



General Assembly

Tenth Emergency Special session

Official Records

47th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 December 2023, 10.55 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening the 47th plenary meeting of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Mauritania on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/ES-10/PV.46).

We have once again gathered here with heavy hearts as we witness the escalation of the brutal, inhumane and unacceptable aggression and killing by Israeli occupation forces in Palestine, and especially in Gaza. It is regrettable that the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, has so far failed to stop those atrocities and repeatedly failed to take any concrete measures to save the lives of thousands of civilians, including women and children. Against that backdrop, we welcome the General Assembly's continued efforts to preserve the sanctity of the Charter of the United Nations and stand by the innocent civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory as they endure the scourge of Israel's unjust war. We also welcome the adoption of resolution ES-10/22, presented by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, which we were

pleased to co-sponsor, and which we hope will be immediately implemented so as to bring an end to the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

As the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) mentioned in his letter addressed to you, Mr. President, UNRWA is on the verge of collapse. We need to take urgent action to keep UNRWA operational and effective in order to address the dire humanitarian needs of the 2.2 million people of Gaza, who are suffering not only from brutal atrocities but from starvation and a lack of most basic services. And at the moment the only way to save the millions is a humanitarian ceasefire. The United Nations should take urgent action to stop any further atrocities and ensure an effective ceasefire in Gaza. It is our collective responsibility to save thousands of lives. We are also appalled by Israel's clear violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights and humanitarian law and its deplorable disrespect and disregard for the entire international community's call for it to stop the atrocities for which it must be held accountable.

We commend the Secretary General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, urging the members of the Security Council to push for a solution aimed at preventing a humanitarian catastrophe and appealing for a humanitarian ceasefire. Regrettably, the Security Council has once again failed to fulfil its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and protecting civilians. The

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number of casualties has increased to a shocking degree, exceeding 18,000 in just two months. The Council's inaction seriously undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the whole United Nations system. We cannot simply go on witnessing the ruination of the image, success and achievement that the United Nations has built over the 78 years of its glorious journey.

Once again, we strongly condemn Israel's continued bombing and killing of Palestinians, its demolition and destruction of hospitals, religious and cultural sites and the genocidal acts it has perpetrated. Action must be taken to end its colonial occupation and uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinians by establishing an independent, viable and sovereign Palestine. To that end, we once again urge the Security Council to hold Israel accountable for its criminal activities and ensure peace and stability for the whole region by implementing its own resolutions. In that context, we call on the International Criminal Court to conclude its investigation of the serious crimes being committed in the occupied Palestinian territory as soon as possible. We also reject any blueprint designed to displace the Palestinian population from their homeland in Gaza. Bangladesh believes that a two-State solution, based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, is the only sustainable way to resolve the crisis in the Middle East.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for an immediate halt to the atrocities in Gaza through effective actions to implement the resolutions adopted by the Assembly since Israel's resumption of its aggression in Gaza.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/22, by which 153 Member States voted to call for an immediate ceasefire. I am particularly grateful to Egypt, in its capacity as Chair of the Group of Arab States, to Mauritania, as Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and to the United Arab Emirates, the current representative of the Arab Group on the Security Council, for their commendable efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and end the tragedy of our brother people of Palestine.

In the more than 70 days since the aggression against Gaza began, the Security Council has been unable to adopt any resolutions calling for a ceasefire, despite all the efforts of its members. We stress that neither this crisis nor the Arab-Israeli conflict generally will

ever come to an end unless the Palestinian question is resolved. The question has been the subject of multiple resolutions that Israel has never implemented. The solution is clear, simple and well known — it requires implementing the relevant international resolutions and respecting the legitimacy of the United Nations. Without that, the conflict will not end, and the war will continue to be passed down from one generation to the next. What we have seen in Gaza over the past two months will be repeated in five or 10 years' time, merely with different names and actors. The Palestinian people will not cease their resistance to the occupation, and Israel will not stop perpetrating the occupation or its crimes. Sadly, we, the members of the General Assembly, will continue to return to it with new speakers but the same substance. What is the point of adopting resolutions that cannot be implemented? What is the point of meeting in this Hall today if Israel remains above the law? We all know the solution and how to seek it.

The world has stood in solidarity with the Palestinians. Demonstrators have taken to the streets in many capitals, including Paris, London and Washington, D.C., to protest Israel's actions and support the Palestinian people. We are grateful to the media outlets that have reported the truth without obfuscating it. But that is why Israel has directly and deliberately targeted journalists, leading to the killing of more than 50 Palestinian and three Lebanese journalists — Issam Abdallah, Farah Omar and Rabih Al-Maamari — and wounding many others. Last Friday the crew of the Qatari network Al Jazeera was targeted in Gaza, in yet another proof that Israel intends to silence the free press. We salute Wael Al-Dahdouh, and pay tribute to Samer Abu Daqqa. But we know that young people around the world today are inclined to believe in the truth and sympathize with this just cause, and no one will be able to continue to falsify history, distort the present and poison the future.

What has been the result of the aggression so far? It has been more killing, more oppression and more destruction. Is that what we want? Is that what we are seeking? We should congratulate the arms dealers, because we are living in an age of illusion mongers. Israel has achieved none of its stated goals of war. The resistance continues on the one hand and the killing on the other. The unstated aim of prolonging the war is to prolong the life of the extremist Israeli Government and ruin the chances for a two-State solution. If we do not learn from the past, we cannot change the future.

We want to warn everyone that extremist forces are gaining strength, the language of violence is taking over and the concept of killing is becoming dominant. Meanwhile, we must be aware that those who love peace are growing weaker, those who believe in dialogue are deemed irrational and those who seek to resolve crises are dubbed traitors.

We are now 70 days into Israel's continued aggression and its threats against Lebanon. Israelis sometimes threaten to destroy Beirut and at other times to send Lebanon back to the Stone Age. Israel's Minister of Heritage has even made a statement about using nuclear weapons against Gaza. Faced with all those threats, Lebanon and its Government have shown the greatest possible restraint and responsibility, despite the great sacrifices that the Lebanese people have made in recent times as Israel has continued to target defenceless civilians, displace populations, burn forests, use white phosphorus, bomb places of worship and hospitals and attack troops and headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, as well as our army, killing one of our soldiers. All of that is in flagrant and continued violation of international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006).

What happened on 7 October was a wake-up call to everyone, telling us that the situation is untenable. Today we need a satisfactory solution for all, so that the Palestinians can have their independent, sovereign State, based on the 1967 borders. The international community must act now, push for a two-State solution and turn this tragedy into an opportunity. The Council urgently needs to adopt a resolution capable of resolving the conflict fairly and comprehensively. It is imperative to ensure that the outcome benefits all the peoples of the region, particularly Lebanon. If we move in that direction today, we can definitely bring stability and prosperity to our region and the world.

Lebanon stresses its commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and all of its provisions. The Lebanese Government and our Prime Minister have spared no effort to prevent the war from spilling over into Lebanon. However, like the Palestinians, the people of Lebanon will never give up an inch of their occupied land. Israel must stop its aggression against Lebanon and immediately withdraw from all the Lebanese territories that it still occupies. The outskirts of the

town of Al-Mari are ours, the Kafr Shuba hills are ours and the Shebaa farms are also ours. History, truth and fairness are on our side.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/ES-10/PV.46).

We support the reconvening of this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. We must take immediate action to respond to the inaction of the Security Council, which has been paralysed by the United States' use of the veto to protect the excesses of the Government of Israel, the occupying Power. History will not forget or forgive those who had the ability to stop the genocide and did not do so. Today the General Assembly's top priority must be ending the massacre of the Palestinian people and the violence against them, establishing an immediate ceasefire and providing urgently needed and adequate humanitarian aid to Gaza.

We have followed with deep concern and dismay the tragic events in the Middle East for more than two months now. Cuba condemns the killing of civilians and innocent people of all parties involved in the conflict, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality or religious faith. Our position is clear. The current situation is a result of 75 years of Israel's illegal occupation and colonization, in flagrant violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people on their own territory and in protracted disregard for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including numerous United Nations resolutions.

Nothing justifies the collective punishment that the Palestinian people are being subjected today, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. We condemn in the strongest terms the killing of civilians, especially children, women and humanitarian workers from the United Nations system; the indiscriminate bombing; the destruction of homes, hospitals and civilian infrastructure; and the withholding of water, food, electricity and fuel services from the Palestinian population, which has considerably exacerbated the precarious humanitarian situation resulting from the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The impunity that the United States has ensured for the Israeli Government must end if we are to halt the genocide. It is unacceptable that the Security Council

has once again been unable to fulfil its mandate, and it is deplorable that the United States has vetoed 47 draft resolutions submitted to the Council on the situation in the Middle East. While the international community continues to demand a ceasefire in Gaza, the United States is transferring weapons to Israel, which has resulted in the loss of more than 18,000 innocent civilian lives. As we speak, Palestinian children continue to die merely because they were born there. If the situation continues, the international community will be standing idly by as we witness the extermination of the Palestinian people. In the face of Israel's barbarity and policy of apartheid in the occupied Palestinian territories, inaction is impermissible. We reiterate our call to end the double standards, selectivity and political manipulation that are undermining the cause of international peace and security.

We support the quest for a speedy solution through negotiations that can halt the escalation of violence and its extremely serious humanitarian consequences. We underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the establishment of two States, which will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and which will also guarantee the right of return of refugees. We once again reiterate our firm condemnation of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, as well as its illegal annexation policy and colonization activities. We condemn plans to annex Palestinian territories in the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

With the coordination of the United Nations, emergency humanitarian aid must continue to be urgently provided to address the catastrophic situation in Gaza. We call on all the parties concerned to facilitate the entry and delivery of that vital assistance to the Palestinian people. While we reiterate our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian and Arab cause, we reaffirm that Cuba will never be counted among those who are indifferent and will contribute to the best of its ability to the legitimate international efforts to end the current crisis.

Ms. Macchiavello (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the terrorist attack perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli civilians and other nationalities on 7 October, the conflict in the Middle East has escalated and the humanitarian situation has deteriorated, particularly in

the Gaza Strip. In addressing the same situation less than two months ago from this very rostrum (see A/ES-10/PV.40), the representative of Peru stated that it was essential to seek consensus on a series of elements, including the establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and the adoption of specific provisions to ensure full, rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Today all of those elements remain relevant, and the three I just mentioned are even more urgent, because regrettably, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has only worsened dramatically since then, as the Secretary-General and the heads of various bodies, agencies and entities of the United Nations system have reported. There was a brief glimmer of hope when, through the mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the United States, the parties to the conflict succeeded in agreeing to a truce that lasted from 24 to 30 November. During that time, through mutual agreement, Hamas and Israel released hostages and prisoners held by the parties to the conflict. Essential goods and services, such as water, food, fuel and medical supplies, were also allowed to enter Gaza to assist its civilian population. Unfortunately, there was no agreement on extending the truce, and hostilities were resumed between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, including through the firing of rockets into Israel from Gaza and a resumption of ground operations and ramped-up air strikes by the Israel Defense Forces.

Peru has not ignored the suffering created by this tragic situation. Peruvian nationals have died as a result of Hamas's vicious actions or have had to be repatriated from Gaza, owing to the danger to their lives from the large-scale bombings and clashes in the area. Our Embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo have spared no effort to safeguard the lives and physical integrity of our compatriots in both Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Following the heinous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October, Peru immediately expressed its unequivocal condemnation. We could not have done otherwise. Our population has also suffered the violence of terrorism, which is why we categorically reject it in all its manifestations, regardless of origin. At the same time, Peru strongly urged all the parties to comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and recalled that the right to self-defence must be exercised in full compliance with

international law, including international humanitarian law, and in observance of the principles of distinction, necessity, proportionality and precaution. That is all based on Peru's historical and principled dedication to respect for international law. In that regard, at this meeting of the emergency special session, we demand an end to attacks on civilians in refugee camps, schools and hospitals, as well as on humanitarian and United Nations facilities or others protected by international humanitarian law.

The draft text that we voted to adopt last Tuesday in the General Assembly (resolution ES-10/22) met Peru's expectations and calls by demanding a ceasefire, respect for the obligations of international law, including those arising from international humanitarian law, and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The resolution also highlighted the need to protect civilian populations without distinction between Palestinians and Israelis. For all those reasons, Peru co-sponsored and voted in favour of the draft resolution presented by Egypt.

Today we find ourselves facing a catastrophic situation, which motivated Secretary-General António Guterres, for the first time during his mandate, to expressly invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, a measure that had not been used for decades. Peru reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's initiative, as well as for the role he has been playing, particularly in humanitarian matters, and for his use of other measures at his disposal to address this tragic situation. In the same context, we reject calls for withdrawing or imposing undue conditions on funding for United Nations agencies and entities. We also call for respecting and protecting the United Nations humanitarian system, including its personnel and facilities, especially in the Gaza area, which has been seriously affected and where more than 130 United Nations personnel have died, representing the greatest loss of life in the history of the Organization.

We are also facing a critical situation within the Organization. The United Nations is finding it difficult to achieve a response commensurate with the needs in the international context. That is why it is urgent that the Security Council resume negotiations, with a view to adopting decisions based on international law, including international humanitarian law, that make it possible to save human lives and strengthen collective confidence in multilateralism as an effective tool to achieve peace. The fact is that we are meeting

because on 8 December (see S/PV.9499), the Security Council had before it a draft resolution (S/2023/970) that received 13 votes in favour and was sponsored by more than 100 Member States, including Peru. Despite that, the text could not be adopted due to the veto of a single Council member. We also co-sponsored the new draft that will be submitted to the Council for its consideration. We hope it will be adopted and above all that its implementation will not only be effective but will translate into an effective ceasefire that is respected by all parties, enabling humanitarian access and the continued liberation of hostages and prisoners.

Although Peru supports an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, it has become clear that at the moment any request for an indefinite ceasefire will continue to be vetoed. We must also take into account that the so-called humanitarian pauses, when they depend solely on the will of the parties, have not had the desired results. If the impasse persists, Peru proposes that the Security Council directly adopt a text on the establishment of a truce for a defined period to enable the provision of humanitarian assistance and to ensure that at the end of that period, the Council will meet to assess the results and consider an eventual extension of the truce if it judges that the conditions for it have been met.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today Peru reiterates its commitment to multilateralism and its determination to steadfastly defend the United Nations system more firmly than ever. We also reaffirm our historical commitment to achieving a just and lasting solution that can finally enable the two States, Palestine and Israel, to live together in peace, within secure, mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Consistent with that position, our country recognizes Israel and Palestine as sovereign States and maintains diplomatic relations with both.

We also reaffirm our position that wherever it is required, humanitarian assistance must be provided quickly, safely and without hindrance, and in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. In that context, we call on the Council to take into account the results of today's vote to undertake new efforts to save human lives, urgently

provide humanitarian aid to the civilian population in Gaza, release all hostages and protect the viability of a two-State solution.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President of the General Assembly for reconvening this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

We are once again meeting as Israel is continuing its brutal aggression against the Palestinian people, with consequences that portend a major humanitarian disaster. The systematic massacres and killings of civilians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, mostly women and children, have continued in full view of the world, which has failed to protect the Palestinian civilians morally or humanely, abandoning its duty to rescue the women and children of Gaza, who are victims of one of the most heinous crimes in history. In its aggression in the Gaza Strip, Israel, the occupying Power, has violated all moral, religious and humanitarian standards and values. It is regrettable that despite all the murders and the scale of crimes against the Palestinians that we are seeing unfolding every day, some still hesitate to call a spade a spade, condemn those crimes against humanity and call for an immediate end to them. It is shameful that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, continues to allow the ongoing massacres, genocide and crimes against humanity being committed against Palestinian civilians, mostly women and children, in flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Security Council has failed to adopt a draft resolution on a humanitarian ceasefire, in support of the values and principles of our Organization. That failure affects the credibility of the United Nations and its ability to address current and future crises. It also highlights the fact that genuine reform of the Security Council is more urgently needed than it has ever been. The Secretary-General's appeal in invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations did not take place in a vacuum. His appeal reaffirms that it is no longer possible to accept the continued war crimes, massacres and genocide being committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It also draws the Council's attention to the fact that the catastrophic situation in Palestine is posing a threat to international peace and security. If it is adopted, the new draft resolution (S/2023/1029) currently being submitted by the Group of Arab

States and the Group of Islamic States to the Security Council is a step that must be followed by further steps, including the Security Council's adoption of a binding resolution on a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Without that, the draft resolution cannot produce results.

We are living in a world that has gone off the rails. Despite the great scientific and technological progress that the modern age has produced, our world has lost its most fundamental values, principles and morals. It has lost its human conscience and its drive to preserve the human spirit regardless of gender, colour, religion or identity. We are living in a world that has lost its compass, where resistance to occupation and apartheid is considered terrorism. We are living in a world where an occupier is committing heinous war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the murder of thousands of civilians, including women and children, the destruction of infrastructure and the targeting of hospitals, schools and medical personnel, and yet all of those acts are considered self-defence.

Nonetheless, we are holding this meeting because together with the free and resilient Palestinian people, we are hopeful that the General Assembly will take action and voice unanimously what the Security Council could not say — that enough is enough. We have had enough bloodshed and enough massacres. The Assembly must speak with one voice to say that there must be an immediate ceasefire.

We cannot continue to repeat the numbers of the thousands of victims in Gaza, most of them children and women, because they are not just numbers. They are human beings with dreams, hopes and aspirations to live in freedom, dignity and independence, like the other peoples of the free world. We must continue to affirm that peace and security cannot be achieved in the region, or even in the Israeli entity, without peace and security for the Palestinians. The most painful thing of all is that just since the vote in the Security Council on 8 December on the draft resolution sponsored by more than 100 States (S/2023/970), we have lost thousands more innocent civilians, mostly women and children, whose lives we could have saved, while still more people are in danger and likely to die. That is morally, humanly and legally unacceptable. Let me echo the words of the President of the General Assembly after the Security Council failed to adopt that draft resolution calling for a ceasefire: "In

the name of humanity, the world needs to act now.” How many lives must be lost before we do something? There is no time to spare. The massacre has to stop.

If the Security Council is detached from the reality of today, then the General Assembly represents a platform for defending the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and international humanitarian law and the conscience of the world. It must not become a powerless gathering. I greatly appreciate all the peace-loving and humanitarian States that sponsored and voted in favour of resolution ES-10/22, submitted by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, demanding a humanitarian ceasefire. Every day, every hour means more bloodshed, the blood of children, women and innocent civilians. The credibility of our Organization is at stake.

A just, lasting and comprehensive peace, which is a strategic choice, is the only way to guarantee security and stability for all the peoples of the region and to protect them from the spiral of violence and wars. That cannot be achieved without putting an end to the Israeli occupation, guaranteeing the Palestinian people their inalienable and legitimate rights and establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. Israel and the States of the region cannot enjoy security and peace unless they are also enjoyed by the Palestinian people, who must see all their stolen rights restored.

The continuation of the Israeli occupation is a threat to the stability and security of the region and to international peace and security as well. There should be legal and criminal accountability for every Palestinian civilian casualty resulting from the Israeli aggression, and for every crime committed. We reiterate our rejection of all forms of selectivity in applying international legal and moral standards, just as we reject efforts to ignore the heinous crimes committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the other side of the ongoing tragedy in Gaza is the steadfastness of the courageous Palestinian people — men, women, children and the elderly — who are defending their territory and homeland, along with their heroic struggle to restore their legitimate rights and establish their independent State.

Ms. Brattested (Norway): Norway co-sponsored and voted in favour of resolution ES-10/22, which calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We deeply regret that the Security Council did not adopt the draft resolution on the subject submitted on 8 December (S/2023/970).

The more than nine weeks of hostilities between Hamas and Israel have led to a level of human suffering that has shocked the world. The heinous terrorist attack by Hamas started that terrible crisis. Norway has condemned the attack and has been clear about Israel’s right to self-defence within the limitations of international law. We have emphasized that both parties have an obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. The hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Israel’s current military operation in Gaza is not compatible with the protection of civilians required by international humanitarian law. It has gone too far. We are shocked by the level of destruction and death caused by the war that has ensued in Gaza. A humanitarian ceasefire must be declared as soon as possible. Civilians must be protected, and humanitarian aid must reach those in need immediately. The parties to the conflict must ensure that sufficient humanitarian aid is brought into Gaza. That responsibility under humanitarian law clearly falls on the parties to an armed conflict. We commend the United Nations and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and for their important role, especially that of their personnel, whose heroic efforts to get assistance to the population come at great personal risk while their own families are struggling to find food, water and safety.

Norway fully supports the Secretary-General’s invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. It sends an unprecedentedly strong message to the international community that we must do everything in our power to prevent further escalation and a humanitarian catastrophe. The impending risk of collapse of the humanitarian system entails potentially irreversible and devastating implications for peace and security in the entire region. The regional spillover of the war is a real risk. We condemn all military acts that threaten regional stability, including attacks by the Houthis on civilian ships in the Red Sea. We encourage all to de-escalate.

The desperate situation in Gaza must not distract attention from the critical situation in the West Bank. The risk of a collapse of governance structures there is clear and present. All must contribute to preventing such a scenario, which would be a disaster and would totally undermine the Palestinian Authority. In particular, Israel must transfer clearance revenues to the Palestinian Authority, according to its obligations, remove movement restrictions and stop the settler violence and other transgressions against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Two months ago, Norway warned against the consequences of a near full blockade of Gaza's civilian population. Since then, the situation has become almost untenable. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is therefore urgently needed.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for resuming the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, against the backdrop of a letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/962), invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, and his call for a humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, aimed at preventing a collapse of the humanitarian system and an intensification of the war's threats to international peace and security. In that connection, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's initiative and its humanitarian objectives. We welcomed the General Assembly's adoption last week, with 153 votes in favour, of resolution ES-10/22, demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and guarantees for the delivery of humanitarian aid in order to alleviate the suffering of the people in Gaza and protect civilians on both sides, Palestinian and Israeli, in accordance with international law.

Bahrain also urges the international community to assume its responsibilities by implementing the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution ES-10/21, adopted in October, calling for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, immediately and adequately meeting their basic needs and ensuring the release of detainees. The resolution rejects any attempt to forcibly transfer the population, as is also stressed in Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), and further encourages the establishment of a humanitarian truce

and humanitarian corridors throughout the Strip, in line with international humanitarian law. Taking urgent action to establish an immediate and sustained ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, opening safe and sustainable humanitarian corridors, stopping the bloodshed of innocent civilians, most of whom are children and women, protecting civilian objects, including hospitals, schools and camps, and rebuilding what the war has destroyed will send a humanitarian message about the vigilance and solidarity of the international community in providing minimum respect for human rights and averting a worse humanitarian disaster and expanded cycle of violence. In turn, that will limit escalation and pave the way towards reviving a process for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Bahrain reiterates its firm position in support of the legitimate historic right of our brother Palestinian people to establish a sovereign, independent State, within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and based on a two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions. That will be the real guarantee of coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, living side by side in peace, security and harmony within a safe, stable and prosperous region.

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by once again expressing Chile's condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims who have died in this conflict and our deep solidarity with the wounded. We are particularly sensitive to the suffering and deaths of innocent women and children during this catastrophe. We reiterate that we must support the economic and social empowerment of the women who are affected in this chilling conflict. We also call for fostering women's leadership at all levels, as that is a strategic element in the achievement of sustainable, inclusive peace.

We underscore our full support for the dedicated work being done by the United Nations and its agencies, and by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in particular. We deeply deplore the deaths of officials working for the Agency during this war and extend our condolences to their families and colleagues.

We urge all parties to the conflict to fully respect the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and human rights law, and to protect

all civilians, Israelis and Palestinians alike, without distinction based on nationality, origin or religion. We recently commemorated Human Rights Day, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But considering the many years that have elapsed since then, it is disheartening to see that those fundamental rights are not being upheld in the Gaza Strip today. The theme chosen to commemorate that historic milestone this year was "Freedom, equality and justice for all". But in this conflict, we see that we are very far from living up to those values.

Chile unreservedly and unequivocally condemns Hamas's actions, as it does any act of terror, violence or hostility against civilians. We also want to underscore that the use of force within the context of the legitimate defence of a State that has been attacked must be guided by the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution. The protection of civilians is crucial in any armed conflict, as is respect for all health-care workers and humanitarian personnel working on medical missions, transportation and equipment, or in hospitals or other health facilities. We also recall the vital need to respect the right to health of everyone in the occupied Palestinian territory in order to fulfil obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. Disregard for such obligations represents a threat to people's dignity and jeopardizes international peace and security. For that reason, we ask for the situation to be investigated by the competent national and international authorities. In that regard, I am very sorry to have to draw attention to the fact that as we were meeting here in New York there was another Israeli air strike, close to the Al-Kuwaiti hospital in Rafah, in southern Gaza.

An immediate ceasefire is critical if we are to prevent a surge in the fighting's violence, intensity and frequency, ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and accelerate swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. We should not relativize those demands, which have been made repeatedly by the international community and in respect of which we have seen little progress. Violence cannot be resolved with more violence, and its indiscriminate use has cost thousands of Palestinian civilians their lives and places the lives of kidnapped Israeli citizens at grave risk, as was tragically demonstrated last week. That is why we value and support the implementation of the recent 10-point

proposal announced by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, which will not only make it possible to stop the deaths in Gaza, but will also allow humanitarian aid to be provided to the many victims of this conflict.

We support the right of Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace, within mutually agreed, internationally recognized and secure borders, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. We urgently call for full and immediate compliance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which emphasizes that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity. Moreover, that action constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to achieving the two-State solution and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Chile strongly supported resolution 77/247, and we sent a written submission to the International Court of Justice requesting an advisory opinion on the implications of Israel's continued violations of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. We hope that the Court can assist the international community by clarifying the legal obligations of the parties, and that those obligations can provide a basis for the search for a definitive solution that guarantees the human rights of all its inhabitants.

Chile considers that it is essential to relaunch, with the support of the international community, the process of direct, good-faith negotiations between the two parties, leading to a just, full and definitive peace agreement as part of a two-State solution within the pre-1967 borders, and to the full recognition of both States by the United Nations.

In that context, we support the General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/21, on 27 October, as well as the adoption of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), which we hope will make it possible to contain this crisis. We therefore support the efforts of the Secretary-General and various international actors, including the diplomatic efforts that friendly countries are making, to facilitate a solution to this conflict.

Against that backdrop, Chile co-sponsored and voted in favour of the new resolution, presented by Egypt (resolution ES-10/22), which sends the clear and overwhelming message that the international community deems unacceptable the violations of the Charter of the United Nations, humanitarian law and human rights in this conflict.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): Thailand welcomes the reconvening of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly given its serious concern over the urgent humanitarian situation in the Middle East, and we welcome the adoption last week of the resolution entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations”, which we co-sponsored (resolution ES-10/22)

Despite the Secretary-General’s efforts in invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, we deeply regret that the Security Council was unable to take the necessary steps to follow up on the necessary measures to implement Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), end the conflict and maintain peace and security in the Middle East. In the immediate future, we hope that the Security Council will be able to come together and take effective decisions to urgently address the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

We are saddened that thousands of innocent civilians have been killed and injured, including many Thai nationals. We condemn in the strongest terms all forms of violence and attacks, wherever they take place, against innocent civilians regardless of their nationalities. Thailand urges all sides to respect and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure the safety and dignity of civilians in conflict situations. The protection of innocent lives and civilians must be a priority at all times.

Thailand regrets that the temporary ceasefire in Gaza lasted for only seven days. We encourage all sides to work towards the resumption of the ceasefire, as we hope to see the extension thereof and an eventual permanent ceasefire. Thailand welcomes the release of some civilian hostages, including Thai nationals, during the implementation of the temporary ceasefire. We deeply appreciate the diplomatic efforts of all parties involved in facilitating their release. We continue to appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of all the remaining hostages, and we also hope that, pending their release, those hostages would continue to be afforded the proper care and treatment.

We welcome the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, despite the end of the ceasefire. However, we are deeply concerned about the supply shortages and the inability of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and international parties to access those in need throughout Gaza, owing to the growing insecurity. As each day of conflict goes

by, the humanitarian situation has only worsened, with dire consequences for the civilian population, especially women and children. It is therefore critical that the fighting ceases in order for much-needed humanitarian assistance to safely and effectively reach all affected people.

Thailand commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its instrumental role and untiring efforts. We extend our deepest condolences to those personnel who have lost their lives in fulfilling their duties. We appeal to all sides to continue to support UNRWA in order for the Agency to carry out its mandate to distribute humanitarian assistance, operate health centres and provide shelter to the people in Gaza.

We also call for the protection of United Nations staff and of United Nations premises, hospitals and public buildings. As a co-sponsor, Thailand supports the resolution adopted last week, which calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, in addition to demanding that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. We hope for the immediate implementation of the resolution in order to save lives.

Lastly, Thailand reaffirms its support for genuine dialogue with a view to finding a mutually agreed, peaceful solution to the issue, in accordance with the two-State solution, whereby the States of Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): At the outset, Brunei Darussalam joins others in advocating for the resumption of the tenth emergency special session. We thank the President for his swift response in heeding the request of delegations to reconvene the session, shortly after the recent challenges faced by the Security Council.

We also align ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Mauritania on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/ES-10/PV.46).

Brunei Darussalam reiterates its strong condemnation of the unprecedented levels of violence and attacks by the occupying Power, particularly in the Gaza Strip. We remain gravely concerned, as well

as saddened, by the significant loss of life, unbearable suffering and destruction of property throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. Without an end in sight, the number of civilian casualties is only going to increase.

The crisis in Gaza is not just humanitarian but also constitutes a total disregard for human rights. Immediate action is beyond urgent and necessary. The Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations must not be taken lightly. As we have heard time and time again, amid the ongoing escalation, nowhere is safe. A permanent cessation of hostilities and an end to the siege are vital to ensure the secure delivery of life-saving supplies. The need for sufficient, unhindered and continuous access of humanitarian aid into Palestine must be of the utmost priority.

In that vein, Brunei Darussalam firmly endorses the call for a humanitarian ceasefire and for all parties to abide by their obligations in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

There is no country in the world that illustrates the collective failure of the United Nations more evidently than the State of Palestine. The Security Council has a special and moral responsibility to uphold international peace and security, and we regret that the Council has once again failed to take much-needed action on this matter.

The recent escalation of violence did not occur in a vacuum. It is the direct result of decades of injustice imposed upon the Palestinians and the dismissal of their inalienable rights to self-determination, peace and freedom.

Brunei Darussalam therefore will continue to stand in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters and reaffirm our commitment to a two-State solution leading to an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, who responded favourably to the request from the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to resume the tenth emergency special session for the second time in less than two months. That reflects the extremely dangerous situation

in the Gaza Strip, as noted by the Secretary-General in his letters to the Security Council, including the letter dated 6 December (S/2023/962).

Last week, the General Assembly was able to adopt resolution ES-10/22, which requested an immediate ceasefire for humanitarian purposes. The Kingdom of Morocco sponsored that resolution and voted in favour of it, reflecting the ultimate importance that our Organization and the entire international community attach to a humanitarian ceasefire and to saving the lives of innocent people.

The Kingdom of Morocco would like to reiterate its deep concern and frustration over the unprecedented deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in the killing and injuring of tens of thousands of civilians, most of whom are women and children, along with more than 130 humanitarian workers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, not to mention the great destruction of houses, schools, hospitals, religious sites and infrastructure.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its rejection of all violations, of the policy of collective punishment and forced displacement, as well as of the attempt to impose a new reality and threaten the national security of neighbouring States. The Kingdom of Morocco also reiterates that the Gaza Strip is an integral part of the Palestinian territories and the unified Palestinian State. The Kingdom of Morocco has confirmed that the Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip violate international law, international humanitarian law and common human values. We underscore once again the need to cease military assaults. We demand a permanent, verifiable ceasefire that ensures the protection of civilians, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law, as well as the delivery of unhindered and adequate humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza. We also demand the release of detainees and hostages and the establishment of a political horizon for the Palestinian question.

In the context of the steadfast commitment to the Palestinian question of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chair of the Jerusalem Committee of the Islamic Cooperation Organization, the Kingdom of Morocco has sent urgent humanitarian assistance to the population of the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. Upon royal instructions, the Jerusalem Committee has also provided financial assistance to hospitals and major social institutions that address urgent medical and social needs resulting from the developments in the Gaza Strip.

The continued Israeli unilateral measures in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, taken in violation of international law, are only expanding the gap between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and fuelling extreme conflicts, which will only result in further violence and tension. Those measures must therefore be stopped.

As chair of the Jerusalem Committee, His Majesty King Mohammed VI is very closely and carefully monitoring all developments of the Palestinian question in an ongoing manner. He calls for maintaining the legal, civilizational and religious position of the city of Jerusalem, which is the heritage of all humankind and the symbol of peaceful coexistence for the followers of the three monotheistic religions. It is also a centre of dialogue and mutual respect, as stipulated in the Al-Quds/Jerusalem declaration, jointly signed by His Majesty and Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its steadfast, clear and established position regarding the just Palestinian question and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, chief among them their right to establish an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel. That is the only way of guaranteeing peace, security and stability in the region. The Kingdom of Morocco also reiterates its steadfast position alongside the Palestinian Authority, the legitimate and only representative of the Palestinian people.

Mrs. Le (Viet Nam): By adopting resolution ES-10/22 on 12 December, with 153 votes in favour and 104 sponsors, an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership expressed its strong desire to uphold its humanitarian obligations and restore peace in Gaza. That aspiration for peace should be respected by all parties so as to prevent further casualties and suffering inflicted upon innocent civilians.

As a sponsor of the resolution, my delegation wishes to see its full and effective implementation, together with the realization of other United Nations resolutions. We believe that they will facilitate and lay the grounds for a longer-term, more sustainable solution to the situation.

Viet Nam is greatly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are saddened by the loss of innocent lives — nearly 20,000 since the beginning of the conflict in October, most of

whom are women and children. Viet Nam condemns in the strongest terms those indiscriminate attacks targeting civilians and critical civilian infrastructure and calls for their protection under international law. We are deeply concerned that conditions for the effective delivery of humanitarian aid are no longer viable and worry about the high risk of total collapse of the humanitarian support system in Gaza. Our priority right now is to ensure the survival and well-being of the civilian population.

As such, Viet Nam joins others in demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a stop to violence and hostility. We repeat our call for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of all hostages and the rapid and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. Let me take this opportunity to applaud the courageous work by humanitarian aid workers, including the United Nations personnel who have lost their lives while on duty, and those who have chosen to stay to help the people in Gaza amid dire conditions.

For its part, the Government of Viet Nam has announced a contribution of \$500,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to support the United Nations endeavours on the ground. Yet much more needs to be done. We urge all the parties concerned to create favourable conditions for an environment that is conducive to a cessation of hostilities and the resumption of negotiations.

Looking at the broader picture, durable peace can be achieved only through a comprehensive solution, which must be based on international law and the relevant resolution of the United Nations. In that regard, we support the two-State solution whereby Palestine and Israel coexist peacefully side by side, based on the pre-1967 borders. On 12 December, the international community sent another strong message demanding a humanitarian ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians under international law in Gaza. We must not fail the people in Gaza, and we must spare no effort to contribute to that end.

Mr. Zuhuree (Maldives): I would like to deliver the following message on behalf the President of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Muizzu.

“I would like to begin by thanking the President for reconvening this emergency special session, after the Security Council yet again failed to take

decisive measures to bring an end to the ongoing suffering in Gaza.

“When we last convened the tenth emergency special session, more than a month ago, the Maldives joined an overwhelming majority of 120 Member States to unequivocally call for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities. And we firmly rejected any attempts at the forced transfer of the Palestinian civilian population (see A/ES-10/PV.41).

“Despite the overwhelming support of the General Assembly and the outpouring of strong calls for an immediate ceasefire across the globe, on 8 December the Security Council once again bypassed the opportunity to take decisive steps in that direction. The Council once again squandered that moment of hope, leaving not only Palestinians distraught but also millions across the world questioning the value of humanity and, indeed, the United Nations itself. A veto not only failed to enable demanding a ceasefire and the unconditional release of hostages but also demonstrated a complete disregard for the Secretary-General’s rare invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations.

“A veto today is enabling potential war crimes. Should we still continue with that practice, even as the veto continues to erode the faith people have in the United Nations; even as the veto continues to stand in the way of ending atrocities and violence; and even as the veto continues to raise questions about the value of multilateralism itself?

“The United Nations was created 78 years ago to make sure that the world would not again witness the atrocities of the Second World War. The Security Council was mandated to guarantee and uphold international peace and security. But what we are witnessing today is the Council enabling the ongoing violations of international law and international human rights law. The countries that continue to enable violence should be ashamed.

“That paralysis once again makes the case for the reform of the Security Council. The reforms of the Council must ensure the equitable representation of the current international order. The reforms of the Council should strive to ensure transparency and accountability and insist that Member States explain and persuade, instead of blocking via vetoes. The reforms of the Council

should enable the Council to take a united stance on matters related to international peace and security.

“As we reconvene the tenth emergency special session again, it is disheartening to say that the bloodshed has not stopped, the suffering has not eased and the destruction has not abated in the slightest. That is why the Maldives reiterates its call on the International Criminal Court to investigate possible war crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.

“In truth, the oppressive force of Israel’s occupation has only grown in size and in intensity. Israel is carrying out aerial bombardments on Gaza, enforcing a blockade and intensifying a brutal ground offensive. Most of the 2.3 million Palestinians have been forcefully displaced from their homes in Gaza. More than 18,000 civilians, including 6,000 children, have been killed. And that is just the number that has been counted; countless others may remain under the rubble. And the number keeps rising as we speak.

“The facts are clear. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not begin on 7 October. The Palestinians had been suffering under Israel’s occupation and its apartheid-like policies long before that. It is driven by Israel’s disregard for what the Palestinians rightfully deserve: genuine independent statehood, security, essential economic and political opportunities and their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination — just like any other Member State here in the Hall.

“As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we are witnessing countless violations of human rights unfolding right in front of our eyes. This critical situation prompts pertinent questions. Why are there double standards in upholding international law and international humanitarian law? How can we justify the daily abuses of innocent civilians, including women and children? Should the growing number of Israeli illegal settlers, backed by the Israeli Government, and their escalating violence against Palestinians continue without consequences? Can we stand idle and overlook Israel’s highly provocative actions, such as the repeated storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards, which heighten tensions around the holy sites and incite violence?

“The Maldives co-sponsored the resolution presented by Egypt (resolution ES-10/22), which demands an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the assurance of unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas affected by the conflict. Given the dire humanitarian situation, we urge the Assembly to increase pressure on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, with a particular focus on the protection of civilians. The ongoing escalation of Israel’s bombardment in Gaza underscores that any delay in resolving this conflict will result in more casualties, further destruction and the risk of the conflict widening.

“The Maldives also calls for increased international pressure on the Israeli Government to stop the expansion of illegal settlements and the economic isolation of Palestinians. We urge international support for providing significant aid and opportunities to Palestinians to rebuild Gaza and the West Bank, alongside active measures to safeguard the rights of Palestinians to live in dignity. That approach represents a tangible step towards a more stable peace. We are convinced that that is the only viable solution to end the conflict, allowing the people of both Palestine and Israel to enjoy a meaningful, lasting peace and coexist in dignity.

“The Palestinians have placed their hope in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and our multilateral system for their very survival. Let us ensure that we do not fail them again and again.

“The Maldives wishes to reiterate the steadfast support of the Maldivian people for any resolution that outlines the formation of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine established on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): Guyana aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representatives of Jamaica and Mauritania on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively (see A/ES-10/PV.46).

It has been more than 70 days since the events of 7 October. In that time, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has been catastrophically altered. Each minute in Gaza is a battle for survival to the next minute, and the

battered population miraculously keeps up the fight to survive. While that is a remarkable demonstration of the indomitable human spirit, we cannot ignore the reality: while many are surviving, many are dying. Many are dying victims of a relentless bombing campaign that defies international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Those who are surviving are doing so under the most inhumane conditions imaginable. People are desperate for food, water and shelter. The wounded and sick desperately need access to health care. But all of those essentials are in short supply, worsening the humanitarian crisis with each passing day.

In the light of those circumstances, Guyana supports the Secretary-General’s decision to invoke Article 99 of the Charter, given the threat to international peace and security that the situation in Gaza represents. We deeply regret that, on 8 December, the Security Council was unable to respond to the Secretary-General’s appeal (see S/PV.9499), despite overwhelming co-sponsorship by the general membership of the draft resolution presented by the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/970). Guyana urges the Council to intensify its efforts to urgently find a path to agreement, in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and its obligation to the Palestinian people. We know that the Council is expected to consider another draft resolution today, and we are hopeful that it will be adopted.

The obscene treatment of the Palestinians in Gaza must stop, and those responsible for the devastation must be held to account. For that reason, Guyana co-sponsored the resolution presented by the delegation of Egypt and adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session (resolution ES-10/22). We underscore that a ceasefire is the only condition under which the humanitarian situation in Gaza can be effectively addressed.

While acknowledging the provision for humanitarian pauses and corridors contained in Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), the events since 1 December have amply demonstrated that nothing short of a ceasefire can bring sustainable relief to the beleaguered population in Gaza. Isolated humanitarian pauses will not have real impact if the parties return to fighting after those pauses. Resuming hostilities after a humanitarian pause reverses whatever impact such pauses might have had and plunges the population into further distress.

I reiterate that nothing short of a ceasefire will provide an environment conducive to long-term recovery. Guyana therefore calls for the full implementation of resolution ES-10/22. This is not a time for polemics — we need political will to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, beginning with an immediate ceasefire.

The road to recovery for the Palestinian people in Gaza will be a long and arduous one. The destruction of critical infrastructure and livelihoods; the environmental damage caused by the war; the psychological impacts, especially for children; the numbers maimed and incapacitated; and the projected increase in poverty levels are just a fraction of the issues that are to be grappled with once the war ends.

In the name of humanity, therefore, what constrains us, as United Nations States Members, from collectively acting to immediately end the war? What prevents us from insisting on full adherence to international law and to the Charter of the United Nations?

Guyana reiterates its call for focused discussions by the General Assembly on how to advance a permanent solution to the question of Palestine in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. There is unanimous agreement that the implementation of the two-State solution is the only legitimate solution and settlement to this question. We must now generate practical options to that end, and Guyana is ready to be part of those discussions.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Today we are witnessing Israel's brutal bombardment of, and indiscriminate military attacks against, the innocent Palestinian people. In spite of the unanimous demand of the international community for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, Israel is expanding its ground operations in the Gaza Strip. As a result, approximately 20,000 innocent Palestinian people have been killed, 70 per cent of whom are women and children.

However, at the Security Council meeting held on 8 December (see S/PV.9498), the United States once again exercised its veto power on the draft resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire (S/2023/970) for the mere reason that Israel's right to self-defence was not respected. In October (see S/PV.9442), the United States exercised its veto power at the Security Council on the draft resolution to allow a humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip (S/2023/773) while talking about Israel's

right to self-defence, thereby actively supporting Israel's atrocity of civilian massacre in the Gaza Strip.

My delegation cannot but deplore the fact that the unanimous desire of the international community to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East at an early date was mercilessly trampled upon once again by the high-handedness and arbitrary practice of one permanent member of the Security Council. The indiscriminate military attacks and atrocities by Israel in the Gaza Strip are clearly a grave breach of international peace and security and constitute crimes against humanity.

The United States has branded the exercise of legitimate rights — such as the satellite launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which did not harm any other country — as a threat to international peace and security. However, this time, the United States abused its veto power to patronize its ally, which has killed tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian people. That is a typical manifestation and expression of illegal double standards. If Israel's massacre of civilians is a legitimate exercise of the right to self-defence, it would have been necessary to provide answers as to why the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's exercise of the right to self-defence in order to safeguard the security of the country and its people, as well as regional peace and stability, should be dealt with as illegal in the Security Council.

The present Middle East situation clearly shows once again that, because of the United States, the Security Council — whose basic mission is to protect international peace and stability — has been reduced to an arena for showdowns, inciting war and conflict, and a stage of injustice where illegal double standards are rampant. The crimes against humanity being committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip must be stopped immediately.

In conclusion, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never tolerate the United States heinous infringement upon sovereignty, causing international instability and humanitarian crises with illegal double standards. My delegation once again expresses its unwavering support for, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their legitimate national rights, including the establishment of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): It is a matter of the utmost regret that the Security Council once again failed to assume its responsibility to ensure a ceasefire

that restores peace and stops the senseless killing of innocent civilians. The credibility of the existence of the Organization is at stake. Let us hope that today the Security Council unanimously decides to call for the cessation of hostilities. Mauritius is appalled by, and deeply concerned about, the continuing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. We are witnessing the loss of many innocent lives and the atrocious suffering of multitudes of civilians caused by the unjustified and unprecedented escalation scale of violence.

The siege of Gaza has led to the killing of thousands of Palestinians, thousands injured and the displacement of more than 2 million people. Of those killed, the majority have been women and children. The lack of life-saving essential supplies, such as medicine and water, have caused the collapse of sanitation services. The heavy and persistent bombing is being pursued amid apocalyptic conditions. The situation has now reached an abysmal depth of despair for Palestinians, and humankind can no longer turn a blind eye on Gaza.

Like all countries, Mauritius was hopeful that the humanitarian pause, which began on 24 November, would have led to a lasting ceasefire. Mauritius deplores that talks to extend the truce have collapsed. In the absence of a ceasefire and following the resumption of hostilities, we are concerned that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating day by day. Notwithstanding the current context of polarization, diplomacy and dialogue remain the only solution to resolve the conflict. It is more than ever crucial that the international community expeditiously redouble its efforts at multiple levels with a view to, first, bringing about an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire and, secondly, restoring the momentum in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process on the basis of the two-State solution. We firmly believe that the only way forward is through peaceful negotiations and a permanent ceasefire, with the United Nations playing a pivotal role, together with regional and international partners.

Both Israel and Hamas must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect innocent civilians. We call on both sides to exercise maximum restraint, with a view to preventing the further killing of innocent civilians, and to implement the unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance.

Mauritius continues to support the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State, alongside Israel, as it is the only way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. In line with its principled position, Mauritius supports all initiatives for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, and we call for an early resumption of negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico regrets that we must meet once again at an emergency special session of the General Assembly as a result of the use of the veto by one of the permanent members of the Security Council of a draft resolution (S/2023/970) calling for a ceasefire in the Middle East — a measure that is necessary to ending the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza. That is why Mexico co-sponsored the text of the draft resolution.

A few weeks ago, the General Assembly met to consider the humanitarian situation that was unleashed as a result of the response to the Hamas attack against Israel on 7 October (see A/ES-10/PV.46). At that time, there was talk of the loss of more than 11,000 people in the occupied Palestinian territory. Today that number has surpassed 20,000, including 7,000 children. In the face of the paralysis of the Security Council, the Assembly shoulders the responsibility of calling for a ceasefire to end the tragic situation that is unfolding before our very eyes. In the Security Council Chamber, Secretary-General António Guterres referred to the risk of the total collapse of the humanitarian system (see S/PV.9498), including the lack of security for humanitarian personnel and the continued attacks on humanitarian and medical infrastructure. The World Food Programme has warned of the risk of starvation and famine. Given the tragic situation, we stress the obligation not to target civilian infrastructure, and we call once again for unrestricted humanitarian access in strict adherence to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence.

We also echo the Secretary-General's call that the Palestinian people must not, and cannot, be collectively punished for the abhorrent acts perpetrated by Hamas. We unequivocally condemn Hamas's use of civilians as human shields. However, in no way does that give Israel carte blanche to disregard its obligations under international humanitarian law. We call once again for the release of all hostages and, in the meantime, demand that they be treated humanely and that the International

Committee of the Red Cross be allowed to visit them. Every one of the 130 hostages, including one Mexican national, must return home.

Once we have overcome the crisis, the international community must focus, concentrate and dedicate itself to achieving the long-awaited two-State solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

Lastly, Mexico reiterates the need to work to restrict the use of the veto in situations in which mass atrocities may have been committed. In that regard, Mexico calls on all States that have not yet done so to join the French-Mexican initiative.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are meeting at this emergency special session as a result of the most recent failed attempt in the Security Council to establish a humanitarian ceasefire, which must be reciprocal and include the immediate and unconditional release of hostages. Costa Rica co-sponsored the Security Council draft resolution (S/2023/970) and supported the call to achieve both ends. We express our delegation's support for the Secretary-General's decision to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations in response to a humanitarian catastrophe of such proportions. We regret that the Council continues to fail in its primary role of maintaining international peace and security. At least, with regard to the General Assembly and the adoption of resolution ES-10/22, which 153 States voted in favour of, the position of 80 per cent of the United Nations membership has been made very clear.

Costa Rica has been firm in its absolute condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October against Israel and innocent civilians, including the taking and holding of hostages. We reiterate this condemnation, as well as our solidarity with all the victims and their families. We are also concerned that the war that began on 7 October has been ongoing for more than two months and that, despite the calls of the Security Council and the Assembly asking for compliance with the obligations derived from human rights law and international humanitarian law, such as the protection of civilians, the non-taking of hostages, access to humanitarian aid, the protection of United Nations personnel and the rejection of mandatory displacement of the population, those calls have not yet been heard and the conflict worsens, increasing the number of innocent victims.

The fundamental principle of *jus in bello* is that civilians cannot be targeted as military objectives or disproportionately injured as a means of achieving a military objective by any party to a conflict. That is true regardless of the legality of the underlying conflict and whether the opposing side has violated humanitarian law. The right to self-defence should not affect civilians in that way. We deeply regret the loss of so many lives as a result of this crisis, both Israeli and Palestinian, primarily women and children, as well as United Nations and other humanitarian workers carrying out their responsibilities, 89 journalists, the thousands of injured and the thousands of forcibly displaced. In that regard, Costa Rica makes the following urgent calls.

First, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The taking of hostages is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we call on all parties to strictly abide by *jus in bello*, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality, the non-use of civilians as shields and the non-attack on sites protected by humanitarian law. Even in wars, the protection of innocent civilians must be a priority.

Thirdly, Costa Rica urges that immediate, complete, safe, sustained and unhindered humanitarian aid access be guaranteed to Gaza and other places where there are victims, as well as the unrestricted protection of humanitarian workers, health workers and journalists.

Fourthly, my country reiterates its call for the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from using the veto in humanitarian situations.

Finally, Costa Rica urges the international community to use the tools of diplomacy to resolve this crisis in a way that allows the right of both peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, to self-determination and two States living in peace and security. The impacts of violence remain on victims and survivors, fuelling trauma and division and progressively distancing us from the possibility of achieving peace. That is why we all must commit to peace.

Ms. Tickner (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a nation committed to the promotion of peace and respect for human rights, Colombia joins the majority of the Member States of the Organization in demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities that allows an end to the violence and barbarism that has been spiralling

since the beginning of October. The resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly serves to highlight once again the inability of the Security Council to take robust action in the face of the escalation of violence that we have witnessed over the past two months in the Middle East and that imminently threatens the maintenance of peace and security in that region.

Our historical experience has shown us that violence only produces more violence and more loss of life, leaving in its wake a disastrous legacy for societies, especially the youth and future generations. In that regard, allow me to express Colombia's solidarity with all the victims and their families. Nothing justifies the death of Palestinian and Israeli civilians, defenceless women and children, journalists or the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The displacement of a high percentage of the population in Gaza and the shortage of water, food and adequate shelter are also unacceptable. The international community is obliged to strongly condemn the serious violations of international humanitarian law that are occurring and that have disproportionately affected women, children and other vulnerable groups. Colombia also reiterates its call to all States to respect and observe the principles of distinction, proportionality and protection of goods essential for the survival of the civilian population.

The absence of a definitive response to the conflict between Israel and Palestine results in deplorable consequences for the civilian population, destabilizes the region and calls into question the very meaning of life and humanity. We therefore reaffirm our support for a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on two States living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the provisions of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, while respecting human rights and international humanitarian law.

Colombia recognizes and appreciates the efforts of different countries to stop the violence, guarantee access for humanitarian aid to the territories affected by the conflict and achieve the immediate release of all hostages. We urge the United Nations and its Member States to redouble our efforts to definitively achieve those goals.

Finally, and as President Gustavo Petro Urrego has demanded in different international settings, we call for pursuing the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations.

Mr. Gunaratna (Sri Lanka): We meet again under very grim circumstances: a besieged population continues to suffer under deprivation and bombardment despite the collective voice of an overwhelming majority of the international community calling for a ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid. While recognizing the legitimate security concerns of both Israel and Palestine, Sri Lanka is appalled by the deplorable humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are deeply conscious of the immeasurable pain, loss and suffering that both the Israeli and Palestinian people continue to experience as a result of the ongoing hostilities.

The adoption on 12 December of resolution ES-10/22 (see A/ES-10/PV.45), by an overwhelming majority of 153 countries voting in favour of an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages held by all parties, shows clearly where international opinion is on the matter. Many countries and international organizations have expressed their disappointment and concern about the inability to reach a consensus on a ceasefire at the Security Council. While we note that discussions are still under way, it is hoped that consensus will not be blocked further so as to bring about a sustainable ceasefire, halt the violence, protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian aid in the affected areas.

Despite the General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/22 on 12 December and resolution ES-10/21 on 27 October and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023) on 15 November, we have only seen the situation continue to deteriorate with grave consequences for the civilian population. The resolution adopted on 12 December focused on the Secretary-General's call invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and the letter of 7 December by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, emphasized the need for the protection of Israeli and Palestinian civilians, called upon all parties to exercise maximum restraint, demanded an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of hostages held by all parties and reiterated the demand for all parties to comply with their obligations under international

humanitarian law. Previously, the resolution adopted by the Assembly in October, with 120 votes in favour, called for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities.

The Security Council resolution adopted in November called for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors. Furthermore, it called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups, especially children, as well as ensuring immediate humanitarian access. It also called on all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in Gaza of basic services and humanitarian assistance.

However, it is regrettable that all those calls have only fallen on deaf ears. We call for the immediate implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Assembly during this session.

Continued inaction and the inability to reach a consensus at the United Nations-mandated body dealing with peace and security translates into a loss of human lives, especially among the women and children of Gaza. That inaction, even in the light of the Secretary-General invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, has no justification whatsoever. The Secretary-General, in his briefing to the Security Council, termed the situation as being at a breaking point, noting that

“[t]here is a high risk of the total collapse of the humanitarian support system in Gaza, which would have devastating consequences.” (*S/PV.9498, p. 2*)

In particular, he stressed that

“[t]here is clearly ... a serious risk of aggravating existing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security.” (*ibid.*)

One hundred and thirty-four United Nations staff have been killed so far — the highest number ever in a single conflict and within the span of a little more than two months. The UNRWA Commissioner-General,

Philippe Lazzarini, called this the darkest hour in the Agency’s 75-year history and, in a letter, informed the President the humanitarian situation is now untenable. The suffering faced by the helpless Palestinian civilians in Gaza, especially children and women, must stop now. Calling for a ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza is in no way condoning the attacks of 7 October on Israeli civilians. Sri Lanka condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We recall that the Secretary-General, in his message for the 2023 International Day of Solidarity for Palestinian People, stated that he has

“been clear in my condemnation of the terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October. But I have also been clear that they cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people”.

The terror attacks of 7 October by Hamas cannot justify the constant bombardment of civilian infrastructure and the continued killing of women and children.

It is in that context that Sri Lanka co-sponsored resolution ES-10/22. We reiterate our call for the need to avoid double standards and urge the international community to present a united front and a collective voice at this critical juncture and to prevent any further expansion of hostilities. We must prioritize the well-being and security of all individuals involved and work towards a peace that ensures the safety, dignity and rights of both Israelis and Palestinians. Sri Lanka calls for an immediate halt to the violence and urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint to prevent further civilian casualties.

Finally, allow me to reiterate that Sri Lanka remains committed to supporting a negotiated settlement in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, leading to two States living side by side based on the 1967 borders.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.