United Nations S/PV.7825

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7825th meeting
Monday, 5 December 2016, 2.25 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

16-41331 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 2.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1026, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

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

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The vote you have called today, Sir, on a draft resolution (S/2016/1026) on the humanitarian situation in Syria violates the Security Council's rules of procedure, since the draft resolution was put into blue only at 11.20 a.m. this morning and cannot be voted on before tomorrow morning, in accordance with the 24-hour rule. There is no consensus among Council members to waive that rule. This case is of significant importance because the additional time would have allowed Council members to take certain new circumstances into account and to reach consensus on a draft resolution that could contribute on a practical level to improving the humanitarian situation in Syria, and in particular in eastern Aleppo. Those circumstances are as follows.

On 2 December, Russian Foreign Minister Srgey Lavrov and United States Secretary of State John Kerry held negotiations in Rome. At the proposal of the American side, the outcome of those talks was an agreement to convene a meeting of experts in Geneva to resolve the issue of eastern Aleppo. We expressed our readiness to begin those discussions immediately and to hold an initial meeting on Sunday, 4 December. However, our United States partners suggested that it be postponed until Wednesday, 7 December, to which we agreed.

The proposed arrangement anticipates a full withdrawal of all fighters from the eastern neighbourhoods of the city, which conforms to the well-known initiative put forward by Staffan de Mistura. Initially, it is expected that we would agree on itineraries and timetables for their withdrawal; as soon as that takes place, a cessation of hostilities regime would enter force, allowing the fighters to be evacuated. In that way, the problem of eastern Aleppo would be effectively resolved while ensuring the security of civilians, the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and the normalization of the situation as a whole.

The draft resolution before us refers not to a withdrawal of fighters from eastern Aleppo but to an immediate cessation of hostilities, while fighters would have 10 days to indicate whether or not they would remain a party to the cessation of hostilities. As we know, such pauses have been exploited by fighters every time to replenish their supplies and ranks. Is strengthening their control over certain quarters of the city really be worth the suffering of thousands of people?

The Russian Federation cannot support the draft resolution submitted by the humanitarian troika. We shall vote against it against it, as we honestly informed the Council in advance. Perhaps we should offer our sympathies to the humanitarian troika, which as know has been shamelessly pressured by the three Western permanent members of the Security Council yet again to put a doomed draft resolution to the vote. We believe such efforts to be provocations, undermining the efforts of the International Syria Support Group, especially in and around Aleppo.

Provocations are taking place not only here in the Security Council Chamber in New York, but also on the ground in Syria. Today, fighters shelled a medical unit of the Russian field hospital in Aleppo. A Russian nurse was killed as a result of a direct hit and a Russian pediatric doctor is fighting for his life. These people were genuinely helping Syrians, while some false guardians of humanitarian principles have all along been destroying the country, generously sponsoring terrorists and continuing to worry about their fate at any cost in order to implement their plans in the region. We caution once again that this policy is doomed.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): We have heard the representative of Russia talk about conversations with the United States. Russia says that it was on the cusp of reaching a deal with the United States to allow for some resolution of the situation in eastern Aleppo, and that the draft resolution (S/2016/1026) before us undermines the negotiation. That is a made-up alibi.

The United States, including Secretary Kerry, has continued our bilateral conversations with Russia to try to find some way to relieve the suffering around eastern Aleppo. However, we have not reached a breakthrough because Russia has been more focused on preserving its military gains than on helping Aleppo's civilians. Russia has many times before held out the vague prospect of some diplomatic deal to argue for delaying action at the Security Council. Each time Russia has followed up its promises with yet another relentless round of bombing, with horrific human consequences.

We remain directly engaged with key countries, including Russia, to address the horrific situation on the ground, but we will not let Russia string along the Security Council while waiting for a compromise from the Russians that never seems to come.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This is not the first time we have seen this. Secretary of State John Kerry has been working with our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, to reach a concrete result. But whenever they near an agreement, somebody undermines it. Sometimes that effort originates in Washington, D.C., from the Department of Defense or from some other American agency. Now, unfortunately, this tactic has been employed by the delegation of the United States in New York. It is most unfortunate that serious agreements are reached, and then we are told that nothing of the kind exists. There was a meeting and an agreement on new elements submitted by John Kerry, not the Russian side. Subsequently, we were told that the American representatives needed three additional days to discuss the issue, following which we were told that no agreement had been reached. I recall that, had the agreement of 12 September been implemented, it would have allowed us to address the problem in eastern Aleppo. Once again we are faced with same situation today, and we strongly deplore it.

The United States must shoulder its responsibility, which it is trying impose on others, especially in connection with resolving the problem in Syria. As co-Chair of the International Syria Support Group, the United States should show coherence in its actions, but that is not the case. We are witnessing the dramatic consequences of that lack of coherence today. Unfortunately, the United States delegation, as the members of the Security Council know, has shamelessly put pressure on the three co-sponsors of the draft resolution (S/2016/1026) to put it to the vote, knowing that it would not be adopted. That undermines the unity of the Council. There is no longer any unity between the two co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group. That represents a dangerous strategy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now put the draft resolution to a vote.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:
Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

Against:
China, Russian Federation and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:
Angola

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 11 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make a statement following the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta: (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Nearly two months ago, we met in the Security Council to debate the Syrian crisis, in particular the situation in Aleppo (see S/PV.7785). We left the Security Council Chamber carrying only messages of our continued failure with regard to the Syrian people and indications that can be explained only as lack of care with regard to Syrians and the fact that some prefer their narrow political interests over all else.

I recall now when we declared before the Council that, despite the strong polarization following the

suspension of coordination between the co-Chairs of the International Syrian Support Group and the escalation of the political and military strife among the various influential parties, we would continue to work with other members of the Council on the basis of elements that we believe reflect strong principles that take into account only Syria's interests. Indeed, we did so, over one month of difficult negotiations, based on those principles, working with Council members and in cooperation with our partners on this draft resolution (S/2016/1026), Spain and New Zealand. I am duty-bound to express to those delegations, their Permanent Representatives and their experts on Syria our sincerest thanks and appreciation. They showned a level of trust and sincerity throughout difficult negotiations.

We believed that we would be able to reach a very balanced view reflecting the principles that must not be affected by political positions. Our approach in that regard was comprehensive and took up all the issues on the ground. In our approach, we clearly called on all parties to the conflict to cease all attacks, starting in 24 hours, against Aleppo for seven consecutive days in order to allow humanitarian assistance to reach the city to save civilians, recalling that assistance had ceased in July. We also called for an immediate implementation of the components of the cessation of hostilities agreements on all Syrian territory in accordance with resolution 2268 (2016), which also calls for humanitarian assistance to be delivered to all Syrian people, in particular in besieged and not easily accessible areas.

Furthermore, we have publicly called for cessation of any cooperation between any parties and terrorist organizations that control large swathes of Syrian territory, particularly Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, now known as Jabhat Fatah Al-Sham. Cooperation by some parties with Jabhat Fatah Al-Sham/Al-Nusra began more than a year and a half ago, without any deterrent. Some groups have reached an unprecedented level of cooperation that cannot be met with silence. It is perhaps appropriate that I recall some of the sanctions that are in accordance with the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning Da'esh, Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. It is the only Committee qualified to classify terrorists, and it continues to closely monitor those developments in order to adopt future draft resolutions on a firm basis.

I would also like to call on the International Syria Support Group to resume its work, which was initiated by our brothers in Jordan a year ago. We thank them that and for participating in the ongoing efforts.

We also call for a resumption of the political process and negotiations on the transitional period, in accordance with the communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015) as soon as possible. Let me also clearly state that it is unacceptable for those negotiations to remain suspended. It is also unacceptable for us to remain silent with respect to those who hamper those negotiations, whoever they may be.

We were determined to put this draft resolution to a vote today even though we were fully aware of the complications surrounding the positions of some Member States regarding any movement by the Security Council on the issue. That determination was not based on political interests. Rather, it is born out of the strength of our conviction that we are right. Therefore, Egypt will continue in its approach. It will continue to use its political capital with all parties, including major Powers and friendly Powers, whether they are allies or foes on the Syrian battlefield, to respond to the pleas of Syrians, regardless of their affiliations or political positions.

We are not directly party to the crisis. That does not mean that we do not care. On the contrary, we are focusing on settling the crisis, not on fuelling it or benefiting from it. I would like to call on the conscience of the parties to the conflict — those in the country and those with regional or international connections. What you are fighting for in Syria — does it really justify having to see mothers and fathers holding their dying children? What is the victory you seek? What is the aspiration that requires millions of Syrians to seek refuge and mercy from strangers? What religion, what sect can still justify this level of bloodshed?

I would also like to address the Syrian people in all of their communities and faiths — whether Arab, Kurd, Druze, Yazidi, Muslims, Christians, Sunni, Shia or Alawi. Yes, we have been unable to impose a settlement or quick change of the situation on the ground that would immediately erase their tragedy. However, we have intent and perseverance. More important, we have goodwill and good intentions. What we want is to stand with Syrians, shoulder to shoulder, with every political tool at our disposal until a final settlement is reached and the aspirations of Syrians to freedom

and democracy in a united, sovereign State, safe from extremism and terrorism, are achieved. We make a promise to Syrians that we shall continue on a straight path that is dictated only by our humane conscience towards a brotherly people. We promise to fight any attempts to fuel the conflict.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand is bitterly disappointed that the Security Council was not able to come together today to adopt the draft resolution contained in document S/2016/1026.

The draft resolution, put forward by Egypt, Spain and New Zealand, represented only a small step. In our view, it was the minimum required for a credible response from the Security Council to address the situation in Aleppo and in the rest of Syria. It was a humanitarian draft resolution designed to reduce fighting and get aid to those civilians who most desperately need it. As is well known, New Zealand has been working towards such an outcome for many months. The Council's failure to act in spite of the graphic monthly briefings and increasingly urgent pleas from Staffan de Mistura, Stephen O'Brien and others is deeply damaging to the Council's reputation, and catastrophic for the people of Syria.

As I said last week (see S/PV.7822), our objectives in presenting this draft resolution are those that have guided our engagement on Syria since joining the Council, and that led my Prime Minister to convene a high-level meeting in September (see S/PV.7775). Those objectives were and are to reduce the violence, to restore the ceasefire, to allow humanitarian assistance to reach those in need and to create space for the resumption of political talks.

Egypt, Spain and New Zealand had been working on this draft resolution for over a month. We consulted extensively and took on board as many views as would allow us, or so we understood, to achieve consensus while still making a practical difference for Syrian civilians on the ground. I would note that the delegation with which we engaged most intensively and from which we took the greatest number of changes was the delegation of the Russian Federation. We circulated the latest draft text to all Council members and requested the Secretariat to put it in blue at 8 p.m. on Friday, 2 December. That request was circulated to all Council members. It is deeply disappointing that a trivial procedural point should be advanced as a serious argument for delaying such a draft resolution as this, against that practical background.

Today's veto is another indictment on Russia, on those that supported Russia and on the Council. Today's veto demonstrates to the world that for Moscow and Damascus our common refrain — that there is no military solution to this conflict — is a hollow fiction. For those countries it is clear that a military victory is precisely what they want and are actively pursuing, even if its cost is continued carnage inflicted on the Syrian people.

Putting aside the devastating outcome of today's vote for the Council's credibility, we must not lose sight of the fact that the biggest losers today are those on the ground who, instead of having a chance to restore small parts of their lives, will continue to be subjected to the bombing and blasting that have blighted their lives for so many years. However, we will not let today's great disappointment deter us. New Zealand will continue to work in the Security Council, in the General Assembly and elsewhere to continue trying to protect Syrian civilians.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We deeply regret that the draft resolution (S/2016/1026) submitted by Egypt, Spain and New Zealand could not be adopted. Given the extremely grave situation in Syria, it was and is the responsibility of the members of the Security Council to give their unreserved support to everything that would enable us to save lives. That is what France did today, alongside the large majority of the members of the Council, aware of the overwhelming responsibility that we have to maintain international peace and security.

The draft text submitted to us was not, by definition, perfect. It was the result of compromise. However, had it been adopted, it would have reconstituted a fragile ray of hope, admittedly partial and late in arrival, that would have allowed us to work, and work together, to save lives, put an end to the tragedy of Aleppo and seek the conditions for a political solution.

In demanding a total halt to attacks for a renewable seven-day period so as to allow humanitarian actors to meet the urgent needs in eastern Aleppo, we were not asking for a concession. It was the minimal response to the repeated demands from the United Nations and humanitarian actors, which for months have been relayed by members of the Council, beginning with France. It was the minimal delay necessary to

allow access for humanitarian assistance and medical evacuations under the responsibility of the United Nations, in accordance — it should be recalled — with obligations under international humanitarian law. We were only demanding that the regime and those who support it finally conform to the obligations that they have under international humanitarian law.

By delaying the negotiations as long as possible, and then opposing a very moderate draft text, Russia chose to remain deaf to the appeals of the international community and to continue its support, with that of Iran, for the efforts of the Syrian regime seeking to take Aleppo regardless of the human cost. That is the meaning of those successive vetoes.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, France has defended an unchanging position, that is, the primacy of a negotiated solution, given that a military solution is impossible, as only a political solution will allow us to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people, ensure lasting peace and combat terrorism. France is convinced that the headlong military rush by the regime and its supporters is not simply a moral fault but also a strategic error — a strategic error that, beyond Syria, endangers the international community as a whole. Without a political solution, Syria will remain what it is today: a devastated and divided country, prey to incessant fighting and the foremost bastion of international terrorism.

However, France is not resigned to the deadlock that we see here again today. As I have said, the only solution to the Syrian conflict is political. Nothing will cause France to deviate from that conviction. Nothing will make us deviate from the road map that was agreed to by the international community — a political solution based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), with the establishment of a transition authority having full executive power. That is not an ideological position; it is the only possible solution imposed by the reality in Syria.

We have noted that the limited-format discussions in Lausanne and Geneva have not made it possible to halt the current offensive. For that reason, France calls for the immediate relaunching of a credible and inclusive international dialogue that brings together all actors involved in the Syrian conflict to save the martyred population of Aleppo from destruction. France hopes that the initiative brought by Canada to the General Assembly demanding the stopping of all attacks can be carried out.

In such dark hours for Aleppo and Syria, which, if we are not mistaken, challenge the credibility of the Council, we have no right to give up. We have the moral and political obligation to take action, and therefore to come together to put an end to the tragedy in Aleppo and seek the conditions for a political solution, which, once again, is the only possible solution to the Syrian tragedy. That will be the essence behind all of France's efforts.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Just five days ago I sat in this Chamber (see S/PV.7822) and asked what it would take to stop the horror in Aleppo. Today Russia and its small number of followers have shown that they have no interest — none whatsoever — in answering that question. Instead, for the sixth time in five years, they have chosen to block meaningful action and hold the Security Council to ransom. In doing so, and much more tragically, they have also held to ransom the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children currently enduring hell in Aleppo.

They will claim that we made them veto, that there was not enough time for proper consultations, that we forced them to a vote for political reasons. Those are hackneyed excuses. The draft resolution (S/2016/1026) was first circulated over a month ago. And yet for most of that time Russia simply refused to engage, more content to support Al-Assad's onslaught against Aleppo than to negotiate with fellow members of the Security Council.

Let me pay tribute to the work of Egypt, New Zealand and Spain in seeking consensus on such a sensitive issue. They left no stone unturned, reaching out in particular to the Russian delegation. They put their first draft into blue a week ago.They amended it to take into account Russian views, and they put their final version into blue on Friday. And that is the version in blue that we have in front of us, dated 2 December. I therefore urge all delegations to avoid hiding behind hypocritical, bogus procedural arguments.

China's veto is particularly surprising. Despite repeated pronouncements against politicization and in favour of dialogue, China has chosen to side with Russia — a party to the conflict. Put simply, they have chosen to veto not because of a lack of consultation, but because of their long-standing, misplaced faith in a despot who has killed nearly half a million of his own people, who has sanctioned the murder of civilians as

they flee the bombed-out ruins of Aleppo — a despot who would rather reduce Syria to rubble than to negotiate an overdue peace.

I could go on, but instead let me ask Russia another question. What did it seek to achieve today? For the past 71 years, the Council has been responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Each and every one of us in the Chamber has committed to upholding that responsibility. And yet, through its veto today, Russia has once again blocked meaningful, credible action — action that could have fulfilled our collective responsibility. How does that veto serve international peace and security? How is it in keeping with the principles that we are all here to uphold?

Russia claims it is fighting terrorism and that its veto today is in pursuit of ridding Syria of extremists. That is pure fantasy. Blocking a seven-day ceasefire — a ceasefire that would have let aid in, that would have fed starving children — is not fighting terrorism. Continuing the indiscriminate bombing of civilians and attacking medical facilities is not fighting terrorism. Supporting a regime that uses chemical weapons and carries out war crimes is not fighting terrorism. Russia will claim that its intent is decent — humanitarian, even. But that misses the point. Many Council members have pledged generous amounts — the United Kingdom has allocated $900 million. But we all know that that money counts for so little when humanitarian aid cannot even get in. And we all know who is obstructing the United Nations and its humanitarian partners. We all know who is using starve-or-surrender tactics, and who is bombing civilians into submission.

Even if Russia will not use its influence to stop the bombing or permit humanitarian aid to be delivered, it is not too late for Russia and the regime to prevent even worse atrocities. Russia can still ensure the protection of civilians leaving eastern Aleppo. Russia can still enable the United Nations to protect those fleeing and allow the United Nations to have a role in planning evacuations.

The world and the Syrian people will not forget Russia's role in carrying out, and supporting the regime in carrying out, such heinous crimes in Syria. Look again at the faces of those left starving, bleeding and dying in Aleppo. They are not terrorists. Look again and change course. We had a chance today to help those people, to stop the bombing and let aid in. We have once again failed, but we must keep trying until we succeed.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief. My delegation voted in favour of a draft resolution (S/2016/1026) that we thought was highly inadequate. Uruguay understands that the solution to the crisis in Syria requires an immediate and unconditional ceasefire throughout the country. The draft resolution was very far from what we would have liked to have seen. Nevertheless, we could not vote against it because at least it could achieve a pause in the massacre. As for abstaining, there is no option between saving lives and continuing with the massacre. Therefore, we voted with full conviction for a draft resolution that I must say it is inadequate.

I have no doubt that currently in Syria very few people are worried about what time the text was put in blue and, for that matter, most certainly they will not understand how we could be worried about something to that effect. But in any case, what is very serious is that the Security Council continues to be unable to fulfil its role. We can ask ourselves what was the use of this meeting. Somehow, it might remind us of the Gabriel García Márquez novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, in which everyone knew that Santiago Nasar would be killed that day by the Vicario brothers but no one did anything to prevent it.

I believe that the difference here is that many have been working in search of consensus, although that continues to escape us. But I think that we must be persistent in our efforts to ensure that the solution to the crisis in Syria be a political one and not military — a solution that includes Syrians and is led by them. Certainly, it must be a solution in which the numerous terrorist groups that are constantly obstructing the pursuit of a solution are excluded from the political landscape.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Recently, the conflict in Syria has continued to escalate, causing a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in some areas and plunging the Syrian people into deep suffering. China expresses its deep concern about the situation in Syria and feels for the Syrian people in their suffering in the conflict. Under the current circumstances, it is all the more necessary for the international community to remain committed to the political settlement of the question of Syria. It must work together to push the Syrian issue back on the track of seeking a solution through peaceful negotiations and dialogue and to find a fundamental way out of the conflict as soon as possible.

Security Council action on the question of Syria should be conducive to the work on the four tracks, namely, a resumption of the ceasefire, political peace talks, cooperation on counter-terrorism, and humanitarian relief. The situation in Syria is complex, sensitive and grave. The parties concerned, such as the Russian Federation and the United States, are making diplomatic efforts to ease of the situation in Syria. The Security Council's actions should support and cooperate with the those diplomatic initiatives.

The draft resolution (S/2016/1026) that the Security Council just voted on includes concrete measures for easing the humanitarian situation in Syria. Council members, including the co-penholders, made great efforts to seek consensus. Those efforts could have continued so that the Council could speak with one voice to the outside world and avoid the politicization of the humanitarian issue. Action on the draft resolution while there were still serious differences was not conducive to the diplomatic efforts by the countries concerned, nor is it helpful for improving the situation in Syria. The situation in Syria is the result of multiple overlapping factors. The only way is take an integrated approach to seek a comprehensive, fair and appropriate settlement.

The international community needs to work together to ease the humanitarian situation in Syria. It equally needs to set its sight on the overall situation and continue to support the United Nations role as the main channel of mediation and push the Syrian parties to find an agreement that is acceptable to everyone through peaceful negotiations, under the principle of being Syrian-owned and Syrian-led. The Security Council should maintain unity on the question of Syria and speak with one voice. It must work together to play a constructive role for an early political settlement of the question of Syria.

Finally, I would like to ask the representative of the United Kingdom what right he has to distort the position of other countries. The Security Council is a solemn forum; it is not a place where groundless attacks can be made against the serious positions of other countries. Taking a responsible approach and abiding by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations are the minimum requirements for each and every Member State when participating in the Council's work. I would like to request that the United Kingdom representative put an end to such a practice of poisoning the atmosphere of the Security Council and abusing the solemn forum of the Council. Today is not the first time he has done that, and I hope that such abuse will not be repeated in the future.

Mr. Ramirez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again expresses its concern about the horrendous armed conflict that has caused a blood bath in Syria, and in particular about the suffering among civilians. We condemn the indiscriminate attacks, irrespective of who carries them out, against the civilian population and humanitarian actors, such as the bombing of hospitals and health centres and the practice of besieging civilians. In that connection, we condemn the recent attacks perpetrated by armed groups of the so-called moderate opposition against a Russian field hospital and its humanitarian personnel, killing two Russian health professionals.

Our country voted against the draft resolution (S/2012/1026) on the situation in eastern Aleppo because we believe that the text does not appropriately reflect the situation on the ground, in particular the threat represented by the Al-Nusra Front and its associated groups in the eastern part of Aleppo. We regret that since the beginning of the armed conflict, five years ago, some members of the Security Council, which are directly involved in the gruelling war, have continued to impose their own particular geopolitical agenda to the detriment of the people of Syria and the objective treatment of the humanitarian situation.

Unfortunately, the humanitarian dimension has been politicized anew, and the justifications and ingredients that triggered and fuelled the tragedy are again being ignored. In Syria, a terrible war has been imposed, and some countries have unflaggingly supported terrorist groups, the executioners of the Syrian people. The perpetrators of this horror even speak out against and offend those countries in the Security Council that do not give the green light to their continued aggression against Syria. I therefore fully support the views expressed by the Permanent Representative of China.

As we said on 8 October (see S/PV.7785), the fight against terrorism being conducted jointly by the Governments of Syria and Russia is the most effective way to protect the Syrian population from the terror and death that the terrorists are carrying out in the territories under their control in eastern Aleppo. A genuine threat exists in that region and is reflected by the thousands of fighters of the Al-Nusra Front and other

terrorist groups that are holding hostage the thousands of civilians living there and using them as human shields — all in breach of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This type of fighting by terrorist groups can be seen on all fronts in the battle, including currently in Mosul. This terrorist tactic cannot be used to inhibit a frontal attack on the scourge of terrorism.

The purpose of today's draft resolution was not to assist the people of Aleppo who are suffering the onslaught of war. Rather, it gave propaganda treatment to the humanitarian issue in order to frustrate the Russian Federation in its efforts to combat terrorism. Today, by voting on the draft, the Security Council, despite the views of several of its members, demonstrated its lack of unity on this issue, which is detrimental to finding a political solution to the conflict. Had there been a genuine interest in coming up with a compromise draft resolution, as was done in resolution 2319 (2016) on the renewal of the mandate of the Joint Investigation Mechanism, the Security Council would have been in a position to adopt a draft resolution that might have dealt with the complex situation on the ground. Today's vote is unfortunate, particularly when diplomatic efforts are being made in Geneva between the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group. We demand that the diplomatic path be followed.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that the Syrian Government has the full right to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity when threatened with terrorism from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front. Further, we should also keep in mind that the military operations under way in coordination with Russia are aimed at retaking the territory occupied by these terrorist groups. It is therefore a matter of maintaining territorial unity and political independence of the nation, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In the fight against these terrorist groups, it is clear that the full commitment and efforts of the Syrian Government to protect its own people from terrorist barbarism have been handicapped by external forces that have pledged to defeat the legitimate authorities of the country. For us, it is remarkable how the civilians of eastern Aleppo are fleeing terrorists who are trying to use them as human shields, and trying to reach Government-controlled territory where they find safety and humanitarian assistance.

In eastern Aleppo, terrorist groups are using these people as human shields, as the Islamic State has done in areas that it controls. It is using humanitarian aid for its own purposes rather than the undoing the tragedy that it represents for the Syrian people. We have insisted that the so-called moderate opposition be separated from Al-Qaida and the Al-Nusra Front in order to show its true intentions with regard to achieving peace through political negotiations. The opposition needs to join the fight against terrorism and cease to be part of the scourge as it has unfortunately been until now.

Of course, the solution to the conflict is not military one but political. That does not mean, however, that the Syrian Government relinquishes its responsibility to protect the people from terrorism and defend its own territory. We once again support the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, with a view to achieving a peaceful and political solution to the conflict. We call on the parties to commit themselves decisively to advancing the shared goal of peace and stability in this country, beginning with an effective withdrawal of all fighters in eastern Aleppo.

Finally, we support a negotiated and political settlement of this terrible crisis. Foreign interference in Syria must cease. The Syrian people are paying a very high price in defending its integrity and sovereignty and in defeating terrorism. The international community, and particularly the Security Council, must reach consensus and take constructive steps in order to stop the violence and re-establish peace.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Malaysia has repeatedly called for the Security Council to act more decisively on Syria. We therefore view this latest effort by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain as an attempt to assert the Council's authority and discharge its responsibility to effectively address the deteriorating situation in Syria, particularly in Aleppo.

The fulfilment of the draft resolution's (S/2016/1026) main objective, which was to achieve a ceasefire in Aleppo to allow for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance, is absolutely critical for reducing death and destruction and for saving thousands of lives in the besieged city, especially women and children. Also of utmost importance to my delegation is the fate of thousands who are facing the great risk of mass starvation. An urgent need for the activation of the United Nations four-point humanitarian plan to resupply medical and food assistance needs no further

elaboration, and the presence of medical personnel to treat the many sick and wounded is urgently needed.

Given the compelling humanitarian reasons behind it, my delegation voted in favour of the draft resolution. We have consistently pressed for alleviating the appalling humanitarian situation being faced by innocent civilians in Syria. We are therefore gravely disappointed that this draft humanitarian resolution failed to be adopted. It is a betrayal of all hopes pinned on the Council to alleviate the dreadful suffering caused by a brutal conflict.

We have spent hours listening to the heart-wrenching accounts of a humanitarian catastrophe, and with the Security Council's inability to act, do we have the heart to listen to more graphic briefings? What is required is actions to halt the fighting in order to pave the way for the delivery of the humanitarian assistance that the people of Syria are so desperately missing.

For the sake of these innocent lives we will not give up hope. We cannot despair. We will continue to support any initiative, be it in the Security Council or outside the Council, to see an end to the brutal conflict and destruction in eastern Aleppo.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine commends the dedicated efforts of the delegations of Spain, New Zealand and Egypt. Ukraine voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2016/1026), since we wholeheartedly hoped that it would have served the purpose of breaking the dangerous pattern of escalation in Syria and contribute to easing the continued intense suffering inflicted on the Syrian people. The draft resolution presented a rare if pale glimmer of hope in the otherwise gloomy environment around the Syrian issue in the Security Council.

It is exactly for that reason that we are extremely dismayed, but not surprised, by the fact that all these efforts were, in the end, derailed once again by the Russian Federation. It is a terrible shame to talk about procedures as if they are more important than the principles of the Organization and the Security Council, let alone the wasted lives of increasing numbers of innocent people in Aleppo.

If the draft resolution had seen the light of day and were adopted, it would have been a small yet meaningful step towards exercising the collective responsibility of the Council. It would have helped to prevent what has already become one of the gravest humanitarian tragedies of modern times. It is utterly frustrating that the counter-terrorism narrative will continue to be used by Russia as an alibi for bombardments of opposition forces and civilians in Aleppo and elsewhere. History will hold accountable those who did not let the Council discharge its duties.

We once again stress the urgent need for the United Nations to look into the alarming reports of the extensive use of incendiary weapons as well as of other indiscriminate weapons, including bunker-buster bombs. We firmly insist that those responsible for committing crimes against humanity, war crimes and other grave violations of international humanitarian law should be brought to account. I am sure that they will.

Let us also convey once again a clear message to those planning a retake of eastern Aleppo. The idea that a regime victory would lead to an enforced stability in Syria is a dangerous fantasy. What we are witnessing is turning Aleppo into another Grozny, and a Grozny scenario in Syria is possible but will never be sustainable; there is no military solution to this conflict.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): Abu Jaafar, a coroner in eastern Aleppo, recently told a reporter,

> "You know, it is not our job to bury people, but if we do not, no one else will. Where we used to bury one man, we now lay down entire families. We dig and we dig; it never ends".

We dig and we dig; it never ends. Today we had a chance not to end but to briefly stop the ongoing butchery in eastern Aleppo. We have failed because of a cynical act. With a wave of their hands, Russia, China and Venezuela showed that they do not want the suffering of eastern Aleppo to end. They have heard the cries of people who are pleading for their lives, people cowering in the basements of their ruined homes, people who are picking through trash to find a morsel to eat, and they said, "No, the Security Council cannot help you". Russia, together with its ally, Bashar Al-Assad, will keep bombing these people instead.

Today we will hear a lot of words from Russia; we have heard a lot already. But it is Russia's action using its veto to block a brief humanitarian pause that speaks volumes today. The raised hands that blocked today's draft resolution (S/2016/1026) to aid suffering civilians shows us everything we need to know about Russia's intentions in Syria, and Russia has no one to blame for its veto today except itself.

If it had been adopted and implemented, the draft resolution that Russia and China vetoed today would have established a seven-day pause in the fighting in eastern Aleppo. That pause would have allowed life-saving humanitarian aid to get into eastern Aleppo and allowed civilians who wished to escape to leave. This was no political draft resolution. Its purpose was, in fact, quite simple: stop the bombing, stop the shelling and get people help.

It probably should not even have been necessary to propose this draft resolution. After all, the Council has long demanded that the regime enable immediate and unhindered humanitarian assistance, and, of course, international humanitarian law requires that civilians not be targeted. The situation in eastern Aleppo is so dire that the Council has to demand that the parties respect the norms that all of us know should apply. Let me tell the Council what Russia and China have vetoed today in blocking this draft resolution and allowing the bombardment of eastern Aleppo to continue. They have vetoed the delivery of basic medicine to people who will die without it. They have vetoed the evacuation of sick and dying people who have no chance of surviving in the bombed-out hospitals and clinics of eastern Aleppo. The have vetoed the delivery of food to civilians who could starve to death and, in the case of vulnerable children, suffer lifelong effects from severe malnutrition. They have vetoed the lives of innocent Syrians. This action is a death sentence for innocent men, women and children.

We had no illusions about today's draft resolution offering a lasting solution to the fighting in Aleppo, much less in all of Syria. But if implemented, it unquestionably would have saved the lives of Syrian civilians. It would have eased their suffering, if only for a week, and it just might have created space for other, more durable solutions to emerge beyond a brief pause in the killing. Because of today's vetoes, now we have none of that.

So Syrians trapped in eastern Aleppo will continue to have to choose between two hells: stay put and be barrel-bombed, starved and mortared to death, or try to escape and risk being bombed or picked off by snipers on the journey or tortured or disappeared by regime forces.

Let me share what just one resident of Eastern Aleppo faced this past week. Modar Shekho is an emergency nurse. His brother was killed last Sunday, reportedly by an artillery strike. Modar's father then went out to search for a place to bury his son. As the father searched, he, too, was killed, hit by an airstrike. So Modar lost his brother and his father. Think about that: parents being killed as they look for places to bury their children. And finding places to bury the dead in eastern Aleppo is getting harder and harder. Cemeteries are full; they have been full for a long time now. People have started to dig shallow graves in public parks, rushing to dig so as to avoid the fate of Modar's father. They have even stopped burying loved ones in the daytime; it is simply too dangerous.

Russia and China's vetoes mean that we on the Council have failed to stop this destruction. History will remember that Russia once again, together with China and Venezuela, thwarted the Council's efforts to act to help the Syrian people for the second time in as many months.

The United States recognizes New Zealand and Spain for their tireless efforts to find a way here in the Security Council to stop the fighting in eastern Aleppo. We also greatly appreciate Egypt's leadership in preparing and advocating for this draft resolution for weeks and for speaking on behalf of the countries in the region most directly affected by the conflict to demand a halt to Russia and the Al-Assad's regime's brutal campaign, calls that Russia has blatantly defied in vetoing this draft resolution.

But in the face of this callous act, we must not give up. The civilians of eastern Aleppo cannot stop the bombs from falling on them or get their hands on the food and medicine they need to survive; but we who are not trapped there do have that power. So while Russia has taken advantage of its permanent seat on the Council to block today's draft resolution, the rest of us have an obligation to continue to search for other ways to pressure Russia and the Al-Assad regime to stop this devastating assault. And each time an approach comes up short, we must be willing to try another strategy to end the carnage. We can all fight harder and dig deeper to make sure that Russia never evades scrutiny for its actions in Syria, to make sure that we are never silent in the face of these atrocities and to make sure that we apply maximum pressure to bring this barbaric military campaign to a halt.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Japan supported the draft resolution (S/2016/1026) proposed by the three co-penholders — Egypt, New Zealand and

Spain — because we believe that it could have served as a tool to meet the pressing humanitarian needs in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria. As Japan has often emphasized, our most important priority is to take action that improves the situation on the ground, regardless of the ongoing political impasse.

It is deeply regrettable that the Security Council has once again failed to overcome its differences. The Council is ultimately responsible for addressing the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria. We have worked hard, and we are close to reaching an agreement on how to alleviate the protracted suffering of the Syrian people. I sincerely urge all Council members not to abandon our collective and individual efforts, and to resume our discussions immediately after today's meeting.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Regrettably, we felt compelled to abstain in the voting on today's draft resolution (S/2016/1026), which, if it had been negotiated with the sole objective of saving Syrian lives in mind, would have been adopted by consensus. A resolution designed to stop the bombing for 24 or 48 hours, or even seven days, only for it to be resumed immediately afterwards, is not what is required of the Council. Our consultations clearly pointed to the outcome we have just reached — a draft resolution that could not be adopted, since we did not reach a consensus. Angola has worked consistently to try to enable the Council to reach a consensus and will continue to do so. We should stand united in the face of a situation such as the one in Syria. I would like to make it clear that Angola will continue to be engaged in the search for a solution that can save lives in Syria by stopping the bombing and ending the war that continues to make victims of so many.

We need a lasting peace in Syria, not just in Aleppo, and I am sure that if the Council continues to act as it should — in unity, and with a clear goal — we should be able to reach that goal, as we have done in adopting previous resolutions on Syria.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): In deciding to vote in favour of the draft resolution (S/2016/1026) on the humanitarian situation in Syria introduced by its three co-authors, Egypt, New Zealand and Spain, the delegation of Senegal wanted to echo the numerous appeals and warnings made to the Council, including in this Chamber itself, to act without delay in order to prevent the city of Aleppo, and its eastern districts in particular, from becoming an unprecedentedly terrible tragedy before the helpless gaze of the international community.

Beyond the issue of Aleppo, what we are really talking about is breathing new life into the ceasefire throughout Syria by implementing resolution 2268 (2016) effectively, so as to ensure access for humanitarian assistance and the evacuation of those who are injured or vulnerable. We are also talking about finding the means to combat terrorism more effectively within the framework of a comprehensive strategy that respects international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. For all those reasons, my delegation reiterates its call on the International Syria Support Group, particularly its two co-Chairs, to make every effort to arrive at an effective, lasting truce that can give every chance to a credible political process under the auspices of the United Nations on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 and resolution 2254 (2015).

It is by coming together around the goal of peace and stability in Syria that we will succeed in effectively combating terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and Jabhat Fatah Al-Sham, formerly the Al-Nusra Front, which are unquestionably our common enemies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We deeply regret the vetos of today's draft resolution (S/2016/1026), introduced by Spain, Egypt and New Zealand. Spain believes that its text, which is not perfect and undoubtedly comes too late for the thousands of lives that have been lost already, would have made it possible to protect the civilian population of Aleppo from the worst consequences of the war in Syria and to re-establish the cessation of hostilities throughout the country.

As divided as the Council is with respect to how to respond to the conflict, it has continued to shoulder the responsibility conferred on it by the Charter of the United Nations. If peace cannot be maintained, we should at least be able to maintain respect for international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks on civilians and requires the regular provision of humanitarian aid. Spain, Egypt and New Zealand share duties as rapporteurs on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Over the past two years, we have often been tempted to urge a response to the problems in Syria in the Security Council, but have refrained in order to

avoid divisiveness and interference in the negotiations being conducted in other forums. We have crafted more than one draft resolution that has not seen the light of the day and have also participated in initiatives that ran the risk of creating conflict within the Security Council. This time, however, we could no longer stay silent, considering that the General Assembly will be holding a meeting in three days in order to debate a draft resolution demanding that the Council take action on the grave situation in Syria.

As my colleagues from Egypt and New Zealand have recalled, we convened an initial round of negotiations on today's draft resolution on 3 November. Despite the desperate situation of Syria's civilian population, we set aside enough time to help us work to reach a consensus. We have striven to find language that could bring together positions that were very different, included some that were fully opposed. We have incorporated suggestions from every delegation that wanted to contribute to drafting the text. We have done everything possible — indeed, perhaps, sometimes the impossible — to reach an agreement. We are sorry that our efforts have not produced results, but we do believe it was our duty to try.

The year 2016 is the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, who will always be remembered for his impossible dream of becoming a knight errant. With today's veto of our draft resolution, the Spanish delegation has awoken from its dream, but we will not give up. I would like to conclude by expressing our gratitude to the delegations of Egypt and New Zealand, which have shared with us our frustrated attempt to tackle the conflict in Syria. It has been an honour to work with both of them.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of China has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council has very important work to do, and I do not want to take up any more of members' time. However, with regard to the statement made by the United States representative, I would like to emphasize one point.

How did the situation in Syria come about, and how did the problems that other countries in the Middle East are dealing with reach the point where they are today? Where did they begin, and why? What has been the role played by the various countries concerned? The historical record is very clear. Every member of the Council is very well aware of that. It cannot be changed by distorting the positions of some countries on the Council. I have already explained China's position and do not want to repeat myself.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As far as I am concerned, the discussion ended somewhat unexpectedly for me when you took the floor in your national capacity, Sir. I wanted to say a few words after the voting as well. I will be brief, since we have discussed the situation in Syria many times, including just recently. We have already stated our position.

Some rhetorical, perhaps even polemical, questions were asked with regard to what Russia is trying to achieve. I will tell the Council what Russia is trying to achieve: Russia is attempting to find a solution — including through the Security Council — that would have a chance at success.

The initiative that Mr. Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State John Kerry discussed two days ago has a chance to succeed because it would lead to an effective end to the tragedy in Aleppo, which has lasted for many years — both in eastern and western Aleppo, which is actually one huge area with ongoing military activities.

I regret that the representative of the United States was so aggressive in her statement. Once again, it was clear from her statement that the delegation of the United States is somehow trying to disavow the initiative of Secretary of Statey Kerry. I hope that the Secretary of State will find the strenght to pursue this initiative, because it could lead to an effective and lasting solution.

I would like to say just a few words on the statement made by the representative of Ukraine. I thought it quite curious that the criticism that the representative of Ukraine tried to direct at Damascus could also be levelled at Kyiv, word for word, with its anti-terrorist operation in the Donbas region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize for taking the floor again but I must make a few comments on the illusion under which the delegation of the United States is operating with regard to my country's vote.

First of all, as the Ambassador of China stated so eloquently, I would like to recall the high level of responsibility that the United States shoulders in the origin and subsequent developments of a conflict whose consequences we are seeing in Syria. Interventionist policies in the Middle East — in Iraq, Libya and Syria — are among the main causes of the emergence of terrorism and the destabilization of institutions and States in North Africa.

No institution has been able to address terrorism because armies and other State institutions have been destroyed. In that regard, for a State to invoke the humanitarian situation that it has caused itself is an act of political cynicism. As a country elected by the General Assembly to be a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Venezuela is responsible for superimposing the elements of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations on any national or geopolitical interest. For that reason, in all of our resolutions and actions, we have firmly supported the principles of the United Nations to counter foreign interference, defend sovereignty and support peace. We do so without employing double standards or preconditions and we do so in all circumstances.

President Obama has acknowledged his mistakes. He announced them publicly when referring to the intervention in Libya. North American domestic political debate makes many references to the mistakes made in Iraq and Syria. What is regrettable about the entire situation is that in spite of this ongoing debate on Syria here in the Security Council, it is the Syrian people who are dying and the victims of a brutal conflict that has been thrust on them, in which terrorist groups have destroyed and devastated the entire country. That means that we have shared but differentiated responsibilities within the Security Council. Some countries have been directly involved in this conflict and could do a little more to achieve a political solution. That is why we believe in and support the efforts of the International Syria Support Group, whose two co-Chairs are members of the Security Council.

In addition, we cannot allow the political discussion and division in the Council on this type of vote to distract us from the main goal of the Security Council, which is to defeat terrorism. As a body, our responsibility should be to support a political solution. As stated openly, there are no military solutions. Of course, as human beings we would like to see a radical change in the humanitarian situation for the peoples of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, on whom great suffering has been inflicted as a result of the war. That can be achieved only through political agreement, the cessation of hostilities and an agreement to be reached by all parties involved to ensure that Syrians decide their own future without interference and interventionism.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States of America has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): As the origin of the Syrian crisis has been raised by others who just took the floor, in March 2011 protests against Bashar Al-Assad began in Syria. He responded with brutal violence, which dramatically escalated the situation, and then relied upon others to support him. The United Nations responded with numerous resolutions and communiqués, which all start with a ceasefire, and that is what we tried to do today. Any allegations to the contrary about the United States on this matter are absurd.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): For the first time in the Security Council, I was very glad to hear the Russian Federation make a comparison between Syria and Ukraine because that is the issue that we have tried to raise here in the Council since we joined. The methods used by the Russian Federation and its proxies in Donbas are exactly the same as those being used in Syria. First they intervene and then play the role of mediator.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The sponsors of terrorism are the ones daydreaming about Syria's downfall, just as they dreamed of burying Iraq, Libya and Yemen. However, I am sure that when they fall asleep they will have nightmares about and be haunted by Syrian, Libyan, Yemeni and Palestinian curses.

From the very first days of the terrorist war imposed on my country, Syria, the United States, France and Britain, which have been calling for action, became worthy of the title of the three musketeers who defend terrorism. If only they modelled themselves after Don Quixote, whom you mentioned, Mr. President, as he was a noble person fighting for human justice. Those three States, in addition to other States outside the Council — such as Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia — call for convening formal and informal meetings and informal-informal consultations, in various formats, and submit one draft resolution after another, in such a way that has pushed the United Nations to abandon its most important purposes and principles in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Through the erroneous practices of some, the Organization has now become a platform and a tool to defend, protect and promote terrorism in Syria and undermine international consensus on combating it. If that continues to be the case, we would not be surprised if the Governments of those States were to nominate terrorists — such as the Briton Jihadi John, the French Abu Murrah, the American Abu Huraira, the Turkish Abu Mekdad, the Saudi Abdullah Al-Muhaysini or the Canadian Abu Abdul Rahman, in addition to Abu Jaafar from Aleppo, who was just mentioned by the representative of the United States — for a Nobel Peace Prize. Or indeed, if the United Kingdom and French Governments were to name a couple of streets in Paris and London after Abu Mohammad Al-Julani, leader of Jabhat Al-Nusra, or Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of Da'esh, in eternal commemoration of their contribution to humanitarian action in Aleppo, the promotion of democracy and the protection of civilians.

We would call on the three musketeers today and ask them where they have been. Why were they silent? Why this shameful posture vis-à-vis the bombing of the Russian field hospital today, with the killing of two Russian doctors and the wounding of staff and patients alike by the self-styled moderate terrorists who are being defended by those States in act, deed and word inside and outside of the Security Council? That field hospital was set up to treat innocent civilians liberated by the Syrian army and its allies from the terrorists of Jabhat Al-Nusra, who had used them as human shields. It is a well-established fact that terrorists entered Aleppo in the summer of 2012, as two United Nations officials, Mr. De Mistura and before him Mr. Stephen O'Brien, finally recognized in their latest briefing (see S/PV.7822) to the Security Council.

The liberation of some 100,000 civilians in Aleppo, from the area members refer to as eastern Aleppo, including tens of thousands of children, was never a part of the plans of the three musketeers' Governments and their proxies. Otherwise, those Governments would have welcomed the achievements of the Syrian army and its allies, who are combating terrorism in Syria on behalf of the entire membership of the international community — now that the threat of terrorism is present in every corner of the world because of the reckless policies and the cheap political blackmail of those Governments.

I will not recount the suffering of our people in Aleppo under the practices of terrorist groups — nor, indeed, the horrific stories being told by those freed from the crime and barbarity of those groups. But I would confirm that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, supported by its allies, will not give in to the attempts of those three States and their proxies to exploit the Security Council to support terrorists in Syria. We will not let our people in Aleppo down. We will not hesitate in our constitutional and legal duty to expel terrorists from Aleppo and from all Syrian territory. We will not hesitate to save Syrians from the scourge and practices of those groups, in conformity with the principles of international law and in implementation of Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism — just like any State Member of this international Organization that cherishes its sovereignty.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and its allies have abided by all previous periods of calm because we value the lives of Syrian civilians. However, those periods were simply used as an opportunity for terrorist groups, supported and directed by their handlers — some States members of the Security Council and some not — to regroup their forces and reconstitute their terrorist fighters and to obtain more weapons and military, human and logistical supplies in order to carry out their crimes against the Syrian people. In that context, the question being asked by the Syrian people and the free international public opinion is this: Has the Security Council ever adopted a draft resolution to impose a truce on terrorists merely to allow them to take a breath and rearm?

In the face of such cheap political blackmail by the three musketeers, the Syrian Government, supported by its allies, will continue to spare no effort — as it has done since the very first days of the war against terrorism — in upholding international humanitarian law, protecting civilians and fulfilling its duty to assist all Syrians in need, including by recently putting in place safe passage for civilians in Aleppo to facilitate their exit. Armed persons were also given the opportunity to lay down their weapons in order to restore peace and stability to the city. In return, international humanitarian organizations and their officials — including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — who have cried tears before the Security Council, have to date done nothing to help the people liberated by the Syrian Army from terrorism in Aleppo.

It is now the duty of Member States of this international Organization not to fall victim to the attempts of some States members of the Security Council and outside to force through draft resolutions that only strengthen terrorism and promote it in Syria. No Member State is safe from terrorism. For those who hold high the interests of the Syrian people, either to alleviate their suffering or to reach a Syrian-led political solution, I emphasise that they must knock at the door of the Syrian Government. The address is known to all.

In conclusion, a permanent Member State of the Council, whose Foreign Secretary justifies the killing by the Saudi air force of thousands of civilians in Yemen, destroying that country, surely is in no position to make false accusations against others. Today the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom said that Saudi Arabia had crossed no red lines in Yemen and that the United Kingdom would continue to provide weapons and advice to Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen. That was the statement, word for word, from the United Kingdom Foreign Minister, in exact contradiction to what the world is witnessing: the bombing of hospitals, the killing of civilians and the destruction of infrastructure in Yemen.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.