



# General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

**99**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
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Official Records

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

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Körösi (Hungary), Vice President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 34 (continued)

### Prevention of armed conflict

**The Acting President:** I should like to remind members that, as announced at the 97th plenary meeting, the debate on agenda item 34 and its sub-item (a) will take place at a later date to be announced.

Members will also recall that, at its 97th plenary meeting, held on 16 February 2012, the Assembly adopted, under agenda item 34, resolution 66/253, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". In accordance with paragraph 12 of that resolution, the Assembly will now hear the report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolution.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General:** I am making this report as requested by resolution 66/253, of 16 February. Given the gravity of the situation, please be assured that we will keep the General Assembly regularly informed.

We have all watched the events in Syria this week with growing alarm. We have seen heavy artillery shelling and tank fire in densely populated

neighbourhoods across the country. A major assault on Homs took place yesterday.

Civilian losses have clearly been heavy. We continue to receive grisly reports of summary executions, arbitrary detention and torture.

In Homs, Hama and elsewhere, the brutal fighting has trapped civilians in their homes, without food, heat or electricity or medical care and without any chance of evacuating the wounded or burying the dead. People have been reduced to melting snow for drinking water. That atrocious assault is all the more appalling for having been waged by the Government itself, systematically attacking its own people. All agree that we must act in the face of this escalating crisis.

Yesterday, the Security Council deplored the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation and demanded access for relief workers. I welcome the Council's clear and strong statement.

The Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva, condemned the "widespread and systematic" violations of human rights and demanded an immediate end to the violence.

I am extremely disappointed that the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Amos, has not been able to travel to Syria despite repeated assurances. I once again urge the authorities to allow her to visit as soon as possible so that humanitarian relief

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workers can reach the many thousands of people who desperately need assistance.

Today, teams from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society have been permitted to enter Homs, but they are waiting to get access to Bab Amr.

It is essential that aid workers be allowed to help civilians in the most devastated areas of the city. As of this moment, assistance still cannot get through.

As the Assembly knows, the Joint United Nations-Arab League Special Envoy, The Honourable Kofi Annan, will depart from New York this evening. During the past two days he has been consulting intensively with Member States, including members of the Security Council and the Arab Group, as well as the Syrian Mission and other concerned stakeholders. He plans to travel to Cairo next week for consultations with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, as well as to a number of other regional capitals, including Damascus. My predecessor has taken on a difficult mission with immense challenges. He needs the full and undivided support of the international community, speaking with one voice.

Let me turn now to the particulars of the situation: the deepening humanitarian crisis, the increasingly worrying human rights picture and the political process that we hope will chart a way ahead.

The Secretariat has sent a note verbale to the Permanent Mission of Syria requesting its response to the clear demands set forth in resolution 66/253, dated 16 February. We received a reply yesterday.

The Secretariat has also requested information from the League of Arab States on what Member States are doing to support the Arab League initiative. In the past two weeks, I have remained in close contact with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. I met him last week in London and spoke with him as recently as yesterday.

The Syrian Government has failed to deliver on its responsibility to protect its people. Civilian populations are under military assault in several cities. The disproportionate use of force by Syrian authorities has driven what had been largely peaceful opposition forces to resort to take up arms in some cases. But let us be clear, the opposition's firepower appears to be minimal compared to the heavy weapons being used by the Syrian army.

Armed extremist groups have also opportunistically used the situation to carry out terrorist acts, in particular in Damascus and Aleppo.

While the continuing lack of access makes it impossible to verify specific casualty figures, credible reports suggest that the total number of people killed since March of last year is well above 7,500, including many women and children. On several occasions, the daily death toll has exceeded 100.

Approximately 25,000 refugees are now registered with to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in neighbouring countries. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people are internally displaced.

The Syrian Government has also resisted the General Assembly's demand for full and unhindered access for international media. Journalists, too, have been killed or injured alongside the people whose plight they were there to report.

Let me turn now to the human rights situation. The Assembly called upon the Syrian Government to immediately put an end to all human rights violations and attacks against civilians, protect its population and fully comply with its obligations under applicable international law. The Syrian authorities clearly have not done so. The international commission of inquiry for Syria, in a report (A/HRC/19/60) issued on 22 February, concluded that Syrian Government forces had committed widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations, amounting to crimes against humanity, with the apparent knowledge and consent of the highest levels of the State.

The commission's report also concluded that anti-Government groups had committed abuses, although not comparable in scale and organization to those carried out by the State.

The commission also found that the security forces and shabiha militias have continued to use live ammunition against peaceful protesters throughout the country, and that the Government has carried out reprisals in response to opposition calls for strikes.

Freedom of expression continues to be severely restricted, and many human rights defenders, activists, protesters and journalists across the country are being arrested or detained. We are receiving widespread reports of torture under detention, even of children.

In response to the worsening human rights situation, the Human Rights Council yesterday adopted

a resolution that strongly condemns the use of force against civilians, summary executions, the killing and persecution of protesters, human rights defenders and journalists, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, interference with access to medical treatment, torture, sexual violence and ill-treatment, including against children.

The resolution also calls on the Government to allow free and unimpeded access by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to carry out a full assessment of needs in Homs and other areas, and to permit humanitarian agencies to deliver vital relief goods and services, especially in Homs, Dar'a, Zabadani and other areas under siege.

We must do everything in our power to end the crisis. We must help move towards a Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system, as supported by the General Assembly. Yet to date, the international community has failed in its responsibility. In fact, the actions — indeed, the inaction — of the international community seems to have encouraged the Syrian authorities in their brutal suppression of its citizens. Further militarization of the Syrian opposition is not the answer.

The international community must urgently find unity in pressing the Syrian authorities and all other parties to stop the violence. It must insist, with one voice, that the Syrian authorities give access to international humanitarian workers as an essential first step towards a peaceful solution.

It is with this aim in mind that, together with Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby of the Arab League, we announced the appointment of Kofi Annan as our Joint Special Envoy for Syria. Mr. Annan will work to end the violence and human rights violations, and promote a peaceful solution to the crisis. It is important to ensure that there is only one track in the mediation process being undertaken by the international community.

Efforts to support the Arab League's initiative to promote a peaceful solution also included last week's meeting of the friends of the Syrian people in Tunisia, which brought together representatives from more than 65 nations and organizations. The meeting demonstrated wide international support for the Syrian people and sent a strong message to the Syrian authorities that the time has come to stop the bloodshed.

The way towards a peaceful solution of the Syrian crisis is difficult but clear. First, there should be an

immediate end to the killings and violence. International relief workers must be allowed in. Secondly, there is a clear need for an inclusive political dialogue among all Syrian actors. The international community must align itself with the process led by the Joint Envoy. To succeed, he will need our full and undivided support. It is time for the international community to speak with one voice, loud and clear.

Continued division emboldens the Syrian authorities in their violent, dead-end path. Continued delay in the humanitarian effort causes more human suffering. Continued violence on the ground risks a descent into full civil war and sectarian strife that could haunt the country for generations to come.

The stakes are high, above all for the people of Syria, as well as for the international community. We must act urgently and in concert. I thank the Assembly for its support.

**The Acting President:** I thank the Secretary-General.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Like the members of the Assembly, I have listened to the statement made by His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with regard to the implementation of resolution 66/253, which was adopted a couple of weeks ago. On behalf of my Government, therefore, I should like to comment on the Secretary-General's report. In doing so, I would like to say that I respect the Secretary-General personally. I am proud of our long-standing and exceptional friendship. I believe that, as is said in diplomatic circles, to not agree does not mean that the friendship has been called into question.

I am well aware that the interests of the Secretary-General vis-à-vis the situation in Syria stem from his deep personal concern for human rights in general. However, the report he has just given us is not reassuring to my Government. I believe that the report is more conducive to increasing tensions than towards a solution. I say this at the outset because a number of people, and not just me, have been surprised at the way in which the situation in Syria — a founding Member of the Organization — has been addressed, namely, through the use of very virulent rhetoric intended solely to slandering a Government based on reports and opinions — all of them from the opposition and people abroad, including people living in countries that are open enemies of Syria. That also

includes information and intelligence from countries that would not hesitate to change the regime in Syria, changing the State in its entirety. That represents a much greater and more ferocious phase in the escalation of the situation. All that calls to mind a mindset reminiscent of the way Member States of the Organization were dealt with in the 1950s and 1960s — sovereign countries that were nevertheless considered to be banana republics, to use the most commonly used term.

The duplicity, intermingling and complexity of the efforts being made by the United Nations and the numerous other efforts vis-à-vis the Syrian Government and people, on the one hand, and the opposition, on the other, aimed at bringing them together to bring an end to the crisis are entirely inexplicable. How is it possible to reasonably listen to the report that the Secretary-General has just given us and at the same time understand that a high-level respected person of the stature of Mr. Kofi Annan would be sent to the region and to Syria by the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States? How can those two events be reconciled, namely, an aggressive, virulent and slanderous statement, on one side, with the desire of a majority of Member States to send an important person like Mr. Annan to carry out good offices, in cooperation with Syrian authorities, to put an end to the painful situation that my country is experiencing.

And how is it possible to square those two elements with yet a third, that is, the allegations made by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

Emergency Relief Coordinator that the Government of Syria has opposed her visit to the country. I do not know how Ms. Amos came to that conclusion. On behalf of my Government, I myself agreed to a visit by Ms. Amos. I personally sent information to the staff of the Secretariat indicating that my Government accepted a visit by Ms. Amos. We also requested that the date of her visit be communicated to us via diplomatic channels.

How can it now be claimed that Syria refused to welcome Ms. Amos and did agree to her visit? Where does that inaccurate conclusion come from? That was the conclusion that compelled members of the Security Council to support a statement to the press by its president fully endorsing the false allegations that the Syrian Government had refused to allow the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to visit the country.

I have just referred to a scenario that saddens me considerably, particularly as it concerns the Secretary-General. I am thinking here about a performance that one might call a rehearsal; it is not serious or focused.

According to the Secretary-General's statement, the Syrian Government has failed in its responsibility to defend its people. I feel that that is doubly unfair. First, according to the Charter of the United Nations, every Government is responsible for its citizens. It also has responsibility vis-à-vis any crimes committed against it, including lack of order, chaos or insecurity. That is exactly what the Syrian Government has done. That is my first point.

Secondly, with regard to claims that the Syrian Government has failed in its responsibility to protect its people — which are unforgivable — they obscure the facts revealed by a large amount of data. Had this been about any other State but Syria, that information would have given rise to a completely different reaction both from the Secretary-General and his staff.

Heads of State and Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Member States of the Organization are openly speaking of supplying weapons to the armed groups in Syria. Another State Member of the United Nations has openly claimed that it has made a \$100 million gift to fund the rebel groups. Some States are putting in place sanctions that are smothering Syria. It is the Syrian people who are the first to suffer from those sanctions. But the effect of those sanctions are does not appear to be obvious to those who claim to have the Syrian people in their hearts. There have been deaths among Al-Qaida members in the city of Homs. Armed combatants not of Syrian nationality have been found in Syria. Some journalists who entered Syria clandestinely have unfortunately been caught up in the events and died. Some secretly left Syria by being smuggled out, but no one talks about that. Where is respect for the law? Why is no decision taken to take into account Al-Qaida elements, foreign combatants, foreign journalists in the country illegally, the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been donated and the Israeli weapons — all of that pouring into the country? Why is no one taking that into account? Why is no one talking about that?

The Secretary-General, who, as I said earlier, is my friend and a man whom I respect, is misled and not adequately informed. He said that the firepower of the armed opposition is less than that of Government forces. Is that logical? Is the firepower of Member States supposed to be less than that of an armed opposition?

Are all opposition movements in other Member States armed? Should they be? Should other opposition movements receive enough weapons so that their firepower equals that of the Governments they oppose?

The Secretary-General also said that further militarizing the Syrian opposition is not the solution. I thank him for that. But when he talks about increasing weaponization — and I suppose that he is talking about an increase and not weapons themselves — is that the position of the Secretariat? I hope that is not the case, otherwise the simple words than coming from the Secretary-General — words spoken in good faith, for I know him personally — will be interpreted by the armed groups as international legal cover for them to act in a criminal fashion in Syria and continue to arm themselves with weapons coming from the very countries that put forward a draft resolution before this body.

What about the Secretariat position with regard to the meeting in Tunis? Why did the Secretariat not disassociate itself from that meeting, which brought together a third of the States Members of the United Nations? Despite that fact, the Secretariat was indeed present at the meeting. How is it that the Secretariat can be present at a parallel event outside the framework of international law? How is it conceivable that the United Nations would be an accomplice in activities that are openly hostile to a Member of the United Nations?

I should like to be explicit here and say that Syria considers resolution 66/253, concerning the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, to be erroneous. Legal rules stipulate that when a premise is erroneous then the whole body of the text is erroneous. The resolution does not meet the minimum requirements for diplomacy at the United Nations.

For example, the Syrian Government was not consulted and the very restricted circle of States that sponsored the resolution refused to amend it. The Russian Federation and other countries put forth amendments, but that limited group of States refused any negotiation on the content of the resolution. They proceeded from a self-centred, narrow position that contravened the Charter and basic norms of international law. That is why we find ourselves before a biased resolution par excellence that is unilateral, subjective and completely unrelated to what is happening on the ground in Syria.

The resolution also openly turns a blind eye to the serious reforms undertaken in Syria, ignores the criminal activities perpetrated by armed terrorist groups,

and supports unbalanced resolutions of the League of Arab States. That is a violation of Syria's sovereignty. It is increasing tensions rather than providing a solution. Furthermore, the resolution includes explicit irresponsible support for armed groups under the guise of providing all sorts of material support to the opposition. By inflicting unjust sanctions on Syria, which have a direct repercussion on the daily lives of its people, it is obvious that we have here a mix of people who are acting in a non-objective and non-customary manner at the United Nations. By way of example, I would like to mention the following

First, I should like to refer to the insistence on hastily holding frequent meetings on Syria under various entirely unrelated agenda items. Members will recall that we have addressed this issue before. In a previous statement we said that moving from the item "The situation in the Middle East" to "Prevention of armed conflict" and then to "Human rights" clearly shows that there is a legal and procedural problem in the way that the Organization is addressing the situation in Syria.

Secondly, General Assembly meetings were organized at times that violated United Nations procedures.

Thirdly, a meeting was organized without consulting or alerting the Syrian Government beforehand.

Fourthly, there have been a number of procedural violations on the part of the Secretariat. They have to do with issues of substance and form that clearly reflect the manner in which Syria is being openly targeted under the pretext of supposed international legitimacy — with suspicious silence on the part of some and more than suspicious complicity on that of others. All of that clearly illustrates the subjectivity and enormous degree of bias in looking at what is happening in Syria.

It is incomprehensible for an oral report to be given on the implementation of a resolution before the written report is published, and all the more so that it is done without waiting for a response from the Government of Syria. The Secretary-General says that the Secretariat alerted the Syrian Government on 16 February. To be precise, the truth is that we received that communication on 29 February. We immediately conveyed it to Damascus, which sent us a response yesterday, in less than 24 hours. We then transmitted the response to the Secretariat. All of this shows that the purpose of the pressure being brought to bear on Syria is purely political. It is intended to serve the interests

of the open enemies of the Government and people of Syria. It is an agenda that is using the United Nations in order to attack Syria's rights in the Organization.

Syria has taken great qualitative strides in very little time in order to put in place a comprehensive national reform programme to meet the legitimate expectations of the people. I repeat, those are legitimate demands of the people. Reforms are not medicine that one takes in one dose when sick. As members know, reforms are an ongoing process. That is why demands for reform are legitimate no matter where they take place. It is not possible to object to legitimate demands. Reforms are rejected by those who use them as a slogan to pay back for old slights and destabilize or destroy a State.

The national reform programme culminated in the adoption of a new Constitution that guarantees the establishment of a Syrian democratic State based on political pluralism, the defence of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the rule of law. The Constitution limits the term of the President of the Republic. In that regard, I can only express my sadness that the Secretary-General neglected to mention that important development. It is a significant development that the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs also neglected to mention in his report to the Security Council two days ago, despite the fact that we supplied the Secretariat and high-level officials of the Organization with dozens of written communications and reports that went into detail about the activities of the Syrian Government to strengthen the reforms under way.

I am not claiming that there are no problems in Syria, or that there is no opposition in Syria. I am not claiming that it is not necessary to undertake reforms in Syria. What I am saying is that some should not harm the honest Syrian opposition by using hostile agendas that are in principle hostile to Syria. Those that would manipulate the honest national opposition are actually harmful to the opposition and its chances of being able to strengthen the process of reform in the country.

In parallel to the reform programme, the Government has seriously continued to invite the various factions to participate in a national dialogue.

All Syrians, regardless of their background or political beliefs, have been invited to participate in a national dialogue with a view to the realization of their aspirations. But some countries of the region, as well as countries members of the League of Arab States and other well-known foreign countries, have assiduously

attempted to persuade and induce the opposition not to sit at the negotiating table for a national dialogue or lay down its arms.

The Assembly will recall the very clear and open position recently expressed by the official spokesperson for the State Department of the United States. That and other countries have welcomed armed opposition leaders on their territories, organized conferences for them, and provided them with weapons, funding and logistic and technical support. Their goal is to enable the opposition to continue to perpetrate terrorist acts against the Syrian infrastructure and to target the sons of a single nation. How is it possible to link the honourable national opposition to the derailing of trains carrying provisions and fuel for heat and destroying oil and gas pipelines, trains and other key infrastructure?

Would an honest national opposition that wants to be a partner in managing the country's affairs — a fully legitimate aspiration — truly be comfortable with destroying the country's infrastructure? What is the point of destroying the oil refinery in Homs? What is the point of stealing fuel on the roads and highways of Syria? All of those elements are key to the generation of electricity.

Syria was not surprised by the explicit statements made a few days ago by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and the Qatari Prime Minister, when they reaffirmed the need to arm the Syrian opposition. No, it was not surprising when they expressed their willingness to do that. I am not even referring here to Libya's announcement that it would be willing to give \$100 million to the armed Syrian opposition.

My country would like to reiterate that the provision of weapons to the opposition is nothing new; that began a long time ago. Today, however, it is being admitted openly and officially. World capitals have heard this. National security forces found weapons, most of which were Israeli, in some Homs neighbourhoods once the city had been freed from the yoke of the armed groups.

Certain parties are attempting diligently to manipulate the events in Syria in the media and to orchestrate developments at the political level by using humanitarian relief as an excuse in order to destroy Syria. They are using it as a pretext to carry out policies that have nothing to do with what they are really trying to accomplish or what they claim to want with regard to the humanitarian situation in Syria. The false picture they paint is one of a Government that is allegedly

behind a humanitarian crisis in its own country. That is absolutely untrue. Most of Syria is living in normal conditions, and no effort has been spared to provide the necessary services to all citizens and to ensure medical supplies, food and services in many regions, especially those where acts of violence have taken place and civilians have been used as human shields by armed groups.

We are not claiming that the humanitarian situation in those regions is perfect. We do not deny that there has been a deterioration in the quality of the services provided by the State in those regions. But the primary reason for that is the armed attacks and vandalism that have occurred in certain regions and the illegal unilateral economic sanctions imposed by certain States under resolution 66/253. Those sanctions have had a negative impact on daily life. They impede the flow of medications, vaccines, food, fuel, as well as electricity provision the funds necessary to buy such materials.

Syria recently received a delegation from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Amos, and cooperated with her. The Red Cross and Red Crescent were allowed in and are in Homs even as we speak, working freely. Three days ago their teams tried to bring out the bodies of two journalists — one French, one American — who had died, but the armed opposition groups refused to release their bodies, keeping them for three days.

We accuse some of the States that are behind resolution 66/253 of being directly involved in the bloodshed in Syria. They have worked against the stability, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Syria. From this rostrum, we declare that we hold those countries accountable for their irresponsible acts, which violate the basic principles of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations.

We call on the Secretary-General to personally attach the highest importance to this issue, especially since the leaders and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of those countries, whom the Secretary-General knows very well, have openly stated, as I said earlier, that they supported the Syrian opposition and were supplying weapons to it, both inside and outside the country. The Secretary-General must actively contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in a region that is in a state of upheaval and could explode at any minute.

Henceforth we will be asking for accountability on the part of all of those who have been responsible for increasing tensions, spreading violence and instability in the region and all of those who have not fully assumed their responsibilities in that regard.

We and the rest of the international community have waited for four long years for the United Nations to finally rebuild the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools in Gaza. Those schools, as the Assembly is aware, were destroyed by Israeli acts of aggression in late 2008, and it has taken four years for the rebuilding to start.

As has been made clear today, we have seen no one rush to bring any pressure to bear on Israel and its protectors to save the Palestinian people.

Here, I am not making a comparison. It is not a question of comparing. The comparison arises naturally when we see no particular enthusiasm on the part of certain United Nations delegations or officials of the Secretariat even to rebuild the UNRWA schools. There are also those who constantly talk about war in and outside Israel. We have all read the potential scenarios with regard to the aggression of one country against another that might lead to this or that outcome in our region.

However, such speculation has given rise to no comment. It has not motivated anyone to say that it is contrary to the United Nations Charter or the principles of international law. It almost seems that some have decided that our countries should be laboratories for political, military, intelligence and security experiments and that there shall be no questioning of the statements made by Israeli officials and others undertaking acts of aggression and war against a State Member of the Organization. Representatives know who I mean. No one comments on, deplores or condemns such aggression.

I almost feel as if the law of the jungle seems more merciful than the jungle in which we live today. At least there is law in the jungle, although today I have the feeling that the word “law” has disappeared even from the jungle itself.

In conclusion, I address my words first and foremost to my friend, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I respect him and hold him in the highest regard. I know his deep-rooted humanity and insight. I address these words to him and, through him, to all present: Come and help Syria and its people and Government to tackle the

humanitarian problems in certain regions. Help Syria on the basis of the provisions and principles set out in the Charter and in international law. Help Syria by not encouraging more bloodshed in Syria, including of the opposition. Most of the Syrian opposition is honest and loyal to the State. Some in the media are provoking and manipulating the opposition. They are buying and selling it. They are driving the opposition to shed its own blood.

All the aforementioned acts are wrong and unjust. We would have said the very same had it occurred to another Member State. The opposition needs to be advised to participate in comprehensive national dialogue. It should be advised to become part of an authentic partnership with the other sons of Syria so as to build a country for all that excludes no one.

Every Syrian victim belongs to the country. Each Syrian death deeply troubles and saddens us. Help us to stop the bloodshed by stopping the media provocation. Let us put an end to the sea of lies, the smuggling of weapons, and the encouragement of the extremist opposition abroad. Let us invite the opposition to begin an authentic dialogue with the Government so that it can find its place and determine its role in building the country to which we all aspire.

**The Acting President:** I acknowledge the broad latitude that members can take in expressing and addressing different issues, but I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his expressed respect to the Secretary-General and to the highest representative body, as I understand, of the Organization.

**Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to say clearly that here I am speaking on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the States members of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council. I would like to thank the President for holding this meeting and the Secretary-General for his clear and comprehensive statement.

The States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council warmly welcome the appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan as joint Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the League of Arab States to Syria. We believe that, given his worldwide reputation, singular skills and great sense of fairness, his appointment reflects the will and determination of the international community to devote all possible efforts to reaching a swift solution to the Syrian crisis and putting an end to the suffering of our brotherly Syrian people, in accordance with the

initiative of the League of Arab States (see S/2012/71, annex) and resolution 66/253 of 16 February.

Since the Security Council failed to adopt a resolution on the situation in Syria owing to the regrettable exercise of the right of veto by some members of the Council, the Syrian regime believes that it has been given the green light to crush unarmed Syrian civilians and to extinguish their revolution. The Syrian regime is behaving as if it were in a race against time to finish the task before the international community moves again.

We have witnessed a continuing escalation in attacks against civilians, and the number of victims is increasing daily. Yesterday evening, we saw the Syrian forces roll into Baba Amr, and we witnessed the failure of the international community in the test of conscience. It is as if we were witnessing a new Srebrenica — as if the international community had learned nothing from the lessons of Rwanda, Kosovo and Gaza.

The Security Council is today more than ever called upon to play its legally sanctioned role and shoulder its moral responsibility by calling for an end to the violence; by taking all measures necessary to put an end to the actions of the Syrian killing machine; by saving the civilians who are under siege in Homs, Hama and other Syrian cities; and by providing medical and humanitarian assistance to the affected civilians.

The Council must also support the mission of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, who is working to find a political solution that would ensure the Syrian people's right to a life of dignity, prosperity and security. Such a solution should be based on comprehensive national unity among all segments of the Syrian population, regardless of political, sectarian, ethnic or religious affiliation, on the basis of the road map drafted by the League of Arab States, which is supported by the General Assembly, and should involve the deployment of joint Arab-United Nations forces so as to maintain peace and security in Syria.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are fully prepared to spearhead any joint effort aimed at saving the Syrian people and bolstering their ability to protect themselves from their own authorities, which lost their legitimacy by shedding the blood of their own people. The States members of the GCC assign to the international community in general and to the Security



Council in particular and, more specifically, the Powers that exercised the right of veto the moral responsibility for what is now taking place in the streets and homes of Baba Amr and Homs. History and conscience will hold them to account for failing to respond to the Syrian people's cry for help.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): On 19 March, Egypt, on behalf of a number of sponsoring States, submitted the draft resolution that was later adopted as resolution 66/253. Today I should like to address the Assembly in my national capacity.

I should like at the outset to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his outstanding report to the General Assembly, which he made in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 66/253, of 16 February 2012, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is deteriorating daily and having grave political, social and economic consequences.

Egypt welcomes Mr. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General, as the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy. We have full confidence in his proven wisdom and insight as well as his ability to reach innovative solutions that will strengthen the role of the United Nations in dealing with the aggravated crisis in Syria. Egypt reiterates that the visit by the Special Envoy is in accordance with resolution 66/253, the resolutions adopted by the League of Arab States on 22 January and 12 February 2012, and the plan of action agreed upon by the League of Arab States and the Syrian Government.

The claim made today that Syria was not a party to those resolutions is false. Syria did not oppose the suspension of Libya's membership in the League of Arab States when violations were occurring in Libya. Syria took part in all the resolutions adopted by the Arab League, including one aimed at enforcing a no-fly zone in Libya, which was adopted as Security Council resolution 1973 (2011). Thus Syria cannot today use the excuse that it was not a party to the resolutions adopted by the Arab League when Syria itself participated in the adoption of similar resolutions dealing with the situation in Libya.

The priorities for the Special Envoy's mission are clear: the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities by all parties — the Government and the armed groups — and unconditional access of humanitarian assistance. Egypt calls upon the Syrian authorities to allow an immediate visit by Ms. Valerie

Amos, in fulfilment of Syria's national duty to protect its population and to work with the United Nations to provide humanitarian relief to all areas, including Homs, Hama, Idlib and others. We must address the humanitarian needs of the brotherly Syrian people and ensure the immediate cessation of all violations of human rights, which were the subject of successive resolutions of the Human Rights Council. The most recent of those resolutions was adopted yesterday and emphasized that the situation was escalating and deteriorating by the minute. It stressed the need to initiate an active dialogue between the Government and the opposition, within and outside the country, in order to find a solution acceptable to all the Syrian people, not just a particular community or sect.

Egypt agrees with the Secretary-General that providing various parties with weapons will worsen the crisis and escalate it to the level of a civil war from which the entire region will suffer. At the same time, the Syrian Government must not consider the failure of the Security Council to adopt the Arab resolution a license to kill and oppress the protesters. The death of more than 7,500 people so far is proof of the grave deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the situation of human rights in sisterly Syria.

We hope that Syria will realize the gravity of the situation and the fact that the report presented today by the Secretary-General, at the request of the General Assembly, is an honest reflection of the grave and escalating situation on the ground, of international concern in that respect, and of Syria's explicit refusal to abide by international law. In this forum only, the Syrian Government rejects the detailed information provided on the situation on the ground.

The basic problem is not who is doing the killing, the Syrian Government or the armed groups. The problem is that innocent Syrian civilians are being killed daily in the streets, people whose only sin is to live in a country whose Government and leadership refuse to abide by their responsibility to protect their own people.

There is no legal or procedural problem in dealing with this issue. There is only one problem, and it is a humanitarian one: a people's suffering at the hands of a Government that denies everything that is happening on the ground, thereby deepening a humanitarian crisis that is inflicting death and destruction on its people.

We would request that the Secretary-General present to us, here in the General Assembly as well as

the Security Council, periodic reports on developments on the ground and on the progress achieved by Mr. Kofi Annan in the context of his joint mission.

We hope that Mr. Annan will use his expertise and skills to achieve what the Security Council to date has failed to do and the General Assembly in its resolution sought to do by ending the serious humanitarian crisis there.

**Mr. Khazaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the meeting of the General Assembly held on 13 February (see A/66/PV.96), we expressed our views on the current situation in the Middle East and in Syria, and I will not repeat those points.

First, on the appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan as the Special Envoy to Syria, I would like to say that, considering his reputation of having broad experience of resolving disputes in different parts of the world during his long tenure as the head of the Organization as well as his eminence at the international level, we hope that he will carry out the important task given to him in the best interest of the Syrian people. The Islamic Republic of Iran is supportive of any constructive, unbiased and peaceful Syrian-led political process. We stand ready to play our role in that process. We sincerely hope that his mission leads to a prompt end to violence and the continuation of the political reform process in Syria in resolving the crisis in that country peacefully.

However, it is regrettable that, from the very beginning of the Syrian crisis, some countries took positions and made provocative statements that were more in line with undermining any possibility of a political settlement, calling for regime change, encouraging the opposition towards an armed struggle, and pushing the country towards a civil war. What is urgently needed for Syria today to emerge from the crisis is an end to foreign interventions and the funnelling of money and arms to the opposition groups. The people in the conflict areas are in need of humanitarian assistance. The presence of armed rebels would be an impediment to assisting civilians who are in dire need of humanitarian aid.

The ongoing crisis in Syria is indicative of the fact that coercive sanctions, pressure and attempts to interfere in Syrian internal affairs would only lead to the deepening of the political and social crisis. Instability in Syria will have many negative ramifications for the region as a whole. Our goal should be concentrated on devising a process that would lead to broader political

reconciliation, strengthening national unity, and ensuring the public order, national security, stability and prosperity of the Syrian people.

We believe that the main role of the Secretary-General, including his Special Envoy, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, is to facilitate the engagement of Syrian political groups with the Syrian Government for a Syrian-led political process, while taking into account the reform process announced by the Government, based on the aspirations of the Syrians and ensuring respect for the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. That call should be heeded by all groups.

The main and most important point that I would like to make today is that, while we welcome the mission of Mr. Kofi Annan as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, we must all try and do our best to help him to implement his mission without further fuelling the situation and exacerbating the crisis. So we should pave the way for a peaceful resolution and a suitable environment for Mr. Kofi Annan to do his job. We are very hopeful that, with his reputation and the assistance of the Secretary-General, his effort will lead to a reasonable solution to Syria's crisis.

**The Acting President:** The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind him that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for requesting the floor once again. However, I am forced to do so owing to the statement of my colleague, the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who made some threatening remarks that are not consistent with the sensibility and broad political, historic and diploma experience of the audience. He used the expression "regime" in referring to the Government of Syria. I myself would not accept the use of such a term to describe the Government of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and I will therefore not use such an expression. I will leave it to him and to his conscience in the future to reflect on that, and hope that he will stop using that expression, which is inappropriate in diplomatic language even when there is a disagreement between parties.

Secondly, the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, speaking on behalf of his country and the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, called for sending joint international and Arab forces

to maintain security in Syria as if there were no security and no State there and as if I myself did not represent a founding State Member of the international Organization. It is as though things were in uncontrolled chaos and that Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council forces were needed to maintain peace and security in my country.

In a statement delivered approximately two weeks ago (see A/66/PV.95), we proposed that we jointly adopt, under the auspices of the United Nations, a comprehensive plan to promote democracy and the protection and strengthening of human rights in all States of the region, including States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, since those who speak about Syria with great sadness, on account of their belief that there is a tragedy and civil war in Syria, are hardly role models for the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights.

If such a force were to be dispatched, then I, on behalf of my country and many other Member States, volunteer to send international, Arab and Islamic forces to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to protect the oppressed Saudi population in the Al-Qatif area. I volunteer to do so free of charge. We do not seek to be financed by anyone.

The other important issue for the Kingdom may be to withdraw its forces from Bahrain. Those forces repress and violate the legitimate demands of the brotherly people of Bahrain. I had hoped that this

meeting would not turn into an inter-Arab discussion, but some are trying very hard to fall into that trap. My advice from this rostrum is that nobody should seek to provoke us because there is much we could say that would expose the deep crises of some Governments and regimes inside and outside the Arab region.

It is shameful for an Arab to liken the limited armed rebellion in the small neighbourhood of Homs known as Baba Amr, a place that we all hold dear in Syria, to the massacres of Srebrenica, Rwanda, Kosovo or Gaza. Such a claim is especially disrespectful and misleading when issued by an Arab voice in the international Organization. It is a misleading statement that serves only Israel and the enemies of all Arabs.

My country is officially called the Syrian Arab Republic. It is not called the Assad Arab Republic. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is named after its rulers. The name of the country is linked to the name of the ruling family, so it is called the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I hope not to be provoked further, so that I will not have to make even more hurtful statements.

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

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*