



General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

35th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 2 December 2020, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (continued)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/75/195 and A/75/297)

Draft resolution (A/75/L.29)

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina takes the floor to address General Assembly agenda items 37 and 88, “The situation in the Middle East” and “Question of Palestine”, respectively. Argentina continues to believe that the only way to solve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is through negotiations between both parties to seek agreement on the final-status issues identified in the Oslo Accords: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security measures.

Argentina supports a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on the two-State solution and the 1967 borders, to be determined by the parties through negotiations, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council. Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace alongside its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Argentina also reiterates its concern regarding the persistent and continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and urges that their expansion cease. As the General Assembly has repeatedly made clear, settlements contravene international law, create obstacles to peace, undermine the prospects for a solution based on two States living in peace and security and thereby promote the continuation of an unsustainable status quo. The gravity of the situation was recognized by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016), the terms of which we fully reaffirm.

At the same time, Argentina condemns the indiscriminate shelling from Gaza of civilians in Israel, as well as all acts of violence perpetrated by Hamas and other armed groups. It is essential that Palestinian leaders sincerely address Israeli security concerns. In that regard, we recognize the right of Israel to act in its legitimate defence, while stressing the necessity for Israeli actions to respect their obligations pursuant to international humanitarian law, particularly taking into account the principles of distinction and proportionality.

Regarding the financial difficulties facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Argentina wishes to reiterate its full support for the Agency’s work, which helps prevent even further deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We likewise reaffirm the need for the international community to develop appropriate responses to ensure that the Agency has the necessary funds to ensure that its services can be provided without interruption.

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With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and in that regard rejects any unilateral attempt to modify that status, especially with regard to the Old City, which has special significance for the three great monotheistic religions. My country believes that the Holy City should be a meeting place and a place of peace and that free access to holy sites should be guaranteed to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Any attempt to negate or diminish the historical connection and deep significance of those places for any of the three monotheistic religions is completely unacceptable and undermines efforts to find a solution to the conflict by reinforcing prejudices and distrust among the parties. Argentina believes that Jerusalem is among the issues whose final status must be determined by the parties through bilateral negotiations.

With regard to the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position with respect to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, and therefore deem it important that a negotiated solution be sought to the conflict between Syria and Israel with a view to ending the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Finally, Argentina once again urges Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks in good faith, with flexibility and in line with international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, with a view to reaching agreement on pending questions regarding the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/75/L.29 will be taken after we take action on draft resolutions A/75/L.32, A/75/L.33, A/75/L.34 and A/75/L.35, submitted under agenda item 38.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 38 (continued)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/75/L.32, A/75/L.33, A/75/L.34 and A/75/L.35)

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/75/L.32, A/75/L.33, A/75/L.34 and A/75/L.35.

Delegations wishing to make a statement in explanation of vote before the voting on any of the draft resolutions are invited to do so now in one intervention.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I asked to take the floor on the draft resolutions presented under agenda items 37 and 38, the draft resolutions of the Palestinian package. Not only do those draft resolutions fail to promote peace; every single one of them is destructive to peace. The draft resolutions reinforce a false narrative of the conflict and further entrench the Palestinians in their uncompromising positions. They convince the Palestinians there is no need for them to negotiate because the United Nations will fight for their outrageous demands to be met — demands that include resettling millions of Palestinians in Israel and forcing us to give up sovereignty over our holiest sites. Such steps would cause the destruction of Israel as a Jewish State, and we will never agree to them.

Those draft resolutions not only embolden Palestinian rejectionism; they increase Israeli mistrust towards the United Nations, making the General Assembly irrelevant in facilitating peace. Why should Israelis trust the United Nations when the majority of Member States vote to renew the mandates of bodies whose sole purpose is to promote anti-Israel bias? The existence of those United Nations committees is a further stain on this institution's reputation. It is time the General Assembly realized that and stopped voting automatically to renew their mandates. Funding propaganda against a Member State is not only outrageous and shameful; it is a flagrant misuse of valuable United Nations resources, which should be used to save lives, not to perpetuate a conflict.

The peace between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan proves that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only with direct negotiations between the parties. They also prove that United Nations intervention is not necessary. In fact, the decades of failed United Nations attempts at ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggest that

such intervention may even be counterproductive. For years, the Assembly has voted in favour of the same draft resolutions. It recycles old talking points and tries the same approach, and the result remains unchanged. Perhaps it is time to try something new. I suggest that the Assembly start by voting against these draft resolutions.

Ms. Messenger (United States of America): The United States continues to take active steps to rebuild trust with our partners in the region by identifying their shared interests and moving them away from the conflicts of the past. Between the United States Vision for Peace and the Abraham Accords, we have made tangible gains in promoting peace, security and prosperity in the Middle East. The Vision for Peace is forward-looking and makes clear the United States commitment to promoting a peaceful, secure and prosperous future for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Despite those positive steps forward, we are disappointed, although not surprised, that the General Assembly has again taken up a disproportionate number of unbalanced draft resolutions that are unfairly critical of Israel, demonstrating a clear and persistent institutional bias directed at one Member State. The United States continues to oppose the annual submission of more than a dozen draft resolutions biased against Israel. That one-sided approach only undermines trust between the parties and fails to create the kind of positive international environment critical to achieving peace.

These draft resolutions recycle the tired habitual rhetoric that does nothing to advance the cause of peace. They also damage United Nations credibility, casting into doubt its impartiality. It is deeply troubling that the United Nations, an institution founded upon the idea that all nations should be treated equally, should be so often used by Member States to treat one State — in particular Israel — unequally.

As the United States has repeatedly made clear, that dynamic is unacceptable. We see draft resolutions that are quick to condemn all manner of Israeli actions but say nothing, or almost nothing, about Palestinian actions or terrorist attacks by Hamas and similarly aligned groups. Therefore, the United States once again votes against these one-sided draft resolutions and encourages other nations to do so as well.

The United States remains firmly and consistently committed to achieving a comprehensive and lasting

peace agreement between Israelis and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, draft resolutions like those introduced here today only just distract from making real progress on the goal we all share.

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

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/75/L.32, A/75/L.33, A/75/L.34 and A/75/L.35.

We turn first to draft resolution A/75/L.32, entitled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.32: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria,

Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Czechia, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Papua New Guinea, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay

Draft resolution A/75/L.32 was adopted by 91 votes to 17, with 54 abstentions (resolution 75/20).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.33, entitled “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.33: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia,

Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Eritrea, Finland, France, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao

Tome and Principe, Serbia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay

Draft resolution A/75/L.33 was adopted by 82 votes to 25, with 53 abstentions (resolution 75/21).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.34, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/75/L.34 and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.34: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Cuba, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, United States of America

Abstaining:

Brazil, Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Madagascar, Malawi, Palau, Rwanda, South Sudan

Draft resolution A/75/L.34 was adopted by 145 votes to 7, with 9 abstentions (resolution 75/22).

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/75/L.35, entitled “Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/74/L.35 and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/74/L.35: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Hungary, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Madagascar, Mexico, Rwanda, Samoa, South Sudan, Togo, Uruguay

Draft resolution A/75/L.35 was adopted by 142 votes to 8, with 11 abstentions (resolution 75/23).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers for explanations of vote on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Bogyay (Hungary): Regarding the Middle East peace process, Hungary supports the two-State solution, which has to be achieved through direct negotiations between the two sides. We hope that the parties will agree to engage in renewed dialogue in good faith.

We align ourselves with the explanation of vote to be delivered by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and its member States and wish to make the following explanation of vote in our national capacity.

Hungary has traditionally pursued a balanced, fair and constructive approach in its relations with Israel and Palestine, as well as regarding the Middle East peace process. In 2020, Hungary was the first European nation to welcome the historic achievement of normalization between Israel and a number of Arab countries, a development that does not impose any constraints on Palestine; on the contrary, the normalization benefits all, and we are happy to see that the Palestinian leaders have started to recognize that to be true.

We would like to see the same approach reflected in our multilateral efforts. We are willing to lend our support to any draft resolution that is balanced and fair to both parties and, most important, beneficial to all of us. But we are also ready to express reservations when we see that would firmly help to achieve a constructive and balanced approach. Our efforts should be concentrated on fostering cooperation and partnership in the Middle East and North African region instead of alienating key partners and each other by adopting often one-sided and unbalanced draft resolutions, which is detrimental to the peace process and our work here at the United Nations.

For that reason, Hungary cannot support the draft resolutions on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat.

Mr. El Eid (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The EU wishes to thank the Palestinian delegation for the successful outcome of our negotiations on a number of resolutions on which action is taken by the General Assembly. The EU welcomes the Palestinian Mission's decision to biennialize a number of resolutions under the agenda item "Question of Palestine".

At this point in time, we would like to put on record that with regard to all resolutions that are adopted during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the EU and its member States consider that whenever the Palestinian Government is mentioned, this refers to the Palestinian Authority.

Furthermore, the use of the term "Palestine" in any of those resolutions cannot be construed as a recognition of the State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Member States on this issue and hence on the question of the validity of an accession to the conventions and treaties mentioned therein.

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

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/75/L.29.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.29, entitled "The Syrian Golan". A recorded vote has been requested.

The draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in draft resolution A/75/L.29, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of the draft: Angola, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Oman, Palestine and Senegal.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway,

Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uruguay

Draft resolution A/75/L.29 was adopted by 88 votes to 9, with 62 abstentions (resolution 75/24).

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Republic of Moldova informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain; the delegation of Tajikistan had intended to vote in favour.]

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

Mr. Mazzeo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to deliver the following explanation of vote on resolution 75/24, on the Syrian Golan, which the General Assembly has just adopted.

Argentina voted in favour of the resolution because it believes that its essential character is linked to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of a State.

Likewise, I wish to make clear Argentina's position on operative paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not prejudice the content of this paragraph, particularly the reference to the line of 4 June 1967. Argentina believes it is important to move ahead in the quest for a solution to the Syrian-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, with a view to putting an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights.

The Government of Argentina therefore reaffirms once again the importance of a resumption of negotiations so as to seek a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation welcomes the adoption by majority of all resolutions under agenda items 37 and 38. By adopting those resolutions, Member States have once again expressed their strong support for the cause of Palestine, in particular the realization of the inalienable rights

of the Palestinian people and holding the occupying regime accountable for its crimes against Palestinians, in particular women and children.

The question of Palestine is the longest-running crisis of our time with no feasible conclusion in sight. After more than seven decades, the Israeli regime continues to violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and of other Arabs living under its occupation. As a result, Palestinians are not only deprived of their land and property while being forcibly evicted but are also subject to violence, terror and intimidation.

In the Gaza Strip, nearly 2 million Palestinians continue to live under a suffocating blockade, making Gaza the world's largest inhabitable open-air prison. That situation amounts to a collective punishment against the entire population of Gaza, including women and children, thus constituting a war crime under international law.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved solely through the promotion of a discriminatory and selective policy of support for the Israeli regime as well as simultaneously condemning the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation. Putting an end to more than seven decades of conflict and instability in the Middle East is possible only by resolving the Palestinian issue through the termination of the occupation, the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, ensuring the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and establishing a sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

In the context of the current debate, several top Iranian scientists have been targeted and assassinated in numerous violent terrorist attacks. The cowardly assassination of the martyr Fakhrizadeh, with serious indications pointing to Israeli responsibility, is another desperate attempt to jeopardize international and regional peace. In fact, the commission of such a reckless and criminal act is a clear manifestation of State terrorism, which needs to be strongly and immediately condemned by the international community.

Emphasizing that no number of terrorist attacks can hinder Iran's progress in the achievement of the successes in the field of science and technology needed for its socioeconomic development, the Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its right to take all necessary measures to defend its people and secure its interests.

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

I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Palestine): I wish to take this opportunity to express the State of Palestine's sincere gratitude to all the Member States that voted in support of the important resolutions — 75/20, 75/21, 75/22, 75/23 and 75/24 — that have just been adopted by the General Assembly under agenda item 38, "Question of Palestine", once again by a resounding majority.

We convey additional appreciation to those countries that co-sponsored those resolutions for their strong endorsement and support and express in that regard our special appreciation to Senegal, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for leading the Committee and its co-sponsorship of those resolutions; to Namibia, Vice-Chair of the Committee, for introducing the resolutions to the Assembly (see A/75/PV.34); and to Afghanistan, Vice-Chair and Acting Rapporteur of the Committee, for presenting the annual report of the Committee (A/75/35) today (*ibid.*), reflecting on the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people, the continued quest for a just solution and the Committee's ongoing efforts in that regard, in line with its General Assembly mandate since it was established in 1975, 45 years ago.

We renew our gratitude also to all members and observers of the Committee and to the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat for all of their efforts, advocacy and outreach in support of the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the achievement of a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the question of Palestine as a whole, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Central to all of the resolutions just adopted, both the programmatic and political, is that goal of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution that will put an end to the Israeli occupation, fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom, in an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders, and a just

solution to the Palestine refugee question, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

These are the pillars of a just and lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace and of genuine security and stability for both peoples and the region, pillars on which the international consensus as reflected in the vote today remains strong.

We must reject the offensive remarks by the Israeli representative against the integrity of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and against the States that have sponsored and voted in favour of those resolutions. This is not the so-called question of Palestine, as he flippantly stated; it is in fact the longest-standing item on the United Nations agenda. Once again he went on to insult the General Assembly by claiming that everyone in this Hall is "detached from reality".

On the contrary, what was discussed today in this debate is the reality, and what was discussed today are not so-called Palestinian talking points. These are the international talking points; this is the international consensus, the consensus that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to reject, obstruct, deny, belittle and attempt futilely to destroy.

The debate in this Hall, with the participation of countries from every region of the globe, is a clear expression of international law and its respect by the international community. The exception is Israel, which refuses to abide by international law, flagrantly trampling the Charter, international humanitarian and human rights law, and United Nations resolutions, clearly having gotten too accustomed to violating the law with zero consequences.

We reiterate what was stated in our intervention earlier today (see A/75/PV.34): it is high time for accountability for such systematic breaches of international law and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. Only accountability can change this miserable situation and give hope for a future of justice and peace.

Peace cannot be built on the basis of illegality and oppression. Peace is built on the foundation of justice that is international law and upon compromise, and no one has made a greater compromise for peace than the Palestinian people and their leadership. The hypocritical and degrading claim by the Israeli representative that this institution's approach has "failed" perhaps should

highlight even more the need for concrete action by States to implement the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and, of course, the Security Council to give meaning and substance to the commitments made, to give life to the international consensus and to ensure accountability for such illegal and contemptuous behaviour. We all know that it is that behaviour that is what is causing so much grief and suffering in occupied Palestine, what has undermined every single peace initiative and negotiations over two decades and what is preventing the establishment of peace and security between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and in the Middle East region as a whole.

We urge the mobilization of the necessary political will to change course from decades of inaction towards real action for a peaceful end to this conflict.

In closing, I wish to reiterate our deep gratitude for the principled support given to the resolutions on the question of Palestine and for the support and solidarity to the Palestinian people expressed in the debate and in the many messages of solidarity received in the past days from all corners of the globe in commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. These resolutions reflect the collective will of the international community to uphold the law as it pertains to the question of Palestine and ultimately contribute to a just, lasting and peaceful solution. For this, the General Assembly should be proud.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 15 (continued)

Culture of peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/233)

Draft resolutions (A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1)

The President: The Assembly will now hear the remaining speakers on this agenda item before proceeding to take action on draft resolutions A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

Ms. Lahmiri (Morocco) (spoke in French): I should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" (A/75/233), submitted pursuant to resolutions 74/21 and 74/23, which provides

an overview of the measures taken by Member States and the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

I reiterate my country's support for the efforts of the United Nations to ensure that a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue is the focus of the United Nations as a whole. I would like here to pay warm tribute to the Secretary-General for his selfless dedication, at the head of our Organization, to a culture of peace.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought home to the international community the pivotal importance of building a peaceful, stable and prosperous world. The pandemic has shown to what extent a culture of peace is crucial in order to bridge the gaps among and within societies. In that context, we warmly welcome the role of, and the actions taken by, the Secretary-General to keep the United Nations at the core of all international efforts to combat the pandemic.

The call made by the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire and all his other appeals, initiatives and strategies in various sectors have helped Member States in their national policies aimed at addressing this unprecedented health crisis and its significant economic, social and political ramifications.

A culture of peace is based on the promotion of a political understanding and a constructive dialogue among States on the basis of mutual respect and strictly in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the norms of international law, in particular the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. It enshrines the three pillars that guide the work of the United Nations, namely, development, peace and security, and human rights.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which is an active and responsible player in the community of nations, remains convinced that strengthening multilateralism is the best tool for arriving at global solutions to the major challenges of the twenty-first century, in order to bring about a more peaceful and tolerant world for current and future generations.

The Kingdom of Morocco is proud to have a long tradition of promoting intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue, as it is a hub where different cultures and civilizations meet and mix. Respect for cultural and religious diversity is an integral part of our

everyday life and the collective memory of Moroccan society. Morocco continue to work tirelessly in order to strengthen the values of peace, harmony and knowledge of and respect for cultural and religious diversity at the national, regional and international levels. In this we are guided by His Majesty Mohammed VI, may God preserve him.

Morocco is replete with Jewish holy and pilgrimage sites, in both large cities and remote areas. Jews and Muslims share the same holy sites and traditions, with no distinction based on faith or religious belonging. Similarly, the historic visit by His Holiness Pope Francis on 30 and 31 March 2019, at the invitation of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Commander of the Faithful, which was the second papal visit following the visit by Pope John Paul II in 1985, is clear testimony to my country's pivotal role in promoting dialogue, understanding and cooperation among various cultures and faiths.

Morocco attaches fundamental importance to education and deems it a key factor in development, promoting a culture of peace and combating intolerance, hatred and extremism. I would like to welcome here the work done by UNESCO to promote the kind of education that promotes a culture of peace throughout the world. The educational system in Morocco promotes respect, openness, diversity and human rights from the very early years. Textbooks and school curricula are continually reviewed to include the values of peaceful coexistence, harmony and tolerance. I would refer here to the recent decision taken by Morocco to teach Moroccan students Jewish history and culture in the Arabic language starting in primary school, beginning with the current school year.

Morocco has undertaken various initiatives, such as religious reform, updating religious education and the promotion of cooperation with brotherly countries, particularly African ones, in order to promote the just, noble and respectful values of the Islamic religion and combat radicalism and extremism of all stripes. Morocco created the Mohammed VI Foundation for African Ulemas and the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines and Morchidates, upon instruction from His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Commander of the Faithful. We therefore provide a multidimensional education to hundreds of preachers, both male and female, from many African, Arab and European countries.

The Kingdom of Morocco attaches great importance to combating all kinds of discrimination, xenophobia, hate and rejection of the other, including Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia. Morocco is proud and honoured to have played a large part in the adoption and implementation of the plans of action, documents and resolutions that represent the cornerstone of the efforts of initiatives of the United Nations to promote a culture of peace and to combat exclusion and discrimination of all kinds.

I refer in particular to the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites, the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities, the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred, and the Fez Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.

Furthermore, we were the driving force behind the adoption by consensus by the Assembly on 25 July 2019 of resolution 73/328, entitled "Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech". The resolution was co-sponsored by 90 States Members of the United Nations.

Religious leaders also have an important role to play in order to help address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Here the Kingdom of Morocco, in support of the call made by the Secretary-General in that respect, organized in May 2021 a high-level video-teleconference entitled "The Role of Religious Leaders in Addressing the Multiple Challenges of COVID-19". The meeting underscored the vital role that religious readers can play in order to overcome the pandemic and combat discrimination, stigmatization and misinformation of all kinds.

Furthermore, the Kingdom of Morocco, a founding member of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, participates actively in global dialogues conferences and is working towards cultural and religious understanding and enrichment, and it spares no effort in promoting a dialogue on peace that would allow for genuine synergies within the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the contributions and efforts made by the Alliance of Civilizations under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos to promote intercultural

dialogue and strengthen understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs.

In that regard, I would like to specify that because of the pandemic, the Global Forum of the Alliance, which had been planned for 2020 in Morocco, has been postponed. My country will be honoured to host it as soon as the global health situation allows.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Before I introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.36/Rev.1, allow me to say a few words in my national capacity.

Attaining a culture of peace that is both sustainable and universally acceptable is one of the fundamental struggles confronted by communities, societies, cultures, nations and civilizations. Throughout human history, defenders of peace have been trying to balance the conflicting instincts of humankind, oscillating between the selfish trait, which focuses only on vested interests, and the selfless trait, which pushes us to consider the good and well-being of others.

Our collective resolve to promote a culture of peace is all the more important today as we fight a global pandemic. As this deadly virus rages across the globe, it is feeding on insecurities, anxieties and fault lines within and among societies and poses a grave threat to peace. It is also unravelling the decades of work done to promote a culture of peace. More worryingly still, the tensions triggered by that regarding the sensitivities of entire communities in condoning offensive and provocative actions have emboldened those who seek to take advantage of such expressions of disunity.

While discrimination and acts of violence continue to take place against individuals of all religions, a particularly alarming trend is the resurgence of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia, glimpses of which we have seen in many countries during the recent months. Such vilification and negative stereotyping of the adherence of one of the largest religions in the world only perpetuates dangerous self-fulfilling prophecies, such as that of a clash of civilizations, and must therefore be addressed on an urgent basis by the international community.

In view of those concerns, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan, has repeatedly urged the global community and the United Nations to promote

tolerance and respect for all religions and beliefs and to combat Islamophobia. We hope that the United Nations and the Secretary-General will respond to that call.

On behalf of Pakistan, the Philippines and the other sponsors, I have the privilege to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, The draft resolution under consideration is an attempt to bridge the differences among religions, societies, cultures and civilizations by promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and mutual respect. It is also for that very reason that the General Assembly includes an item on the culture of peace on its agenda every year.

Due to the unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the sponsors decided to limit the discussions to a few emerging and urgent issues rather than the entire draft resolution. To that end, we retained the agreed language in the resolutions from previous years. At the same time, we thought that we would be doing an injustice to our mandate as the main co-sponsors of this draft resolution if we failed to reflect the current trends, such as the challenges posed by the pandemic, the rise in religious intolerance, xenophobia and hate speech, and an acknowledgement of the respect and significance of religious symbols.

We were encouraged to note that our approach was supported by the membership. We held an open, inclusive and transparent negotiation and worked closely with all Member States to reach a draft text that enjoys the widest possible support. We have reverted to the agreed language, where possible, and throughout the consultations we agreed to reword and dilute our initial proposals to alleviate the concerns of Member States. In our view, the current draft text accommodates the concerns of the widest possible membership, while keeping intact the original objectives and purposes set forth by the facilitators and agreed by Member States at the start of the negotiations. We once again thank all Member States for constructively engaging with us in that process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors of the draft resolution and to urge others to become sponsors before its adoption. We hope that also this year the General Assembly will reaffirm the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the achievement of peace and stability and the

promotion of a culture of peace by adopting the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Sharma (India): A culture of peace is the cornerstone of the foundation of a global order of peace and tolerance. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the promotion of a culture of peace has grown into a global discourse.

As Mahatma Gandhi said:

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

India has tried to foster that culture, *inter alia*, through tolerance, understanding, respect for differences, respect for other religions and cultures, respect for human rights and gender equality under the overarching umbrella of pluralistic ethos and democratic principles.

India is not only the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, but also the land where the teachings of Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism have taken strong root and where the Sufi tradition of Islam has flourished. Today every one of the world's major religions has a home in India. The great Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda said:

“We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.”

For millenniums, India has provided shelter to waves of those persecuted in foreign lands and allowed them to thrive in India. And our tradition of intercultural dialogue goes right to the time when ancient Indian thinkers had a flourishing dialogue with the ancient Greeks. India is not just a culture, but a civilization in itself.

That historical tradition of intercultural dialogue in India has drawn upon our quest for knowledge and a willingness to question, as well as a desire to learn. Thus, for instance, the Buddha urged his followers not to accept his beliefs without questioning them. The Indian Constitution, which declares our nation to be a secular democratic republic, also underlines both the freedom of religion and faith, as well as the duty of the State to inculcate a scientific temper among the people.

We appreciate the efforts of Bangladesh in presenting a draft resolution today on the follow-

up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/75/L.28), which India is happy to co-sponsor.

However, we find disconcerting trends in the world of today. At the outset, let me state that we fully agree that anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-Christian acts need to be condemned, and India firmly condemns such acts. However, United Nations resolutions on such important issues speak only of those three Abrahamic religions together. This organ fails to also acknowledge the rise in hatred and violence against Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. The shattering of the iconic Bamiyan Buddha by fundamentalists, the terrorist bombing of the Sikh gurudwara in Afghanistan, where 25 Sikh worshippers were killed, the destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples and the minority cleansing of these religions by countries call for condemning such acts against these religions also. But the current Member States refuse to speak of these religions in the same breath as the first three Abrahamic religions.

Why is that selectivity? Overall, Hinduism has more than 1.2 billion followers, Buddhism has more 535 million and Sikhism has around 30 million. It is time that attacks against those religions were also added to the earlier list of the three Abrahamic religions when such resolutions are adopted. A culture of peace cannot apply only to Abrahamic religions. And as long as such selectivity exists, the world can never truly foster a culture of peace.

The United Nations is not a body that should take sides when it comes to religion. If we are selective, we will end up only proving Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. What we are trying to build is an alliance of civilizations, not set up a clash. I call on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to act likewise and speak for all, not just a select few.

Pakistan has already violated the earlier resolution on a culture of peace adopted last year by this very Assembly (resolution 74/23). Last month, Pakistan arbitrarily transferred the management of the Sikh holy shrine Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara from the Sikh community body to the administrative control of a non-Sikh body. That act goes against the Sikh religion and its preservation and protection. Members will recall that the holy Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara finds mention in that earlier resolution. That resolution stands violated by Pakistan.

If Pakistan changes its current culture of hatred against religions in India and stops its support of cross-border terrorism against our people, we can attempt a genuine culture of peace in South Asia and beyond. Until then, we will only be a mute witness to Pakistan driving away their minorities by threat, coercion, conversion and killing. Even people of the same religion are not spared due to the encouragement given to sectarian killing.

In today's world, intolerance, hatred, violence and terrorism have almost become the norm. There can be no doubt that terrorism, which is a manifestation of intolerance and violence, is the antithesis of all religions and cultures. We are troubled by the increase in resources, financial and otherwise, that are being made available to violent and terrorist groups that misuse religion to justify and propagate their agendas. We need to be clear that abetting or condoning terrorism is like feeding a monster that will turn around to consume us.

Let us fight such negative forces together rather than separately. Let us build a culture of peace together rather than fail separately.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): As the Declaration on a Culture of Peace proclaims, a culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behaviour and ways of life based on, inter alia, full respect for the principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and compliance with international obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The very fact that the General Assembly has adopted a growing number of resolutions under the agenda item "Culture of peace" with the overwhelming support of Member States attests to the primacy and urgency given by the international community to the topic.

The annual resolutions entitled "Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace" and "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" continue to serve as universal standard-setting and guidance in that area of activities and cooperation. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the delegation of Bangladesh and the delegations of Pakistan and the Philippines, respectively, for submitting the relevant draft resolutions this year (A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1) and for their strong

commitment to the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/233) on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, submitted pursuant to resolutions 74/21 and 74/23.

We would also like to emphasize the leading role of UNESCO and the critically important work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in advancing the cause of a culture of peace.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue has diverse forms and continues to play an important role in advancing sustainable development, promoting cultural diversity and tackling the root causes of violence and conflict. Indeed, the culture of peace is interlinked with the objectives of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development.

A culture of peace is equally important in the context of addressing conflicts and post-conflict situations, especially those exacerbated by long-standing policies aimed at sowing dissension and inculcating enmity and hatred on religious and racial grounds, creating mono-ethnic societies and promoting hateful ideas of ethnic incompatibility.

It is critical that the United Nations continue confronting hate speech and mobilizing the world against hatred of all kinds, including through the implementation of the commitments contained in the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

The deliberate attacks on cultural property during conflicts and the destruction and desecration of cultural heritage and religious sites as a method of warfare and a means of colonization have become an integral part of a policy and strategy aimed at eliminating diversity and concealing or destroying cultural, historical and scientific evidence. More resolute and targeted measures are required to end impunity for such offences, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites offers an action-oriented framework and a multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach to preventing, preparing for and responding to attacks against religious sites.

Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the promotion of a culture of peace, while paying particular attention to encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue at the national and international levels. Among the initiatives put forward and successfully implemented by Azerbaijan, the Baku process has proved itself to be one of the leading international platforms for fostering dialogue and cultural diversity. The Secretary-General emphasized the important role of the Baku process in advocating for dialogue among cultures in his report on the current agenda item to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session (A/72/488). An integral part of the Baku process is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, which since 2011 has been organized biennially by Azerbaijan, in partnership with UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the World Tourism Organization, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

We welcome the growing international recognition of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, which, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General I mentioned, has established itself as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue. That high assessment of the role of the World Forum was further promulgated by the General Assembly in resolutions 72/136, 73/129 and 74/23. It is also emphasized in the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites.

The United Nations continued support for successful initiatives on the culture of peace and multiculturalism is essential in the context of building relationships, overcoming stereotypes and misconceptions and implementing development frameworks and policies. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue at the national and international levels has been, and must remain, one of the important avenues within the broader objectives of sustaining peace, peacebuilding, reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration. As the Secretary-General noted in his report,

“diversity is a richness, not a threat” [and] “investing in a culture of peace as the essential foundation for global cooperation ... means an end to injustice and discrimination” (A/75/233, paras. 3 and 7).

Azerbaijan is ready to continue its efforts towards promoting mutual understanding and respect for diversity and looks forward to enhanced cooperation with all stakeholders in achieving those noble goals.

Ms. Juárez Argueta (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this discussion on a culture of peace — a topic that we believe to be of great importance to both my country and the international community as a whole. We also express our gratitude for the report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/75/233), which contains valuable reflections on existing challenges and good practices at the international level.

As set out in the report, “in times of crisis, the shared human condition and values must be a source of unity, not division” (A/75/233, para. 45). Guatemala has given particular importance to the culture of peace since its initial conceptualization, reaffirming through its own experience that peace is humankind’s most precious asset, which not only is achieved but should be maintained and strengthened at all levels. The crisis brought about by the coronavirus disease has highlighted the interdependence among nations and the need to step up cooperation to tackle common scourges, such as poverty, hunger and inequality.

In that regard, Guatemala actively supports the fact that the United Nations should work on conflict prevention and investing in sustainable development. To that end, we believe that it is necessary to step up efforts to improve the peacebuilding architecture and the concept of sustainable peace. We reiterate the need to break down silos to achieve a coherent and integrated approach in the work of the Organization, which recognizes that peace and security, development and human rights are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. It is also necessary to ensure peaceful coexistence among societies through interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

We must curb hate speech, discrimination and intolerance and address the misinformation crisis by ensuring the responsible use of technology. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our blueprint for creating just and peaceful societies by addressing the root causes of conflict and violence of all kinds. That means that we must adopt a robust approach to inclusion, with a particular emphasis on integrating all sectors of society in combating discrimination, stigmatization and racism, as well as on protecting the most vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and migrants.

As a relevant contribution, we would like to highlight that Guatemala, together with the Kingdom of Morocco, jointly put forward during this session of the Second Committee the draft resolution entitled “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism” (A/C.2/75/L.20/Rev.1), which recognizes that the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics represent a commitment to ethical and sustainable tourism and a contribution to peace, development, prosperity and human rights as indivisible values.

Finally, we express our gratitude to those delegations that have put forward the draft resolutions to be adopted under this agenda item (A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1), including Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. We underscore the importance of their adoption by consensus, in particular the implementation and execution of their content. We recall that the pursuit of peace is an ongoing process based on the choices and decisions made every day. Today we therefore urgently need to play our part in history by empowering the whole of society so that together we can ensure a better future for this and future generations.

Ms. Sorto Rosales (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador welcomes the convening of this debate, which is being held in a context that highlights the importance of further exploring the notion that seeking peace should be a constant process given the new challenges that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic poses to the ongoing efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

El Salvador commends the measures adopted by Member States and the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Those measures are set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/75/233), which allows us to take stock of the progress made and challenges facing us in ensuring that we meet the commitments made since the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243).

In that regard, we reaffirm the importance of that instrument, whose adoption more than two decades ago meant the recognition of the universal mandate of the international community to promote a culture of peace and which remains valid in the light of the current

challenges. We therefore also reaffirm the importance of redoubling our efforts to implement the Programme of Action, which is an inseparable part of upholding human rights and respect for diversity.

In the same vein, we firmly believe that the support enjoyed by the resolution entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace” over the years reflects the commitment of Member States to a culture of peace and non-violence, which benefits humankind and in particular future generations.

El Salvador welcomes the actions supported by the United Nations to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. We particularly underscore the importance of increased coordination among the different pillars of the Organization and of ensuring comprehensive responses at the country level. Similarly, we recognize the importance that peacebuilding be increasingly grounded in an integrated approach and linked to the work being done with regard to a culture of peace.

In that regard, against the backdrop of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, we underscore the importance of renewing our collective efforts to promote a culture of peace and tolerance. In that respect, allow me to highlight some of my country’s efforts to strengthen both peace and tolerance.

In El Salvador, we are convinced of the important role of young people in all initiatives aimed at establishing the foundations of peace and ensuring its sustainability in future. For that reason, the promotion of a culture of peace at the national level is focused above all on strengthening the role of young people in El Salvador in society, in particular by encouraging them to discard the idea of violence as an inherent part of their everyday lives.

In that way, we are working to provide a better reality for today’s generations and future ones, mainly through a comprehensive focus on preventing violence and promoting a culture of peace through actions that allow us to minimize risk factors at the local level by promoting civil participation and cooperation. That is being done in order to integrate that approach into areas such as peacebuilding, education, the arts and sport, while benefiting from the positive contributions by young people in many fields.

Despite the encouraging progress made in the implementation of the culture of peace agenda, we must stress the fact that there are significant challenges. As has been highlighted, in addition to its devastating impacts on health, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, with serious social, economic and political consequences, as well as significant challenges for peace and security and the risk of provoking or exacerbating violence.

In that context, for El Salvador, investing in promoting a culture of peace means working to eliminate inequalities, which run counter to respect for human dignity, while creating opportunities for all. In the context of this decade of action, my country therefore calls for reinforcing the central role of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in our response to the causes of the crisis and of existing vulnerabilities in order to sustain the gains made in the area of peace in recent years.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our readiness to fully participate in all regional and international efforts to revitalize the promotion of a culture of peace for current and future generations.

Mr. Elgharib (Egypt): Allow me, at the outset, to extend our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/233) entitled “Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, submitted pursuant to resolutions 74/21 and 74/23. We commend the efforts of the various United Nations entities to create and promote a culture of peace and engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

As delineated in the report, the magnitude of global transformations has given rise to new opportunities as well as threats. While global trends in certain areas such as media, trade and technology have brought the international community closer together, there is no doubt that the events unravelling in many parts of the world are a clear manifestation of the unprecedented challenges we face. The gravity and complexity of those challenges require the combined efforts of the international community.

Despite the commendable progress achieved in the realm of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, it has nonetheless become increasingly apparent that there is a resurgence of

xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination across many parts of the globe. The unprecedented crisis of the coronavirus disease pandemic has simply highlighted and deepened those phenomena, which go against fundamental rights and freedoms and human dignity. They also pose a challenge to international peace and security, development and social stability. It is imperative to recognize that democracy and the rule of law are incompatible with any form of discrimination or intolerance. The proliferation of radical and extremist movements in many societies therefore represents an alarming trend, as such movements build their political and social platforms on incitement, hatred and social exclusion.

In that regard, the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue across and within societies is essential to discredit violent and intolerant ideologies. The rise in intolerance, discrimination, violence and negative stereotyping against persons based on their religion or belief and the increased incidence of religious hatred are also matters of concern. A clear manifestation of that lies in the insistence of some to defame religions under the guise of the freedom of expression, which undermines the values of tolerance, coexistence and mutual respect. Equally alarming are attempts by some to conflate combating terrorism with unjustified discrimination against individuals or groups on ethnic or religious grounds.

Our societies remain plagued by violence, extremism and terrorism. It is important to note that any attempt to eradicate such phenomena must strive to address their root causes, including foreign occupation, so that such challenges can be diagnosed effectively and the means of overcoming them determined. A comprehensive approach that is not limited to military and security aspects should be adopted. It should include economic and social development and encompass cultural aspects so as to rectify religious discourse, improve the quality of education and disseminate a culture of tolerance, acceptance of the other and peaceful coexistence.

Intellectuals, cultural leaders, the media and educators also have a great responsibility to confront ideas that provoke hatred, promote ignorance, reject diversity and exclude others, and instead spread the values of moderation and tolerance. In that regard, the media should play its role by raising awareness, combating extremist and destructive ideas and disseminating noble values. It is important to note that efforts should also be made to prevent the misuse

of modern technologies, mainly social media and the Internet, to spread incitement and hatred and to recruit others under the guise of false religious claims. We must ensure that such technologies are used as intended — to disseminate culture and knowledge and enhance positive interactions among peoples and civilizations.

In conclusion, I reiterate Egypt's strong support for efforts throughout the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace as well as interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Only through the concerted efforts of the international community and continued dialogue can peace prevail, and only thus can our efforts to eliminate intolerance, prejudice, negative stereotyping and discrimination succeed and endure.

Mr. Elhomosany (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to express my thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the culture of peace at a time when the world needs peace more than ever before.

I would also like to thank the delegations of Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines for their efforts in introducing draft resolutions A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1 — the two draft resolutions that we supported under agenda item 15.

God Almighty said:

“O mankind! We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most godfearing of you. Allah is All-knowing, All-aware. (*The Holy Qur'an XLIX:13*)

That noble verse from the Qur'an stresses the doctrine of tolerance in Islam, which calls for promoting a culture of peace and plurality among nations, building bridges across cultures and societies, accepting others and believing that diversity and difference are intrinsic features that make distinction of humans and societies.

Agenda item 15, entitled “Culture of peace”, encompasses all of the principles that underpin the Charter of the United Nations, namely, to maintain international security, urge countries to seek cooperation and find a way that leads to understanding, dialogue and non-violence.

That is why the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has sought to promote pluralism, diplomacy and mutual respect in its international relations, along with non-interference

in the internal affairs of other States. That is in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's three pillars — sustainable development, peace and security and human rights.

In 2012, my country established in Vienna the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. The Centre constitutes a historic beginning in establishing a meaningful and responsible humane dialogue that seeks to promote the commonalities among the followers of different religions.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also created the Global Centre for Combating Extremist Ideology in order to monitor, analyse and pre-empt extremist ideologies by combating and preventing them, in cooperation with Governments and relevant organizations. Its aim is to rank as the first international centre on countering extremist thoughts and fostering the culture of moderation.

My country also contributed to the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, which seeks to build the capacity of Member States to counter terrorism and extremism.

Today it is imperative for the international community to promote global peace through inclusive and integrated policies and preventive measures with a view to spreading a culture of peace. Those include instilling the values of peace and tolerance in future generations through educational curricula and the media. That would contribute to preventing and settling and disputes, strengthening economic well-being, preserving the gains made, achieving and supporting inclusive economic growth and empowering women and youth.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — alongside its brothers in Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan and a number of other countries — will soon introduce a draft resolution under this item, calling for the promotion of a culture of peace and the protection of religious sites. My delegation hopes that, once the negotiations are over, Member States will co-sponsor the text because of its lofty goals, which call for respecting religions and religious symbols, protecting religious sites from extremist and terrorist attacks and preserving the identity of such sites, in particular historic and heritage ones.

Ms. Charikhi (Algeria): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his report contained in document A/75/233, which provides an overview of the promotion of the culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue within the United Nations system. I would also like to thank the delegations of Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines for presenting the draft resolutions under this agenda item (A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1) and for their tireless efforts towards the adoption of these two draft resolutions today.

Algeria attaches great importance to the matter of a culture of peace. Indeed, the concept of peace is deeply rooted in the Organization's pillars of sustainable development, peace and security and human rights, and is enshrined in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which we must all uphold, including through respecting the right of peoples to self-determination and the principles of justice and international law.

The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as provided in resolution 53/243, is a milestone document in that regard. It constitutes a shift in our perception of peace — from being only an end in itself to becoming a process that requires the contribution and cooperation of all in order to achieve lasting peace.

We must therefore reaffirm our commitment to the principles of international cooperation, solidarity, understanding, tolerance and dialogue, which are needed now more than ever, as we all strive to recover and respond to the global pandemic and try to address other pressing challenges affecting the lives of many people around the world.

The coronavirus disease crisis serves to underscore the urgent need to leverage a culture of peace as a means of bridging divides across and within societies, as well as ensuring peaceful coexistence as a foundation for advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes, there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. As we embark upon the decade of action, the interrelatedness between peace and development should be duly considered. More action is needed from all nations and stakeholders in order to realize the culture of peace by addressing the root causes of

conflicts, including through decolonization, education, inclusion, social cohesion, combating violent extremism, eradicating poverty and fostering good governance and the rule of law.

Algeria has always been a devoted advocate for the promotion of the culture of peace and tolerance among nations. In that regard, Algeria introduced resolution 72/130 (see A/72/PV.68), adopted by consensus, to proclaim 16 May as the International Day of Living Together in Peace. The aim of that resolution is to contribute more to promote living together in peace, to promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence and harmonious cohabitation and to increase understanding and mutual respect, without distinction as to race, nationality, sex, civilization, language or religion.

Our effort here, in the United Nations family, is proof of Algeria's deep belief in the promotion of a culture of peace as a tool for regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to ensure sustainable development, and in the critical role played by all actors, especially young people, who contribute to the fundamental shifts that are urgently needed to achieve lasting stability.

At a national level, the Government has invested in efforts to implement policies of reconciliation, focusing on education and communication, and working with communities, civil society and other actors in order to build an inclusive, tolerant and peaceful society.

In addition, in May 2020, Algeria adopted a new law related to the prevention of, and the fight against, discrimination and hate speech. That law establishes a global legal framework to fight against that phenomenon, which is foreign to our society and the principles of Islam, in order to protect our society against those scourges. The law provides for the establishment of a national prevention strategy against discrimination and hate speech and in promotion of moral public life through spreading the culture of tolerance and dialogue by involving civil society and the private sector in its development and implementation. Its provisions provide for the necessary measures to be taken to prevent these phenomena through the development of education and training programmes to raise awareness and disseminate a culture of human rights.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that we are in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda and are laying the foundation for sustainable peace through a more holistic approach to peacebuilding. Algeria hopes

that the culture of peace can move forward alongside those complementary objectives and processes, with the conviction to continue our efforts to achieve lasting peace.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 15.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/75/L.28 and A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

Before the Assembly takes action on these draft resolutions, one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote or position on any or both of the two draft resolutions either before or after action. Delegations wishing to make a statement on either draft resolution are invited to do so now.

Mr. Sharma (India): I am grateful for this opportunity to explain India's vote before the voting on draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace."

The text before us is being considered under the agenda item "Culture of peace". However, it suffers from serious infirmities. I am referring in particular, to paragraph 10, relating to the volatile matter between India and Pakistan on the holy Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara.

Since the adoption of resolution 74/23 last year, the situation has only deteriorated. The Government of Pakistan, in a unilateral and arbitrary decision taken in early November, transferred the management of the Gurdwara to a non-Sikh body. We strongly protested against that action taken by the Pakistani side, as it runs counter to the spirit of the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara and the religious sentiments of the Sikh community at large.

We also received communications from the Sikh community expressing grave concern about this Pakistani decision, which targets the rights of the minority Sikh community in Pakistan. Depriving the Sikh community of its right to manage the affairs of the holy Gurdwara goes against the basis of the culture of peace. It is completely inappropriate to retain this reference in the text before us when the Pakistani Government has entirely subverted this issue. In fact, by doing all of this, Pakistan stands in clear violation of last year's resolution.

It is a matter of disappointment that the co-sponsors did not agree to our demand to delete paragraph 10, mainly because one of them wants it to be retained for its own domestic consumption, as well as to mislead the international community and divert attention from their record of hostile treatment of its own minorities. We call on them to immediately drop this paragraph from the text and stop politicizing the matter. United Nations resolutions cannot be weapons for settling bilateral scores.

We call on the Government of Pakistan to stop the hatred, harassment, conversion and killing of its minorities before it proceeds to co-sponsor a draft resolution on the culture of peace. If the draft resolution cannot accommodate a matter of importance to India, we have no option but to abstain in the voting if it is put to the vote. We will disassociate ourselves from the draft resolution, as the matter is referred to in paragraph 10 and strikes at the very root of the draft resolution, which is relevant to fostering a culture of peace, both in South Asia and the rest of the world. Pakistan's actions reflect anything but that.

Mr. Meirelles Reis Sotero de Menezes (Brazil): This explanation of vote concerns the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.36/Rev.1, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace".

Brazil has been a supporter of the core messages of the draft resolution since a resolution on this theme was first presented, a decade and a half ago. For Brazil, fostering dialogue among members of different cultures and religions is an essential condition for lasting peace, stability and development. But interreligious and intercultural dialogue is more than sound public policy — it is an integral part of our identity as a nation. Interfaith and intercultural relations in Brazil are, by and large, marked by open dialogue and respect. Our society is a melting pot of different cultures and beliefs. Our social fabric was woven over centuries with strands from every continent.

We are a diverse country and proudly so. Those values inspire our foreign policy, and any international initiative that promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogue can count on our wholehearted support. That being said, we must also reiterate that freedom of expression is an indispensable condition for such dialogue. For any exchange to be truly democratic and

meaningful, it must be free from undue limitations and preconditions.

The notion that, in order to foster dialogue and protect religious freedom, we must curtail or amend the right of religious freedom or freedom of expression as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is extremely troubling. Equally unfounded is the conception of an inescapable causal link between supposedly disrespectful conduct and acts of violent extremism.

Brazil condemns all forms of violence related to the expression of opinions and rejects any propositions suggesting that victims are in any way responsible for the violence they suffer. While the draft resolution before us today does not include text in that vein, similar proposals made in the negotiation process made it needlessly divisive and protracted, extending it well beyond its expected conclusion.

We are also disappointed that new and redundant text on the rights and duties associated with the exercise of freedom of expression has been included in the twenty-third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution, which weakens its overall balance.

In the coming years, the General Assembly will be better served by examining the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue on a proactive constructive basis solidly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other foundational documents.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States to explain our position on the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

The EU is a strong supporter of the freedom of religion or belief and actively encourages and supports interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. Those values are at the core of the EU. The EU has major concerns about the substance of the text before us today. We regret that, in many ways, it duplicates and seeks to distort, in a selective manner, the provisions of two draft resolutions recently adopted by the Third Committee and soon to be considered by the General Assembly.

The first draft resolution is on freedom of religion or belief (A/75/478/Add.2, draft resolution XIV); the second draft resolution is on combating intolerance,

negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief (A/75/478/Add.2, draft resolution XIII), which has been shaped over the years with the involvement of the main sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

We see no need for draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1 to address the same issues. The draft resolution also includes several new references not included in previous years, despite the call to avoid new substantive language during this session of the General Assembly due to the coronavirus disease. The new language includes a reference to a statement by the spokesperson of the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which we believe is misleading with respect to the right of everyone to exercise their freedom of expression, including with respect to religion and — despite its name — contains negative and exclusive language that does not correspond with the title of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution also draws attention to future and unfinished endeavours, thereby taking the focus away from tangible achievements and adopted documents and negatively impacting efforts to advance interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Throughout the negotiations, the proposals put forward by the EU had the following objectives: to safeguard important human rights, such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief against attempts to curtail or redefine them; to stress that the freedom of religion or belief, including the right not to believe and to change one's religion or belief, belongs to the individual; to refute the notion that religions or belief systems as such can be insulted and to reject the idea that religious symbols as such have sacred value.

We also have to express our concerns about how the process was handled by the facilitators. There were clear duplications with another draft resolution on safeguarding religious sites that contains identical provisions, without any explanation being offered. The process, despite substantive additions, started very late and the timetable for the negotiations was too rushed, not leaving sufficient time for proper reflection. That could have been handled in a more constructive and respectful way. Overall, there was little willingness to accommodate the concerns expressed by the EU and

others, despite our sincere efforts to ensure a balanced outcome respectful of human rights.

The EU supports all efforts to promote tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and religious pluralism. We believe that the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace should be consensual in character and enjoy the widest possible support. We deeply regret both the process leading to action on the draft resolution and the attempt to curtail fundamental freedoms, starting with the freedom of expression and the right to criticize religions or beliefs. With those clear reservations, the EU and its member States, some of them former co-sponsors of the draft resolution, will abstain in the voting.

Ms. Kaczmarek (Poland): Poland takes the floor to give its explanation of vote on the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.36/Rev.1.

Poland shares the concerns expressed by the observer of the European Union (EU) about the problematic substantive parts of the draft resolution. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the EU in that regard.

We regret this year's limited negotiations timeline and the fact that our primary concerns were not reflected in the text. We continue to underline that freedom of religion or belief belongs to individuals as rights holders, who may exercise that right either in the community, including as religious minorities, with others or individually.

We also oppose the emphasis on future and diverse texts in the draft resolution, which takes the focus away from tangible achievements and adopted documents, thereby negatively impacting efforts to advance interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

As a former sponsor of the draft resolution, we regret that the positive evolution of this text, which we have observed in previous years, has been put on hold. We hope that negative trend will be reversed next year. We also hope that the co-facilitators will look positively on our suggestions next year, allowing us to return to the group of co-sponsors, as we remain a staunch supporter of the freedom of religion or belief and interreligious dialogue.

We believe that, in the face of the dangers posed by the pandemic today, it is even more important that the global community show unity and redouble its

collective efforts to secure religious rights. Therefore, while unable to support the text of the draft resolution, it is Poland's sincere hope that we can reach compromise with the facilitators on this important topic while negotiating future texts and continue cooperation with respect and goodwill.

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

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.28, entitled "Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.28: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Finland, the Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Tuvalu, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.28?

Draft resolution A/75/L.28 was adopted (resolution 75/25).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1: Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Eritrea, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay,

Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Draft resolution A/75/L.36/Rev.1 was adopted by 90 votes to none, with 52 abstentions (resolution 75/26).

The President: Before I give the floor to delegations in explanation of position or vote on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Messenger (United States of America): The United States delegation would like to offer an explanation of position on resolution 75/25, entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”, as well as an explanation of vote on resolution 75/26, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, which were just adopted.

With regard to resolution 75/25, the United States strongly believes in encouraging a culture of peace through the promotion of justice, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as by rejecting violence and addressing the root causes of conflict.

We note that, as of 31 December 2018, the United States withdrew from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and is no longer a party to it. In joining the consensus on resolution 75/25, we refer members to our statement of 18 November on our position with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That concludes our explanation of position on resolution 75/25.

Turning to our explanation of vote on resolution 75/26, the United States firmly supports efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. We thank the Philippines and Pakistan for their initiative in presenting the text on an important topic that is of key interest to all United Nations delegations.

We would like to take this opportunity to explain our decision to abstain and to clarify some important points. We note that recent years have marked a growing departure from previous approaches, including the approach established in Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 and the Istanbul Process, which are widely supported and offer a comprehensive road map to combating religious intolerance, while protecting the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief. We have concerns about the potential for the further erosion of such consensus approaches in this and other resolutions that have been presented at the General Assembly.

The United States strongly supports the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief. We oppose any attempts to unduly limit the exercise of those fundamental freedoms. In that context, we continue to have strong reservations about paragraph 13 of resolution 75/26, in which the text suggests that the protections for the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief are at odds with one another. We strongly believe that protecting the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of expression promotes a mutual respect and pluralism that are essential to human dignity and a robust civil society.

We firmly believe that all people should be free to choose and practice their faith based on the persuasion of the mind and heart. Freedom of religion plays an important societal role and is crucial to the creation of tolerant and respectful societies. Those two freedoms are mutually reinforcing, and both must be respected in order to achieve mutual respect and meaningful interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Rather than seek restrictions to expression to deal with intolerance or hate speech, the United States advocates for robust protections for speech, as well as the enforcement of appropriate legal regimes that deal with discriminatory acts and hate crimes. We remind Member States that — as recognized in the Istanbul Process — the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue

at the local, national and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred and violence. The United States strongly believes in working together to build a more secure and peaceful world through the promotion of justice, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

With respect to the invocation of moderation in paragraph 12, we are concerned that the implementation of moderation-focused programmes and policies could be subject to abuse. In particular, we are concerned that such programmes and policies could undermine the enjoyment of freedoms of expression and thought, conscience and religion or belief.

We also note that, as of 31 December 2018, the United States withdrew from UNESCO and is no longer a UNESCO member State. We refer members to our statement of 18 November on our position with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nevertheless, we reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the Philippines and Pakistan in presenting a resolution on interreligious dialogue. The United States remains committed to working with Member States to promote tolerance and understanding.

Mr. Mazzeo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina voted in favour of resolution 75/26, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, because we believe that dialogue among religions and cultures can contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Argentina has the greatest respect for religious freedoms and has adopted an approach that goes above and beyond mere tolerance and promotes understanding and mutual respect among those with theistic beliefs, non-theistic beliefs, such as those of some indigenous people, and atheistic beliefs. Religious freedom refers to a broad range of beliefs, encompassing institutionalized religions, cults, beliefs, popular observances and specific world views.

The freedom of religion or belief, the freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They therefore play an important role in combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.

In that regard, in his report contained in document A/HRC/40/58, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief indicated that international human rights law compels States to adopt a moderate approach when addressing the tensions between the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief. That approach must be based on limitation criteria that recognize the rights of all persons to the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief, regardless of whether they are critical of opinions, ideas, doctrines or beliefs or whether such expression shocks, offends or disturbs others, provided that it does not extend to promoting religious hatred or incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Therefore, we note with concern the fact that resolution 75/26 places an unnecessary and counterproductive emphasis on restrictions of the right to freedom of expression, in particular in its twenty-third preambular paragraph and paragraph 13.

Finally, while we thank the facilitators, Pakistan and the Philippines, for their efforts to bring delegations closer together in their positions, a more extensive and predictable timetable for negotiations would have been preferable and would have allowed proposals to be considered in greater detail.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan would like to offer the following explanation of vote on resolution 75/26, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, which was just adopted.

Azerbaijan voted in favour of the resolution and welcomes its adoption with the overwhelming support of Member States. We regret that, for the first time since 2004, the General Assembly was prevented from adopting the resolution by consensus. We also regret that we could not join other Member States in co-sponsoring the resolution.

Our position on the event referred to in the thirty-first preambular paragraph was explained in detail in the statement delivered by the delegation of Azerbaijan at the plenary meeting of the General Assembly held on 15 April 2019 (see A/73/PV.75). However, Azerbaijan fully supports and shares the main objectives of resolution 75/26 and subscribes to its content, purpose and philosophy. We are grateful to the delegations of Pakistan and the Philippines for their efforts and impeccable professionalism.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine would like to make the following explanation of vote on resolution 75/26 “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, which was just adopted.

Ukraine acknowledges the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the purposes of peace and has always been a part of international efforts to that end. In that regard, Ukraine does not support the idea of the inclusion, in the text of the resolution, of the reference to the intention of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to hold, in 2022 in the Russian Federation, the World Conference of Heads of State, Parliamentarians and Representatives of the World Religions on Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue for the Benefit of Peace and Mankind.

Regrettably, the Russian Federation attempts to make all international events that it hosts serve the goal of whitewashing its aggressive policies against sovereign States and its repressive practices in occupied areas, including in the religious and cultural domains. The ongoing pressure exerted against religious communities is a sad reality for people in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine today.

The toolbox includes frequent police raids; the demolition of, and eviction from, buildings dedicated to religion; new registration requirements that have affected legal status and property rights; and threats against, and persecution of, those belonging to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Protestant evangelical communities, mosques and Muslim religious schools, as well as Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Dozens of peaceful Muslims have been convicted under trumped up charges of allegedly belonging to Islamic organizations.

It is also worth noting that the challenging circumstances of the coronavirus disease pandemic make it of no real value to refer to the preparedness for an event due to take place in almost two years. Moreover, no credible information of preparatory work already done that the General Assembly could acknowledge has been provided.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I take the floor to explain the vote of Armenia on resolution 75/26, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, which was just adopted.

As a country situated at the historical crossroads of different civilizations, Armenia has cultivated deeply rooted traditions of coexistence with, and respect towards, other cultures and religions. Armenia preserves a rich cultural heritage, including a Hellenistic-era temple, some of the oldest Christian churches and monasteries in the world, a Jewish synagogue, an eighteenth-century mosque in the very centre of our capital, Yerevan, and the world's largest Yazidi temple.

The protection of religious and ethnic groups from identity-based hate crimes is a long-standing priority for Armenia in international forums. Our objection to the thirty-sixth preambular paragraph of the resolution, which refers to an event entitled the "World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue", organized biennially by Azerbaijan, is based on the fact that the country hosting the event continuously advances the policy of organizing various international forums to distract the attention of the international community from the dire human rights situation in that country, its promotion of anti-Armenian hatred and its destruction of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage.

It would be erroneous to think that intercultural and interreligious dialogue is possible under conditions of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and the silencing of dissenting voices. The event referred to in resolution 75/26 is continuously misused by its host country, which seeks to turn it into an instrument of propaganda. We believe that, while organizing international events on intercultural dialogue and the promotion of peace, due regard should also be given to the record of the host country in terms of adherence to its obligations under international human rights law, as well as the protection of cultural heritage of historical and religious significance.

Armenia therefore disassociates itself from the thirty-sixth preambular paragraph of resolution 75/26, which contains a reference to the above-mentioned event.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks Pakistan and the Philippines for their work as co-facilitators of resolution 75/26, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace", which was just adopted, in particular for having convened multiple rounds of negotiation and for their flexibility

in taking into consideration the concerns expressed by delegations and the language proposed.

Mexico voted in favour of resolution 75/26 as a reflection of the constructive spirit and tolerance with which we participated in the consultations on the resolution. We therefore wish to express our surprise at the abrupt way the consultations were suspended and the premature way the resolution was presented. The themes of the resolution, which are in themselves delicate issues, are worthy of careful consideration and reflection. Further consultations could have allowed us to forge language that would have been adopted without a vote by the General Assembly.

Mexico hopes to continue discussions on this thematic topic in a transparent, constructive and inclusive manner to ensure that the opinions of all are taken into account and new agreements can be reached for the benefit of multilateral solutions, which the General Assembly must always seek.

Mexico reiterates its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the international rule of law and the promotion of dialogue and international cooperation. That commitment is the basis for a safer and more peaceful world.

Mr. Ham Sang-Wook (Republic of Korea): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 75/26, entitled "Promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace".

We note with appreciation that the facilitators made great efforts to accommodate the concerns of the widest possible membership. However, we believe that there was still room for improvement in that regard. Indeed, it is regrettable that we could not reach consensus on a resolution that to date has been adopted by consensus.

We voted in favour of resolution 75/26 based on the understanding that tolerance and respect for religion and belief should be upheld. Nevertheless, my Government is of the view that the right to freedom of opinion and expression is one of the fundamental human rights and should not be compromised. My delegation will continue to constructively engage with the international community to ensure that the right to freedom of opinion and expression is fully respected.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted.

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

Mr. Amba (Pakistan): My delegation is obliged to take the floor in response to the statement made by the representative of India a short while ago. We categorically reject India's wilful propaganda against the Katarpur corridor. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, took that landmark initiative last year in the openly hostile environment created by the belligerence and warmongering of our eastern neighbour solely to promote interreligious and intercultural harmony in our region.

We knew full well that it was beyond the capacity of India's current regime to comprehend gestures of peace and interreligious harmony, but we still decided to open the Katarpur corridor to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, which was constructed as the world's biggest Sikh gurdwara; we welcomed members of the Sikh community from all over the world; and we granted them visa-free access to one of their holiest sites.

We are not surprised that India continues to politicize that peaceful initiative by coming up with baseless and fallacious propaganda. Insinuations about transferring the affairs of the Katarpur-Gurdwara Darbar Sahib corridor are aimed at creating religious disharmony, casting mischievous aspersions against the interests of the Sikh community and diverting attention from India's own reprehensible human rights violations against minorities in India. They have also been rejected by the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

While Pakistan is opening doors to the Sikh community and gaining their gratitude and appreciation all over the world, Hindutva zealots are following a well-planned strategy to eradicate their identity. I will not go into the history, but one only has to follow what is happening around Delhi these days to find out how the Fascist Indian regime treats its minorities, including Muslims and Sikhs.

As far as terrorism is concerned, it is rather rich for a country that uses terrorism as an instrument of State policy against all its neighbours to point fingers at others. Only recently, Pakistan shared with the world a detailed and extensive account of the terrorist and

subversive activities that are planned, sponsored and endorsed by the Indian regime to destabilize our region.

We have also caught red-handed Indian agents who have confessed to committing those activities, such as Commander Kulbhushan. Since Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh zealots cannot realize their dream of Akhund Bharat, they try to enlist, train, fund and sponsor terrorists to do their bidding and further their destabilizing agenda in all of their neighbouring countries. Instead of crying foul all the time, India would be well advised to take steps to protect its minorities and their places of worship, rather than feeding misleading and sham concerns about the rights of minorities elsewhere.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): There is nothing surprising in the inadequate, irrelevant and unethical comments just made by the representative of Armenia. His allegations once again eloquently confirm that culture, peace and dialogue are alien to Armenia. The representative of Armenia went so far as to lecture others about principles and values that his Government has consistently disregarded and opposed.

The purpose of Armenia's allegations is evidently to camouflage its own racist policy and hate crimes. It is Armenia whose President invented the notion of ethnic incompatibility. It is Armenia that has become uniquely monoethnic and has methodically and systematically pursued a policy of destroying any traces of other cultures in the territories under its control. It is Armenia that is responsible for numerous war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. It is in Armenia that international terrorists and war criminals are national heroes.

With regard to the comments on human rights and democracy, the Armenian authorities should first look closely at themselves rather than blame other countries. Indeed, all successive Governments in Armenia, including the current one, have come to power violently and have resorted to the cruellest possible methods of dealing with political opponents.

Following the latest change of Government in Armenia, the new authorities at the outset started to diligently accuse their predecessors of authoritarian rule, systemic corruption, election rigging and the suspension of democracy and human rights. However, the natural question arises as to whether and on what grounds the current Armenian authorities should be regarded differently.

The crackdown on the opposition, persecution of political opponents, politically motivated killings, limited freedom of the media and interference in the judiciary are bitter realities in today's Armenia — which at the same time projects itself as a proponent of human rights and democracy, albeit wrongly and unsuccessfully, and continues to exploit the cynical and perpetual narrative of victimized Armenians. The current Government of Armenia continues without any hesitation to deny its responsibility for the heinous crimes committed against Azerbaijan and its citizens in the course of the aggression.

Armenia's denial of responsibility for wrongdoing and the resulting human rights suffering — including through apparent falsifications and distortions of the past and present and the glorification of war crimes and their perpetrators — represent a defiance of human rights, a direct obstacle to genuine reconciliation and a threat to regional security and stability.

We hope that, instead of sowing dissension and challenging various global initiatives and international events for racist purposes, Armenia will learn lessons, accept and reconcile with the new realities and finally realize that diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding and respect are values, not threats.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): We reject the narratives just put forward by the representative of Azerbaijan, which could serve as textbook examples of hate speech. In our assessment of the record of Azerbaijan in promoting intercultural dialogue, we proceed not from the number of window-dressing events but from the dire realities on the ground.

Although positioning itself as a model of tolerance and multiculturalism, in reality Azerbaijan has achieved the complete annihilation of every trace of the civilizational presence of Armenia in the territory currently under its jurisdiction, in particular in Nakhchivan, the occupied parts of Nagorno Karabakh and other areas. The barbaric destruction in 1998 to 2005 of the ancient Jugha cemetery — with more than 5,000 *khachkars*, or medieval Christian cross-stones — is illustrative in that regard. It is a documented fact that Azerbaijan rejected all requests by international organizations, including the European Parliament, to send a fact-finding commission to Nakhchivan to investigate that crime.

The recent aggression unleashed against the people of Artsakh, with the involvement of foreign terrorist

fighters, was accompanied by atrocity crimes and the barbaric destruction of ancient Armenian cultural and religious heritage. The inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners of war and civilian hostages and the widespread glorification of that behaviour on social networks, with a clear sense of impunity, are deplorable.

Regardless of the number of international events organized by Azerbaijan, it will never whitewash the policy of anti-Armenian hatred, which goes against the values of humankind.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its concentration of agenda item 15.

Programme of work

The President: Before adjourning, in reference to my letter dated 1 December 2020, I would like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session.

Members will recall that, at its second plenary meeting, on 18 September 2020 (see A/75/PV.2), the General Assembly decided that the seventy-fifth session would recess on Monday, 14 December 2020. However, in the light of the work that remains to be completed for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess until Monday, 21 December.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to postpone the date of recess until Monday, 21 December 2020.

It was so decided.

The President: I would also like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Fifth Committee.

Members will recall that, at its second plenary meeting, on 18 September 2020 (see A/75/PV.2), the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Fifth Committee should complete its work by Friday, 11 December. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Fifth Committee that it requests an extension of its work to Monday, 21 December, with a view to facilitating the comprehensive consideration of the important agenda items before it.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Fifth Committee until Monday, 21 December 2020?

It was so decided.

The President: I would furthermore like to make the following announcement concerning the

programme of work of the plenary. The consideration of agenda item 40, "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", originally scheduled for Monday, 14 December, has been postponed to a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.