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Official Records

President: Mr. Jeremić (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 33 (continued)

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/67/L.63)

The President: Members will recall that, under agenda item 33, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/259 at its seventy-fourth plenary meeting, held on 26 April.

We gather in the Great Hall of the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, home to a proud and valiant people engulfed in an escalating maelstrom of ferocious violence. A multi-confessional and multi-ethnic country in the heart of the Middle-East, Syria is inhabited by Sunni, Shia, Alawite and Christian Arabs, together with Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Druze, Armenians, Mizrahi Jews, and other communities. It stands at one of the world's most important civilizational crossroads, continuously enriching the heritage of humanitarianumankind for millenniums.

Bordered by the Mediterranean basin and the Holy Land to the west, Anatolia to the north, Mesopotamia to the east, and the Arabian Desert to the south, Syria is a place of beautiful mosques erected during the Golden Age of Islam, and home to magnificent churches housing some of the most venerated icons and relics of the Christian faith. Its capital Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited metropolises of the world. The Jasmine City stood at the centre of the mighty

Umayyad and Fatimid empires, serving as the starting point of the major caravan route for pilgrims making the hajj. It is where the Apostle Paul experienced his miraculous conversion, and Saladin began his ride to Jerusalem.

For centuries, equal to Damascus in its splendor was Syria's largest city Aleppo. As a terminus of the Silk Road, it basked in its greatest glory under the rule of Sayf Al-Dawla, whose royal court attracted renowned philosophers and poets such as Al-Farabi and Al-Mutanabbi.

Yet today, the vitality and grandeur are all but gone. The calls of muezzin and the ringing of church bells have been drowned out by the sound and fury of falling shells, exploding mortar rounds and machine gun fire. Towns and villages have been razed to the ground and the fertile countryside now lies fallow.

At least 80,000 have perished since the start of the hostilities, with most of these casualties believed to be civilians. As the death toll rises with every passing hour, so does the number of refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered close to 1.5 million of them, who now live in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and beyond. Over 4 million more have been internally displaced since the fighting began, according to some estimates.

Evidence of chemical weapons use is coming to light. Violence is begetting more violence, hatred more hatred, carving ever deeper wounds into Syria's society.

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Over the past 800 days, the conflict has continued to escalate, threatening the establishment of ethnic or sectarian fiefdoms, thereby gravely imperiling the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. The threat of full-scale lawlessness looms large, portending to engulf the country in wanton destruction.

We should have no doubt that what happens in Syria in the weeks and months ahead will profoundly bear upon the security and well-being of the entire region, and possibly beyond. We must not allow the shadows to lengthen and mayhem to spread like a contagion. Succumbing to the despondency of the status quo is a prescription for a disastrous future of growing estrangement, multiplying crises and uncontrollable revendications.

We gather today in the General Assembly to express the conscience of the international community, but our efforts must be put to the service of endeavours to bring about the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and induce the conflicting parties to engage in dialogue. This, however, must not be confused with the hard work that must follow in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace in Syria.

We should strive to build on the agreement, reached by the Action Group for Syria last June in Geneva and reinvigorated a few days ago in Moscow, to get the political process off the ground, enabling the citizens of Syria to begin reconciliation and ultimately to freely determine their nation's future. I believe that it is incumbent on the international community to extend its full support to this course of action, in which all of us should play active and appropriate roles, investing our greatest efforts in the quest to bring this disaster to an end.

In my view, this is a grave test for the United Nations, an institution founded with the express intent of being a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. Should we fail to stop the perpetuation of what is fast becoming the most horrific humanitarian catastrophe of our times, then common decency will demand of us to ask, in all candour, "quo vadis, United Nations?"

I believe that the tides of history are not indifferent to the cause of justice. If we are unable to do anything to stop this tragedy, then how can we sustain the moral credibility of the Organization? I believe that it is high time to say "enough is enough — enough to complacency, and enough to fratricide.

I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.63.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are all well aware of the tragedies occurring on a daily basis in the Syrian Arab Republic, the deterioration of the situation in the country, the repercussions for the security of the country, the well-being of its people and international peace and security, and the severe tragedy resulting from the crisis. We cannot help but wonder if the United Nations, faced with the continued escalation in the use of heavy weapons and ballistic missiles by the Syrian authorities against population centres, should not condemn those acts in the strongest terms? Should not the United Nations, in view of the escalation of violence, condemn those acts, regardless of their source? Should not the United Nations, in the light of the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and fundamental freedoms, condemn those transgressions, irrespective of their perpetrators, and call for an immediate end to them?

That is the premise on which the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 proceeded. On that basis, approximately one third of the Member States, on whose behalf I speak today, prepared a draft resolution modelled on what has been adopted by the General Assembly before in this respect. They drew up a draft resolution that is rooted in international law and the Charter of the United Nations; it imposes no obligation on Member States, but merely reflects the position of the majority, using agreed language.

While we emphasize that there is no way to place the victimizer and the victim on even footing, objectivity is nonetheless required. The draft resolution is therefore objective, balanced and fair, as demonstrated by many of its provisions, including a condemnation of transgressions and violations and an attempt to address all countries on an equal footing, in more than one place in the text.

In previous relevant resolutions, the General Assembly has called for a political solution and a comprehensive political transition process led by Syria towards a democratic, pluralistic political system. It has called in particular for serious dialogue between the Syrian authorities and all factions of the opposition. It has also welcomed the conference held under the auspices of the League of Arab States last month.

Now that the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces has been

established as the wide umbrella under which all factions will be united, we have an interlocutor, which is a necessary step for the political transition. Why would the General Assembly not welcome this? Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations emphasizes the role of regional arrangements in international peace and security, as emphasized by the draft resolution. Should not the Organization play a complementary role and welcome the League of Arab States as the relevant authority in the search for a political solution for the crisis in Syria? This is just the essence of the draft resolution concerning the political solution of the crisis.

A diligent reading of the text makes it clear that the draft resolution supports all efforts to find a solution that will put an end to the bloodshed and ensure the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex), including all political, regional and international efforts. The draft resolution addresses all aspects of the Syrian crisis, calls for the implementation of the humanitarian assistance plan in order to give assistance and access to all those working in the humanitarian and medical fields, and urges the concerned authorities to provide the necessary financial support. It addresses the question of refugees and internally displaced persons, taking into account the concerns of the host countries, highlights the political role of the United Nations, and condemns attacks against United Nations staff. It also deals with the issue of accountability, calls for an end to all violations, encourages the Security Council to take action in this respect and highlights the role of the Syrian people in achieving reconciliation.

It stresses one particular aspect of the crisis, namely, the report referring to the use of chemical weapons, and supports the efforts of the United Nations to investigate this question without coming to any unconfirmed conclusions. The draft resolution highlights the positive role of the United Nations and supports its efforts to offer humanitarian assistance and the activities of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria.

Despite the urgent nature of the crisis, the authors of the draft resolution took care to take the views of many countries into consideration and held consultations with a sincere desire to reach an acceptable text. The draft resolution has been revised many times, and many of us have intervened to respond to all concerns. Member States have before them a draft resolution that is based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of non-interference in a country's

internal affairs. It also calls for the non-use of force or threat of force, and therefore is not a call or excuse for military intervention. It calls for the provision of every kind of support to the Syrian people.

The duties of the United Nations include supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people to justice, stability and equality and insisting on their protection. The lack of concern for what is happening in Syria is unacceptable, not only for ethical reasons, but also for reasons related to international peace and security. Therefore, we call on Member States to support this endeavour and vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me say that I listened closely to the statement just delivered by my friend Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly. It offered a very careful and detailed analysis of the events in our country and region, and a careful interpretation of the situation that predicts what might happen in coming days if certain forces were to insist on rejecting a political solution and to gamble with the destiny of the region and the fate of our nations. I also wish to welcome my dear friend, Mr. Jan Eliasson.

It is surprising that draft resolution A/67/L.63 under consideration has been submitted under agenda item 33, "Prevention of armed conflict", as the content of the draft totally contradicts the wording and purpose of that noble agenda item. The draft resolution seeks to escalate the crisis and fuel violence in Syria by setting a dangerous precedent in international relations in its attempt to legitimize the provision of weapons to terrorist groups in Syria and to illegally recognize a certain faction of the external opposition as "the legitimate representative of the Syrian people", despite the fact that this faction, which is already internally divided and lacks a leader, does not even represent the full spectrum of the opposition inside or outside Syria.

Yet those who prepared the draft resolution considered it appropriate to speak in the name and on behalf of the all Syrian citizens inside and outside the country and to dictate to the international community that the legitimate representative of the Syrian people should be a minute faction of the external opposition that was born, raised and nourished by the media in Doha, Qatar. At the political level, it is the creature of other capitals inside and outside the region.

It is worth noting that whenever there are indications of a political solution to the crisis in Syria, the pace and

magnitude of terrorist attacks on the ground increase and some Member States intensify their efforts to abort that political approach. It is as if those States are sending the message that a peaceful political solution based on dialogue is not allowed in Syria. The draft resolution is the best example of such an approach and is effectively swimming against the current, especially in light of the latest Russian-American rapprochement, which the Syrian Government has officially welcomed.

Hundreds of terrorist attacks, including suicide attacks, have claimed the lives of a great number of innocent civilian victims. Well-known terrorist groups active in Syria publicly declare their allegiance to Al-Qaida, a group that we all oppose. But it would appear that some people combat Al-Qaida in theory and name only while others actually combat it in deed. There are some who secretly and publicly support Al-Qaida.

Thousands of extremist foreign terrorists and mercenaries are being brought to Syria, with the involvement of other States' intelligence agencies, in response to the calls of the leader of Al-Qaida and others to destroy the Syrian State and establish instead a "jihadist Islamic caliphate", according to the leaders of Al-Qaida. Arms smuggling operations, which have been publicized and duly documented by the United Nations, are bringing in all sorts of weapons from Libya and elsewhere into Syria. Those are all well-documented facts. Unprecedented savage crimes and documented human rights violations are being committed by armed terrorist groups in Syria. Illegitimate, unilateral and coercive economic, commercial and financial measures are aggravating the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people. Organized assassinations and kidnappings of Islamic and Christian clerics are being perpetrated. The oldest Jewish synagogue in the region, located in the suburbs of Damascus, was destroyed and its contents were sold in the markets of Beirut and elsewhere by the merchants of death and suffering.

The organized and systematic acts of sacrilege, the desecration of holy shrines and sites, and the savage attacks against archaeological sites and famous intellectual figures bring to mind the demolition of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan and similar barbarous actions that have taken place in Tunisia, Libya, Mali and occupied Palestine.

That is just the tip of the iceberg of what is happening in my country, Syria. It has been acknowledged by

officials of Member States that are co-sponsoring draft resolution A/67/L.63. However, it would seem that the hands of the drafters were disabled when it came to condemning the aforementioned actions and highlighting their grave and perilous implications for Syria and its people. The draft resolution does not contain a single use of the word "terrorism".

It may be suggested that a demand that the drafters mention or, better yet, condemn those terrorist activities in their draft could not be met in the normal order of things because, in so doing, some of them would be condemning themselves, given that they are deeply implicated in activities that surpass in criminality the crime of terrorism itself.

It is very clear that the illegal seating of the so-called National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in the seat of the Syrian Arab Republic at the League of Arab States, and the drafters' attempt to get the General Assembly involved in granting the Coalition false status as representative of the Syrian people merely seek to undermine the Syrian State and its institutions as a whole and to block any chance of a peaceful solution to the crisis, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and the Geneva Communiqué. Furthermore, the methods used constitute a flagrant violation of the rules of international law and the Charters of both the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The so-called National Coalition for Syria, which was created in Doha, Qatar, theoretically includes 63 members, but in practice has only 53. That is the case because those who invited the extremist opposition coalition, which rejects dialogue and exists only in Doha, left 10 seats to be filled by secularists from within Syrian opposition groups. Although nearly a year has passed since then, the Qataris and their allies have yet to find 10 secularist Syrian opposition members who are willing to join a coalition that is under the control and domination of extremist religious factions.

Is it not odd that some Member States that claim to be working to bring democracy and freedom to Syria and to enable its people to determine their own future are the same States that have usurped the right of the Syrian people to choose their own representatives and leadership? Those States are trying to ensure, supposedly on behalf of the Syrian people, that a certain group created artificially in Doha is the sole representative of the Syrian people. It would seem that those same

States are introducing their own amendments to the concept of democracy, whereby true democracy is based on the right of certain foreign countries to choose the representatives and leadership of another country without any involvement of the people of that country itself. That is the reading of and the vision held by some of the drafters of draft resolution A/67/L.63.

We have repeatedly called attention to the destructive role of the League of Arab States, led particularly by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, together with that new member of the League of Arab States, Turkey. They are playing a destructive role with respect to the Syrian crisis, starting with manipulating the Arab observer mission in Syria and continuing with the latest decision to allow members of the League of Arab States to arm terrorist groups in Syria, which is tantamount to supporting and financing terrorism, according to relevant international legal standards. Those decisions not only contradict the role of regional organizations as stated in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, but will, if implemented, direct a deadly blow to the chances of finding a political settlement to the current crisis.

That is precisely what some sponsors of the draft resolution hope to achieve. They do not want a solution to the Syrian crisis; they want regime change at any cost. They call it a game. They call it changing the rules of the game. The suffering of the people of Syria, the stability of Syria, the fate of Syria — all of that is, to them, a mere game. I quote a statement made recently by Mr. Brahimi, Joint Special Envoy, in his most recent briefing to the Security Council, on 19 April, recalling the decision of the League of Arab States dated 6 March 2013, which was adopted in Doha.

(spoke in English)

“If the language of that resolution is to be taken literally, that means that for the League of Arab States the Geneva process is to be considered obsolete. No dialogue or negotiations are possible or necessary.”

(spoke in Arabic)

If the Joint Special Envoy were to say the same with respect to the draft resolution before us, what could we add? While the corruption fueled by Qatari and Saudi petrodollars has destroyed the credibility of the League of Arab States, undermined the integrity of its Secretary General's position, and damaged Mr. Brahimi's

mission, the States Members of the United Nations must not allow our Organization to be infected with the notorious corruption of the Qatari and Turkish regimes, which support religious extremists yet are nominally responsible for the Dialogue of Civilizations, or that of the Saudi regime, which recruits terrorists, or as they call them, “jihadists”, while supporting the counter-terrorism work of the centre they created at the United Nations and financed with \$10 million they donated in advance.

The Syrian Government has welcomed all initiatives seeking a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Syria. I would like to announce from this rostrum once again that the Syrian Government is completely serious and sincere in wishing to achieve a comprehensive, Syrian-led national dialogue encompassing all components of Syrian society and political forces, including all national internal and external opposition groups and the militants who are ready to lay down their arms for the benefit of a peaceful solution and to resort to common sense and logic. There are genuine judicial and security guarantees to secure the safe return of the external opposition forces, including the so-called Opposition Coalition, if they are willing to participate in the national dialogue and the political process.

The great majority of the Syrian people reject violence and chaos and support a prompt, peaceful political solution to the crisis that preserves their right to life, security, stability, citizenship and justice, while maintaining their country's capabilities and securing a future for their children untouched by extremism and terrorism. Those Syrian opposition factions claiming to genuinely have Syria's best interests at heart and to want to end Syrian bloodshed, but who reject dialogue, are therefore requested to set aside their personal grudges, reject any efforts to implement foreign agendas and engage in a national dialogue.

I appeal to all Syrians to beware the aim of some of the foreign capitals that are involved in the bloodshed in Syria, which is to perpetuate the crisis in Syria so as to drain the country's capacities and achieve the total destruction of its infrastructure and social fabric. If that happens, the only losers will be Syria and the Syrians, and the only winners will be those who wish the country harm and misfortune. A quick review of ancient and recent history, whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or other countries, will soon make it clear that what is fundamentally at issue has nothing to do with human rights, the humanitarian situation,

spreading democracy or the best interests of the people of any one country. We are all agreed on that. What is at issue, and what is the real goal, are political, military and economic interests that lead only to insecurity, destruction, crime, disintegration, sectarianism, poverty and other problems that need decades to solve.

I would like to emphasize to all that at the end of the day the real solution to the Syrian crisis can only be an exclusively Syrian solution, led by Syrians themselves.

In view of everything I have discussed, my delegation asks that the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 be put to a vote, and we urge all Member States to vote against it.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to an important piece of information that illustrates the depth of corruption prevailing in some offices of this international Organization. An e-mail message that reached several high officials of the United Nations originated in Doha, sent by the so-called Ambassador of the coalition in Qatar. That so-called Ambassador is the one who instructed the terrorists known as the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade to kidnap Philippine nationals serving in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Ambassador of the coalition in Doha, who was given the Syrian Embassy in Doha by the Qatari authorities, supervised the negotiations with the kidnappers who captured Filipino members of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Golan. He did this twice. The first time, 21 observers were kidnapped and taken to Jordan, where pictures were taken of them for the record; they were given tea, refreshments and food before being released and returned through the area of separation back into Syrian territory; the second time was a few days ago, when four Filipino members of the United Nations troops were kidnapped.

This is the e-mail, right here, with a telephone number used to issue instructions from Doha: 009745577546. This e-mail is now available in many offices of the Secretariat, but nobody has mentioned it. No one has said anything about it, even though this matter concerns the safety of UNDOF observers in Golan. I do not wish to say much more about this subject, which is self-explanatory.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Over the past two years, the General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions — most recently, resolution 67/183 of 20 December 2012 — concerning

the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. What has happened since then? First, the number of victims has risen to more than 80,000 dead. The Government forces have intensified the ferocity of their assault on the Syrian people and diversified their methods of killing, including, in addition to tanks and heavy artillery, shelling by missiles and planes and the use of chemical weapons against civilians. That is in addition to the torching and destruction that the regime has visited on many Syrian villages and cities. Massacres, collective murder and sectarian discrimination have increased. Before, we counted the number of massacres by the names of the cities and villages where they occurred; now such things are happening so frequently that we can no longer count them. They have left their traces in every city and village.

The number of refugees and displaced persons has grown to millions, recalling the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Today their numbers are a heavy burden on neighbouring countries. The regime and its supporters have continued to commit crimes against humanity on civilians, sexual crimes such as rape, and ethnic cleansing and torture, all carried out in unimaginable ways.

The effects of the crisis have spilled across borders and now threaten peace and security across the entire Middle East. The prospects for a peaceful solution have been diminished by the intransigence of the regime and its refusal to respect the will of its people and the opinion of the international community. This led to the withdrawal of the first United Nations-Arab League Joint Envoy and has threatened the mission of the second. Both declared that responsibility for the murder and violence lies primarily with the regime. Mr. Brahimi has said that he sees no role for the Syrian leadership in any transitional phase or in a future Syria.

Draft resolution A/67/L.63, before us today, is of great importance as it sends a message from the international community to the Syrian people that neither the blood of the martyrs nor the lives of the victims have been sacrificed in vain. The extremist persecutors will not go unnoticed in history.

To the Syrian regime, the draft resolution says that a Government based on the skulls of martyrs can only fail. Leadership that turns its weapons on its own unarmed people loses its legitimacy after losing its balance.

To those countries which claim that the draft resolution is unbalanced, we suggest they say as much to the families of the victims, the displaced and the hundreds of thousands of injured. Let them explain that the draft resolution should have struck a better balance between unarmed civilians and the tanks of the regime, or that it should have been more neutral between the voices of the protestors calling for freedom and the ricochet of bullets and deafening roar of artillery.

To the national opposition in Syria, the draft resolution says that the world supports their unity and legitimate struggle.

Some might call for further chances to be given to international efforts, but justice impels us to insist that such calls and efforts should be based on the will of the Syrian people and the international community. They should be a means to start a transitional political process leading to a new Syria that treats all of its citizens justly and seeks to establish a free, pluralistic society unifying all of the Syrian people, irrespective of their political, racial, religious or sectarian affiliation.

We listened to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, seeking to paint the issue as a conflict between Syria and Qatar or Syria and Saudi Arabia. The conflict is between the ruling regime in Syria and the people of Syria, and any attempt to divert attention from that fact will fail. The truth is abundantly clear. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic sought to make the issue look like a war against terrorism in which his Government is facing terrorists. Have all the 80,000 people killed in the violence in Syria been terrorists? If the Government had killed 80,000 terrorists, terrorism would have been ended the world over.

The Assembly heard a clever attempt to divert attention from the reality of the situation. That reality is that there is a people who wishes to live, but must endure under the oppression of the military force aimed against it. We did not hear a single word from our colleague about a ceasefire. We did not hear one single word about stopping the Syrian machine of death and destruction. We did not hear one single word about the Government's willingness to move towards a genuine transition in which the interests of the people would take precedence over any other.

A vote in favour of the draft resolution is a vote for history and for freedom. Voting otherwise, whatever the intention, will only serve to encourage oppression.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Over the past, 26 months we have witnessed a brutal conflict in Syria. The Assad regime, drawing upon an arsenal of heavy weapons, aircraft, ballistic missiles and, potentially, chemical weapons, has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians who for many months manifested their opposition purely through peaceful protest. The sustained violence has created a severe humanitarian crisis, with more than 1.4 million refugees and 4.25 million internally displaced persons within Syria.

The consequences of this crisis are growing more dire not only within Syria, but across the region. The generosity of the Governments and people of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and others, which are hosting large numbers of refugees, has been extraordinary. But those countries now face grave threats to their security and an overwhelming economic burden. It is clear that we need a Syrian-led peaceful political transition.

With this in mind, the United States and the Russian Federation announced on 7 May an initiative to bring the Syrian regime and the opposition together in an effort to try to advance a political solution under the framework agreed to in Geneva in June 2012. In our view, the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/67/L.63) is consistent with that latest initiative. Adopting the draft resolution will send a clear message that the political solution we all seek is the best way to end the suffering of the people of Syria. We support the draft resolution, have co-sponsored it, and urge Member States to vote in favor of it.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): We are here to take action on one of the biggest crises affecting, directly and indirectly, the peace and security of a vast portion of the Middle East and beyond. Draft resolution A/67/L.63, submitted by Qatar and other sponsors, is very timely as the international community is seeking a way to stop the violence and devise a plan to end the crisis. Since dynamics within the Security Council prevent action by the body with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should once again assume its responsibility to reflect the common sense of the international community.

Unfortunately, the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian crisis is worsening every day before our very eyes and in an exponential manner. Even while we are negotiating this broad consensus text,

targeted operations by the Syrian regime and the Shabbiha continue unabated. An immense array of cultural heritage continues to be destroyed by aerial bombardment and ballistic missiles.

We in New York are being informed only of a minimal portion of the grave situation, whereas the great majority of the civilian population in Syria must face this grim reality every single day in order to survive. Various top United Nations officials have articulated the gravity of the situation within and around Syria over and over again. Neighbouring countries, including Turkey, have called on the responsible bodies of the United Nations to action at every opportunity. Our most recent attempt was only nine days ago, but it was to no avail.

The problem is not with the limits of the United Nations; it is with our limited perception of the realities on the ground. How long will we let our fears prevent us from acting within the United Nations? Will inaction provide the solution to those fears? The draft resolution is yet another appeal to the conscience of the international community. It is reminder to all of us that unless we change our perception, more people are going to die — not because of the oppressors in Syria, but because we could not stop them.

There are a lot of details in the draft resolution, but there is one single fact. The vote that we will cast will be perceived by the oppressors either as a warning against or active support for the regime's brutal policies. Certainly, we should be well aware of this. One may choose to believe in the allegations uttered from the rostrum. We choose to believe what we see on the ground. We have continually stated that we stand by the people of Syria, and we will continue to do so. For all these reasons, Syria supports the draft resolution.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation regrets the fact that a very harmful and destructive draft resolution on the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/67/L.63) has been submitted for adoption by the General Assembly. The authors of the draft resolution have obviously not taken a political approach to resolving the crisis and have ignored the situation in and around the country. In fact, the draft resolution seeks to impose on the United Nations one-sided attempts to trample on the tenets of international law in order to effect regime change in the Syrian Arab Republic and focus on one-sided political aims.

The fact that the so-called National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces is highlighted in the text as the only legitimate representative of the Syrian people is an attempt to prepare the ground for conferring the authority to represent Syria in the international arena on a group created under active foreign patronage. This can only be seen as an encouragement to the opposition to pursue armed struggle to replace the regime. The March decisions of the League of Arab States and their positive reception are incitements to the opposition.

At the same time, the militarization of the situation throughout the region, and above all in Syria, has not really been taken into consideration. Against the backdrop of a very complex humanitarian situation, the draft resolution represents a dangerous attempt to call into question universal and generally accepted principles on the provision of humanitarian assistance, thereby undermining the sovereignty of Syria.

The document, like the two similar resolutions 67/183 and 67/262 adopted in 2012, is clearly a one-sided text. The full responsibility for the tragic developments is assigned to the Syrian Government, despite the obvious facts, including those recognized by authoritative international organizations, surrounding the illegal actions of the armed opposition, including terrorist acts. Moreover, the foreign military, logistical and financial support to the opposition is completely disregarded.

The deterioration in the human rights situation in Syria is blamed entirely on the Syrian Government. This interpretation of the situation is clearly contradicted by many examples of violations by the armed opposition, including those recorded in the report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Unfortunately, we note that the proposals of a number of constructively minded Member States to amend some of these dangerous defects in the draft resolution were disregarded. The authors did not seek broad consultations, as required by General Assembly practice.

The very serious internal armed conflict opposing the Government of Syria to armed groups, the so-called Free Syrian Army, and terrorists of all types, including Al-Qaida, is, according to the authors of the draft resolution, a war waged by the authorities against its own people, as though there were no terrorist acts that have led to hundreds of deaths, abductions and other

crimes conducted by Jabhat al-Nusra. In fact, what we are seeing in Syria is the birth of an international terrorist organization that is shaping a very powerful anti-Government force. Instead of efforts to put an immediate end to the bloodshed and to launch a dialogue on the future of the country, we are witnessing attempts to interfere in the conflict on the side of unlawful armed groups, to put maximum pressure on Damascus and disregard the fact that the majority of Syrian society still supports the Syrian Government, which is obviously very worried about the chaos that could follow.

The draft resolution once again raises the possibility of a wave of confrontation, introduces division between Member States, distracts us from the aim of ending the violence, and sets up obstacles to the work of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and his efforts to implement the provisions of the Geneva communiqué of June 2012 (A/66/865, annex), which remains the basis for any political solution to the Syrian crisis.

It is particularly irresponsible and counterproductive to promote such attempts at a time when the United States and Russia have achieved a very important agreement on identifying an international settlement through an international conference based on the provisions of the Geneva initiative. At a time when the international community needs a unified approach in dealing with the two sides and promoting dialogue, we do not need destructive initiatives here at the United Nations, but rather thorough work to try to create an atmosphere where the opposing sides in the Syrian conflict can, with the support of neutral and external actors, be encouraged to put an end to this fratricidal war. The conference should be of a representative character, involving the participants of last year's conference in Geneva and other regional actors, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. The creation of negotiating teams for the two sides is a priority in order to unite the opposition around the constructive basis for dialogue, rather than driving them into an ever-widening spiral of violence.

Bearing all this in mind, we call on the authors to withdraw this counterproductive and odious text if they will not heed the voice of reason. We encourage Member States to speak out against this document or, at the very least, to not support it.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the deteriorating situation in Syria has not only taken a heavy toll on people's lives and property, but has also affected the security and stability of the region. China is deeply concerned.

We oppose and condemn all violence against innocent civilians. The Syrian issue cannot be resolved by military means, which will only lead to further conflict bloodshed, exacerbate rampant terrorism and extremism, and escalate tension among religious factions and ethnic groups. Such an outcome is not in the common interest of the Syrian people, the countries of the region or the international community at large.

With regard to the Syrian issue, the international community must respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the principle of non-interference in internal affairs in particular, as well as international law and the basic norms governing international militias. The future and destiny of Syria can be decided only by the Syrian people. We oppose military intervention in Syria or the imposition of regime change.

China has always maintained that a political settlement is the only solution for the Syrian nation. Recently, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the international community as a whole have launched a new round of mediation efforts to promote a political settlement of the Syrian issue. China hopes that all parties will respond positively to and support those efforts. We urge the Syrian Government and the opposition to honour their obligations in earnest, immediately establish a ceasefire and cease the violence, launch a political dialogue and find a solution for political transition as soon as possible.

With regard to draft resolution A/67/L.63 on Syria, on which the General Assembly is about to vote, like many other Member States China has serious concerns with some parts and asks the sponsors to take the opinions of the various sides fully into account. To force a vote amid diverging views is neither in the interest of unity among Member States, nor in keeping with the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and the international community as a whole on the Syrian crisis.

China understands the concerns of Arab States and the League of Arab States to achieve an expedited settlement of the Syrian issue, and attaches great

importance to their key role in achieving a political settlement. China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community, including the Arab States, and to continue to play an active and instructive role in striving for a peaceful, just and proper settlement of the Syrian issue, safeguarding of the interests of Syria and other countries and peoples of the region, and maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to not deliver my prepared statement or to address the Assembly as a diplomat, reading out a text before voting on a draft resolution. In other words, I shall try to avoid taking a general position and instead look at the language before us. Let us try to work pragmatically and go beyond the caricatures that we have heard until now.

The first question we can ask ourselves is: Why have we come to the General Assembly to address the Syrian question? The answer is simple and tragic. First, a country is destroying itself. There are 80,000 dead. A region is at risk of being dragged into the crisis. Then, the Security Council action has been blocked by three vetos. We are told that the Security Council held a vote because it wanted to pressure one party. That is not true. The three draft resolutions that were vetoed included threats of sanctions — not even sanctions, but threats of sanctions — against the two parties if they did not agree to enter into negotiations. The Security Council's stalemate is the reason why the members of the League of Arab States and especially Qatar have submitted draft resolution A/67/L.63 to the Assembly. I would say that is a somewhat desperate move driven by the Security Council's inability to take action.

Secondly, we are told that the text is not balanced because it does not condemn terrorism and the violence on both sides. But that is false. When we consider the text, at the request of some authors many paragraphs condemn the violations committed by both sides. With regard to terrorism, we would have had to talk about State terrorism as well, because the Al-Assad regime uses cluster bombs and ballistic missiles against civilian neighbourhoods. As the Assembly knows very well, a Scud missile is not a precise weapon. It is used to kill, not to carry out an act of war. That, too, is terrorism.

The text before the Assembly is balanced. It condemns the violations committed by both sides. Human rights violations have been committed by both parties, but the reality is that the Syrian regime is the

most responsible for massive human rights violations because of its use of weapons, some of which are prohibited, against the civilian population.

The second argument that I have just heard is that the Assembly is being asked to recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as the only representative of the opposition. In that regard, I am surprised. I am a diplomat, not a politician, so I have a rather limited perspective. I believe in words. Operative paragraph 26 of draft resolution A/67/L.63 says that the General Assembly

“welcomes the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces ... as effective representative interlocutors needed for a political transition”.

Yes, we recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as an interlocutor for political transition.

There is a certain hypocrisy in telling us, on the one hand, that the opposition is divided and unable to negotiate. We are working to create an organization that will be an umbrella bringing together all sectors of the opposition so that it can negotiate for a political transition. Yet now we are told that this is not acceptable; that it is dangerous. But who is it dangerous for? It is certainly not dangerous for a political solution. As the Permanent Representative of the United States said, since the United States was able to reach an agreement with the Russian Federation, this text, far from opposing a political solution, actually encourages it, because it brings the international community's support to the creation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces — to the creation of an interlocutor that we need.

Why do we need an interlocutor? Because for 50 years the Al-Assad regime has killed, tortured and imprisoned all members of the opposition. Indeed, today, the opposition is fragmented and powerless. We must help the members of the opposition to work together in order to negotiate in order to be able to go to Geneva. They will go to the meeting in Geneva if it is held, and we hope with all our hearts that it shall.

I will not hold the Assembly up any longer. I would simply ask members to look at the text honestly, to look at the words that are on the page, because, in contrast to what has been said, the representative of Qatar has held negotiations with all the regional groups and has tried to

respond to questions that arose. The text is a moderate text that will in fact help the Syrian National Coalition and the Syrian Opposition Forces to negotiate. That is why France asks the Assembly to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): It has been more than two years since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, and there is very little hope for a peaceful and sustainable solution. As the Syrian crisis continues unabated, civilians are paying a heavy price as they are killed, maimed and displaced on a daily basis. The conflict has gone on for far too long under our watch. Now is the time to make our collective effort to bring peace to Syria.

South Africa deplores the continuing violence and tremendous loss of life in Syria, which is barrelling out of control and is quickly being compounded by a lack of consensus on the part of the international community on how best to resolve the protracted crisis.

We are alarmed by the latest developments on the ground, in particular the alleged use of chemical weapons and escalating terrorism and sectarianism. The use of heavy weapons by both sides in civilian areas should be condemned in the strongest possible terms. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to investigate the allegations of use of chemical weapons and hope that all the parties involved will cooperate accordingly. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian relief organizations in assisting the civilian population in difficult times. We call on all sides of the Syrian conflict to immediately stop the violence and focus on launching peaceful negotiations.

It is a tragedy that the Security Council, a body charged with the task of maintaining international peace and security, has to date not been able to agree on a solution to the protracted crisis. The Council has clearly abdicated its responsibilities in the face of human calamity. Members of the Security Council seem to have given priority to their own national interests at the expense of the Syrian people. In that regard, we implore the Security Council to honour its responsibilities and work towards the peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis which, if left unresolved for a long time, could plunge the whole region into political and economic chaos.

We re-emphasize that a military solution to the Syrian crisis is not possible. South Africa reiterates its

strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. We are disappointed that the Syrian parties have not been able to begin an inclusive dialogue that would lead to a peaceful transition and pave the way to a sustainable peace. The only way to achieve a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution that reflects the will of the people of Syria is through the implementation of the final communiqué issued by the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), which has been widely endorsed by the international community, including the Security Council.

Turning to the substance of draft resolution A/67/L.63 before us today, South Africa would like to express its disappointment that the general orientation of the text is unacceptable and that its contents have the potential to exacerbate rather than mitigate the situation. We believe that the text is not balanced, as it clearly supports one side, and that it has the dangerous potential to embolden the opposition and simultaneously force President Assad to retreat to an uncompromising position.

South Africa reiterates that all parties have obligations to cease the violence and comply with the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy and the Action Group final communiqué, which the draft resolution does not reflect accurately. The draft resolution fails to make a clear call for the cessation of the militarization of the conflict. In fact, the monies to be spent to arm the parties could be put to good use by providing much needed humanitarian assistance.

It is interesting that the draft resolution seeks to contradict the very principles upon which the Organization was established, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. It would be dangerous for us to bend the rules for the purpose of fulfilling narrow interests harboured by a few among us. Whereas we are aware of the need to address the Syrian crisis with the utmost urgency, we also believe that there is a need to respect the principles that are the basis for relations among nations. In that regard, we refer to the negligence of the sponsors of the draft resolution, who want to force us to recognize a particular leadership and denounce the present one. That is not desirable and could set a dangerous precedent.

Furthermore, the draft resolution advocates for regime change on behalf of peoples other than the Syrians themselves, despite the fact that we incessantly

caution against such behaviour. Some Member States still believe that they can dictate the leadership of other peoples' countries from outside. We have seen that happen previously and its results have been ruinous. Let us therefore refrain from that improper act.

It is somewhat peculiar that the draft resolution is being rushed to a vote despite the opening of a political window of opportunity as a result of the recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to host an international conference to address the Syrian crisis. Our view is that we should give the diplomatic process an opportunity to bring the parties to the negotiating table and not prejudge its outcome. We would also like to put on the record our disappointment with the sponsors of the draft resolution for ignoring the request of the Group of African States to have today's vote deferred to a later date for the purposes of giving the diplomatic initiative proposed by the Russian Federation and the United States a chance of success.

On the process, we are of the view that the draft resolution was not subject to the normal multilateral process to which all draft resolutions and other multilateral outcomes are subject. We believe that the process was neither transparent nor inclusive. In addition, while we were not given enough time and opportunity to comment and provide input on the draft resolution, our general concerns — including those formally presented through the trilateral mechanism sponsored by India, Brazil and South Africa — were not taken into account.

It is for the foregoing reasons that South Africa will not support the draft resolution to be voted on today. As we vote in that manner, we have the interests of the Syrian people at heart and will continue to work with other States Members of the United Nations and the international community at large to find a genuine, lasting solution to the crisis in Syria.

Mr. Khazae (Islamic Republic of Iran): The current crisis in Syria is acquiring new dimensions in the wake of growing sectarian violence, increasing extremism and criminal and illegal acts on the part of terrorist and extremist groups there. We have also witnessed a new round of air strikes by the Israeli regime that violate Syria's territorial integrity. There is growing concern that the operations of armed groups and the spillover of such acts into other areas in the region will pose a further threat and risk to regional

security and stability. That makes our responsibility for supporting a Syrian-led political dialogue, aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis and ending the violence inside Syria, ever more urgent.

In the view of my delegation, draft resolution A/67/L.63 contradicts all the efforts currently being pursued internationally to reach a peaceful solution. Its terms and spirit also contradict the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We cannot and do not agree with it for the following reasons:

First, it is ironic that the draft resolution does not deal in any way with the recent Israeli attacks on Syria. The Israeli air strikes of 3 and 5 May, along with previous attacks, are all blatant acts of aggression and a clear and serious violation of the standards and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including paragraph 4 of Article 2, concerning the prohibition of the use of force against any Member State. Nothing can justify the use of force or acts of aggression against a sovereign State, and aggressors must be held accountable for any consequences arising from such reprehensible and illegitimate acts, which endanger regional and international peace and security.

Secondly, we believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in the quest for a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis. In our view, however, the draft resolution's approach vis-à-vis Syria is somewhat confrontational and certainly does not help to bring the parties to a dialogue that seeks to resolve the crisis peacefully and in a way that benefits the Syrian people as a whole. We need to help to facilitate the Syrian political groups' engagement with Syria's Government in a Syrian-led political process.

Thirdly, despite some changes, the main elements of the final draft of the resolution still support decisions taken outside the United Nations and include frameworks and mechanisms that do not correspond to the peaceful initiatives that the Organization should pursue under agreed processes, such as through the Geneva Action Group on Syria and the regional framework we are pursuing with some countries in the region aimed at achieving the prescribed peaceful goals. The draft resolution contains language that is at odds with the comprehensive political process supported by regional and international initiatives and the mandate of the United Nations-Arab League Joint Special Representative for Syria, and that can be

interpreted as being in line with certain attempts to alter or to impose illegitimate demands on the mandate of the Special Envoy. That would only undermine the efforts of the Joint Special Representative and other major international and regional initiatives seeking a complete cessation of the violence in Syria. We sincerely hope that Mr. Brahimi will stay resolute in his arduous mission.

Fourthly, the acknowledgement referred to in the draft resolution impinges on the Charter's provisions regarding respect for the sovereignty and integrity of Member States. It also creates a dangerous precedent that violates the most elementary principles of international law. My delegation cannot welcome or endorse decisions that go against the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in letter or spirit. The United Nations should remain an organization of principle, governed by the rule of law and free from the influence of decisions taken elsewhere.

Fifthly, regarding the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a prominent recent victim of such weapons, heartily condemns their use. It is now becoming clearer that certain elements of Syrian armed opposition groups have used chemical weapons, resulting in the death or injury of a number of innocent civilians in Syria, as testified to by Ms. Carla Del Ponte, a member of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Sixthly, the draft resolution does not explicitly recognize the armed groups' responsibility for resorting to acts of atrocity and violence. We believe it is important that the General Assembly's decisions be objective and balanced. Seventhly, the draft resolution violates the authority and jurisdiction of the General Assembly, particularly where it makes implicit reference to the involvement of the International Criminal Court in Rome.

Finally, it is important that any proposal before this Assembly be based on broad consultations with the wider membership and have its consent. It seems that the drafters have not heeded the substantive proposals and amendments proposed by representatives of other regional groups.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that at this stage, what is important is preventing any slowdown in international efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful means, including the upcoming

second Geneva conference on this issue, which we also support. The States Members of the United Nations should, with the greatest possible sense of responsibility, work hand in hand to find a balanced formula for resolving the conflict. After all, what our Organization is about, and should remain dedicated to, is finding diplomatic solutions to political crises, including the current situation in Syria.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am going to follow the example set by the representative of France and, rather than reading a speech, attempt to make a contribution to this crucially important debate.

For more than two years now, humankind has born witness to and been assaulted to its core by a war that has cost 80,000 lives to date. It takes less than one second to say "80,000", but if we think about it and pause for a moment to consider what it means — each one of those people who has lost his or her life in this armed conflict — then, of course, we realize the magnitude of the atrocious situation afflicting the Syrian Arab Republic.

We have heard reports of the use of chemical weapons and heavy weapons. The horrors of this armed conflict have been conveyed through numerous media. Yesterday, a video emerged showing a so-called rebel leader tearing out the heart of a Syrian soldier and calling for the hearts of his enemies to be eaten.

I come from a relatively small country, which is not seeking any mining or petroleum contracts or cheap labour anywhere. We are simply profoundly concerned by the pain being felt at this time by the Syrian people.

Bolivia opposes draft resolution A/67/L.63, first for a number of issues regarding procedure. As certain previous speakers have stated, the draft resolution was not debated transparently, nor were broad consultations held. The consultations on the draft resolution were selective and, as the representative of South Africa pointed out, did not take account of the concerns of all regions of our planet.

Moreover, the manner in which the draft resolution has come to be debated here in the General Assembly calls our attention to the fact that it has been proposed at the very moment when Russia and the United States are proposing a peace conference and when there is a chance for a negotiated political solution to the conflict. In this regard, I believe that it is important to point out

that, for Bolivia, the draft resolution before does not seek to reduce or stop the escalation of violence. It does not seek to end the war in Syria; on the contrary, it seeks put out the conflagration by throwing more fuel on the fire. Of course, those who make a living from war will welcome the draft resolution's adoption.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are also struck by the fact that the draft resolution, if adopted, will obstruct the peace efforts not only of the countries mentioned but also of Joint Special Representative Brahimi. Moreover, we believe that it does not reflect reality, at least based on the Spanish version of the draft resolution we received. It is an unbalanced draft resolution. It is a biased draft resolution. It is a reductive draft resolution when it comes to the reality in Syria. We call it unbalanced because, upon reading it — again, at least the Spanish version — we note that the so-called coalition of forces opposed to the current Government of Syria apparently bear no responsibility for the atrocities being committed day after day in that country. The draft refers only to atrocities in general, either remaining neutral with regard to the parties or attributing them directly to the Government of Syria, but not in an explicit or open way. As we know, responsibility also lies with those groups for which the status of international legitimacy is being sought here today.

The intentions of the draft resolution are all too evident. It is part of a geopolitical strategy seeking to dominate the region and control its natural resources. It is part of the geopolitics of war. Whether there are terrorists among the ranks of the rebels or whether they sew the seeds of new threats and wars, the economies sustained by the war industry will emerge as winners, not victims.

Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would violate the principles on which the United Nations system was built. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of interference over sovereignty. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of militarism over politics. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of war and the escalation of violence over the possibility of building the peace that is so badly needed in Syria.

Finally, we believe that the draft resolution goes beyond its immediate aims and seeks to overthrow a Government. It is clearly an attempt to exploit the United Nations system, to undermine its moral authority and to prevent it from fulfilling its mission of preventing conflicts in that part of the world.

Mr. Moreno Zapata (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our Bolivarian Government is profoundly concerned by the introduction of a draft resolution today that would exacerbate the situation in Syria. Not only would it exacerbate the situation in Syria, but it would also have extremely serious consequences for the region and international security — which the United Nations is mandated to protect — especially given the extraordinary alternative at our disposal in the “Geneva II” initiative, promoted by the Russian Federation and the United States.

In that regard, the United Nations should contribute to the pursuit of a swift peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, and to that end should support dialogue between the Syrian Government and political opposition groups that distance themselves from terrorism. Syrian must find peace and reconciliation for themselves.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will vote against draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled “The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic”, because we view it as biased, politicized and unbalanced. It advocates war over peace, undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, attributes responsibility for the climate of violence and instability in Syria to its Government and President, ignores the calls for political dialogue made by the Syrian Government, blocks the mediation efforts of the Joint Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and ignores the terrorist acts carried out by armed opposition groups.

The draft resolution proposes that the United Nations recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. That potential recognition, as set out in the draft resolution, would not contribute to the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict. On the contrary, it would encourage a radicalization of the already extreme positions of the armed groups that make up the Syrian opposition. It would also entail ignoring a legitimate Government and set a terrible precedent for international law.

It is therefore unacceptable that international recognition be given to political groups reported as having carried out terrorist acts that have caused the deaths of many innocent civilians. Giving diplomatic recognition to the violent factions that make up the opposition would be an ill-advised decision that would open the door to any future opposition group in any sovereign country of the world seeking legitimacy and recognition before this organ of the United Nations. The draft resolution seeks to dispute the legitimacy of the Syrian Government and its representation before the United Nations, setting a precedent that would encourage disrespect for the principles that guide international relations and peaceful coexistence among sovereign nations.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that the legitimate representative of the Syrian people is the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad, and that the only possible transition is one that the Syrian people themselves decide upon, in an atmosphere of peace and inclusive political dialogue and without foreign intervention.

If it were to adopt the draft resolution, the General Assembly would be justifying foreign sponsorship of violence and terrorism. It would not contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion and protection of human rights or the observance of international humanitarian law. The draft resolution seeks to legitimize the rights of certain States to provide the Syrian opposition with all means necessary, including military means, to overthrow the Government. It would thereby endorse the illegal supply of arms to and financing of terrorist groups that undermine the peace and stability of a sovereign State.

In his most recent report, Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi stated that terrorists from over 29 countries have infiltrated Syria to overthrow the Government of Bashar Al-Assad. Of those, over 800 came from European countries. We must ask ourselves, is that the opposition that is seeking legitimacy and recognition?

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its support for the peace negotiations led by the Joint Special Representative for Syria. We encourage him to continue his efforts in the search for peace and to not give in to the pressure being exerted by neocolonial Powers. We believe that adopting this draft resolution would be to sabotage the efforts of the Special Representative.

Those promoting armed violence have discarded one peace proposal after another in order to promote confrontation and war. The deterioration of the conflict in Syria, including the threat of foreign military intervention, threatens the peace and stability of the region.

The attack by Israeli warplanes against the Syrian Arab Republic on 5 May was a serious violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Venezuela supports the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement, which calls on the Security Council to take the measures necessary to hold Israel accountable for its acts of aggression and prevent a large-scale regional war that would threaten regional and international peace and security.

All that is done to promote peace and political understanding among the Syrians must be encouraged. The meeting that is soon to be held in Geneva between the Governments of the Russian Federation and the United States will be a positive step towards achieving peace and stability in that Arab country. It is important to reiterate that the draft resolution introduced here today is incompatible with the Geneva initiative, which proposed a peaceful and inclusive solution. Venezuela supports all efforts to find a peaceful and lasting political solution to the conflict. We reiterate that, in order to achieve peace in Syria, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of that country must be respected.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): For over two years now, the issue of Syria has remained on the agenda of the international community. For over two years now, the international community's efforts to find a workable solution to the crisis have remained paralysed, and for over two years now, the number of innocent victims who have lost their lives has been increasing and is now in the tens of thousands.

The violence in Syria must stop. The Syrian people have suffered enough. All parties concerned, both inside and outside Syria, should refrain from taking any action that would not only prolong the conflict but also contribute to further violence and killings in Syria. It is important to recognize that there is no military solution to the conflict. Only a Syrian-led political transition can end the crisis.

Malaysia reiterates its full support for Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, for his selfless

determination to resume efforts to resolve any differences through negotiation, and we would continue to call and urge all parties involved in the conflict to support him in finding an amicable, peaceful and lasting political solution to the crisis. Malaysia encourages all parties to engage in moderation, good faith, compromise, understanding, rejection of extremism and peaceful dialogue in order to resolve this senseless conflict.

We urge the international community — in particular the United Nations, the League of Arab States, influential nations and regional players — to seek ways and means to provide protection to the Syrian civilian population, to express grave concern over the issue of chemical weapons, and to extend humanitarian assistance to Syrian civilians, who are the real victims in this unfortunate bloodshed.

While Malaysia maintains its policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another country and respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, we are nonetheless deeply concerned at the deterioration of the security situation in the country, which will have grave consequences for the stability and the security of the region. We feel that a peaceful political solution is still viable and the only option for resolving the crisis.

Malaysia has therefore decided to support draft resolution A/67/L.63 on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as we have consistently supported previous relevant resolutions on Syria. This is because of our strong belief in negotiating in good faith and in the multilateral system and its ability to find an amicable and peaceful solution. As before, Malaysia hopes that the implementation of the draft resolution before the General Assembly today will ensure that concrete and viable steps, including those agreed to in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (A/66/865, annex), towards a transitional governing body formed by mutual consent and an inclusive national dialogue would be respected by all parties involved in the conflict. Malaysia also welcomes the recent announcement of Russia and the United States of the convening of an international conference on Syria with the aim of finding a political solution to the conflict.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): Since 2011, the people of Syria have been trapped in a conflict that has reportedly so far claimed over 80,000 lives and has injured and displaced tens of thousands.

The Assembly is on record as having called on all parties to cease violence and spare the civilian population from the scourge of protracted violence. Indeed, all of us welcomed the appointment of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose tenure was short-lived, due to complications inherent in the conflict. Despite his premature departure, we welcomed and expressed high hopes for the road map he proposed. We also welcomed the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as Joint Special Envoy for Syria. His continued engagement with the parties in this conflict brought us hope and reinforced our strong belief that the Syrian conflict can be resolved only through genuine dialogue among the warring parties.

Regrettably, we have continued to witness rising armed opposition and undiminished armed response from the protagonists. This has meant the continued suffering of the civilian population and the broadening of the conflict. We are already witnessing the impact of the conflict in the neighbouring countries, the exodus of refugees, the flow of arms and, indeed, terrorist attacks. This is a real threat to international peace and security.

It is time to renew our faith in the Security Council and to call upon it to take the necessary measures for the sake of peace in Syria. Failure to discharge that responsibility will lead only to more disaster of unimagined proportions. We all stand to lose. The United Republic of Tanzania strongly believes that the Security Council should put aside its differences and agree on an appropriate course of action, prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations, to bring this conflict to an end. The Syrians have shed enough blood. They need actions from the Council and not words.

Efforts under the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), issued at its meeting in Geneva, which were recently reinvigorated in Moscow, deserve a chance and support. It is in the best interests of all Syrians and the friends of the Syrian people to support a peaceful and negotiated solution to resolve this deadly conflict. That is why we are in support of the call of the Group of African States to defer action on draft resolution A/67/L.63.

We also want to make it clear that the United Republic of Tanzania wants to see peace in Syria. We want to see the cessation of fighting and the suffering of the Syrian people. However, we do not see how the

draft resolution, in its current composition, contributes towards that end. It is in that regard that the United Republic of Tanzania will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution before the Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 33. We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.63.

I give the floor to representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", I wish to put on the record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In operative paragraphs 21 and 31 of draft resolution A/67/L.63, the General Assembly would request the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to submit a written report to the General Assembly, within 90 days, on the very dire situation of internally displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic in terms of safety and their basic rights and livelihood, and to provide recommendations with a view to meeting assistance and protection needs and strengthening the effectiveness of the international response to displacement; and request the Secretary-General to report within 30 days on the implementation of the present resolution.

It is anticipated that the request contained in operative paragraphs 21 and 31 for documentation would constitute additions to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two documents to be issued in all six languages. That would entail additional requirements of \$113,200 for documentation services in 2013. In addition, it is estimated that the amount of \$36,000 would be required under section 24, "Human rights", to provide for consultancy at the P-3 level for three months to assist in the preparation of the report, researching and analysing information from a variety of sources on the situation of internally displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

No provision has been included under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 for the aforementioned activity, and as such an additional allocation of funds would be required. Accordingly,

should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/67/L.63, additional requirements of \$149,200 would arise, including \$113,200 under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management", and \$36,000 under section 24, "Human rights", of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. However, every possible effort would be made to absorb the additional requirements of \$149,200 within the existing resources under sections 2 and 24, and report thereon in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2012-2013.

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

Mr. Ri Tong II (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has been aggravated by the rise of terrorism and destruction in the country. In the midst of armed conflict, people are dying. As a whole, the increasingly dangerous situation has negative implications for the regional peace and security of the Middle East.

On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like to clarify my country's position with regard to the situation in Syria.

First, the situation in Syria should be settled on the basis of the principle of respect for sovereignty. Respect for sovereignty is the key to sound international relations and one of the fundamental elements set forth in the United Nations, every sovereign State should be respected in terms of its sovereignty. Syria is no exception in that regard.

The Syrian Government is a legitimate, democratically elected Government. In that regard, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to draw particular attention to the issue of the recent military attack by Israel. The military attack was conducted, as everyone knows, with the encouragement and support of a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States. That is a flagrant violation and infringement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It is also a rampant violation of international law.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, condemning that military

act and asking the Security Council to take immediate action. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea firmly believes that the Security Council's failure to address such rampant violations of international law and acts of aggression can only tarnish its image and have negative repercussions on the confidence the world has in the Council, whose mandate and mission are international peace and security.

Secondly, the situation in Syria should be settled without violating the principle of non-interference. The issue of Syria is one that belongs totally and ultimately to Syria. It is an issue that is to be settled by the people of Syria themselves, who know what is in their best interests. Interference by external actors will only aggravate the situation and has no chance of settling the conflict peacefully. The armed conflict is far more serious than when the problem began. Having dragged on for two years, it is now a full-fledged armed conflict as the result of external interference by outside actors meddling in Syria's internal affairs.

Thirdly, the situation should be settled by political means. When we speak of political means, we mean dialogue and the diplomatic process. There should be inclusive political dialogue led by the Syrian people. Regime change is not a solution. It will only aggravate the problem and increase the conflict without any hope of settling the issue.

Consistent with the aforementioned principles, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the instructions we have received, the delegation of Uruguay will abstain in the imminent voting on draft resolution A/67/L.63. Our position in no way affects the fact that Uruguay is profoundly worried about the humanitarian crisis prevailing in Syria. We think that it is important for the General Assembly — given the paralysis of the Security Council, which holds the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — to take a clear and strongly united position with regard to the humanitarian tragedy that we are witnessing in order to bring the crisis to an end.

Our abstention is simply an expression of caution with regard to certain aspects of the draft resolution that are not linked to humanitarian aspects and do not fully address the concerns expressed by the

Government of my country with regard to certain sensitive aspects included in the section of the draft text on the political transition, which goes beyond the consensus and principles applicable to the concept of recognition of Governments, endorsements decided by regional organizations of which we are not a member, and the possible effects of such considerations in the search for an inclusive political solution to the crisis.

Two years of war have gone by — two years of unbearable suffering for the Syrian people. The latest figures cite 94,000 deaths, of which 50,000 would be of civilians. More than 1 million refugees and 4 million displaced persons are figures that speak eloquently of the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, we are too accustomed to reading and hearing figures and numbers. That is why I believe that we need to strive to put human faces on the tragedy and to think of the thousands of women who have been raped, children who have been murdered and victims who have been tortured — human beings who have been brutalized and dehumanized.

In the meantime, the international community continues to fail to respond. The Security Council remains silent, and we in the General Assembly have not managed to reach a broad consensus on the key issue of the crisis, namely, the humanitarian tragedy. Furthermore, allow me to say that we continue to believe that action by international criminal jurisdictions is essential to putting an end to impunity and to contributing to put a stop to the horrors taking place before our very eyes.

That was why Uruguay, along with 50 other States, recently signed a note asking the Security Council to forward the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court, so that those who have committed these crimes, regardless of whether they belonged to the Government or the opposition forces, can be prosecuted.

In spite of the general acceptance of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and the commitment undertaken by our Heads of State and Government in 2005 concerning our responsibility to protect civilian populations against war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing or genocide, it is unfortunately very likely that Syria will be remembered in future as the worst humanitarian disaster of the early twenty-first century. Srebrenica, Sarajevo and Rwanda resonate in our memory with shameful and

shocking immediacy, and this disaster must be stopped before loathing and shame overwhelm us.

This is not about political considerations concerning factions or groups; this is about the Syrian people, who must be able to freely determine their future as a sovereign people. We are talking about protecting people and their lives from aggressors, regardless of the side they find themselves on. We respect the principles of non-intervention and of nations' right to self-determination, but we also believe that there is an ethical and legal duty to uphold basic human rights.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua wishes to explain why it plans to vote against draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". The provisions of the draft resolution contradict the agenda item under which it is submitted, "Prevention of armed conflict". The text before us promotes war and militarization. It is unbalanced and completely unobjective. It is an initiative that is not constructive in any way, because its fundamental goal is neither to promote an immediate end to the violence nor to seek a negotiated solution to the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political dialogue. The draft resolution not only does not contribute to peace, but continues to fuel war.

Not only is the draft resolution counterproductive; its introduction at this time ignores the discussion and initiatives undertaken by Russia and the United States on 7 May in Moscow with the aim of organizing a second conference based on the agreements reached in Geneva in 2012, in which all the parties involved in the conflict would participate, and which would lay the groundwork for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis. It is in that context that Nicaragua believes that supporting today's draft resolution would be a severe blow to the initiatives that peace-loving countries strongly support.

Another aspect to which we would like to draw the Assembly's attention is the lack of transparency, inclusivity, cooperation and participation in the process of drafting and submitting the draft resolution. The intentions and motives behind it have been clear from the start. It would lead us to endorse policies of aggression that would arm, organize and finance armed groups, many of whose names are on the Security Council's list of terrorists responsible for violence in North Africa and the Middle East, and Syria in particular. It would condemn us to reject any peaceful solution to this

conflict, a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

The aim behind the draft resolution is to impose regime change favouring foreign interests and grant non-existent legitimacy to armed terrorist groups that not only do not represent the Syrian people but cannot even agree among themselves on their self-proclaimed legitimacy. We warn the Assembly of the risk of establishing a very dangerous precedent that, while used today against the legitimate Government of Syria, tomorrow could be used against any legitimate Government represented here.

The draft resolution is a flagrant violation of the Charter, the principles of State sovereignty, non-interference and non-intervention by foreign Powers in the internal affairs of another State, and territorial integrity. The purpose of the United Nations is to strive for international peace and security; its priorities should be dialogue, reconciliation, mediation and negotiation rather than violence and the promotion of an arms race or a war. The draft resolution does not contribute to achieving the goals of our Organization or creating an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. It also complicates the good offices of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Brahimi.

Nicaragua has always proclaimed its commitment to peace, love of life, rejection of violence and war, and unshakeable determination to defend the sovereignty and solidarity of peoples against colonial occupation and imperialism. Those principles have guided us throughout the process of our people's Sandinista revolution. We have always lamented the loss of innocent life in any part of the world and condemned violence in all its forms and manifestations.

Rather than discuss a draft resolution that incites violence and an arms race, what the international community should do is encourage efforts to immediately end the flow of arms to terrorist groups, establish a basis for negotiations, bring all parties to the conflict to the negotiating table, and call on all States with an interest in the region to demonstrate political will and commit to a peaceful solution that will enable Syrians to restore security and determine their own future through a political process that they lead themselves.

In conclusion, we wish to go on record once again as firmly rejecting any interference in the internal affairs

of States. We cannot allow another negative precedent to be set for nations around the world; we must reject policies of military intervention, aggression, regime change and war. We have before us a draft resolution that, if adopted, would have woeful consequences for the peoples of the world. We urge members not to allow the General Assembly to be used for purposes at odds with those for which it was created. Let us give peace a chance and reject war.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I am taking the floor to give a brief explanation of the position of Indonesia on draft resolution A/67/L.63. The fundamental position of Indonesia with regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as conveyed in various forums, has remained the same. I would like to emphasize the following pertinent points.

First, Indonesia remains deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict in Syria and its impact on the Syrian people. The destruction and death of thousands require us to urge all parties to immediately cease their acts of violence and hostilities. Secondly, it is also paramount that all parties to the conflict exhibit the greatest respect for international human rights and humanitarian law and ensure that unfettered and safe humanitarian access to those in need be granted. Thirdly, it is imperative that all parties to the conflict pursue its peaceful resolution through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process.

With regard to the draft resolution, Indonesia welcomes its emphasis on the ending of violence and the importance of unhindered humanitarian access. However, its implied recognition of who constitutes the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people would not be consistent with Indonesia's national practice, which accords recognition only to States and not to Governments. Furthermore, that may be perceived as being inconsistent with the well-established principles of international relations regarding the sovereign right of the people of the country concerned to determine their legitimate representatives.

In conclusion, it is more critical than ever that the international community, represented by the Security Council and the General Assembly, stand united in bringing an immediate end to the violence in Syria, promote humanitarian assistance and launch a Syrian-led political process. For those reasons, Indonesia will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to explain Ecuador's vote on draft resolution A/67/L.63, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since the crisis began, Ecuador has followed with deep concern the ongoing deterioration of the human rights situation in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. We have on several occasions expressed our consternation at the grave violations of human rights. We have condemned them and insisted that those acts must not go unpunished, but that those who have carried out acts of violence, as well as those who have provided weapons and ammunition to the various actors, including organized terrorist groups, must be held to account.

Today, my delegation reiterates its firm condemnation of any violation of human rights by whomsoever committed. We express our solidarity with the Syrian people, and in particular with the victims of the widespread violence and their families. We regret, however, that, with the draft resolution before us for adoption today, we are permitting the continuation of a practice that, over the past two years, has, in different guises, served only to close off the path of dialogue and, in all likelihood, to exacerbate the critical humanitarian situation afflicting our brothers and sisters in Syria.

Ecuador is profoundly concerned by the language of the draft resolution, which is at odds with the Charter of the United Nations. It does not take all of the parties responsible for the crisis sufficiently into account. It will polarize the conflict and will not contribute to a solution involving all parties in Syria and leading to the swift restoration of peace, in the utmost respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

We are further surprised, and we say so without subterfuge, by the double standards by which the text completely ignores terrorist acts that, far from promoting peace, have served only to fuel further war, bloodshed, death and destruction for the Syrian people. Moreover, it goes against the fundamental purpose for which the United Nations was established — the tireless pursuit of peace.

The draft resolution before us today is at odds with Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex). Worse still, it ignores and upends the agreement of

7 May between Russia and the United States, which is a matter of public record.

While Ecuador highly values its friendship with many Arab countries, we are of the view that the decisions of the League of Arab States cannot be taken as universal, because the majority of States Members of the United Nations are not members of the Arab League.

My delegation believes that matters relating to the human rights situation in specific countries must be considered by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and in particular through the universal periodic review mechanism, which was created for that purpose. Bringing such a draft resolution before the General Assembly in New York only politicizes the issue, skews it and submits it to the logic of the most powerful. It is all the more paradoxical that the draft resolution, which will continue to exacerbate the situation in Syria without truly helping the victims of armed conflict in that country, was submitted under agenda item 33, "Prevention of armed conflict".

For all of these reasons, and in order to avoid a situation whereby the General Assembly is used to legitimize international coups d'états — given the experience of only a decade ago, which we cannot and must not forget — my country poses the question: "Who is next on the list"? For all of this, Ecuador will vote against the draft resolution.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Some time ago, at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the Head of State of Argentina, speaking at the South American-Arab Summit in Peru, supported the same position that Argentina will again support today in the General Assembly. At that meeting in 2012, our Head of State stated that we were in favour of a peaceful solution in Syria that was politically negotiated without foreign intervention.

We call for a peaceful solution to all conflicts, strict multilateralism in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and conflict resolution through negotiations, because today the main threat to peace is not a nuclear holocaust but rather local conflicts that spill over into their respective regions and then drag the whole world along with them, thanks to the lucrative arms industry in developed countries. In addition, we cannot ignore the existence of hegemony. When we demand equality and multilateralism — and thus the respect for the Charter that we have all sworn

to uphold — we cannot ignore the greater share of responsibility that is incumbent upon certain countries in resolving and sometimes even in triggering conflicts.

Bearing that in mind, and on the basis of values that we have always championed and continue to champion, such as peace and full respect for human rights in all countries, Argentina, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the General Assembly, reiterates the same conviction. Peace is not merely a naive and formal statement of what our desires, but rather a value that must be built on the basis of truth, justice and equality.

There will be no peace in Syria until the whole truth of the situation is told. Thus, the General Assembly, the Security Council and other organs must act in accordance with a single standard to build the peace, equality and truth that we deserve and to contribute to finding an effective, lasting and coherent political solution for Syria.

In the light of the chilling humanitarian situation, the massive violations of the human rights of the Syrian people, and the serious ramifications of the conflict for the entire region, draft resolution A/67/L.63 before the Assembly today contains a series of elements that my country agrees with, in particular those contained in the section on international humanitarian law and human rights. Over the past few weeks, my delegation has made a number of comments that have consistently reflected our profound conviction that the only possible solution to the Syrian crisis is through an inclusive political dialogue, without preconditions, involving all sectors of Syrian society and on the basis of the road map proposed by the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (A/66/865, annex).

We appreciate the attempts of the authors of the draft resolution to include some of these considerations in the text. Unfortunately, other considerations of particular importance were not taken into account. I will briefly cite a few.

First, the draft resolution continues to call the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. While Argentina believes that the emergence and consolidation of a democratic opposition is essential in order to have a reliable partner in and for Syrian society, in order to begin the process of political dialogue as provided for and requested in the Geneva communiqué, it is up to the Syrian people,

through free and fair elections, and not the General Assembly, to determine the democratic legitimacy of its representatives.

Secondly, the implications of a joint reading of paragraphs 26 and 30 continue to present problems for us. In addition to recognizing the opposition coalition as the legitimate representative of Syria, the tasks entrusted to the Secretary-General appear to include the initiation of a transition plan, without mention of the fact that such a plan should be the result of an agreement achieved through a transparent and inclusive political process.

Thirdly, in spite of our many requests, the draft resolution does not include a clear statement that there is no military solution to the crisis or a clear appeal to avoid additional militarization of the conflict. In January, Argentina launched an appeal to the Security Council that we would like to reiterate today. Once again, we call on all States providing weapons and related material to the parties to the conflict in Syria to end to that practice immediately. For ethical reasons and based on our political conviction, we reject any intention and all activities carried out either by the Government or by the opposition and rebel groups that foster or seek to foster military means of solving the crisis.

To conclude, in addition to the points I have just mentioned, we would also like to mention that, in the past few days, a new door has opened towards reaching a negotiated agreement. The understanding reached by the United States and Russia to convene an international conference offers a concrete opportunity for diplomacy and dialogue rather than armed force. We believe that the draft resolution before us has elements that could be interpreted as contrary to that initiative at a time when the energy of the international community should be focused on sending a message of unity and support to these efforts.

Argentina has consistently voted in favour of resolutions pertaining to Syria in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We have done so in the conviction that such resolutions send a clear message that violence should cease and have brought us closer to a peaceful solution. We have already fallen too far behind on Syria. Let us not fall further behind with our little machinations, our overconfidence, our indifference and our scepticism. There is no time to lose. History can always take one of two opposite

paths — towards freedom or oppression, towards peace or violence. On the basis all of the comments that have been made and the points that we agree on as well as our substantial differences, Argentina will abstain in the voting today.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63. We will do so because it does not contribute to the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation facing the Syrian people. On the contrary, the adoption of such a draft resolution could further exacerbate the instability and violence in a country that is already experiencing serious instability and violence. This is a biased document that addresses current events in the Syrian Arab Republic in a partial manner. We reject once again the attempt to ignore the proposals and measures taken by the Syrian Government and the efforts undertaken by some countries to prevent further violence in that brotherly country.

Inciting a civil war in Syria or an intervention by foreign forces could have serious consequences for all of humankind, and particularly for the tumultuous region of the Middle East. All acts of violence, massacres and terrorist attacks taking innocent lives in Syria must end. It is alarming to hear calls from some in favour of regime change in Syria and of force and violence instead of dialogue and negotiations among the parties. We urge all those promoting foreign intervention in Syria or contributing to the fragmentation of the country, with the support of various armed factions of the opposition, to show greater political responsibility to avoid more bloodshed on all sides.

The media's manipulation of the situation surrounding the events occurring in Syria must also end. We are very concerned about how the Western commercial media machine shamelessly treats the situation in Syria with political aims in mind, inciting violence that increases the suffering of the Syrian people.

Taking into account recent precedents and experiences of manipulation of the Charter of the United Nations and the double standards that characterize the actions of the United States and other members of NATO, we again condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We are in favour of a political solution to the current crisis with full respect for the sovereignty and independence

of Syria. The role of the international community is to offer aid to safeguard peace and stability in the country, not to incite acts leading to deaths, terrorism, aggression against innocent people and civil unrest. We continue to reaffirm our confidence in the ability of the Government and the people of Syria to resolve their internal problems without external assistance and demand full respect for the self-determination and the sovereignty of that Arab country.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): For the past two years, Pakistan has witnessed the suffering of the people of Syria with deep pain and anguish. The Syrian tragedy unfolding under the sharp international spotlight has been a challenge to the conscience of the global community. Despite the means and institutions at the disposal of the international community to maintain peace and security, the killing has continued unabated in Syria. And yet it is not a war; it is an internecine conflict in which Syrian is killing Syrian. All those fighting today in that unfortunate land are inflicting wounds on their own body, Syria. In Syria, weapons speak and diplomacy is silent.

Syria is in turbulence. More than 70,000 Syrians are dead. Six million people have taken flight, 1.5 million of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The humanitarian catastrophe in Syria is getting worse by the day. The fires of sectarianism, extremism and terrorism are consuming entire communities and neighbourhoods. The conflict threatens to engulf the whole region. Syria is a ticking bomb that could trigger a wider conflict along ethnic and religious lines. There is a risk that the huge quantities of sophisticated weapons reaching Syria now will be used to fuel local and regional terrorism in the future.

There is an urgent need for diplomacy at three levels. First, we need an agreement among key States of the international community to end the impasse in the Security Council. In that context, we welcome the recent engagement between the United States and the Russian Federation. Secondly, the Syrian Government and representatives of the opposition should meet without further delay and without insisting on their caveats and qualifications about the venue and representatives. Their timely decisions will stop further bloodshed and suffering. Thirdly, countries of the region should play a constructive and supportive role in stopping the killing in Syria and helping the Syrian people move towards dialogue, reconciliation and transition.

Hopes for a renewed dialogue in Geneva have been rekindled. Representatives of the Syrian Government and the opposition should show maturity and agree on a mechanism with full executive authority, as agreed in the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex), to negotiate a transition towards reconciliation, peace and stability. At the present stage, the General Assembly and the Security Council should strengthen the hand of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in order to revive the stalled Geneva process. In that dialogue process, Syrian ownership is important. No attempt should be made to impose solutions from outside. The Syrian people will carve out their own destiny and decide the nature and structure of their own body politic.

Now is the time for diplomacy, now is the time for the collective wisdom of the international community to stop the current spate of carnage, displacement and degradation in Syria. If diplomacy to succeed, the supply of weapons to all sides should be stopped forthwith. All sides should heed the Secretary-General's call for an arms embargo.

Pakistan has decided to vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 primarily to signal its solidarity with the people of Syria and with the League of Arab States, the Gulf States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Syria's neighbours. We understand the compelling imperatives of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

We would also like to make our position clear on the following issues. First, the draft resolution does not give recognition to the Syrian National Coalition (SNC).

Second, the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria will not be violated. The SNC may send opposition representative-interlocutors to engage in dialogue with the Syrian Government directly or under the auspices of the United Nations.

Third, we understand that the Syrian Government has given clear assurances to the Secretary-General that it would not use chemical or biological weapons. Those assurances should be given due weight.

Fourth, the draft resolution should have been more balanced to reflect objectively the reality on the ground by assigning responsibility to all sides for the worsening of the situation.

Fifth, the draft resolution does not adequately address the rise of terrorism in Syria. Terrorism is the elephant in the room. It dominates the country. With its global and regional orientation, terrorism will cause devastation in Syria and beyond. Terrorism in Syria is not merely a subset of the conflict in the country. It has assumed its own independent persona. Efforts to bring peace and stability in Syria will not succeed without adoption and pursuit of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

Sixth, we take note of the resolutions of the League of Arab States insofar as they are related to the resolution of the political situation in the country.

Seventh, we do not think that the time is appropriate for a referral of the situation in Syria or specific cases related to it to the International Criminal Court.

In closing, we would like to emphasize that the draft resolution should not become an instrument of division. We hope that it will have a positive impact on the revival of the Geneva process, and help make progress towards a substantive dialogue leading to a political dispensation that is acceptable to the Syrian Government and opposition. It is not meant to supplant the Geneva process or prejudice its outcome.

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

The General Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/67/L.63, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Micronesia, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia and Spain.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.63. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu, Yemen

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Dominica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia

Draft resolution A/67/L.63 was adopted by 107 votes to 12, with 59 abstentions (resolution 67/262).

The Acting President: Due to the lateness of the hour, we will hear members' explanations of vote after the vote this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.35 p.m.

Mrs. Adhikari (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the adoption of resolution 67/262, I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): The human tragedy that marks the present situation in Syria is of the utmost concern to Brazil. We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of all violence. All parties, most particularly the Government of Syria, must fulfil their obligation to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law. Once again, we strongly call on all parties involved to immediately and unconditionally put an end to all forms of violence and to pursue an inclusive Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Brazil supports several of the main messages of resolution 67/262, in particular four aspects. Brazil stresses the need for a negotiated solution to the crisis, in line with the provisions of the Geneva communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), which remains a consensus basis for a comprehensive and effective road map to put an end to the conflict. We also fully support the provisions regarding the condemnation of violence, the demands for the cessation of the grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by both parties, and the inadmissibility of the use of chemical weapons. We also wholeheartedly support the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Encouraging proposals for a peaceful and political resolution of the Syrian crisis are being formulated even as we meet, which deserve serious consideration by Member States and the Secretary-General.

The United Nations should strive to reach decisions that contribute to the establishment of an environment conducive to understanding among all Syrian parties. It is not clear the extent to which resolution 67/262 contributes to the creation of such an environment.

In the course of the negotiations, Brazil, together with other countries from our region, engaged with the authors of the resolution to convey our concerns about several of its aspects. Unfortunately, the text still falls short of what we consider necessary for a General Assembly message that aspires to bring about a positive impact on the ground.

The fact that the text lacks an explicit call for no further militarization of the conflict is unjustifiable. The General Assembly cannot shy away from clearly stating that there can be no military solution to the crisis. The absence of a statement of that sort weakens the faith in the resolve of the international community to end the conflict through diplomatic means.

The resolution could also have included important findings and conclusions made by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission has very often drawn attention to the crippling effects of the sanctions regime on the Syrian people. It has also recommended that the international community should curb the proliferation and supply of weapons and address the sources thereof, bearing in mind the regional implications and related responsibility in the vicinity and beyond.

In the same vein, it is not for the General Assembly, at this juncture, even indirectly, to bestow legitimacy on or to decide who should be the representative of the Syrian opposition, let alone of the Syrian people. That is a matter for the Syrians themselves to decide.

Furthermore, Brazil believes that the purpose and implications of the tasks entrusted to the Secretary-General in paragraphs 29 and 30 of the resolution deserve better clarification. That is especially true if we agree that an upcoming international conference will likely provide an updated road map for a political transition. If read in conjunction with paragraph 26, which may imply some level of acknowledgement of the Syrian National Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, paragraph 30 may be construed as requesting the Secretary-General to take measures to initiate transition planning and to allocate resources to that end, even in the absence of one of the parties' consent to that transition. That could further complicate the situation, with far-reaching implications for the impartiality of the Organization, and therefore for its legitimacy and credibility.

It is now time to create improved conditions for the parties to negotiate in and to highlight what unites us,

in a collective effort to ensure a positive outcome for a possible conference that will move beyond the Geneva Action Group initiative of last year. We fail to see how the resolution serves that purpose.

In conclusion, Brazil remains committed to a negotiated resolution of the conflict in a way that stops the bloodshed, rejects extremism, builds stability in the region and responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom, democracy and social justice.

Mr. Mukerji (India): India remains deeply concerned about the unabated violence in Syria and the suffering it continues to cause to the Syrian people. The military approach pursued by various sides to the conflict has undermined the efforts for a political solution to the crisis. Violence has assumed a serious sectarian nature, and terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, have entrenched themselves. All those developments will have long-term repercussions for national, regional and international peace and security. Reports about the alleged use of chemical weapons are also deeply worrying.

We strongly condemn all violence in Syria as well as all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We condemn all attacks directed at women and children, civilians, United Nations peacekeepers and public institutions and infrastructure. We also condemn in the strongest terms possible all terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria.

We are particularly concerned that United Nations peacekeepers have been repeatedly targeted by rebel groups and taken hostage, including on two recent occasions. That is completely unacceptable. It is imperative that the sanctity of United Nations peacekeepers be respected by all sides. The United Nations must send a clear signal that such acts will not be tolerated and will bring the full weight of the international community against the perpetrators.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, India has consistently called on all the parties to abjure violence, dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and pursue a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sectors of Syrian society. We have also contributed assistance worth \$2.5 million to mitigate the humanitarian impact of the crisis.

We believe that the joint communiqué of the Geneva Action Group (A/66/865, annex), adopted in June 2012, provides a good basis for a resolution of the Syrian crisis through a Syrian-led political process that respects Syria's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty and involves all sectors of Syrian society and meets their legitimate aspirations. The task of the international community, anchored in the United Nations, is to assist the Syrian parties in that process, without prejudging its outcome. Also, it is important that the further militarization of the conflict, including support for terrorist and armed groups, cease forthwith. Those are the principles that have guided our consideration of resolution 67/262, which the Assembly voted upon earlier today.

Whether any group is the legitimate representative of the Syrian people or not can only be determined by the Syrian people, not the Assembly. Therefore, certain provisions of the resolution can be interpreted as effecting regime change by sleight of hand. This is a dangerous precedent, which we cannot acquiesce to. We would once again reiterate our position that the leadership of Syria is a matter for Syrians to decide themselves.

As we said earlier, unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis. It will only exacerbate the problem and cause greater instability and violence, even beyond Syria's borders. We think that, following the settlement of the conflict, Syrians themselves should establish accountability for crimes committed by Syria. That cannot be done by outsiders. We also believe that the promotion of political dialogue requires engagement with all the parties concerned and that calls for a boycott of the Government and support for the opposition will not help.

Due to those shortcomings, we abstained in the voting on the resolution.

India remains committed to supporting the efforts of the United Nations, including those of Joint Special Representative Lakdhar Brahimi, to resolve the Syrian crisis expeditiously through inclusive political dialogue among the Syrian parties. We also welcome the recent decision by the Russian Federation and the United States to convene a meeting of the Action Group with the Syrian parties. We hope that all sides will engage seriously, realistically and unconditionally to resolve the crisis in the best interests of the Syrian people, the region and the larger international community.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile voted in favour of resolution 67/262, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Once again today, the General Assembly has been obliged to consider the current situation in Syria, where a critical humanitarian situation also entails an increasingly tragic situation in terms of the political situation, security, human rights and governability. This crisis is increasingly becoming a threat to regional peace and security. The systematic use of violence by all parties to the conflict must cease.

As we have done in the case of previous resolutions on the subject, my delegation welcomes the fact that the General Assembly has once again energetically condemned the systematic and massive violations of human rights taking place in the Syrian Arab Republic. This unacceptable use of force is being used indiscriminately against the unarmed civilian population both by the Government, whose primary responsibility is to protect its own citizens, and by other parties to the crisis. As a result, there are arbitrary executions, assassinations, targeting of human rights defenders and journalists, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, torture and sexual and gender-based violence, including violence against children. It seems to us of vital importance that the resolution that has been adopted reiterates the condemnation of violence and the urgent need to bring to justice those responsible for the serious violations of human rights, whether they be part of the Government or the opposition, including those violations that could constitute crimes against humanity.

Chile voted in favour of the resolution in the hope that that expression on the part of the international community, represented by the General Assembly, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and in alignment with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, will contribute to the political dialogue and ensure the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) — that is, a Syrian process and one without foreign involvement.

In the light of what I have just said, we would like to reassert that it is not the role of the General Assembly to determine the legitimacy of the representatives of the Syrian people; that is their exclusive prerogative. We take note of the existence of the Syrian National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as one of the interlocutors in the necessary pluralistic and democratic dialogue towards a political

transition. Similarly, while we recognize the efforts made by the League of Arab States and reiterate the importance of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, we also believe that their decisions can be applicable only to their members.

As called for by the Geneva communiqué, it is essential to put an end to the militarization of the conflict. In that regard, we agree with the reiterated appeals to the parties to find a political solution to the conflict by both the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, both of whom we strongly support.

The worsening of the humanitarian situation and the indiscriminate use of violence by all players have confirmed the fact that a military solution is not a solution and that an inclusive political dialogue is the political solution. Despite today's action by the General Assembly, we hope that the Security Council, in particular those countries that have the greatest influence on the parties, will contribute to finding a solution to the conflict. Such a politico-institutional outcome should come from the Syrians themselves without any distinction and it should lead to the establishment of a Syria that is fully and genuinely democratic. We hope that the message sent today, added to the recent announcement made by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to hold a conference between the Government and the opposition, will allow for such an outcome to be found.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the humanitarian efforts being made by those countries that are hosting a huge number of refugees from the Syrian crisis, countries on which a responsibility has fallen that is becoming more and more difficult to assume. We therefore remind the principal donors of the need to meet their commitments towards the refugees. We also acknowledge the International Red Cross and the International Red Crescent, the relevant United Nations agencies and various non-governmental organizations for the enormous efforts that they have deployed in that regard.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): Singapore remains deeply concerned about the increasing violence in Syria, the worsening humanitarian crisis on the ground and the suffering being inflicted upon the Syrian people. In particular, we strongly condemn the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the Syrian Government,

which has resulted in a very high casualty rate and has led to the displacement of a large number of civilians. The Syrian Government must act immediately to protect the safety of its own people. However, the situation in Syria is very complex. Different armed groups are also using force. We call upon all the parties involved to immediately cease all violence, as many innocent people are paying a heavy price.

Singapore voted in favour of the two previous General Assembly resolutions on Syria. However, we were obliged to abstain in the voting today. Singapore supports a Syrian-led political process that leads to a transition that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people, as called for in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. However, Singapore is not in a position to support proposals that confer international recognition on any particular opposition group as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala is one of the countries that voted in favor of previous resolutions of the General Assembly on this topic without expressing major reservations. We did so because we have taken a principled approach to the conflict in Syria, with an emphasis on the following aspects: first, the imperative of putting an end to the violence, which has cost so many lives and caused so much suffering; secondly, the imperative of respecting the human rights of the civilian population; thirdly, the imperative that the Government of Syria provide unrestricted access to humanitarian aid; and, fourthly, the imperative of seeking a negotiated political transition led by Syrians but with the support of the international community, in the framework provided by the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) issued by the Action Group on 30 June 2012. That implies respecting the territorial integrity of Syria and opening the way to a pluralistic, inclusive and tolerant system of governance. We also seek to avoid the Syrian crisis from spreading even further to neighbouring States, which are already under great stress. Furthermore, we have reiterated at all times our support to the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. All those elements are reflected in the resolution that was adopted today (resolution 67/262), and that is why we have voted in favour of it.

However, we continue to have serious concerns, some of which are based on elements contained in the

text of the resolution and others which, in our judgment, should have been included in the text but are absent.

In the first category, namely, those elements of the text which cause concern, we must state that Guatemala welcomed the establishment of the Syrian National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as an appropriate nucleus of contacts between the opposition and the Government, but we have never recognized it as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, as could be surmised from the text of the resolution. It is therefore our understanding that the nineteenth preambular paragraph and paragraphs 26 and 30 do not commit the entire membership of the General Assembly to such recognition.

In the second category, namely, those elements which in our judgment are missing in the text, we would have preferred that the resolution expressly proposed the demilitarization of the conflict with a call to limit the delivery of arms to all parties. In that regard, we understand that the reference to all the relevant resolutions of the League of Arab States in the eighteenth preambular paragraph and in paragraph 27 refers only to the political transition.

In spite of what I have just said, by voting in favour of the resolution we wanted to add our voice to the general call to put an end to the violence, whose scale, scope, characteristics and extended duration are offensive to all humankind. It is time to end the bloodshed in the country and seek a negotiated outcome for the long, dark night that has descended on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of the resolution adopted this morning (resolution 67/262) because we believe it essential that the international community send a clear message to the Government and the other belligerents in Syria, as well as the countries that are militarily involved in the conflict, about the importance of putting an end to the tragedy that has convulsed this country and find a path to a political transition leading to peace and democracy.

In order to prevent the situation from becoming even more critical and involving the whole of the surrounding area in the violence, it is imperative that we seek a solution that meets the terms of reference of the communiqué issued on 30 June 2012 in Geneva by the Action Group for Syria (A/67/865, annex). In that regard, we welcome the recent agreement between

the Secretary of State of the United States and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on holding an international conference to open a way forward towards a peaceful and inclusive transition in Syria.

The ultimate goal of any negotiations, as paragraph 26 of the resolution states, must establish “a civil, democratic and pluralistic Syrian Arab Republic, where all citizens are equal regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity”. For that reason, we reject both the current status quo of repression and crimes against humanity as well as the imposition of intolerance, sectarianism and terrorist violence.

Costa Rica is voting so that Syrians can return as soon as possible to a Government that is the result of the free expression of the people’s will and not imposed militarily by a few groups. We appeal urgently to the Syrian Government to respect its commitment to international law, particularly international human rights and international humanitarian law. While that responsibility lies primarily with the official authorities, it also applies to the armed opposition and to any country directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. We repeat the request that was made in January to the Security Council by a group of countries, of which we are a member, to give the International Criminal Court the jurisdiction and authority to investigate those responsible for the worst crimes committed in Syria.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the decision as to how Syria should organize its Government and institutions lies only with the Syrian people.

Ms. Birananda (Thailand): Thailand has considered today’s resolution (resolution 67/262) with the utmost care. We decided to vote in favour of it to show our deep concern about the worsening crisis in Syria. However, our support does not imply an endorsement of the entire text of the resolution. We have legitimate concerns about certain paragraphs. First, we strongly believe that the issue of legitimate representation can be determined only by the Syrian people through a free, fair and inclusive democratic election process. Secondly, our support for the resolution does not imply an endorsement of any act that violates the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We also believe that the crisis in Syria can be resolved only by peaceful means. We therefore call

on all parties concerned to end the violence through non-violence.

Thailand reiterates its firm condemnation of the acts of violence committed against the innocent civilian population, which have so far resulted in more than 80,000 casualties and forced more than 1.5 million Syrians to take refuge in neighbouring countries. We are also deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. We therefore call on all parties to the conflict to provide safe and unhindered passage for humanitarian assistance to the affected population and help those in need obtain access to such assistance.

Given the magnitude of the crisis, the international community must put an end to the violence and actively support a peaceful political transition in Syria. In that context, we believe that any change in Syria should be inclusive, with the full participation of the Syrian people and respect for their human rights and dignity.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to emphasize two points that we consider particularly important: first, the importance of resolving the conflict through political dialogue and, secondly, the issue of responsibility for the crimes committed in Syria. Switzerland supports all diplomatic efforts aimed at upholding the legitimate aim of the Syrian people to end the violence. We especially welcome the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Secretary of State of the United States to organize an international conference with a view to finding a solution to the conflict. We also continue to fully support the political mission of Joint Special Representative Brahimi.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) calls for a political transition and the opening of a dialogue between credible representatives of the Government and the opposition. Switzerland supports this effort towards a concerted political solution; similarly, we welcome the creation of a national coalition and its goal of establishing a pluralistic and democratic Syria. We also welcome the resolution adopted by the League of Arab States calling for a political solution through dialogue. In Switzerland’s view, however, the resolution is not equivalent to recognition of the national coalition; our position is that we recognize States, not Governments.

Abuses and violations of human rights and humanitarian law continue to be perpetrated by all parties to the conflict in Syria. Switzerland fully

endorses the firm condemnation of all such violations, as expressed in today's resolution, whoever the perpetrators are. If such criminal acts go unpunished, the violence will only increase. We should recall that when a country is unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators of international crimes, the international community has a responsibility to ensure that those crimes are prosecuted. The fight against impunity is an essential condition for establishing sustainable peace in Syria. Switzerland notes that the General Assembly mentions in the resolution the responsibility for the crimes committed in Syria and refers to international criminal justice as one of the means of addressing the issue. We are convinced that more explicit references to the International Criminal Court would better reflect the developments and positions in that regard.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court due to the massive violations that have been committed there and the total impunity that reigns in the country. All of the special procedures, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Human Rights Council Independent International Commission of Inquiry, in its latest report, have all called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Those calls were echoed in a letter dated 14 January to the Security Council by 58 States, in a joint statement read by the representative of Libya on behalf of 64 States during the interactive dialogue with the International Commission of Inquiry and, more recently, in Human Rights Council resolution 22/24, adopted on 22 March.

We welcome the decision of the General Assembly to call on the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry to brief the Assembly with a view to moving this discussion forward. We propose that that take place as soon as possible and that the Security Council also consider hearing a briefing from the Commission.

Mr. Aquino (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru voted in favour of resolution 67/262 based on the following considerations.

Faced with the gravity of the situation in Syria, Peru viewed it as indispensable to join our voice to the urgent call for the ending of all forms of violence being committed in that country, to reiterate the need to urgently tackle the humanitarian situation of the

Syrian people and to lay the foundations for a Syrian-led political transition.

Peru has followed the crisis in Syria from the outset and has already condemned all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties. We have taken that position in all multilateral forums.

Our vote in favour of the resolution does not represent any sort of recognition or grant any legitimacy to the representation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, as it is for the Syrian people to grant any such recognition.

With regard to the welcoming of all of the resolutions of the League of Arab States on the situation in Syria, Peru would like to record its reservations on that reference.

Finally, Peru calls for the immediate cessation of violence and reaffirms its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Representative.

Mr. Dos Santos (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to give a very brief explanation of its abstention in the voting on resolution 67/262, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

The Republic of Paraguay attaches the utmost value to human rights, in keeping with its national Constitution and the international treaties and conventions to which it is party. In that regard, in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, we voted in favour of all previous resolutions relating to the situation in Syria, based on our concern at the acts of violence affecting the civilian population. Likewise, along with other delegations, we have supported initiatives relating to the human rights violations.

On this occasion, after giving it careful consideration, we decided to abstain in the voting because we believe that certain paragraphs of the text contradict clear principles set out in the Charter, primarily that of the non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

As it stands, we believe that the document will not contribute to bringing the parties closer in the pursuit of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict. We believe that the affairs and initiatives of the Organization must be in harmony with the principles set out in the Charter and should be reflected in practical, realistic, balanced and fair actions.

Paraguay reiterates that it will continue to support all initiatives on the part of the international community seeking to end the hostilities between the parties. Likewise, we also support all efforts relating to humanitarian assistance intended to meet the needs of the victims of the conflict and to attain lasting peace.

Mrs. Lalic Smajevic (Serbia): Serbia voted in favour of the text of resolution 67/262, with the understanding that all international efforts should aim solely at bringing 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 between all sides involved in the conflict, with the aim of achieving a sustainable political solution to the ongoing Syrian crisis through an inclusive Syrian-led political dialogue that would contribute to the stability of the region.

Serbia welcomes the announcement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Secretary of State of the United States of America in Moscow on 7 May regarding the understandings on ways ahead on the Syrian crisis based on the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) of 30 June 2012.

Miss Richards (Jamaica): The Government of Jamaica remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria, including the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, in particular women and children. We are indeed disheartened by the fact that the High Commissioner for Human Rights has estimated that the number of casualties is approaching 70,000, as well as the fact that there are approximately 1.2 million refugees and 1.4 million internally displaced persons. We are also mindful of the impact that the crisis in Syria is having on neighbouring countries.

There is an urgent need for a peaceful and consultative resolution of the situation in Syria to address the humanitarian and other crises. It should be based on an inclusive political process. Jamaica therefore maintains its support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and for the implementation by all parties of his transition plan aimed at arriving at a negotiated solution to the crisis. That is a democratic approach that should be based on dialogue among all parties and, most importantly, take into account the wishes of the Syrian people. We remain hopeful that the international conference to be held on Syria at the

initiative of the United States and Russia will contribute to such a peaceful transition.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) reaffirms that approach and, more importantly, addresses the actions to be taken to address the dire humanitarian crisis. Jamaica remains of the view that the Government of Syria bears the primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens and for urgently addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis. We therefore call once again on the Government of Syria to take the necessary steps to alleviate the flow of refugees and the number of displaced persons and to offer protection to all of its nationals.

We are concerned, however, that the references in the resolution to political transition could be interpreted as providing international approval for the process in Syria to take a course of action other than that contemplated in the transition plan set forth in the final communiqué (A/66/865, annex) issued by the Action Group for Syria on 30 June 2012. The transition plan assures the safety of all in an atmosphere of stability and calm, provides for clear and irreversible steps in the transition according to a fixed time frame and establishes a consensus transitional governing body, among other measures.

Jamaica reiterates the importance of adhering to the principle outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. It is for this reason that Jamaica took the decision to abstain in the voting on the resolution. However, our abstention should not be interpreted in any way as disregard for the grave situation facing the people of Syria. We appeal for urgent and united action, including in the Security Council, in moving towards a political solution in Syria, and we echo the call for all parties, whether from the Government, opposition or Syrian people, to choose the path of dialogue to ensure peace.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The situation in Syria is one of the most pressing issues on the international agenda. The serious consequences unleashed by the conflict, including the distressing humanitarian implications and the deplorable lack of action by the Security Council to address the situation, make it imperative that the General Assembly take a decision on the issue and send a strong message to the players involved in the crisis.

Mexico voted for the resolution adopted earlier today (resolution 67/262) because we believe it is impossible

to remain unmoved by a crisis of this magnitude. We therefore welcome the initiative taken by the sponsors of the resolution. In particular, we acknowledge the important work of the delegation of Qatar in its outreach to regional groups aimed at addressing our concerns about the text. However, Mexico believes that the consultation process should have been carried out in a more open, transparent and inclusive manner, so that the proposals of all delegations could have been taken into account.

Although we strongly support the resolution, Mexico believes it is essential that the responsibility of both parties regarding the use of violence, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights be clearly spelled out. While it is true that the primary responsibility in this respect lies with the Syrian Government, we cannot ignore the reports submitted to the Human Rights Council, which, while listing the gross and systematic human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities, also show that armed the opposition groups are also endangering civilians by using civilian areas as military targets.

Mexico would also like to recall that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic also stated that there are sufficient grounds to believe that the armed opposition has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, just as Government forces have.

Given those facts, it is important that the international community ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice, in order to combat impunity and to contribute to lasting stability to the region.

I would like to highlight once again Mexico's opposition to further militarizing the conflict. On that basis, Mexico would have preferred that the text of the resolution had included a call for the international community to prevent the transfer of weapons and military equipment to any of the parties.

Finally, we stress that the Syrian people are the only ones who can determine their future, the most appropriate political solution to the conflict and who their legitimate representatives are.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia voted in favour of resolution 67/262 to further demonstrate its firm commitment to finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria and its rejection of all

the forms of violence that have afflicted that country for the past 26 months. Through this resolution, measures are established to address the grave humanitarian situation and put an end to the violations of human rights and abuses.

We agree with the Geneva communiqué of 2012 (A/66/865, annex) that it is only through an inclusive political dialogue led by the Syrians themselves, in which the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of the population are taken into account, that it will possible to move towards a political transition that allows for the establishment of a genuine democratic system in the country. That was Colombia's unequivocal position throughout its participation in the Security Council over the past two years. We therefore reiterate our appeal for political consultation and an end to hostilities.

Although the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces is one of the interlocutors necessary for a political transition, Colombia believes that only the citizens of that country can determine who their legitimate representatives are. It is not up to the General Assembly to make declarations with regard to the legitimacy of peoples' representatives. In that regard, we believe that the adoption of this resolution does not give such recognition to any sector of the Syrian opposition.

The levels of violence in the country are unprecedented, and the level of oppression that has been exercised since the beginning by the Government of Mr. Al-Assad against the civilian population, who are calling for the free exercise of their fundamental rights, is unacceptable. The international community as a whole must therefore recognize that a military response is not an option. In that sense, Columbia believes that this resolution neither authorizes nor promotes measures aimed at providing weapons to the parties to the conflict.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): We would like to thank the sponsors of resolution 67/262 for once again bringing the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to the attention of the General Assembly. We believe this is an appropriate step to take, given the atrocious situation in the country and its destabilizing effect on the region and the fact that the Security Council is clearly not living up to its responsibility in that regard.

The resolution shows that the international community does not wish to remain silent in the face of the tragedy unfolding in Syria and its neighbouring

States. We appreciate the strong focus on the need for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, facilitate humanitarian aid and work towards a political solution.

We particularly look forward to the requested briefing to the General Assembly by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which we hope will take place soon and lead to an appropriate response by the Assembly.

At the same time, we wish to put on record our discomfort with the manner in which the text of the resolution was arrived at. Greater transparency is required for such a process within the General Assembly on a matter of such importance. We therefore hope that future consultations will be held in a more open and interactive manner.

We are also of the view that, with the adoption of the resolution, the General Assembly has missed an opportunity to make an unequivocal statement regarding the need for accountability for the atrocities committed in Syria. We believe that our proposals on the matter, which were not taken on board by the sponsors, would have considerably improved the text.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago abstained in the voting on resolution 67/262, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". In abstaining, however, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to put on record its abhorrence of the continuing widespread and systematic gross violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law on both sides of the conflict.

We are not unmindful of the sexual and other physical abuses against women, the inhuman suffering of Syrian children and the more than 1 million refugees and many more internally displaced persons who are suffering inhumanely as a result of the conflict, all of which is set forth in the resolution. We support the demands in the resolution calling on all parties to immediately put an end to all violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on civilians. Trinidad and Tobago also supports the calls in the resolution for an inclusive Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system in which citizens are equal regardless of their ethnicity, beliefs, colour, class, creed or race.

Trinidad and Tobago abstained in the voting on the resolution because we felt that Member States

were not provided with adequate opportunities to comment on the draft text. We are also of the view that certain provisions of the resolution relating to political transitions are ambiguous. A resolution of this nature must be clear, precise, unambiguous and not subject to multiple interpretations that have the potential to undermine the noble efforts being made to address the human rights and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

It is the hope of Trinidad and Tobago that all parties to the conflict will come together to resolve their differences in the interests of peace, good governance and the future well-being of the long-suffering Syrian people.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

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

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union supported the resolution on Syria that was adopted today by the General Assembly (resolution 67/262) and which underlines once again the urgency of finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria in which more than 80,000 people have lost their lives. The crisis has brought unspeakable suffering to the people of Syria and has already gone beyond the country's borders, gravely destabilizing the whole region. In that regard, we recall once again the need to respect the sovereignty and integrity of neighbouring States and we condemn all related infringements committed by State and non-State actors alike. The European Union also reiterates its attachment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

The European Union has consistently supported the vision of the political settlement outlined in the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and we fully welcome and support the joint call made by United States Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to convene an international peace conference on Syria as soon as possible, as a follow up to the Geneva Conference of June 2012. Bringing the two sides to the negotiating table is the only way that the political process can be set into motion. The EU is ready to assist all efforts in that direction in any way possible. We hope that the two sides will exercise flexibility so as to start the dialogue soon and that that will be the beginning of a true peace process. It is imperative that the process be Syrian-led and that the interlocutors be truly empowered to implement on the ground whatever decisions are made. We also reaffirm our full support to Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and we call on all parties to cooperate with him.

The European Union has welcomed the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which we accept as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. The Coalition is an effective representative interlocutor, as today's resolution points out, which is very much needed for a political transition. It is of the utmost importance that all Syrian opposition forces act in a united manner towards a democratic transition in Syria in the inclusive framework of the Syrian Opposition Coalition. We are committed to continuing to support the Coalition in its efforts to become more inclusive, to remain committed to respecting the principles of human rights, inclusiveness and democracy and to engage with all opposition groups and all sectors of Syrian civil society. At this crucial juncture in the crisis, we welcome the acceptance by the Coalition of the principle of a political process under credible conditions and we urge the Coalition to seize the opportunity created by the American and Russian initiative.

The European Union is appalled by the dire humanitarian situation in Syria and by its impact on neighbouring countries, which, as recent discussions in the Security Council have shown, is clearly becoming a threat to international peace and security. We are particularly grateful to the Governments and the peoples of Syria's neighbouring countries for the generosity they have shown in dealing with the crisis and we are committed to continuing to be the leading humanitarian donor in the context of the Syrian conflict, as part of a wider international response. In that context, we call on Member States to honour the pledges they have made, most recently at the Kuwait Conference.

Today's resolution makes a number of important demands to deal with the humanitarian crisis and, in particular, to ensure safe and timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting. We join in the call by once again urging the regime in Damascus to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance by whatever routes are most effective in order to reach all the population in need, including across borders, and to allow a broader scope of humanitarian actors to work in Syria.

The European Union strongly condemns the widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, while recalling that the Syrian regime bears the primary responsibility for the ongoing violence. We call on all parties to the conflict to commit to their obligation to abide by international humanitarian law, including the protection of medical facilities, staff and patients, and hold to account those in their ranks who do not. The European Union reaffirms that there should be no impunity for any such violations and abuses and recalls that the Security Council can, at any time, refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, as requested in the Swiss letter to the Security Council of 14 January 2013. We have repeatedly called on the Security Council to urgently address all aspects of the situation in Syria, including that issue. The European Union also calls on all parties to the conflict to respect Syria's cultural heritage and all its religious sites, and we condemn attacks against spiritual leaders of all religions and denominations.

The European Union remains extremely concerned by allegations that chemical weapons may have been used in Syria. We emphasize that any use of chemical weapons, whether by a State or a non-State actor, is abhorrent and must be unreservedly condemned. It is important that a clear message be sent today to demand that the Syrian authorities strictly observe their obligations under international law with respect to chemical and biological weapons and refrain from using or transferring any chemical and biological weapons or any related material.

The European Union expresses its full support for the decision of the Secretary-General to determine the facts in relation to the allegations of the use of chemical weapons. It is important that all parties cooperate fully with the investigation and permit unfettered access to the investigation team. The safety and security of chemical weapons stockpiles must also be ensured,

pending independently verified destruction under the supervision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The General Assembly has sent an important message today that the European Union fully supports. Now is the time for action and now is the time to move forward towards a genuine political transition in Syria that makes a clear break with the past and that finally brings about a civil, democratic and pluralistic Syria where all citizens are equal regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): For the record, before I begin my statement, I would like to mention a procedural matter regarding the list of speakers. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/314, the Holy See has the right to speak immediately after Member States, and I should therefore have been given the floor immediately after the last Member State on the list.

With the General Assembly's adoption of today's resolution on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (resolution 67/262), I wish once again to express the grave concern with which the Holy See has been following the unceasing spiral of violence that has overwhelmed Syria for more than two years now, and to recall the words of Pope Francis during his *Urbi et Orbi* message on Easter Sunday: How much blood has been shed — and how much suffering must there still be before a political solution to the crisis will be found?

With the parties still engaged in combat, it is a priority that those in a position to influence the parties to the conflict call on them to immediately end the bloodbath and continual violations of human rights, which only open the door to further retaliation and recrimination. If we wish to reconstitute a peaceable society and avoid abandoning the Syrian people to a violent and uncertain future, a clear change of course is needed.

It is to be hoped that the outcome of today's discussion will constitute a step leading to the Syrian-led political dialogue that all parties are calling for but that still seems all too far away. Only through the involvement of all political parties and the various components of civil society, including representatives of the various religious groups that constitute the

beautiful and ancient mosaic of the Syrian landscape, can we aspire to provide solutions and offer hope for the reconstruction of the social fabric and State institutions for a rebuilt Syria. That rebuilding must be based on the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance of public affairs, together with respect for Syria's diverse ethnic and religious identities.

The sad statistics of the humanitarian catastrophe enveloping Syria are well known. Only a few weeks ago the heads of the major United Nations humanitarian agencies briefed the Security Council about this. My delegation therefore feels that it is particularly urgent to appeal to the international community to act in support, even financially, of those agencies and the countries that, commendably, are welcoming those fleeing the fighting. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a collapse of the most fragile of those countries would produce an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with extremely severe repercussions for the entire international community. What matter here are not acts of mere generosity, but acts that can generate and sustain peace, security and the common good of the entire international community.

It is necessary, furthermore, that the warring parties acknowledge their obligations with respect to international humanitarian law, particularly by guaranteeing humanitarian-aid workers immediate and safe access to the neediest. In that regard, my delegation calls for the protection of health-care institutions — whether they be deliberately attacked or suffering due to the indiscriminate effects of armed violence — both when health-care workers are not assured of the necessary freedom and serenity to accomplish their missions and when they are forced to contravene their professional ethics by refusing care for any wounded without distinction.

In conclusion, the Holy See, having no interests other than the genuine hope to see an end to every act of violence against the people of Syria — among whom, and of particular concern, are some of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating back to the first century — desires that all Syrians may return once again to the peaceful and harmonious coexistence that has been the hallmark of Syrian society for centuries. In that regard, my delegation takes this opportunity to appeal for the international community's assistance in securing the earliest possible release of the innocent

victims of kidnapping by armed groups, who include two Metropolitan Bishops, Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church and Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church, who still remain in the hands of their abductors.

Before the judgement of history and anyone of goodwill, it behooves all individuals and State or international institutions to help bring a close to this painful chapter of Syrian history once and for all, and to find a lasting solution worthy of the dignity of the people of that great nation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bahamas, who also wished to speak in explanation of vote after the voting.

Mr. Newry (Bahamas): The Bahamas solemnly shares the international community's collective alarm and outrage at the violence, bloodshed and turmoil that the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has inflicted, and continues to inflict, daily on that country's people, particularly the civilian population.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) includes many constructive elements that the Bahamas certainly supports. We readily add our voice to the call for an immediate end to all violations of international humanitarian law. We share the alarm at and condemnation of the grave violations of human rights, including those of women and children, by the perpetrators of sexual and physical abuse. We also fully agree on the need to address the plight of the millions of internally displaced persons and those who are now refugees. All those categories of Syrian citizens in particular are unjustly bearing the cost of this crisis in a currency of death, loss and suffering.

The Bahamas also shares the appreciation for the assistance given by neighbouring countries, and we welcome the resolution's reaffirmation of support for the mission of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative, the efforts of the League of Arab States on behalf of Syria, and, indeed, for all diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful solution.

While we do not consider the resolution to be as balanced as it could have been, we believe that overall it provides support for the people of Syria. Our vote in favour does not support any violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as they relate to non-interference in a country's internal affairs. We

again urge both sides in this matter to choose the way of peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We wish to conclude by reiterating in the strongest terms our belief that to halt the mounting death toll and hostilities is a task that must remain at the heart and in the hands of the General Assembly. It is for those reasons that the Bahamas voted in favour of the resolution.

We also wish to echo the remark made by the observer of the Holy See regarding the procedural anomalies regarding the list of speakers, which will hopefully be avoided in future.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): While my delegation regrets the adoption of this prejudiced and unbalanced resolution (resolution 67/262) for the reasons I explained in my statement before the voting, we wish to thank all of those States that did not vote in favour of it for their responsible stance in support of the principles of the United Nations and the provisions of international law.

It is gratifying indeed that the majority of statements delivered this morning prior to the voting (see A/67/PV.80) were positive in their essence and reasonable in their approach, exposing the true intentions of some sponsors of the resolution. Only two or three delegations deviated from that approach. Their statements reflected their capitals' wishes to perpetuate, exacerbate and impede any consensual political solution to the Syrian crisis. Moreover, to take such a public stance goes against the growing international support for a consensual Syrian political solution that satisfies the interests, demands and aspirations of the Syrian people. Based on our belief in such a political solution and our desire to preserve the interests of our people, we will not fall into the trap of provocation and wrangling; rather, we will deal with the essence of the question with the utmost responsibility as a nation.

The low level of support for the resolution voted on at the end of the morning meeting and the increasing number of States that opposed it as compared to the previous resolution point to the growing international understanding of the dimensions and characteristics of what is transpiring in Syria: external interference, the sponsoring of terrorism, growing radicalization and the rejection of dialogue. We hope that the United Nations and its Member States will support Syria and its people in countering the culture of radicalism and terrorism,

and in encouraging comprehensive national dialogue towards the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

At the same time, we expect the United Nations and its Member States to read the road map of current events closely, free from the influence of certain interested parties, both within the region and beyond, in a manner that preserves the principles of international law and the aspirations of the Syrian people to live in dignity in their homeland. The pain our people are suffering matters more than the designs of those who trade in such pain, bloodshed, terrorism, radicalism and collaboration.

I should like to share some remarks with the Assembly in refutation of a number of misleading allegations and statements we have heard.

It should be realized that despite the fact that Qatar introduced the resolution, we are all well aware that the text was not Qatari and that that country was only used as a tool for implementation. It is no secret that the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey persist in financing transnational jihadist terrorism. Joint Special Representative Brahimi, in his most recent briefing to the Security Council, stated that there were some 40,000 foreign terrorists present in Syria contributing to the bloodshed. Among those, there were more than 1,000 Takfiri-Salafist Europeans who belong to Al-Qaida.

In my statement this morning I noted that the Qatari intelligence services had been involved in kidnapping members of the Filipino battalion working as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. I also stated that senior officials in the Secretariat were well aware of that atrocious crime. It was therefore quite strange that the Secretary-General expressed his "appreciation for assistance from Qatar and others involved in securing their safe release". We must ask how Qatar can have such considerable influence on terrorist groups that abducted peacekeepers, if not for its considerable involvement with those groups. To what extent does the position of the Secretariat correspond with the Qatari involvement in abducting peacekeepers and endangering their lives? Who will hold the Qatari authorities responsible for their rashness?

Perhaps my colleague the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia misheard the contents of my statement. I therefore refer him to read the statement again; it is available in English and Arabic. In that connection, I would like to state that the Saudi representative was wrong in two respects. First, he presented an erroneous account of what is going on in my country. That is no surprise, given the full involvement of his country's authorities in terrorism and in exacerbating the situation in Syria. The second mistake was his attribution to me of words that I never uttered. The conclusions he drew from those words were therefore erroneous, corresponding with his erroneous reading.

I would like to remind my colleagues here that the French delegation has blocked the Security Council from issuing many press releases condemning terrorist acts perpetrated by armed terrorist groups linked with Al-Qaida, acts which have killed thousands of innocent Syrians, just as they blocked the issuance of a press release that condemned the attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister of the Syrian Government. That is unprecedented hypocrisy on the part of the Government of France. How can it claim to engage in a war against terrorist groups linked with Al-Qaida in the Sahel and at the same time encourage, sponsor and support the activities of the same terrorist groups in Syria?

Over a year ago, French security forces killed a French terrorist of Moroccan origin named Mohammed Merah. To assassinate that terrorist, they called on 3,000 top intelligence agents, and they riddled his body with thousands of bullets. Today, the French representative, speaking off the cuff, claimed that the Syrian Government attacks its people. If combatting terrorism in France is lawful, combatting terrorism anywhere else is lawful. We in Syria are fighting the same terrorism that the French Government is fighting on its territory. France's hypocrisy is thus exposed and should be clear to anyone who believes in the provisions of international law.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 33.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.