



# General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.*

**Agenda item 34 (continued)**

**Prevention of armed conflict**

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

**Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B on Syria because we believe that, in the present circumstances, it is a necessary response to the extreme seriousness of the situation being borne by that country.

Costa Rica believes that the inaction caused by the double veto in the Security Council, in addition to the enormous obstacles facing the joint United Nations and Arab League mediation, fully justifies the General Assembly seeking other forms of promoting a peaceful settlement to the humanitarian tragedy, insecurity and regional instability created by the conflict.

Costa Rica highly values consensus in our Organization. Nonetheless, the quest for consensus must neither paralyse the international community nor weaken the message of the United Nations in the face of unacceptable events such as those with which we are seized.

The main source of the Syrian tragedy is the intransigence of its present Government, its systematic use of violence against civilians, and its refusal to undertake in good faith the path of mediation proposed

by the United Nations and the Arab League. Today, we regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, but we understand that, in the present circumstances, his capacity to act and influence the situation had been exhausted.

In addition to the intolerable human cost, that alarming combination of factors threatens to cause the conflict to engulf the entire region and has led to a bloody civil war, which is always fertile ground for fanaticism, terrorism and chaos.

For all the foregoing reasons, we make a heartfelt appeal to the Syrian authorities to respect their commitments to international law, and in particular to international human rights and international humanitarian law. It is imperative that they take the measures necessary to avoid further bloodshed and violations of human rights in accordance with their responsibility to protect their own population. That imperative must be carried out above all by the Government, but it also involves the armed opposition and those who support it in armed clashes and any other relevant actors in the conflict.

Finally, we want to emphasize that the decision on how Syria organizes its Government and institutions belongs exclusively to the Syrian people through broad and inclusive political dialogue based on respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and democracy.

**Mr. Pham** (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has been closely following the situation in Syria and shares the deep concerns of the international community, including those of the countries of the region, over the lack of

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progress in the political process and the increasing instability and violence that have caused enormous losses to the Syrian people.

We strongly call upon all parties concerned in Syria to seriously implement the agreement brokered by the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, especially with respect to an immediate end to violence and for the promotion of dialogue and national reconciliation to arrive at a Syrian-led political solution to the current situation.

As a State party to international legal instruments on the prohibition and destruction of weapons of mass destruction, Viet Nam demands full compliance with the commitments made under those instruments. Viet Nam supports the position expressed by many countries upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including those of respect for political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of States, which should be the primary basis for the actions of States and oppositions. Along those lines, Viet Nam does not support practices or implications that may create negative precedents that are not in keeping with that fundamental principle. We also reaffirm our strong support for all constructive efforts on the part of the international community aimed at putting an early end to the crisis and at the promotion of a Syrian-led political process in Syria, and call for action consistent with that goal on the part of all States and organizations.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation deems regrettable the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 66/253 B, which only exacerbates the confrontational approach to resolving the Syrian crisis and in no way helps to bring the parties to a platform of dialogue, with a view to finding peaceful ways to resolve the crisis in a manner that would benefit the Syrian population as a whole.

The resolution's façade of humanitarian rhetoric attempts to mask its blatant support for the armed opposition, which well-known countries are actively supporting and financing and to which they are providing mercenaries and weapons. It is no coincidence that those countries were the most active sponsors of the resolution.

The resolution, in violating the Charter of the United Nations, intrudes on the jurisdiction of the Council, which continues to actively consider the question of

Syria. The document contains statements referencing the inability of the Council to react effectively to the Syrian crisis, which is not the case. Suffice it to recall the unanimously adopted resolutions 2042 (2012), 2043 (2012) and 2059 (2012).

The Council achieves consensus when we take politically tested and balanced decisions; when members work hand in hand to implement them; and when they do not act outside of the Council or the agreed frameworks and mechanisms for a Syrian settlement process.

The resolution adopted today is harmful because it contravenes the efforts under way to help implement the Annan plan and the Geneva agreements of the Action Group. It undermines the chances of launching a Syrian process aimed at a political settlement. We also deem unacceptable attempts to alter the mandate of the Special Envoy. We deeply regret Mr. Annan's decision to resign. We hope that Mr. Annan — a very experienced diplomat and politician — will be replaced by a worthy successor, and that up until 31 August he will work to successfully implement the Council's mandate.

At this stage, what is important is to prevent any slackening of international efforts to resolve the crisis in Syria. The Annan plan, like the Geneva agreements, remain significant as a guideline for the peaceful settlement of Syria's problems. The members of the Action Group should, in a spirit of responsibility, require the strict implementation by all parties of the provisions of those documents and send a clear signal that the violence must end.

In that regard, we welcome the statement by the Secretary-General that the Organization remains dedicated to achieving a diplomatic resolution of the crisis in Syria. In this situation, it is particularly important to maintain a United Nations presence in the country. In spite of all the difficulties faced by the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, it remains the only independent source of objective information on the situation in the country and is an important instrument to help implement the Annan plan and the Geneva communiqué.

**Mr. Prozor** (Israel): Winston Churchill once said, "The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is". The Al-Assad regime could use a healthy dose of Churchill's wisdom today. No matter what Al-Assad says, he cannot alter the horrific truth about the brutality

that he and his morally bankrupt regime have unleashed and are unleashing on the Syrian people.

In the month since we gathered here to speak about Syria, the Al-Assad regime has slaughtered thousands more innocents, indiscriminately murdering civilians — including women and children — using the firepower of its artillery, its armour and even, in some cases, its air force.

The General Assembly is no stranger to distortions and absurdities. But over the course of several debates, the Syrian representative has managed to take the art of fabrication in this Hall to new heights. If lying were an Olympic event, I have no doubt that the Syrian regime and its representatives could easily win a gold medal. Of course, it is nothing new for Al-Assad — and his representatives — to blame all of their country's ills on Israel. But this time around they have broadened their horizons to a whole range of other nations.

Behind every rock and building in Syria, Al-Assad sees not only Israelis, British and French — but also Saudis, Qataris, Kuwaitis and Turks. He says that the slaughter in Syria is a western and Arab conspiracy, and has nothing to do with him personally.

It is clear that the men, women and children of Syria are not the indiscriminate victims of a natural disaster. Nor are they the accidental casualties of a war. The civilians of Syria are the deliberate targets of a brutal regime and its evil allies, who will commit any crime to keep Bashar Al-Assad in power.

On the ground, Iranians are assisting Al-Assad's henchmen. They have been deployed on Syrian soil to help sustain the Syrian regime and take part in its killing spree against the Syrian people.

The outside forces that have been instrumental in the slaughter in Syria speak in a Persian accent. Unfortunately, many in the international community do not yet acknowledge that fact, despite the overwhelming evidence that supports it. Yes, while the Security Council remains paralysed in New York, Al-Assad's council of terror continues to operate ruthlessly in Damascus.

On Al-Assad's advisory board sit Ahmadinejad and Nasrallah, who offer him guidance on how to butcher the Syrian people more effectively. Al-Assad's partners in that trio of terror are not shy about discussing their role in the slaughter. Last week, Nasrallah gave a speech praising the Al-Assad regime, calling it “a

real military partner”. And just several days ago, Iran's Vice-President promised the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs that Iran would continue to offer its “experience and capabilities” to Al-Assad's killing machine.

The experience and capabilities of Iran and Hizbullah in repression are on full display in Syria. They provide weapons, ammunition, training, intelligence and logistical equipment to Al-Assad. It is time for the international community to hold all of those three members of that trio of terror accountable for their crimes. The trio poses the most immediate threat to international peace and security.

The world can begin by calling Hizbullah exactly what it is: a group of global terrorists.

For those in this Hall who are still looking for more evidence that Hizbullah is a terrorist organization, I ask: What are they waiting for? The group has only been actively conducting terrorist acts for three decades. They murdered 241 American servicemen and 58 French servicemen in 1983, blowing up their barracks in Beirut. They bombed the AMIA Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires in 1994, killing 85 people. And last month, a Hizbullah suicide bomber murdered six Israeli tourists on a bus in Bulgaria.

What else does Hizbullah need to do for the world to understand that it is a terrorist organization? Today Hizbullah's terrorist network extends from the cities of West Africa to the communities of South America to the villages of Lebanon and Syria. How many more innocents must fall victim to its terrorism before the world acts?

For years, Al-Assad repeatedly denied that he held chemical weapons. Surprise, surprise. Last week we heard a new revelation from Syrian officials: Al-Assad does have chemical weapons, and his Government is prepared to use them.

The world should wake up to this dangerous reality today, not tomorrow. We should not pretend that a regime that cuts the throats of children today will not be prepared to gas them tomorrow. Al-Assad must know that he will be held accountable for using those weapons. He must understand that transferring chemical weapons to Hizbullah or other terrorist organizations is a red line that he cannot cross. The world's most dangerous ophthalmologist should not be allowed to claim that he is colour-blind. When it comes

to chemical weapons, this red line should be very, very clear.

The lies of Al-Assad are an affront to the thousands of Syrian civilians who have been murdered. Unlike the members of Al-Assad's diplomatic service, these people have no opportunity to apply for political asylum. Instead, the women and children of Syria are shot trying to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

Yet his lies cannot hide one simple truth. Bashar Al-Assad has no moral authority to govern, he has no legitimacy to rule, and he never did. It is time for everyone in the Organization to speak clearly, decisively and truthfully about the reality on the ground in Syria. It does not make a difference where one comes from, what politics one preaches, or what faith one belongs to; no decent human being can stay silent in the face of what is happening in Syria.

Today, on behalf of the Israeli people and the Jewish people, I want to speak directly to the Syrian people. I know that our two nations have a long history of conflict and are still separated by politics. Yet Israel's hand remains extended to the people of Syria. We continue to offer humanitarian aid, food and medicine to them. I want to use this platform today to again express Israel's hope for a brighter future for the Syrian people, along with all the other peoples of the Middle East — a future of freedom, prosperity and tolerance; a future of liberty and justice; and a future of peace.

**Mr. Seruhere** (United Republic of Tanzania): I am taking the floor to explain the position that the United Republic of Tanzania took in the voting on resolution 66/253 B, adopted this morning.

At the outset, the United Republic of Tanzania expresses its sympathy to the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian people for the deaths of innocent people, particularly women, children and the elderly, who have always been victims of conflicts and wars around the globe. The United Republic of Tanzania fully recognizes the magnitude of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and appreciates the national, regional and international efforts that have been made to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, including the efforts of this body through the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan.

We abstained in the voting, however, because of our strong belief that the crisis has been misdiagnosed in terms of the Charter of the United Nations. Our vote should by no means be construed as an acceptance of

the impunity and massive violations, including human rights violations, perpetrated by whomsoever on innocent civilians in Syria.

The United Republic of Tanzania adheres to the principles and the practice of non-discrimination, unity and development. We are deeply concerned that the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, concerning sovereignty and non-interference in matters that are within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, have not been fully upheld in the Syrian crisis.

It is regrettable that the resolution on the Syrian Arab Republic refrains from recognizing the external forces that have also contributed to the escalation and perpetration of the chaos in Syria. In our opinion, that omission has been and remains a major obstacle to achieving a meaningful and peaceful solution to the crisis.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to abide by the fundamental principle of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, namely, that of condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of Governments.

**Mr. Wang Min** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We note that, although it has undergone several amendments, the substance of resolution 66/253 B, just adopted, remains unchanged.

China is deeply worried by the increasingly grave situation in Syria and the continued escalation of the crisis. China opposes and condemns all forms of terrorism and violent acts against innocent civilians. We urge all parties in Syria to immediately and completely cease violence and create the conditions for a political settlement to the crisis.

Both the Syrian Government and the opposition have the obligation to restore peace and stability in Syria at an early date. What has happened proves that putting pressure on only one party will not help to resolve the Syrian issue. On the contrary, it will derail the political settlement of the crisis, cause a further escalation of turmoil, and let the crisis spill over into other countries in the region, thereby jeopardizing regional peace and stability. The only viable approach to Syrian issues to seek a just, peaceful and appropriate solution through political means. A military approach will result in a larger conflict and more bloodshed.

China regrets Mr. Kofi Annan's resignation from the post of Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations

and the League of Arab States. We have undertaken concrete measures to render active support and coordination to Mr. Annan's mediation efforts. We understand the difficulty and obstacles Mr. Annan's mediation has faced. We express appreciation for the positive and constructive role Mr. Annan has played in promoting a political settlement to the Syrian issue. In the current circumstances, the international community should continue to support the implementation of the communiqué adopted by the Action Group on Syria (S/2012/523, annex) in Geneva, the relevant Security Council resolutions and Mr. Annan's six-point plan.

Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity should be respected. Syria's future and destiny should be determined by the Syrian people themselves. A political settlement to the Syrian issue can be led only by the Syrian people and should be accepted by all relevant parties in Syria. To impose a solution from outside will not help diffuse the Syrian crisis. China opposes any measures aimed at forcing regime change. Sanctions will only complicate the situation further. The Security Council has been considering the situation in Syria and its authority should be upheld.

On the Syrian issue, China has no self-interest, but rather a consistent and responsible attitude. Our fundamental point of departure is safeguarding the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the basic norms that govern international relations, including the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; safeguarding the interests of the Syrian people and the Arab States; and safeguarding the interests of all countries, in particular small and medium-sized ones. This is China's consistent stance in all international affairs. It is not targeted at a particular issue or time.

China understands the concerns of Arab countries and the League of Arab States with regard to an early settlement of the Syrian issue. We set store by the important role they have played in seeking a political settlement to this issue and appreciate their efforts in this regard. China stands ready to make concerted efforts with the international community, including the Arab States, to uphold the general direction of seeking a political settlement to this issue and encouraging political dialogue to resolve differences and ease tensions so as to safeguard the fundamental interests of the people of Syria and other countries of the region and to preserve peace and stability in the Middle East.

China's vote on the draft resolution was cast in accordance with the position I have outlined.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): While my country, Syria, regrets today's adoption of the blatantly biased and unbalanced resolution 66/253 B for the reasons I outlined in my statement during this morning's plenary meeting (see A/66/PV.124), we nonetheless thank all the countries that voted against it and assumed the responsible position of upholding the principles of the United Nations and the provisions of the Charter and rejecting policies that promote intervention and chaos in international relations, particularly since such chaos has been intentionally incited.

Syria's Government and people expect the United Nations and its Member States to help Syria in confronting a culture of extremism and terrorism, whether it originates in Israel or is anchored in an ideology based on Al-Qaida's fundamentalist principles. We expect to see the promotion of national dialogue as a path to the peaceful resolution of the crisis under the six-point plan, and to see pressure brought to bear on parties to end their embrace of violence and terrorism.

For its part, the Government of Syria has committed to ending the violence and has been withdrawing heavy weapons from cities since 12 April in order to demonstrate its commitment to the first item of the Kofi Annan plan. But the armed groups have not fulfilled their commitments in those areas; on the contrary, they have exploited the Government's commitment so as to fill the security vacuum created by the cessation of violence on the part of Government forces. They have tried to gain control of populated neighbourhoods by force of arms and by using civilians as human shields. Their troops have intensified their attacks on civilians, military personnel and State institutions, supported by various parties associated both with Governments and with other groups in our region and beyond.

The States that have called for successive meetings of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council are in fact seeking to provide political cover for the actions of the armed terrorist groups operating in Syria and to conceal the crimes they are committing against the Syrian people, such as assaulting civilians and public and private property, killing official personnel, abducting citizens for ransom, bombing power stations and oil and gas pipelines, stealing crops, attacking police stations and burning hospitals and clinics.

Some are relentlessly seeking to destroy the dignity of some segments of the Syrian people by encouraging them to leave the country and turning them into refugees imprisoned in camps that can at best be described as detention centres, where their anguish and the dilemma they find themselves in are exploited through cheap bargaining and political blackmail in the name of false slogans, which, I might add, are based on promises on which they have not yet delivered. Not to mention the fact that some of these camps have been turned into military centres where terrorists are gathering in order to prepare for eventual dispatch to Syria in order to commit horrendous crimes, as has happened in the past and continues to occur at this very moment in the city of Aleppo.

The establishment of a national reconciliation ministry within the Syrian cabinet is testament to the Syrian Government's genuine desire to ensure the success of an inclusive national dialogue among all segments of the Syrian people, aimed at achieving a peaceful solution to the current crisis, precisely as set out in the six-point plan. What is strange here is that the European Union has imposed sanctions on the Minister of National Reconciliation himself, only a few days after he took his portfolio, despite the fact that the man responsible for that important ministry is a member of the Syrian opposition. Thus, foreign intervention in Syrian affairs has pushed the Syrian people's legitimate demands for reform to third or fourth place in terms of priorities and has converted them into armed rebellion against the Syrian State directed from outside Syria, including, unfortunately, from some Arab countries.

My colleague the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia has painted a totally erroneous picture of what is happening in my country. I am not going to address all of those mistakes, but will confine myself to responding to the remarks he made about our Palestinian brother refugees in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. First, I should say that this refugee camp houses Palestinian refugees expelled from their homeland by the Israeli occupying authorities between 1948 and 1967. However, the camp now also hosts twice as many Syrians as Palestinians, and is therefore not exclusively for Palestinians. Secondly, representatives of Palestinian organizations in the camp issued an official statement indicating that those who fired on the camp were members of armed terrorist gangs seeking to thrust the Palestinian refugees living in Syria into the armed rebellion against the Syrian State. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the sponsors of those armed terrorist groups, are

conspiring against the safety, well-being and stability of our brother Palestinian refugees living in Syria.

The Saudi-Qatari resolution adopted today, as we have said, is in fact serving Israeli interests by targeting Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine. What does my Saudi colleague say about the brutal actions of the Saudi army against Saudi citizens peacefully demanding reform in the Al-Qatif and Al-Awamiya areas of Saudi Arabia? Can he explain to the Assembly what the Saudi armed forces are doing in Bahrain? My colleague the Saudi representative said that he was introducing the resolution on behalf of the Group of Arab States. That is not true; as the Assembly is aware, two Arab States did not support it, and it is therefore false and totally unfounded to claim that it was introduced on behalf of the Arab Group.

It is very odd that my colleague, the representative of Saudi Arabia, would put words into the mouth of Mr. Kofi Annan and strangely interpret his demands so as not to extend his mission. In that regard, we express our regret over the fact that Mr. Annan has submitted his resignation. Allow me to reiterate that Syria has consistently declared and proved its full commitment to implementing the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy and has cooperated with the observer mission in order to achieve the desired goals of that plan.

Israeli State terrorism has caused the culture of terrorism to spread across the globe. As the Israeli representative said, it is perhaps appropriate that an Olympic Games should be organized, but solely for terrorism. Then Israel would be awarded the top prize and first place and, in honour of that win, there would be an anthem to the shedding of blood of innocent civilians in celebration of that terrorism. The disgrace of Israel in violating the provisions of the Charter is difficult to assess here, and those in Palestine and beyond are well documented in the archives of the United Nations: assassinating peace activists who are citizens of countries that sponsored the resolution; hijacking civilian planes; and killing scores of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian citizens in the Golan.

The ultimate hypocrisy and misinformation were reflected in the remarks of the Israeli representative when he spoke of the threat of chemical weapons. He ignored the fact that Israel itself has not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and refuses to implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East with regard to reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Resolution 50/66 called for

the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, Israel is not a member of the NPT. Therefore, Israel and its representative should instead remain silent since merely to raise this issue shames them.

Israel has 300 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. Germany has added six submarines that have give Israel the capability of firing those nuclear missiles. Incidentally, Germany is a sponsor of the resolution. That obliges me to conclude that there is a Western, Israeli and partially Arab alliance here. Let the Israeli representative keep his offer of assistance, which is misleading, to himself. The Syrian people do not need that poison. They are impatiently awaiting the liberation of the Syrian Golan from the yoke of the Israeli occupation, which is supported by many Member States that sponsored the resolution.

Allow me to remind the Israeli representative that international law is on our side and not on that of Israel's policies, irrespective of their thrust and aims. They are policies of aggression and occupation that have occupied some 50 per cent of the agenda of this General Assembly since the establishment of the world Organization. The irresponsible Israeli policies to which I have referred will eventually lead to the further escalation of violence and terrorism in our region and the entire world. It is not possible for the so-called international community to fight terrorism in one area, while encouraging Israeli State-sponsored terrorism in other areas.

For all these reasons, allow me to say that the resolution, which was sponsored by the West, Saudi Arabia and Qatar against my country, serves only the interests of Israel and its aggression.

**Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B, as it is our understanding that this decision of the General Assembly establishes crucial elements in helping to put an end to the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Syrian people and in adopting the necessary measures to facilitate a peaceful solution in line with international law.

The resolution clearly expresses the feelings of the majority of the international community concerning the very grave events taking place in Syria. While it certainly regrets the resignation of Special Envoy Kofi Annan, the Government of Uruguay also reiterates its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his High Representatives, and for the work of

regional organizations pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to achieve the aforementioned goals.

In that regard, I would like to underscore our belief that, in seeking a peaceful solution, it is of the utmost importance to keep the protection of the rights of the civilian population as our primary objective. We believe that all actions undertaken by the various actors involved must be in the strictest and fullest respect for the principles and standards of international law in the Syrian people's sovereign pursuit of a peaceful solution.

**Mr. Estreme** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation wishes to express its grave concern over the situation being experienced by the Syrian Arab Republic. We regret that, once again, the structure of the Security Council, which includes permanent members that enjoy the right of veto, has resulted in inaction by the international community in a crisis in which we all agree on the need to stop the violence and to respect the human rights of those affected by it.

The General Assembly has a responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter, but it is also up to Member States by virtue of our commitment to respect and to implement the purposes and principles upon which we have built this Organization. For most countries of the world, the United Nations is a necessary and unique authority in defence of the norms and principles that must govern the conduct of members of the international community. Therefore, any stand taken by the General Assembly must seek a peaceful and lasting solution to the situation in Syria, while respecting the internal affairs of that country and protecting the human rights of its inhabitants.

For those reasons, the Argentine delegation voted in favour of the resolution in order, first, to endorse action by the General Assembly to put an end to the violence in Syria as soon as possible; secondly, to promote and to defend full respect for human rights in Syria; and thirdly, to support the calls by the international community for all parties to respect the recommendations made by various forums and bodies of this Organization so as to meet those goals, including the implementation of the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria.

My delegation also wishes to state that our affirmative vote is on the understanding that the call to put an end to the violence is addressed to all parties,

not only the Syrian Government. My country hopes that all States refrain from undertaking actions that fuel the violence in Syria. Argentina recognizes and values the efforts of the League of Arab States to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, but we do not wholeheartedly endorse all its decisions, resolutions and measures.

Finally, my delegation believes that nothing in the current resolution opens the way for the use of armed force by any members of the international community, in particular with regard to the possible interpretation of the references to the protection of the civilian population in Syria contained in the fourteenth preambular paragraph 14 and to the Security Council considering appropriate measures in paragraph 9.

**Mr. Sarki** (Nigeria): Nigeria deeply regrets that the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate rapidly and the fact that the concerned parties, as well as the international community, have so far failed to bring about an end to the conflict. We also received with profound concern the announcement of the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, as mediator in the Syrian conflict.

That brings into sharp focus the protracted nature of the conflict and the diverse challenges therein. Mr. Annan's resignation is a major setback for the United Nations initiative in Syria. Indeed, it portends the worsening of an already dire situation in that country. The lack of support for his six-point plan is indicative of the ineffectiveness of the United Nations, in particular, and the international community, in general, to deal decisively and transparently with the situation in Syria. Clearly, therefore, the United Nations and the larger international community have the responsibility, and indeed the moral obligation, to act appropriately to stem the deterioration of the situation in the country and to help the Syrian people to realize their challenged desire for peace.

In that connection, we believe that resolution 66/253 B, which was adopted earlier today, imperfect as it is, provides the much-needed and currently lacking impetus for action by the General Assembly towards the resolution of the crisis. The imperfections of the resolution to which we alluded are, indeed, matters of concern. We have misgivings about some issues, among which is the lack of balance in the text. It is heavily tilted against one party to the conflict and mentions by

name only the Syrian authorities. It also holds only one side accountable for the atrocities and human rights violations committed in the conflict.

Additionally, our support for the resolution does not imply a blanket endorsement of the decision of the Arab League of 22 July, reached at Doha, which, inter alia, implicitly calls for regime change and the imposition of sanctions on the Syrian Government, as those are matters beyond the remit of the General Assembly but squarely within the purview of the Security Council. We also do not believe that the call to welcome the Syrian opposition conference, held under the auspices of the Arab League and encouraging greater cohesion of the opposition, is the responsibility of the General Assembly. Indeed, that would undermine the authority and impartiality of this Assembly.

In spite of all those shortcomings, Nigeria voted in favour of the resolution on grounds of certain fundamental principles and beliefs that underpin our foreign policy and national outlook. Nigeria has consistently and openly advocated respect for women, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and accountability in all States. We have stood for the protection of civilians in conflict situations. We have a long-standing commitment to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes, as demonstrated by our peacekeeping antecedents.

Nigeria also believes in the importance of regional initiatives in resolving disputes. As such, it supported the Arab League initiative on Syria especially aimed at bringing to an end to the grave humanitarian crisis in the country (see resolution 66/176). That is consistent with our stance on similar situations in our own part of the world.

In voting for the resolution, Nigeria was moved by the concern for the escalating violence, the degenerating human rights and humanitarian situation and the deplorable loss of life in Syria. Beyond the adoption of the resolution in the General Assembly today, Nigeria calls on the Security Council to live up to its Charter obligations towards the maintenance of international peace and security and to address constructively and transparently and, more important, in an even-handed manner the grave and rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria.

The bloodshed must be stopped now. The possible disintegration of that country must be avoided. We expect the Security Council to take action quickly and



the General Assembly to facilitate the move towards dialogue, reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of the present crisis in Syria.

Ultimately, only the Syrian people, in the exercise of their sovereign right, can decide their future and chart a course for the continued well-being of their country. Nigeria therefore supports a peaceful Syrian-led resolution of the conflict without undue external interference. The resolution provides an opportunity to stem the tide of conflict and human suffering in Syria. We believe that its full implementation by all parties to the conflict has great potential for bringing peace and an end to the conflict in Syria.

**Mr. Milanović** (Serbia): Serbia voted in favour of the text of resolution 66/253 B with the understanding that all international efforts should aim solely for an urgent end to the violence. Serbia fully supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and underscores the need for a comprehensive political dialogue among all sides involved in the conflict with the aim of achieving a sustainable political solution that would contribute to the stability of the region.

**Mr. Alcántara Mejía** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B on the situation in Syria, and we wish to state why we did so.

It is a resolution with a controversial text. That became clear in the meetings of the past few days at which it was presented, as well as today before it was put to a vote in the General Assembly. It could not be otherwise because the resolution addresses the situation of armed conflict, virtually a civil war, in the Syrian Arab Republic. Every conflict is a combat, a struggle, a disagreement, a controversy. The resolution deplors the fact that the Security Council has not been able to ensure that its decisions are fulfilled by the Syrian authorities.

But resolution 66/253 B will not produce an immediate change in the situation. It is not a perfect resolution; it neither could be nor needs to be. For the purposes of the General Assembly, it is the resolution that was possible and that could attract the critical mass of votes needed to be adopted. It is precisely for the virtue of having galvanized us to come to an agreement that the delegation of the Dominican Republic voted in favour of the resolution.

The resolution represents the difference between keeping one's arms crossed or being paralysed by an inability to reconcile our current political interests and actually doing something. It shows that the Organization is neither silent nor indifferent to the suffering and aspirations of the Syrian people. That is why the delegation of the Dominican Republic decided to support it. We decided to support it because the situation on the ground has worsened. It is fraught with alarming, massively tragic events that appear to be irreversible steps towards a conflict that is even more bitter, widespread, internationalized and destructive.

For that reason, we continue to hope that differences of view among the permanent members of the Security Council can soon be overcome so that the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the situation in Syria can be implemented. If that course of action is delayed further, we will confront the inevitable reality that violence, that age-old midwife of history, will impose its own bloody, unstoppable solution. It will do so in spite of all the expertise, all the efforts and all the good intentions of the Organization.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri** (India): Since the 99th meeting of the General Assembly — the last meeting before today in which we discussed the agenda item before us — the situation in Syria has steadily deteriorated. Neither side has fulfilled its obligations under the six-point plan of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, which was endorsed by the Security Council in its resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). The conflict has become increasingly militarized, and a number of terrorist acts have been committed against State institutions and public infrastructure. There have been gross violations of human rights by all sides. The humanitarian situation has also become dire, and more than 2 million civilians are said to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the Syrian parties, instead of seriously commencing a Syrian-led political process, have pursued a military approach in order to realize their objectives.

We strongly condemn all violence and violations of human rights irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We also condemn in the strongest terms possible the terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria. We call upon all parties to dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and ensure that no space is provided for those groups.

In the prevailing circumstances in Syria, there is an urgent need for the international community to close ranks and send a united message to the Syrian parties to walk back their military approach and resolve the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process. There is no other way to bring about a sustained cessation of violence in all its forms by all parties. It is also the only way to end human rights violations and create an atmosphere for the safe and unhindered delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

We have consistently called for international efforts to assist the Syrian parties to resolve the crisis and bring about peace through dialogue and political processes. Accordingly, we have strongly supported the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan. Even though Mr. Annan has resigned, it is important to note that his efforts have put in place a set of valuable documents that, if implemented, can facilitate a political resolution of the Syrian crisis without any further bloodshed.

In order to help the Syrian parties to change their course and address the crisis through political dialogue, it is important that all parties, inside and outside Syria, fully abide by their obligations under resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). The parties must be prevailed upon to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the final communiqué issued in Geneva on 30 June (S/2012/523, annex), which have been accepted by the Government of Syria.

India firmly believes that it is critical for the United Nations to remain strongly involved with the Syrian parties and other actors in the search for a way forward. Unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis; it will only exacerbate the problem and caused greater instability and violence. We also believe that the appropriate path for the leadership of Syria is for Syrians to decide through a democratic process. The task of the international community anchored in the United Nation is to assist the Syrian parties in that process.

The resolution that the General Assembly has adopted today (resolution 66/253 B) makes specific reference to the decision of the League of Arab States of 22 July. Although we do not hold any brief for any particular Syrian leader, we cannot welcome the League of Arab States resolution of 22 July, which openly calls for President Al-Assad to step down from power and for States Members of the United Nations to sever diplomatic relations and contacts with Syria. It is

unfortunate that that element was not removed from the text of resolution 66/253 B. We therefore abstained in the voting on the resolution adopted today.

**Mr. Talbot (Guyana):** Guyana abstained in the voting on resolution 66/253 B on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In explanation of vote, I have the honour to make the following statement.

A tragedy is unfolding in Syria that should have been avoided. Innocent civilians are paying an increasingly heavy price for a spiraling conflict involving multiple actors and interests. Guyana is gravely concerned at the escalation of violence and condemns unequivocally all violations of human rights, by whomsoever committed. We deplore the tragic loss of life and the increasing number of fatalities recorded, especially among the civilian population. We are equally concerned about the humanitarian impact on the affected population. All perpetrators should be held to account.

The primary responsibility falls to the Syrian authorities to take steps for the cessation of violence and to ensure an end to human rights violations and attacks against civilians, to protect its population and to fully comply with its obligations under applicable international law.

But in the current context of the increasing militarization of the situation, the international community cannot turn a blind eye to the actions of armed opposition groups or to terrorist elements. The evident complexity of the situation demands a united and comprehensive response by the international community addressing all sides: the Government and the opposition, including armed opponents.

Guyana is concerned that the resolution just adopted falls short in that regard and raises the prospect of undue partiality to an amorphous and unknown opposition and of encroaching on the sovereign right and prerogative of the Syrian people to determine their leadership.

In the interest of the Syrian people, the United Nations must continue to make unceasing efforts to end the bloodshed on all sides and assist in the quest for a viable political solution. In that context, the six-point plan of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy remains valid and should be advanced in all its aspects. We support the continued efforts of the Secretary-General towards that end.

Given the gravity of the situation, Guyana believes that it is imperative that the Security Council urgently fulfil its responsibility under the Charter to meet this threat to international peace and security and avert any further deterioration of conditions on the ground. The international community must urgently unite in responding to the plight of the Syrian people.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I shall now give the floor to those representatives wishing to make statements following the adoption of the resolution.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Vrailas** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We strongly support resolution A/66/253 B regarding the situation in Syria introduced by the Group of Arab States and welcome its adoption by the General Assembly earlier today.

The European Union stands by the Syrian people at this critical juncture in their peaceful and courageous struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and human rights. It strongly condemns the ever-increasing use of force by the regime, including the use of heavy artillery and shelling from tanks, aircraft and combat helicopters, against populated areas, in blatant violation of its obligations under the Annan plan and Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). We urge the Syrian regime to put an immediate end to the killing of civilians, cease the use of heavy weapons and withdraw those weapons and the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities in order to allow for a peaceful transition. International humanitarian law must be respected by all. We are deeply concerned about the recent intensification of violence, including in Damascus and Aleppo. The only way out of this violence is through a political transition that would

meet the democratic and participatory aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability back to Syria. The European Union remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

The European Union recalls its full support for the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy's mission and his six-point plan, which must be implemented immediately and visibly. The EU commends the efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan, who announced his resignation as the Joint Special Envoy to Syria. The European Union has provided its full backing to the work of Mr. Annan throughout his mandate and to his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

We continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. This resignation stresses the urgency of the full, verifiable and immediate implementation of the six-point plan so as to allow for a political transition. The European Union underlines that those whose presence would undermine the transition should be excluded and that President Al-Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

The EU calls for united action by all members of the Security Council to exert more robust and effective pressure and ensure that there will be serious consequences for continued non-compliance with its previous decisions.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation and breaches of international humanitarian law in Syria. The systematic and widespread human rights violations committed by the regime demonstrate its outright contempt for human rights. We are also concerned about recent reports of the alleged use of cluster munitions against civilians. We reaffirm our support for the independent international commission of inquiry on Syria and its investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law, with a view to holding to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity. The EU recalls that all those responsible for widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations must be held accountable.

Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against any further militarization of the conflict and sectarian violence, which could only bring further suffering to Syria and risk having a tragic impact on the region. In that regard, the EU expresses

concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. We are also concerned about the influx of weapons into Syria. We therefore call on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country.

The EU is seriously concerned about the potential use of chemical weapons in Syria. We call upon Syria to strictly abide by its obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The EU attaches the greatest importance to the safe and secure storage of such weapons of mass destruction. It expresses its hope that a future Syria will accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, thus joining the aspirations of the international community to ban and universally and completely eradicate this category of weapons of mass destruction.

The EU continues to urge all opposition groups to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. In that regard, we welcome the efforts made by the opposition groups in recent meetings to elaborate on a common vision for the political transition of Syria in the post-Al-Assad era. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. It calls on the Syrian regime to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighbouring countries.

We call on all parties to allow full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers; to respect international humanitarian law, including the respect and protection of civilians; and, as a first step, to facilitate the implementation of humanitarian pauses to allow for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU stands ready to offer additional support, including financial support, to help neighbouring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, to host the increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing the violence in Syria. The European Union will increase its humanitarian assistance to the Syrians, including internally displaced persons and refugees, and calls upon all countries to do likewise, in a transparent and coordinated manner, with particular attention paid to United Nations coordinated humanitarian response plans.

On 23 July, the European Union approved the designation of new persons and entities to be subject

to restrictive measures, in particular members of the army and the intelligence and security services directly involved in the repression of the civilian population. We also agreed on measures to strengthen the enforcement of the EU's arms embargo. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. We will also continue to urge the international community to join our efforts by taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters.

The European Union reiterates that as soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, it is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria in all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and a political transition.

**Mr. McLay** (New Zealand): In early June, the Secretary-General told the General Assembly that Syria was at a critical moment, and called on us to act with unity and a collective will. Yet here we are, two months later — the violence escalates, the death toll continues to rise, and many parts of Syria lie in ruins. The Syrian Government has failed to honour the commitments it agreed to under the six-point plan, leaving its sponsor, Kofi Annan, frustrated and ultimately resigning, citing, among other things, the lack of clear unity in the Security Council. We join China, Costa Rica and others that have expressed regret at his resignation.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out more recently, Syrian Government officials have repeatedly said they would honour their commitments under that plan, but we are still waiting for them to act. Indeed, New Zealand waits for all sides to act. But it is unquestionably the Syrian Government that grows seemingly more scornful of international efforts to resolve this crisis, with its continued use of heavy weapons, and now the aerial bombardment of Aleppo. Those Government forces have an overwhelming advantage of military hardware and firepower that, while non-Government forces have now acquired some such weaponry by supply, capture or defection, still explains any perceived asymmetry in this situation.

The Security Council has been blocked from acting with firm resolve, and Member States seeking a rapid and purposeful end to this crisis are left wondering what else can be done. I hope that we will not have to

convene again in another two months only to be told that, for ordinary Syrians, the situation has deteriorated even further while the world stands by, unable to act. To use the Secretary-General's words from this morning, we must not fail that test. Against that awful background, we applaud regional efforts to resolve the crisis, notably today's initiative by some Arab States.

This crisis is sorely testing our collective ability to work for peace. In the absence of action under Chapter VII of the Charter, and in the light of a deadlocked Security Council — to which you, Mr. President, have rightly drawn attention — the General Assembly has, as you said, a role to play. Resolution 66/253 B is the next best option, building as it does on the loud and now constant demands of the international community for an end to the violence in Syria.

We are appalled at the Syrian Government's threatened use of chemical weapons. It is essential that the international community present a strong and united resolve against the use of such weapons. Indeed, we remind all parties, Government and opposition, of all of their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians in non-international armed conflict. We do not turn a blind eye to humanitarian crimes, by whomsoever they are committed. We say quite clearly that those responsible for crimes against humanity, whichever side they may be on, cannot be part of Syria's future. New Zealand remains committed to the fight against impunity for such violations, and we call on all sides to cooperate with the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

As the violence escalates, so too does the humanitarian crisis. As we here seek a political solution, we must always be mindful of the suffering of internally displaced persons and refugees and of the enormous burden their plight imposes on surrounding countries, to which we, the United Nations, owe a debt of gratitude.

This is a deeply unsettling time for the whole of the Middle East. We all understand the historic importance and cultural depth of Syria, but all of us, not least those whose veto has deadlocked the Security Council, should pay heed to the Secretary-General's warning that a sectarian civil war in Syria would gravely imperil Syria's neighbours — and all that because one man, and the clique that surrounds him, have lost all touch with reality, have lost all legitimacy, and do not know when enough is enough.

**Mr. Husain (Canada):** Canada deplores the ongoing situation in Syria, which has claimed too many lives and threatens to inflame sectarian strife. Deteriorating conditions have increased tensions in Lebanon, and a massive outflow of refugees to Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon has created a humanitarian challenge for those countries and the international community.

Canada is disappointed by the Security Council's inability to take unified action to bring an end to the bloodshed in Syria. The international community cannot stand by in the face of such horrific violence. Canada therefore fully supports resolution 66/253 B, sponsored by the Group of Arab States, and is pleased by its prompt adoption today. Canada also fully supports calls for sanctions under Chapter VII, designed to persuade the Syrian authorities to engage sincerely in the search for a peaceful, negotiated solution. Canada calls on those that have sheltered the regime from international sanctions to cease their efforts immediately, join international efforts to pressure the Al-Assad regime to end the violence and use their influence with Syria to bring about a peaceful political transition.

We also learned yesterday of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's resignation. Canada is grateful for Mr. Annan's tireless efforts to end the bloodshed in Syria and achieve an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition. Sadly, with his departure, Mr. Annan's six-point plan is, in practical terms, dead. We continue to call on all parties to end the violence and respect the basic rights of all Syrians.

**Mr. Berger (Germany):** Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks (see A/66/PV.124). It is with great regret that we have learned of the Joint Special Envoy's resignation. We are grateful to him for the excellent work he has done to find a diplomatic solution to this conflict. His decision comes at a critical juncture. We understand and share the frustration that the six-point plan conceived by him and endorsed by the Security Council has not been implemented due to the intransigence of the Syrian Government, which has consistently failed to implement its obligations under Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012).

We would also like to thank the Chair of the Group of Arab States, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, for introducing today's resolution 66/253 B, which we fully endorse. It comes at a moment when the Security Council,

due to three double vetoes, has not been able to live up to its responsibility and agree on measures to ensure compliance with its own decisions. The resolution, which received the membership's overwhelming support, sends two clear messages: a message of support to the Syrian people in their suffering and struggle and in their hopes for a free and peaceful future; and a message to the Syrian regime that the international community does not and will not accept the war that Al-Assad is waging on his population. We condemn the regime's threat to use chemical weapons in breach of international law and morality. We earnestly call on all relevant forces in Syria to secure those weapons and to absolutely refrain from their use or transfer to others.

Germany is deeply worried about the reports of ongoing severe human rights violations in Syria, especially against women and children. The accountability of those who violate and abuse human rights must be ensured. All parties to the conflict must ensure safe and unhindered access for providers of humanitarian assistance. Germany commends the Governments and the peoples of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq for their support to the more than 120,000 refugees. That is why we have increased our humanitarian aid to €11.5 million.

The situation in Syria has reached a turning point. It is now urgent to work towards a political transition that will silence the weapons and give Syrians the opportunity to determine their own future. The blueprint for the transition is contained in the Annan plan and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). Such a transition has a chance to succeed only if Al-Assad steps aside, opening the way for an interim Government. In that context, it is of utmost importance that the opposition follow through on the decisions of the Syrian opposition conference, held on 2 and 3 July in Cairo, and find a unified voice.

There is not a shadow of a doubt — one day there will be a new Syria. Whether that day will be tomorrow or in weeks or months, it will come. Together with the Syrian people, we should work for a democratic Syria with religious freedom and where the rights of minorities are respected.

**Mr. Dabbashi** (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to an initiative of the Group of Arab States, the General Assembly today adopted resolution 66/253 B, which is aimed at finding a solution to the tragic situation in Syria. It is a resolution that might repair the damage to the United Nations credibility caused by the Security

Council's inability to fulfil its responsibilities vis-à-vis the massacres being suffered by the Syrian people at the hand of its Government.

Although the resolution does not rise to the level of the measures adopted by the League of Arab States to expedite a resolution to the crisis, the results of the voting show widespread support for the resolution and send a clear message to the Syrian regime that it cannot indefinitely continue to defy the international community and to carry out crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations in all Syrian cities. Indeed, it is the last opportunity for the Syrian regime to recover its sanity and recognize that it cannot continue to rule Syria on the dead bodies of innocent people demanding their legitimate rights. By "innocent people", I mean those ordinary people who have poured into the streets by the hundreds of thousands demanding a peaceful and democratic transfer of power.

The international community cannot coexist in a landscape of destruction left by tanks and aeroplanes that are bombing civilian population centres and indiscriminately killing scores of people every day. No one can accept the constant stream of hundred of thousands of displaced Syrians forced to seek sanctuary outside Syrian territory. No one can accept the perpetration of more flagrant human rights violations.

Unfortunately, we have learned from history that despots cannot stop killing and torturing innocent people because they always believe that they are the most powerful and cannot be vanquished. They remain in the grip of that mindset until they are eventually crushed by the people and end tragically. That will be the inevitable destiny of Bashar Al-Assad.

The Syrian people have been forced to carry arms in self-defence in the face of brutal attacks by the regime's army, its security forces and pro-Government militias. The Syrian people have had no other option. In that regard, at this time, I would like to salute the Syrian people for their courage and determination to achieve victory over their torturers and to exercise their rights despite the power imbalance. Undoubtedly, the Syrian people will attain their legitimate demands and eventually emerge victorious, exactly like the Libyan people who emerged victorious against a similar tyrant.

We deeply regret that some countries continue to hide behind the principle of sovereignty and the pretext of eschewing extremism in order to provide military and political assistance to the Syrian regime, thereby

becoming accomplices to the crimes perpetrated by the regime. We hope that those States will recognize that such practices are morally inadmissible and contravene their interests in the long run.

Today the General Assembly has adopted a resolution that calls upon the Syrian regime to take concrete and specific steps. However, we doubt that the Syrian regime will respond to it, given its past record and behaviour. Therefore, the General Assembly should not stop at the mere adoption of resolution 66/253 B, but must follow up on its implementation. If the Syrian regime does not respond favourably within two or three weeks and the Security Council fails once again to fulfil its duties, it will then become imperative for the General Assembly to impose concrete sanctions against the Syrian regime, including by referring those responsible for certain crimes to the International Criminal Court and suspending the regime's membership in international organizations.

**Al-Thani (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): The crisis in Syria has now passed the 500-day mark. With the slow passing of each of those 500 days, the Syrian people have sacrificed their blood, lost some of their finest youth, endured degrading treatment and the violation of their honour, suffered through a scarcity of food — even bread — and a severe shortage of electricity and fuel for heating and cooking, witnessed the deterioration of their economy and the devaluation of their currency, and seen their country teeter on the brink of civil war. What is particularly pitiful is that those calamities have not been brought about by a major natural disaster or by a massive foreign invasion, but have all been the result of a Government choosing a policy that refuses reform, seeks to subject its people by force, and fails to uphold its responsibility for their protection.

That style of governance does not belong among civilized nations, nor does such an exclusionary authoritarian attitude have a place in the twenty-first century.

Were we to follow the logic of the Syrian regime, we would put the blame for what has befallen the country on those demanding freedom, justice and a dignified life. However, humankind rejects that fallacy and logic, with which we have been bombarded and which holds that the crisis has been caused by armed terrorist gangs and a universal conspiracy against Syria.

The fact is that the adherents of this fallacious argument have not explained to us the millions of Syrian

demonstrators who have taken to the streets day after day, at thousands of protest flashpoints, putting their lives on the line. Are the Syrian people terrorists? Have those demonstrators risked their lives for a few dollars? Is yearning for freedom and insisting on human dignity now considered terrorism? Those who echo such fallacies have not explained to us why pro-freedom demonstrators have been killed and wounded, while not a single bullet has been fired on the rallies that the regime has organized in its own support. They have not explained to us the visible devastation that has befallen Syrian cities, which can only have been caused by a merciless bombardment using thousands of tons of explosives — and everyone is aware of which party possesses such weapons. They have not explained to us the daily scenes of citizens being insulted and humiliated by members of an army whose basic mission is to protect them, neither have they explained to us why foreign journalists have been denied free access in order to impartially and transparently document the events. Moreover, they have not explained to us the reason behind the cutting off of communications, electricity, water and major food supplies in areas experiencing protests. Are armed terrorist gangs the ones who have cut off the Internet and land and cellular telecommunications networks?

Assuming that all the accounts by the Syrian regime were true, why would the authorities and decision makers in Damascus insist on using the full arsenal of the Syrian army against Syrian cities, towns and villages for over 500 days, pushing the country towards a sectarian war — unless the blood of the heroic Syrian people were not dear to them?

The world is tired of those continuous repeated lies that insult our intelligence. Those who make up and spread fictional stories about the events in Syria should remember that they can fool some people some of the time, but cannot fool all people all of the time. They have to remember that they are not on the right side of history.

In the face of all that is happening in Syria, the Security Council is unable even to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations to address the Syrian crisis, and the international community is unable to offer the Syrian people anything more than statements and condemnations. We spend every day discussing formalities and theoretical principles, violence claims the lives of hundreds of innocent people in Syria.

Is not saving people, protecting their fundamental rights and dignity and establishing justice and prosperity for them among the first and most important principles for which this international Organization was established? Dwelling on debates about formalities has in the past played a role in the international community's slow response to tragedies such as the massacres in Rwanda — a mistake that we pledged not to repeat.

Faced with this situation, the General Assembly bears a moral responsibility to address the crisis, especially following the Joint Special Envoy's despair of obtaining any positive response by the Syrian regime to diplomacy and his request that the Security Council ensure the Syrian Government's compliance with its obligations.

Resolution 66/253 B, submitted by the Group of Arab States, therefore was a necessary step that could not be delayed any longer, especially in the light of the escalation in violence by the Syrian regime, which has threatened to use weapons of mass destruction and to ignite the region, as well as the worsening humanitarian situation and the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. The resolution reflects the position of the international community and calls for a peaceful solution to the crisis based on a Syrian-led political transition process that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures accountability for those who have committed murder and violated their rights, freedoms and dignity. Such a process should also lead to the establishment of a pluralistic and democratic civil State with equal rights and freedoms. All of that must take place in a way that preserves Syria's national and territorial unity, sovereignty and stability and be in line with the principles of the United Nations.

It is ironic that the representative of Syria continues to devote his statements to haphazard accusations against other countries and to unrealistic justifications for what is happening in Syria. That is but a desperate attempt to divert attention from the reality of what is happening and to put the blame on others. That is not surprising, however, as it comes from a representative of the Syrian regime.

**Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation seems to be the victim of a conspiracy to keep us from taking the floor. I would like to thank you, Sir, and express my appreciation to you for having given me the floor now. I take the floor on behalf of the Group of Arab States, which sponsored resolution 66/253 B, in order to address my sincere thanks to all

States that voted in favour of it, thereby sending several very strong messages.

The first is a message to the people of Syria by which the Assembly says that their struggle is not far from our minds and that the international community takes a stand with the people of Syria.

The second message is that pursuing a policy by force of arms will not bear fruit; considering the people as enemies will not confer legitimacy on a regime; carrying out massacres cannot be a way to maintain the regime; and basing the competence of the President on anything other than national consensus, a feeling of satisfaction and acceptance of his authority will not produce lasting results.

The third message is directed at the Security Council and the forces that have undermined the adoption of Council resolutions. The overwhelming majority of the international community is against the positions that have been taken and requests new ones be adopted and for the Security Council to measure up to what is demanded of it and to deal with this question in a serious manner.

The final message concerns the next Joint Special Envoy; his terms of reference must be specific.

I thank the President of the General Assembly and representatives of all States that supported today's resolution. I believe that they genuinely wanted to send a historic message of conscience.

**The President:** We have heard the last statement in explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 66/253 B.

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

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The representative of the Zionist criminal regime once again used the General Assembly, deviating from the topic on the agenda, to level baseless allegations against my country.

I do not want to tax the patience of this body to reply in detail at this late hour to those nonsensical allegations. However, suffice it to say that that regime has been and remains the only destabilizing entity in the Middle East, embarking on violence and all manner



of barbaric acts for its shortsighted and narrow-minded political aims.

In the present crisis in Syria, Israeli agents — one can hear them talking in Hebrew — are actively engaged in arming and providing logistics to terrorist groups to carry out deadly operations against innocent Syrian civilians and Government institutions.

That regime's history is replete with acts of aggression, violations of international law, State terrorism and assassinations. The assassination of Iran's nuclear scientists and the cyber-sabotage perpetuated by the regime are just some examples. A regime whose only source of pride is the occupation of others' territories, the demolition of houses, the killing of innocent children and defenceless women in the most barbaric way and the commission of all types of atrocities is not in a position to talk about others, let alone to pass judgment on them.

**Ms. Alkhalifa** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to a remark made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to state the following. The forces present in the Kingdom of Bahrain are the joint forces of the Peninsula Shield Force of the Gulf Cooperation Council, deployed on the basis on an agreement concluded among members of the that body in 2000. They are there to deter any external threat.

**Mr. Adi** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed regrettable that we have had to listen to statements containing a torrent of mischaracterizations and falsehoods from several speakers.

In the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) there were assertions that the EU cared about the welfare of the Syrian people. Let me ask here whether the sanctions imposed by the European Union against the Syrian people fall within the scope of that concern. Does impeding access to essential basic needs required for the livelihood and well-being of the Syrian people fall within that scope? Is imposing sanctions against members of the Syrian Government within only a few days of their appointments to their positions an attempt to advance dialogue, in particular the sanctions imposed against the Minister for National Reconciliation?

The statement made by the representative of Libya included many falsehoods and baseless accusations. It is indeed regrettable that that representative has spoken about my country in such an irresponsible way. Let me remind the Libyan representative that my country did

not call for outside military intervention in our country. We cannot be followers of others.

Let me quote here what Mr. Mustafa Abdel Jalil said in an interview during a Ramadan cultural event. He said, "Qatar supports Islamic trends and has an interest in establishing a system of government that is anchored in Islamic or Sharia law; no one goes to Qatar without receiving a sum of money from its Government". That is all I need to say in that regard.

In response to the representative of Qatar, we were surprised by the language he used in his statement. Listening to his statement during this plenary meeting gave one the impression of being tuned into his country's television channel. I wonder whether that representative could explain to us the reason for its financing terrorist groups. Let him explain to us who is responsible for the acts of violence and terrorism that are being committed in Syria. Could he explain to us why Qatar has been keen to discourage the opposition from dialogue and to encourage it to resort to violence, as the Amir of the State of Qatar himself did? Could he explain why his country impedes the implementation of Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point plan, judging it within only two days of its adoption as standing a 2 per cent chance of success?

Syria, as a signatory of the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, is committed to that Protocol and is willing to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the event that Israel also accedes to it as well. Syria also has acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supported its indefinite extension in 1995, which was extended indefinitely at the 2010 Review Conference.

Syria has always called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In 2003, when Syria was a member of the Security Council, it submitted a draft resolution on behalf of the Arab Group for setting up such a zone. However, the countries that expressed concern about the alleged presence of those weapons are the same ones that obstructed the draft resolution and threatened to use the veto solely to protect their protégé, Israel, to which they also provided nuclear submarines. Nonetheless, Syria continued to support that draft resolution. It is regrettable that we are seeing a double standard.

If Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the secretariat of the League of Arab States were serious in their efforts, they would have emphasized the dangers posed by the Israeli nuclear threat rather than opening new fronts in the Islamic world. The representatives of Saudi Arabia and Qatar were misleading when they referred to the chemical weapons alleged to be present in Syria;

they should instead have expressed concern about the chemical and nuclear arsenal possessed by Israel, which occupies Arab lands.

**The President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*