity has been cut off. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has been systematically suppressed, and humanitarian workers have been attacked in the course of their duties. In Lebanon, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, peacekeeping forces have been targeted, which has resulted in massive casualties among peacekeepers. In the Sudan, humanitarian workers have carried out their work in extremely dangerous conditions. In Yemen, dozens of United Nations personnel are still being detained.

Those harsh realities require the international community to maintain a heightened state of urgency, to speak with a more unified voice and to take stronger action to protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We urge greater efforts to promote ceasefires. Ending armed conflict provides the most basic protection for humanitarian workers.

The Security Council should discharge its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and take the necessary steps to effectively implement ceasefires to end fighting. To that end, parties to conflicts must implement the relevant Council resolutions, renounce the use of force and resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation. Countries that can bring influence to bear should play a positive and constructive role.

We call for greater resolve in order to revitalize the authority of international humanitarian law. It is a fundamental principle of international humanitarian law that humanitarian and United Nations personnel must not be the target of military operations. In conflict situations, all parties must guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian agencies and their staff. With respect to occupied territories, occupying Powers are obligated to protect the humanitarian needs of civilians by facilitating humanitarian operations. The mandates of United Nations missions must be respected, and freedom of movement must be guaranteed. Violations of international humanitarian law must be strictly investigated and prosecuted.

We support the improvement of the protection system through more pragmatic measures. The Secretary-General has proposed measures to protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We hope that the Secretariat will strengthen communication with the countries concerned to promote their effective implementation. Taking into account the situation on the ground, missions and troop-contributing countries must provide targeted training for peacekeepers and enhance their situational awareness, emergency response and rescue capabilities. Missions must accurately study and assess evolving risks, promptly improve contingency plans and minimize casualties among peacekeepers through preventive actions. We support the harmonization of protection standards with stricter requirements.

Humanitarian and United Nations personnel work for a noble cause, bringing peace and hope to conflict areas. Their safety should not be ranked in a hierarchy, and there must be no differentiation in their protection. Double standards and the selective application of protection will only narrow the space for humanitarian work and result in impunity for more violations of the law and must, therefore, be completely rejected.

In September 2024 China, the International Committee of the Red Cross, France and others jointly launched the global initiative on international humanitarian law with the aim of promoting the reaffirmation by the international community of its firm commitment to international humanitarian law, garnering the greatest possible synergy in upholding international humanitarian law and promoting the realization of lasting peace. We call on further countries to join that initiative.

China stands ready to work with all parties to continue to make unremitting efforts to protect the safety of humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and France for assuming the presidency. We express our appreciation and thanks to Denmark for its presidency. I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Lee for their insightful briefings.

We welcome this meeting on implementing resolution 2730 (2024). I think it is critical that the Council maintain momentum on the safety, security and well-being of aid workers, and I pay tribute to those on the front lines and extend, again, my condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives.

In the first three months of 2025, the Aid Worker Security Database has already recorded 64 deaths, 36 injuries and eight kidnappings. The majority were local or

national aid workers. The most dangerous place to deliver humanitarian assistance is Gaza, with more than 400 aid workers reportedly killed since the beginning of the conflict. That is followed by the Sudan and South Sudan. We are also concerned about the aid workers detained by the Houthis in Yemen and call for their release. We stress the need for the safety of aid workers in Myanmar, who are bringing essential responses for the victims of the devastating earthquake.

On the anniversary of the attack on a World Central Kitchen convoy in Gaza that killed seven aid workers, including three British citizens, we continue to call for the conclusion of the Military Advocate General's consideration of the incident, including determining whether criminal proceedings should be initiated.

Tragically, just last week the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported that eight of its medics were killed in Gaza, alongside first responders and a United Nations aid worker. We call for a thorough and swift investigation with meaningful accountability for those responsible. PRCS medic Asaad Al-Nasasra is still missing, and we call on Israel to support the search for him.

Three actions are essential.

First, all parties to a conflict must comply with international humanitarian law. That includes compliance with obligations relating to the passage of humanitarian supplies, equipment and personnel, as well as respecting and protecting aid workers. States must investigate attacks on aid workers and hold perpetrators to account. Effective, trusted deconfliction mechanisms must be set up and used.

Secondly, we must strengthen international commitments to protect aid workers. The United Kingdom is proud to be part of the Australian-led ministerial group to develop a political declaration to galvanize collective action to protect aid workers, and we encourage others to join and demonstrate unity to drive action beyond the Council that enhances protection for aid workers.

Thirdly, we must do all we can to support humanitarian organizations, including local organizations, to work safely. Actors who play a fundamental role in aid worker safety face operational risks due to inadequate funding. The United Kingdom supports organizations, such as the Aid Worker Security Database and the International NGO Safety Organisation, which play a central role in aid worker security. We urge others to consider supporting fundamental enabler organizations.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom remains steadfast in our commitment to allowing aid workers to do their job in safety and to preventing violence against aid workers from becoming the new normal.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by extending our warm congratulations to France on assuming the presidency of the Council and our sincere appreciation to Denmark for its successful leadership during its presidency. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya, Under-Secretary-General Michaud and Mr. Nic Lee for their informative and insightful briefings. I warmly welcome the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to this meeting.

Even though the Security Council adopted resolution 2730 (2024) in May, initiated by Switzerland, and more than 100 Member States renewed their commitment in November, last year was the deadliest on record for humanitarian workers. Even more concerning is the fact that this phenomenon spans multiple regions — from Gaza, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the Sudan, to Haiti and to Myanmar. The gravity of this issue cannot be overstated, as each attack is not only a tragic loss of life, but also a significant disruption to life-saving assistance for civilians in urgent need.

Against that dire backdrop, allow me to make the following points.

First, we call on the parties to armed conflicts and all Member States to honour the obligation to protect humanitarian personnel under international humanitarian law. Attacks against humanitarian workers have reached record levels year after year. That alarming trend has continued into this year, with 108 humanitarian personnel killed, kidnapped or injured in the first three months alone. Aid workers, both international and local, must be protected under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. In particular, we emphasize the inviolability of United Nations personnel and facilities under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We urge all States that have not yet ratified that Convention to do so, without delay, and fully comply with it.

Secondly, we urge all Member States to fully cooperate with the United Nations and humanitarian entities to effectively mitigate risks to aid workers. In particular, it is crucial to ensure that humanitarian personnel have timely and reliable access to the information and resources needed to anticipate and respond to threats, including through coordinated channels such as the deconfliction mechanism. The effective implementation of the deconfliction mechanism is more critical than ever, as more than 400 humanitarian personnel, including United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East workers, have reportedly lost their lives in Gaza alone since 7 October, including the 15 found dead this week. We call upon all parties to maintain and implement the mechanism throughout the duration of armed conflict until humanitarian needs are fully addressed.

Thirdly, we urge all Member States to actively counter misinformation and disinformation targeting the United Nations and humanitarian organizations. Malicious actors have mounted defamation campaigns against them to disrupt their activities. In the Sudan, for instance, the warring parties spread false narratives accusing the Emergency Response Rooms in the Sudan of collaborating with their enemies, thereby justifying the denial of humanitarian access and leaving millions in urgent need without assistance. If left unchecked, this worrisome trend risks rendering the delivery of humanitarian aid in conflict zones untenable. We therefore call upon all States to ensure public access to accurate and reliable information, rigorously monitor misinformation and consider sanctioning those responsible for disseminating unverified and libellous content.

Fourthly, perpetrators who attack humanitarian workers must be held accountable at all costs. These attacks are severe violations of international humanitarian law and demand swift, impartial and independent investigations. States must prosecute perpetrators, and the Council should ensure that by requesting concerned States to report the progress of their investigations, in line with resolution 2730 (2024) and the Secretary-General's recommendations in November.

We remain concerned that attacks against humanitarian personnel are not being properly investigated, such as in Haiti and South Sudan. States lacking such capacity should receive technical assistance and capacity-building support from the United Nations and the international community.

Furthermore, when national jurisdictions fail to act, international accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, must be deployed, in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

In conclusion, we are always touched and impressed to recognize that humanitarian workers continue to bravely operate on the front lines of multiple crises, even under extremely dangerous circumstances. However, without stronger legal protection, accurate messaging and renewed financial support in the wake of funding cuts, their ability to deliver life-saving aid is at grave risk. As such, the

international community must act with greater resolve to ensure that aid workers are fully protected and that humanitarian assistance reaches those in greatest need.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the entire delegation of France for assuming the presidency of the Council. We wish you the best of luck and assure you of Denmark's full cooperation. I would also like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Lee for their very impactful briefings.

At the outset, Denmark wishes to pay tribute to all United Nations humanitarian personnel globally, many of whom risk their lives and work under the most challenging circumstances to bring relief to those most in need. And they do so with passion and courage, as mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Michaud.

As mentioned many times this morning, the year 2024 was the deadliest one on record for United Nations and humanitarian personnel. From Haiti to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Mali and Ukraine, violence, disinformation and intimidation have led to the killing and injuring of hundreds of United Nations and humanitarian workers. That is evident in Gaza, which, for 23 days now, has been under a complete blockade, with 2 million people cut off from aid, water, food and electricity.

As we heard today, since Hamas' terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 and the ensuing conflict, more than 400 humanitarian staff, including 289 United Nations staff, have been killed in Gaza. As a result, the United Nations is now forced to scale back its presence, putting its stay and deliver strategy in jeopardy. Just last week, the Council addressed that in a private meeting on the attack on a deconflicted United Nations compound in Deir Al-Balah (see S/PV.9888) — an attack that killed one United Nations staff member and severely injured five others. This weekend, we learned of the further devastating killings of more than a dozen first responders, including Palestine Red Crescent Society medical workers, while being dispatched to aid wounded civilians in Rafah. After five days of negotiations, United Nations teams were finally permitted to access the area, only to find their remains, ambulances, fire truck and a United Nations vehicle crushed and partially buried. Those medical workers and humanitarians should have been protected in their work.

Denmark calls on Israel to abide by international law and respect the rulings of the International Court of Justice. Israel is obliged to resume the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and to ensure that the basic needs of the civilian population are met. However, let me be clear: international law applies to all parties to the conflict. They must protect United Nations and humanitarian workers and ensure the absolute inviolability and neutrality of United Nations premises, including by refraining from using them for military purposes.

In the Sudan, we are also witnessing blatant disregard for the safety of United Nations and humanitarian staff. Nearly two years into the conflict, the parties continue to harass, intimidate and target aid personnel. That creates unacceptable barriers for humanitarian operations. We remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations to ensure that life-saving aid reaches those in need. In Yemen, aid workers are also being targeted by the Houthis. There, humanitarians are subject to detentions, restrictions and harassment. And in Ukraine, since Russia's full-scale aggression, we have seen the use of cruel, double-tap strikes, deliberately targeting rescuers arriving to assist the injured. The killing of three International Committee of the Red Cross staff members after shelling at its distribution site in late 2024 underscores the grave danger for humanitarians, who must not be a target.

Against that dire backdrop, allow me to make three recommendations.

First, impunity signals tolerance. If the Council fails to hold perpetrators accountable, we send the message that such crimes are permitted. That will only deepen the violence driving the catastrophic humanitarian outcomes.

Secondly, we must demand effective investigations for attacks on United Nations and humanitarian personnel. Investigations must be independent, transparent and credible. Without consequences for violations, we run the risk that they will simply continue unabated.

Thirdly, States must ensure that United Nations and humanitarian personnel are protected under national law. Counter-terrorism legislation must contain explicit exemptions for humanitarian actors. Their work must never be criminalized.

In conclusion, we recall that attacks on United Nations and humanitarian personnel may amount to war crimes. We must insist on the implementation of the Council's resolutions, including resolution 2730 (2024). The protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel is an inseparable precondition for the protection of civilians in conflict. We must use all tools available to us and seek accountability whenever violations occur. History will judge us not by our words but by our deeds.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I want to join colleagues in thanking Denmark for its skilful and effective guidance of the Security Council in March, and we congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council in April. You can count on our cooperation.

We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya, Under-Secretary-General Michaud and Executive Director Lee for their invaluable input. We heard them, and we will be following up on their recommendations and their asks. I also want to welcome the representative of Switzerland to the Chamber.

Last year was the deadliest year ever for humanitarian workers. It was the deadliest year for women and men who choose to help others survive the hardest period of their lives. They are the ones who run towards the danger when the rest are escaping it; the ones who put their lives in harm's way; the ones who choose to provide hope. For battered civilians, they are the only remaining face of humanity. Humanitarian workers are left to pick up the pieces when political solutions evade us. Assistant Secretary-General Msuya rightly pointed out that there is no lack of legal protection for humanitarian workers, but there is a lack of political will. The absence of a proper reaction to violations in one conflict leads to dangerous trends in others. Or to quote the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Ms. Spoljaric Egger, speaking in the Chamber in September 2024,

"... one conflict informs the other. The boundaries of what is acceptable are pushed, and more human suffering follow." (*S/PV.9732, p.4*)

Ms. Msuya asked us what the Council was going to do given the unprecedented number of humanitarian workers being killed; let me try to outline Slovenia's answers.

First, our collective commitment to peace and security must be guided by a renewed respect for, and implementation of, international law — not by a group of countries or a majority of the countries, but by all 15 of us here and all 193 overall. Slovenia joined the global initiative on international humanitarian law launched by the ICRC to reverse the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law. As we have done time and again, we underline the respect for the protected status of humanitarian workers, facilities and operations under international law. Intentionally directing attacks against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance mission is a war crime and must be prosecuted accordingly.

Secondly, humanitarian workers must be protected. They should not be terrified to work. In the two weeks since the resumption of hostilities in Gaza, the number

of attacks on humanitarian workers has been staggering — a United Nations guest house, ICRC, Médecins sans frontières and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations guest houses and Nasser Hospital are all under protection and all under fire. Palestine Red Crescent Society emergency teams and workers from the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been killed. Slovenia condemns all attacks on all humanitarian, medical and United Nations personnel and those on journalists and media workers.

And lastly, as stressed by the briefers, we cannot emphasize enough the need to end impunity and ensure accountability for killings of humanitarian workers. Each of these deaths demands comprehensive investigation — transparent, impartial enquiries that lead to changes in policy, accountability for the perpetrators and guarantees of non-repetition. The results of the investigations should be shared with the Council.

Let me conclude this statement by welcoming the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his most recent report (see S/2024/852) on resolution 2730 (2024) and by calling on all Member States to support them. We thank France for organizing this briefing and suggest that the Council address more regularly the protection of humanitarian workers in country-specific settings following attacks on them.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): I would like to join other colleagues in congratulating Denmark for a successful presidency last month.

(spoke in French)

I also congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish you every success.

(spoke in English)

We welcome the presence of our Swiss colleagues to this meeting, and we thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michaud for their briefings. We also appreciate the insights shared by Mr. Nic Lee. We thank the Secretary-General for his recommendations presented last November pursuant to resolution 2730 (2024) (see S/2024/852).

As is evident from this discussion, we are faced with a deeply troubling reality, and that is despite numerous resolutions and statements by the Security Council, attacks on humanitarian personnel continue to escalate. And those are not just isolated incidents, they reflect a growing disregard for international norms.

The figures speak for themselves. The numbers are simply astounding. According to the Aid Worker Security Database, 379 humanitarian personnel were killed in 2024, making it the deadliest year on record. And while there are challenges in various situations, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, Lebanon, Yemen and others, nowhere is the crisis more evident than in Gaza, where 408 humanitarian workers, including 284 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have been killed since October 2023. Just days ago, we learned about the Israeli occupation forces' killing of eight Palestinian medics, six civil defence first responders and a United Nations staff member in a wanton, shameless act in southern Gaza, which has left the world appalled. We are failing those who risk their lives and act as a lifeline to serve others. It is unacceptable that those who carry food into war zones, provide life-saving medical support and strive to bring dignity among displacement are being met not with gratitude, but with gunfire and intimidation. Every attack on a humanitarian worker is an attack on the principle of humanity itself.

Resolution 2730 (2024) unequivocally reaffirmed that humanitarian personnel must be protected, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. The high number of fatalities is a sombre reminder that much more needs to be done to fully implement that resolution. The promise of protection must be backed by action.

In resolution 2730 (2024), coupled with the Secretary-General's detailed recommendations, we have a road map for action. We must move with urgency and purpose.

In that regard, first, we would like to propose and call for setting up a global implementation dashboard for resolution 2730 (2024) under United Nations auspices. The dashboard would provide real-time public tracking of actions to implement resolution 2730 (2024), recording violations and investigations and their outcomes for everyone to see and follow.

Secondly, all parties to conflict must adhere strictly to their obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. There must be consequences for non-compliance.

Thirdly, we support the call for mandatory integration of safety provisions into all United Nations mission mandates, especially during peacekeeping drawdowns and transitions. As the Secretary-General has highlighted, those periods are marked by acute risks. Transition planning must be anticipatory, inclusive and backed by adequate security resources.

Fourthly, impunity must end. Impunity is not merely a failure of justice; it is a license for repetition. Timely, independent and impartial investigations must hold perpetrators accountable. The Security Council should push for sanctions and legal action against violators.

Fifthly, we echo the Secretary-General's concern about impediments to humanitarian access. Bureaucratic hurdles and the weaponization of access as a war tactic must cease.

Sixthly, humanitarian personnel today face not only lethal weapons but also weapons of disinformation fuelling false narratives that incite violence and erode trust. We must ensure public access to accurate and reliable information, monitor misinformation and disinformation related to United Nations and humanitarian activities and sanction those responsible for spreading harmful content.

Finally, in accordance with resolution 2730 (2024), the Secretary-General should continue to swiftly report to the Council when widespread issues occur in situations considered by the Council concerning the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. Once those situations are brought to the Council's attention, it must take prompt action against the violators.

Pakistan remains committed to supporting the effective implementation of resolution 2730 (2024) and to upholding the safety, dignity and neutrality of all humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance their safety and security and stand ready to work with all to operationalize the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Humanitarian workers and personnel seek protection, accountability and assurance that the international community will not turn a blind eye when their lives are at risk. Let us answer that call not with promises alone, but with protection; not with just reporting, but also monitoring and prevention; and not by just mourning their loss, but with effective action. Let us ensure that the courage of humanitarian workers is matched by collective international resolve to protect them. That, in our

view, will be important to restore the credibility of the Council's decisions on this important matter.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Joyce Msuya; the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Mr. Gilles Michaud; and the Executive Director of the International NGO Safety Organisation, Mr. Nic Lee, for their important statements.

We have all seen that 2024 was the deadliest year for humanitarian workers, with 377 staff killed. On behalf of France, I would like to pay tribute to the victims, and I would like to convey to their families and loved ones the sincere condolences of France.

This trend is continuing in 2025. Just a few days ago, in Gaza, the bodies of 15 rescue workers were found after their ambulance convoy came under heavy fire. Among them were eight paramedics and volunteers from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and a United Nations staff member. One paramedic is still missing.

Faced with the risks, humanitarian workers are sometimes forced to withdraw. In Yemen, the United Nations had to suspend its activities in the governorate of Saada after a new wave of arrests of its staff by the Houthis and the death of a humanitarian worker detained in inhumane conditions. In Gaza, the Secretary-General made the difficult decision to reduce the United Nations presence. Several humanitarian organizations have suspended their activities in the Zamzam camp in North Darfur, which is home to almost half a million displaced persons and where famine is rife. Civilians are paying the price for those attacks.

France condemns in the strongest possible terms all violations of international law committed against humanitarian workers and calls for the immediate release of all those held captive.

The facts are clear: almost a year after the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), aimed at strengthening the protection of humanitarian workers on the ground and four months after the publication of the Secretary-General's recommendations (see S/2024/852), which we welcome, the situation has worsened, as if normalizing these unjustifiable and unacceptable attacks.

Regardless of the place or circumstance, parties to conflicts must respect international humanitarian law. That is a legal, political and moral imperative, and humanitarian workers must be protected under the Geneva Conventions, which set limits on the conduct of hostilities irrespective of the threats against which the parties seek protection. The Conventions also require that safe and unhindered access to populations in need be guaranteed. To that end, it is imperative to combat the misinformation and stigmatization to which humanitarian workers are subjected.

When violations occur, the Council must make itself heard, react and ensure that the perpetrators are held responsible. It was in that context that France, alongside the United Kingdom, requested a meeting of the Council on 28 March (see S/PV.9888), following the strike on a United Nations building in Gaza. It is also our collective responsibility to implement the resolutions adopted at the thirty-fourth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held just six months ago.

International criminal law has other important avenues for action. France calls on States that have not yet done so to ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, as well as its 2005 Optional Protocol. The International Criminal Court is also an important instrument available to States and to the Council. Article 8 of the Rome Statute defines a war crime as "intentionally

directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission”.

Finally, France calls on all States to join the global initiative launched by the International Committee of the Red Cross alongside six States, including France, which has already begun its work. The Initiative should lead to concrete recommendations to strengthen the commitment of States to respect international humanitarian law and, thus, alleviate the suffering of civilian populations in conflicts. The Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noël Barrot, will be working on these concrete recommendations here in New York at the end of the month.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Mr. President, and your team on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and in thanking our Danish colleague and team for their successful presidency in March. I welcome the holding of this meeting and I thank the President for having invited us to participate.

The protection of humanitarians is a key priority for us, as demonstrated during our term on the Council, particularly through our commitment to the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024) almost one year ago. I also wish to join my colleagues in thanking Ms. Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; and Mr. Lee, Executive Director of the International NGO Safety Organisation, for their briefings. Their commitment to the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel is remarkable.

I think that everyone here stated, in one way or another, that the numbers are chilling. They reveal a reality that is clearly unacceptable. That is true in Gaza, the most dangerous place in the world for humanitarian workers, as we heard, but also in the Sudan, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan — the trend, unfortunately, is global. Humanitarian workers, who are essential in alleviating the suffering of civilians and ensuring their survival, are being targeted.

National and locally recruited staff are particularly affected, as we heard. The killing of a local employee receives 500 times less attention than that of an international employee. Killings, injuries, threats, kidnappings and harassment: Switzerland strongly condemns any attack against humanitarian and United Nations personnel, including national and local staff. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families, to whom I would like to express our sincere condolences.

“When anyone targets an ambulance, he is not only killing the crew and the rescued person, he is killing all of humanity,” says Mohammad Bashir Summakie, local security officer for the World Food Programme in Syria. Unfortunately, these attacks are not isolated or accidental incidents. They are symptomatic of a deliberate challenge to the international order, marked by continuous violations of international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law. We cannot allow this trend to take hold.

A significant number of States, including Switzerland, are committed to fighting this trend. In May 2024, 98 countries co-sponsored resolution 2730 (2024), which Switzerland had the honour of presenting to the Council. In September, at the initiative of Australia, a ministerial group for the protection of humanitarian personnel was created, and the International Committee of the Red Cross launched its global initiative, endorsed by several members of the Council, which we also support. And in November, in discussions on the recommendations of the Secretary-General (see S/2024/767), 117 delegations unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to protect

humanitarian and United Nations personnel, to guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to strengthen accountability.

We welcome this mobilization. However, it is not enough. We must translate words into concrete actions to save lives. What we must do is, in fact, quite clear and apparent. First, we must demand respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, in all circumstances. The obligation of States and all parties to a conflict to respect and protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel, including national and locally recruited personnel, is unequivocal.

Secondly, we must immediately implement resolution 2730 (2024) and the related recommendations by the Secretary-General.

Thirdly, we must guarantee safe and unimpeded humanitarian access. The safety of humanitarian personnel must be ensured so that they can reach all those in need, even in the face of budget constraints and increasing delegations to local organizations.

Fourthly, beyond political condemnations, let us finally put an end to impunity. States must systematically investigate violence and prosecute those responsible. Otherwise, we will not succeed in breaking the vicious cycle of violations of international humanitarian law.

Fifthly, we must strengthen confidence in humanitarian action by combating all disinformation campaigns.

Finally, we must support the victims and amplify their voices to prevent further suffering.

The courage and commitment of humanitarian and United Nations personnel on the ground in the face of threats and attacks are more than admirable. Their solidarity with people in need should inspire us. Our role is not limited to saluting their bravery or mourning their deaths. We must act. The Council must remain united and maintain its commitment to protecting those who protect. I would like to believe, alongside the Assistant Secretary-General, that we can individually and collectively change this harmful trend. Switzerland will remain fully committed to that end and will make this issue a central theme during the week dedicated to the protection of civilians next month here in New York.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.