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60th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 115

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/785)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General, issued as document A/78/785, concerning the extension of the appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security.

Members will recall that in its resolution 59/276 of 23 December 2004, the Assembly decided on an exceptional basis and without setting any precedent that the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security shall serve for one non-renewable term not exceeding five years.

As indicated in document A/78/785, on 30 May 2019 the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Mr. Gilles Michaud of Canada as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security for a five-year term that began on 1 July 2019 and is due to end on 30 June 2024.

In view of the strategic need to ensure continuity in security leadership at this time of simultaneous crises, and given the ongoing reforms of the Department and their potential impact on the United Nations security

management system as a whole, the Secretary-General proposes that notwithstanding paragraph 22 of section XI of resolution 59/276, the General Assembly approve the exceptional extension of the term of Mr. Gilles Michaud as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security by two years, until 30 June 2026.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation greatly values the efforts of Mr. Gilles Michaud in the conduct of the work of the Department for Safety and Security. The reforms that have been initiated have genuinely increased the ability of the United Nations to carry out programmes quickly and effectively in high-risk situations. In the unprecedentedly challenging circumstances in the area of security, it would be illogical to ignore Mr. Michaud's experience. We are ready to scrutinize the question of Mr. Michaud's reappointment very carefully.

However, we have concerns about the process of consideration of this proposal. The Secretary-General's note (A/78/785) appeared in *The Journal of the United Nations* on 28 February. The Chair of the Group of Eastern European States informed us about the plans on 29 February, but there was no warning in the information provided that the decision would be taken so hastily. Resolution 59/276, to which the Secretary-General refers, was recommended by the Fifth Committee. Mr. Michaud's contract expires on 30 June. We have a great deal of time ahead of us to take a decision, and we find it difficult to understand

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why delegations were given only two days to consider such an important matter. In view of that, we are asking for more time to establish our position and we request that the consideration of the matter be postponed.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): It appears that additional consultations are needed on this matter. The General Assembly will consider it later once the consultations have taken place, and the date will be announced after that.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 63 (*continued*)

Use of the veto

Special report of the Security Council (A/78/786)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 63 to continue the debate pursuant to resolution 76/262.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is urgent to bring an end to Israel's prolonged genocide against the Palestinian people. The United Nations cannot remain silent in the face of the collective punishment and the grave violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity committed by the Government of Israel as the occupying Power. We condemn in the strongest terms the killings of civilians, especially women, children and humanitarian workers of the United Nations system; the indiscriminate bombing and destruction of homes, hospitals and civilian infrastructure; and the deprivation of the Gazan population of basic services, which has significantly worsened the dire humanitarian situation resulting from the blockade of the Strip. On 29 February, Israel committed a new crime against humanity by shelling people who had gathered to receive food supplies. At least 104 people died and another 760 were injured. We reiterate our firm condemnation of the genocide in Gaza and demand an immediate ceasefire. Cuba also condemns the potential military operation by Israel in Rafah. Nothing justifies the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people, which has been preceded by decades of illegal occupation, colonization, dispossession of their lands and apartheid practices.

The historical complicity of the United States, with the support of its NATO allies, ensures that the Government of Israel can continue acting with impunity. Since the escalation of violence in Gaza began, this is the third time that the United States has vetoed a Security Council resolution on Palestine demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The United States Government must stop using the undemocratic and obsolete power of the veto to protect Israel. We have once again been given untenable pretexts that prevent the Council from fulfilling its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations to stop the massacre in Gaza. Once and for all, we must do away with the double standards, selectivity and political manipulation that are undermining the cause of international peace and security. We can no longer put off the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian conflict based on the establishment of two States, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and guaranteeing the right of return of refugees. We join the call to urgently convene a peace conference under United Nations auspices that can make it possible to preserve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We reaffirm Cuba's willingness to contribute to the legitimate international efforts to bring the situation to an end. We support South Africa's request before the International Court of Justice with regard to Israel's violations of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which Cuba is State party.

We reiterate our proposal at the recent nineteenth summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to urgently send to the Gaza Strip an international protection mission authorized by the General Assembly with a mandate to guarantee the security and protection of civilians and to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance, including water and food.

We call once again on all parties involved to facilitate the entry and essential distribution of assistance to the Palestinian people.

Cuba reiterates its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The State of Palestine has the right to be a full member of the United Nations. It is imperative to have a cessation of violence and to avoid the forced displacement of Palestinians from their own land.

As the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, said,

“Never did the Palestinian cause seem more just than in contrast with the repulsive brutality of its adversaries. Humankind will not forget the heroism of those who were attacked nor the barbarism of the aggressors.”

Mr. Prabowo (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59).

Just days ago, a large crowd of hungry and desperate civilians were met by Israeli’s firing squad, leading to the death of at least 100 Palestinians and the injury of hundreds more. That is a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

Indonesia strongly condemns the shooting of Palestinian civilians seeking humanitarian aid in Gaza. Those Palestinian civilians were forced to seek humanitarian assistance only because Israel had destroyed their homes, destroyed their livelihoods, destroyed their families and destroyed their future. But condemnation after condemnation of Israel’s brutal actions is not enough. We need concrete action; we need accountability to make the brutality stop.

The continued use of the veto in the Security Council not only means the Council is failing to carry out its responsibility but also means the Council is giving a free pass to Israel to carry out its brutal actions. The power of the veto should never be used against humankind. The veto must also not undermine the upholding of international law such as that of the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice. We must ensure that a single act of raising one’s hand saves lives instead of enabling the annihilation of civilians.

We again remind the permanent members of the Council to act with great responsibility and utmost wisdom to the benefit of global peace and security and of humankind. In the immediate term, we therefore expect the Council to continue to push for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance and to reject the forced displacement of Palestinians.

Indonesia also further emphasizes the need for the following.

First, no country is above the law, Israel included. Indonesia stressed in the International Court of Justice, on 23 February, that Israel’s unlawful occupation and its associated atrocities cannot continue to go unchecked. Such actions must not be normalized or accepted by the international community. The time has come for Israel to answer for its violations, ensuring accountability is enforced as a cornerstone of justice and peace.

Secondly, the international community must take a firm stand by ending the delivery of arms and ammunition. Providing military support only fuels the conflict, enabling further aggression and violence. By ending the flow of arms, we can send a clear message that the world refuses to be complicit in the perpetuation of the crisis. That action is not just a moral imperative but also a necessary step towards de-escalation and peace.

Thirdly, the path to peace is incomplete without granting full United Nations membership to Palestine. A just, lasting and comprehensive solution cannot be achieved without Palestine’s equal participation at the negotiation table alongside Israel. Recognizing Palestine’s full membership is a recognition of its people’s rights and a crucial step towards balance and fairness in the peace process.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Yemen on behalf of the Group of Arab States and Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59). We thank the President for convening this meeting.

We are meeting today in the context of the implementation of resolution 76/262 on the use of the veto, which laid the foundation to limit the use of the veto and prevent its misuse by the permanent members of the Security Council. The United States used its right to veto for the third time in this context on draft resolution S/2024/173 submitted by Algeria, seeking ceasefire in Gaza.

We are meeting today with heavy hearts as a result of the barbaric war waged by Israel, which is targeting millions of defenceless people in the Gaza Strip and which has killed more than 30,000 people, most of whom are women and children, and has led to the starvation of the people of Gaza. The objective of the war is to eradicate the presence of the Palestinians from their land and annihilate their noble and just cause.

Egypt regrets once again that the United States repeatedly used the veto, which prevented the Security Council from adopting a draft resolution demanding a ceasefire, thereby impeding the Council from discharging its mandate in the maintenance of international peace and security. The entire international community had hoped to reach an end to the steady rise, reaching tens of thousands, in the numbers of dead and wounded, along with the horrific scenes of children who have been killed that we are seeing on a daily basis and the cries of the injured and the wailing of mothers mourning the loss of their children. We had hoped that all that would affect the rigid United States position that obstructs the adoption of the draft resolution aimed at stopping the brutal Israeli killing machine, ending the bloodshed of innocent civilians and preventing the conflict from becoming a regional one. However, we were all disappointed.

Egypt stresses that diplomatic efforts or negotiations do not conflict with the performance of the organs of the United Nations within the framework of the Charter. The ongoing efforts to release Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners and to establish a ceasefire would not be disrupted by a Security Council resolution calling for the same objective. On the contrary, the resolution would support those diplomatic efforts, give hope to the civilians in Gaza and send a message that the United Nations cares for them and that it will uphold its legal, political and ethical commitment to stop the destructive war.

The repeated use of the veto has created a sense of impunity and escape from accountability for Israel and has emboldened it to continue with its horrific crimes committed in Gaza. The most recent example of that is the Nabulsi roundabout massacre, which led to more than 100 martyrs killed in cold blood as they were receiving scarce aid and foodstuffs. The blood of those innocent people hopes that all Assembly members hold accountable whoever obstructed the adoption of the draft resolution.

We should pay tribute to the personnel of the United Nations and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) who lost their lives to establish peace and help civilians. We commend the efforts of United Nations officials to implement a humanitarian ceasefire and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid. In particular, we commend the Secretary-General for addressing the Council and invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter. We

also commend the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for his two letters addressed to the Council about the status of the Agency and the current catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We must not limit ourselves to only making statements. We must move forward with the implementation of several measures.

First, there must be an immediate ceasefire in order to save lives and ensure the return of the displaced people to their homes. Israeli plans seeking forced displacement must be stopped, as we all firmly reject them. We strongly warn against the continuation of military operations around the city of Rafah, and we note before everyone here that there will be disastrous repercussions if there is a military incursion into Rafah. We will hold Israel responsible for that.

Secondly, the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions must be immediately implemented, especially resolution 2720 (2023). The humanitarian aid mechanism must be implemented without delay, and pressure should be brought to bear on Israel to cooperate with the United Nations mechanism led by Sigrid Kaag and open all crossings immediately. Only that can deter Israel from using hunger as a weapon against the defenceless Palestinian people.

Thirdly, the political horizon must be revived quickly through the recognition, by all countries, of the State of Palestine, along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestine deserves to be a full-fledged member of the United Nations in order to protect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people that Israel seeks to deny.

Fourthly, all countries exporting weapons and ammunition to Israel should immediately stop their exports in order to put an end to the systematic killing and to prevent Israel from opening up new battle fronts.

Fifthly, the financing of UNRWA must immediately resume. The Agency plays an essential and irreplaceable role for humanitarian work in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip and other areas of operation.

Sixthly, a process must be initiated to adopt a United Nations resolution that holds Israel accountable for the crimes it committed in the Palestinian territories, especially the Gaza Strip. Israel must be compelled to pay due compensation for the massive destruction it has caused.

In conclusion, I cannot find more eloquent words than those uttered by the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat before the Israeli Knesset in 1977, when he addressed the leaders of Israel, saying:

“You must give up once and for all dreams of invasion. You must give up the belief that force is the best way to deal with Arabs. You must understand the lessons of confrontation between us and you. Expansion will do nothing for you. Our land is non-negotiable.”

May God bless the soul of the insightful late President Sadat.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): France regrets that the draft resolution presented by Algeria (S/2024/173) could not be adopted. The situation in Gaza requires that the Security Council be able to express clear and strong demands on all aspects of the crisis: humanitarian, security and political.

It is unacceptable that the Security Council and the General Assembly have not yet been able to condemn the terrorist acts committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October. The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages must take place without further delay.

The human toll and the humanitarian situation in Gaza are intolerable, and Israeli operations must cease. The civilian population of Gaza must be protected. A ceasefire must be implemented immediately in order to enable aid to be distributed throughout the Gaza Strip. The negotiations under way must lead to the conclusion of an agreement in that regard without further delay. All access routes must be opened, including the port of Ashdod, a direct route from Jordan, and all other necessary crossing points.

France reiterates its unwavering commitment to Israel's security, but nothing can exempt Israel from the obligation respect international law, including humanitarian law.

France reiterates its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Agency's action in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the region is essential. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza requires us to avoid the collapse of UNRWA. France welcomes the steps taken by the Secretary-General to ensure the Agency's neutrality and to shed full light on the very serious allegations against 12 UNRWA

personnel. France will closely follow all reports issued in that regard.

Finally and above all, France reiterates that progress towards a political solution must be made, without delay, and that only the two-State solution can meet the security needs of Israel and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for a State. France will continue to work towards that goal.

Mrs. Güven (Türkiye): I would like to express our appreciation to the President for convening this debate, in line with resolution 76/262, on the veto initiative. We have gathered under this roof for a second time this year due to the veto cast by a permanent member of the Security Council during the debate on the situation in the Middle East last month (see S/PV.9552).

It is evident that the Security Council has failed to deliver on its mandate and to shoulder its primary responsibility, in this case, to maintain international peace and security in the face of the horrific crimes committed in Gaza. Now, five months into the conflict, in debate after debate and resolution after resolution, the Council has yet to stop this human-made catastrophe. The General Assembly represents our wider consciousness, our collective response and articulates our shared demand for Gaza — an immediate ceasefire.

For the past five months, we have been witnessing a brutal assault on Gaza. The women, children and men in Gaza are being massacred, with total impunity. Civilians are being targeted, not only by shelling and bombing, but also by starvation, destruction of medical services and by being stripped of their dignity and means for survival. A new episode of this tragedy is under way in Rafah, despite the warnings of the international community.

We once again underline the importance of preserving the historical status quo of Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Given the fragile environment, any restrictions or violations of the current status quo could add fuel to the fire. That is especially true on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan, when it will be essential to exercise restraint and prevent provocations.

We condemn in the strongest terms the recent killing of civilians who were desperately waiting for an aid convoy. That tragedy is unfolding before our eyes, in total disregard for international law, international humanitarian law and the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice. We need to be

conscious of what this dreadful episode could mean for the future of international law, for the future of human rights and the United Nations. The consequences of abandoning international law will only bring more instability, aggression, conflict and suffering. Our concerns about the regional spillover of the conflict have already become a reality. Recent incidents in the Red Sea, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria are alarming. Without a ceasefire, the atrocity in Gaza is about to become a global catastrophe with repercussions far beyond the region. Yet steps can be taken to avert the worst-case scenarios, and they all start with an immediate ceasefire. The General Assembly has adopted two resolutions (ES-10/21 and ES-10/22) calling for a ceasefire, and it remains on the right side of history. The Security Council needs to follow suit. What we expect of the Council is clear — it should ensure an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian assistance and prevent people's forced displacement.

The crimes committed in Gaza are far too grave for us to remain silent and idle. All nations should embrace their historic responsibility to stop the bloodshed immediately. Let us heed the global outcry. Türkiye will continue to advocate for a political solution based on the vision of two States. That has to be part and parcel of our overall efforts to resolve the conflict in a sustainable manner. My country will engage constructively in the efforts for a more democratic, accountable and effective Security Council.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Almost five months after the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, the Security Council's call for a ceasefire has been forcefully blocked by the United States for a fourth time, which China finds extremely disappointing. The result of the Security Council's vote clearly shows that the vast majority of Council members are in agreement on the issue of a ceasefire in Gaza. However, the United States has abused its veto power to stifle the consensus on the Council, causing widespread discontent in the international community. An immediate ceasefire in Gaza is a prerequisite if we are to save innocent civilians and provide humanitarian assistance and is key to avoiding the further escalation or spread of the conflict. As Ramadan approaches, the international community must push for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the conflict with a stronger sense of urgency and political determination if we are to preserve the people of Gaza's hopes for survival. We urge Israel to immediately reverse its course and its plans for

an offensive against Rafah, cease its military attacks on Gaza and stop the forced transfer and collective punishment of the Palestinian population. We call on the countries concerned to put aside their geostrategic considerations and domestic political calculations and to be truly impartial and responsible in making the right choice and playing a constructive role in promoting a ceasefire in Gaza.

Mr. Zambrana Flores (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Under fire, Gaza is facing an unprecedented humanitarian disaster, with an extreme shortage of survival supplies, nearly 600,000 people on the verge of famine and social order on the verge of collapse. We urge Israel, as an occupying Power, to comply with its obligations under international law to guarantee the safe, rapid and unimpeded entry of sufficient humanitarian supplies. Practical measures should be taken to protect the safety of humanitarian agencies and personnel and to facilitate the delivery of their relief work. Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) must be fully implemented.

A two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Recently, some Israeli political figures have openly and repeatedly rejected the possibility of a two-State solution or any international efforts aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State. That is very alarming. We urge Israel to cease discrediting the concept of a two-State solution and eroding the basis for such a solution, and to end its illegal settlement activities. China calls for intensified international and regional diplomatic efforts to reshape a credible multilateral process, revitalize the political prospects for a two-State solution and relaunch direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. We advocate convening a larger, more comprehensive and effective international peace conference. We support Palestine becoming a fully-fledged member of the United Nations as soon as possible. China will continue to work tirelessly with the international community to bring about a rapid end to the fighting in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian disaster, implement a two-State solution and realize long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are once again taking part in this debate owing to the use of the veto by a permanent member of the Security Council against

an urgent draft resolution (S/2024/173), sponsored by Algeria and aimed at halting the continuing genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people in Gaza. We are once again lamenting the actions of the Security Council, which has been paralysed by a single country, even against the will of the vast majority of States, civil society and humanitarian organizations, human rights defenders and the peoples of the world in general.

The peoples of the world, our peoples, are asking themselves how it is possible that the children and grandchildren of those who suffered one of the greatest atrocities committed against humankind are today condemning the Palestinian people to a similar fate. It is shocking that the Israeli regime has lost all sense of humanity, sensitivity and appreciation of human life. Nothing and no one matter to it any more, except its ambition to kill without any thought whatsoever. It has the nerve to present itself as a country that defends human rights, while it is using all of its resources with impunity to maximize the suffering of Palestinian men and women, including using starvation as a method of warfare. Israel has gone to great lengths to try to justify its systematic policies of genocide and apartheid, pointing to the events of 7 October 2023 as if they happened in a vacuum, as if the Palestinian State had not been blockaded for 17 years, as if there had not been 57 years of occupation and systematic violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and international law.

For Bolivia, it is even more outrageous to see that the atrocious actions of the occupying Power have been made possible thanks to the support of certain countries that continue to send weapons and supplies to Israel, on the one hand, and, on the other to provide aid and political and diplomatic complicity. When action is most needed by the Security Council, it continues to be hijacked by those who claim to be contributing to solutions but who block any possibility of a forceful decision mandating a ceasefire.

My country unequivocally condemns acts of violence against civilians and joins the call for a complete and immediate ceasefire on humanitarian grounds and the grounds of justice. It is shocking and unacceptable that Israel should come to this Hall and blatantly accuse all the Member States of this Assembly, and the United Nations system itself, of supporting terrorism by denouncing Israel's genocide and its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Absolutely nothing justifies the

brutal massacre of more than 30,000 Palestinians, 70 per cent of them defenceless women and children. Israel, by its past and present actions, such as the threat to invade the Palestinian city of Rafah by land, has demonstrated its willingness to exercise State terrorism. Consequently, every Member State that sells weapons or supplies that enable Israel to continue its actions against all the Palestinians must be considered a State sponsor of terrorism and genocide.

In addition, we reaffirm our full support for the heroes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Those brave United Nations workers are being persecuted, injured and killed, and we call on the Secretary-General to do everything possible to safeguard their welfare and to initiate prosecutions before the appropriate legal bodies. Israel must also be held accountable for attacking humanitarian workers, who are protected under international humanitarian law.

Lastly, Bolivia reiterates its commitment to a Palestine free of violence, oppression and aggression — that is to say, a free Palestine. A real and concrete contribution would therefore be for the General Assembly to incorporate the State of Palestine as a full member as soon as possible. To that end, we support the initiative proposed in this Hall to convene a peace conference for the Palestinian people.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Yemen, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter (see A/78/PV.59) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The General Assembly is meeting today to once again express its position on the United States' use of the veto against a draft resolution (S/2024/173) calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The United States vetoed the draft resolution to protect and provide immunity to Israel, thereby enabling it to continue committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Palestinian people without fear of accountability or punishment. Syria condemns in the strongest terms the United States Administration's use of the veto to paralyse the Security Council and prevent it from fulfilling its main responsibility of maintaining

international peace and security. We categorically reject the pretexts that the United States claims in defending Israel's crimes, in total disregard for the will of the peoples and States of the world. And those crimes are not limited to our people in occupied Palestine alone but are also spilling over to Syrian and Lebanese territory, with repeated Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure and civilian homes.

The United States Administration obstructed the adoption of the draft resolution submitted by Algeria and supported by the vast majority of Security Council members, as well as the wider membership of the United Nations. The draft resolution responded to Members' calls for an end to the five months of the brutal Israeli aggression and wanton crimes that once again showed the true face of the occupation and its authorities to the world at large, and laid bare the years of lies propagated by the occupation authorities and their Western sponsors. The United States' counter draft text is nothing but a desperate attempt to distract attention from the fact that it has prevented the Council from discharging its responsibility, giving Israel more time to continue with its crimes, its siege and its starvation of the Palestinian people.

The use of the veto is not the whole story. In addition to providing the Israeli occupation with its support in the Security Council, the United States Administration has opened its arms depots and provided Israel with all kinds of materiel, munitions and expertise. In doing so, the United States is directly involved in the killing of thousands of Palestinians, a majority of them women and children, and in displacing nearly 2 million people, destroying hospitals and schools and even targeting United Nations agencies, headquarters, personnel and humanitarian convoys. What the world has witnessed in the occupied Palestinian territories in the past few months has gone far beyond the blind United States bias towards Israel or the double standards of the United States Administration and some of its allies. The hypocrisy no longer has anywhere to hide. For months the United States has prevented the establishment of any investigative committee or international mechanism to ensure the documentation of Israel's crimes. The United States' statements make no reference to accountability and ensure no impunity. It has even continued to distort provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, underestimating international public opinion and the positions of Member States, as well as the Secretary-

General's call to the Security Council to invoke Article 99 of the Charter.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, returned to the Chair.

In conclusion, Syria reiterates its support to our brother people of Palestine in their struggle to liberate their occupied territory and establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. Syria calls for the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the occupied Arab territories in Palestine and the occupied areas of the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon. We call for granting Palestine full membership in the United Nations. Syria also emphasizes the need for an immediate halt to all acts of genocide, killing and destruction against Palestinians, as well as for the need to hold senior officials of the occupation accountable and prevent impunity for their acts. The immediate delivery of humanitarian aid should be allowed and any attack on Rafah or attempts to displace Palestinians from their land prevented.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): It is March and spring is fast approaching. But for the civilians besieged in Gaza for the past five months, spring's rays of hope remain distant and elusive. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is beyond description. Everyone in this Hall knows the unimaginable number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since the beginning of October, which has now reached more than 30,000. For those who have survived, life in Gaza is utterly tragic and devoid of basic dignity. Schools, mosques, churches and even hospitals are under attack. The protection of civilians, the core pillar of international humanitarian law, has not been observed. Humanitarian assistance is far below the immense needs of the more than 2 million people in Gaza. The nightmare of starvation is becoming a reality. Public order has collapsed. The looming ground operation in Rafah, where more than half of Palestinians in Gaza are densely packed, is extremely concerning. Surging regional tension is causing fear and insecurity all around the Middle East. This tragedy must come to an end.

Since October, the Security Council has adopted resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) in order to enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale to Palestinians in Gaza. Unfortunately, however, the resolutions have had little impact on the ground. A humanitarian ceasefire

is urgently needed if humanitarian assistance is to be rapidly scaled up. That is why the Republic of Korea voted in favour of the Security Council draft resolution (S/2024/173) proposed by Algeria and demanding a humanitarian ceasefire. The Council's primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. We hope that it can find the unity needed to establish a durable solution to the current situation.

We must not forget that the direct cause of the current situation in Gaza was Hamas's heinous terrorist attacks on innocent Israeli citizens. One hundred and thirty hostages are still being held in Gaza with no contact with their family members, who spend days and nights in deepening anxiety and dwindling hope. The Republic of Korea notes that intensive diplomatic negotiations to achieve a hostage release are ongoing, and we really appreciate the tireless efforts undertaken by key stakeholders to that end. We sincerely hope that the negotiations will soon arrive at a fruitful outcome that can lead to a cessation of hostilities, and finally to a permanent ceasefire on the ground. Ultimately, based on a permanent ceasefire, sincere negotiations to end the anger, frustration and grief of both Palestinians and Israelis must be resumed. Security and stability, not only in Palestine and Israel but in the wider region as well, depend on a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. In that context, at this perilous inflection point, it is high time for the Security Council to take real action to both end the fighting and contemplate a viable path towards the realization of a two-State solution. As a member of the Security Council, the Republic of Korea will engage constructively in all Council efforts to attain that guiding vision.

Ms. Brattested (Norway): The Assembly's adoption of the veto initiative, resolution 76/262, was important, and a significant step in making the Security Council more transparent and accountable. Norway regrets that on 20 February the Council failed yet again to call for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. We would like to call on it to act in accordance with its primary responsibility, the maintenance of peace and security.

Norway calls for an immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. We have clearly condemned the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October. And we have called for the unconditional and immediate release of all hostages. The situation in Gaza is deteriorating at an alarming speed. Palestinians in Gaza continue to be deprived of basic human rights, including the right to food, water and health care.

Children are dying, not only from bombs and guns, but from hunger and preventable disease. The United Nations confirms that a quarter of the population is one step away from famine, yet Israel continues to severely impede and restrict the flow of humanitarian aid into and within Gaza. Ensuring access for such aid to the population in northern Gaza is particularly urgent. The opening of new crossings in the north, together with a humanitarian ceasefire, would greatly improve humanitarian access. According to international humanitarian law, Israel must allow humanitarian relief to reach civilians in Gaza. It is not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative to preserve human life.

We look forward to the advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, where Norway has submitted that Israel's recent actions in Gaza include the ongoing indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force and has asked the Court to determine whether the occupation of the Palestinian territory may have become tantamount to de facto annexation, which would be contrary to international law. Norway also recalled Israel's historic commitment to contributing to the realization of a viable State of Palestine. We continue to see a rapid expansion of illegal settlements and high levels of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The illegal settlements are an impediment to achieving a two-State solution and should be uprooted. Going forward, we need creative and innovative diplomacy to ensure an irreversible and clear path towards a two-State solution that guarantees peace and security for both peoples. Questions pertaining to international recognition of a Palestinian State and full membership in the United Nations should be part of those discussions.

In conclusion, Norway wants to highlight the vital role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in these desperate times. As we heard yesterday (see A/78/PV.59), they represent a lifeline for millions of civilians inside and outside Palestine, and we urge all the countries that have suspended their contributions to adhere to their commitments.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): My delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this plenary meeting of the Assembly to debate the veto cast in the Security Council on 20 February (see S/PV.9552). Every veto has a cost. Security Council vetoes have resulted in invasions, mass killings and even genocide, as we are currently

witnessing in Palestine. The latest veto in the Security Council gave Israel licence to kill more than 100 Palestinian civilians and injure hundreds more on Thursday, 29 February, and to perpetrate several more such killings since then. Those were innocent people who had queued up for food and water, people who were hungry and on the brink of starvation. The question I want to ask Israel is what security threat it sees from hundreds of starving civilians that Israel itself has deprived of food, water and basic human necessities.

The Security Council's inaction is a nod to Israel to continue with a genocidal war. The draft resolution (S/2024/173) that the Council failed to adopt called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the unconditional release of hostages. It called for unhindered humanitarian aid and the prevention of further escalation in the region. It called for all parties to comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. The failure to condemn Israel's violations of humanitarian law and human rights law is equally confounding. The discrepancies that I hear in this Hall, which are especially apparent during the debates on aggression, oppression and land-grabbing, are alarming. The Maldives condemns in the strongest terms Israel's heinous attack of 29 February on unarmed Palestinian civilians who were waiting for humanitarian aid. We call on the Security Council to take swift action to stop Israel's ongoing genocide in Palestine. The United Nations cannot continue to fail "we the peoples" and the very purposes and principles outlined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Council should hold Israel and its leadership accountable for their blatant violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We must move beyond rhetoric and take decisive action. My delegation therefore calls for imposing an immediate arms embargo on Israel. Israel's war crimes against the people of Gaza are unprecedented. It has been withholding water, food, and medicine from the Palestinian people. Its occupation has been systematically imposing collective punishment and forced displacement on Palestinians, and it must be called on to comply immediately with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.

A ceasefire is the absolute minimum. Palestinian civilians must be protected. They should be granted compensation for the injustices that they are being forced to endure. The right of the Palestinian people to self-

determination should be realized. We must re-evaluate the functionality and validity of the multilateral system if we cannot act. We cannot stand by and watch atrocities taking place as a consequence of our own inaction. We cannot write off devastating, avoidable tragedies as casualties of the peace process. The Maldives therefore reiterates that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only with the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Almost five months have passed since the outbreak of the conflict between Palestine and Israel. During that period, the international community has made every possible effort to achieve a ceasefire, halt the hostilities, protect civilians and resolve the humanitarian crisis. Yet in spite of the efforts of the international community, the situation in Gaza is worsening as civilian casualties increase every day, the suffering of the Palestinian people continues and the escalation of the tension in the Gaza Strip continues to spread to the entire Middle East.

The only solution to the current crisis in the Middle East is an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. However, in the Security Council, the United States has so far vetoed all draft resolutions calling for such a ceasefire on the absurd and hypocritical pretexts of Israel's right to self-defence and the purported negative impact on the negotiations on releasing the hostages. As the only Security Council member that voted against the most recent draft resolution (S/2024/173) calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the United States has once again revealed its true colours to the international community as a destroyer of peace that seeks only its own geopolitical hegemony, regardless of global peace and security and the sanctity of human life.

The Palestine question under discussion today is not a simple matter of armed conflict but rather a critical issue directly linked to the fate of humankind, whereby we decide whether the international community will passively stand by and watch the indiscriminate genocide perpetrated by Israel or unite in strength to uphold human dignity and justice. Through the tragedy of the bloodshed in the Middle East, for five months we have seen that the Security Council, which has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is unable to carry out its mandate thanks to the high-handedness and arbitrary practice of the United States. Reality teaches us the immutable philosophy

that in today's world, where the high-handed and arbitrary practices of the United States are rampant, the dignity and sovereignty of a State and the safety of its people's lives can be defended only with legitimate capabilities of self-defence powerful enough to enable it to defend itself, rather than through any international organization or outside help.

If the United States continues to exercise its veto power to incite Israel's massacre, as it is doing now, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza will worsen and the anger and resistance from the international community will grow. The humanitarian disaster in Gaza must be ended without delay through an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, and the issue of Palestine must be urgently resolved in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of an independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders.

In conclusion, my delegation once again expresses its unwavering support for and solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just struggle to regain their legitimate national rights.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this special meeting.

Kenya aligns itself with the veto initiative countries, as represented by Liechtenstein (see A/78/PV.59), and I would like to offer some additional remarks in my national capacity.

A veto does not need to be popular to be a credible assertion of its wielder's fidelity to the Security Council's mandate. Unfortunately, the negative vote on 20 February 2024 on a draft resolution (S/2024/173) that called for an immediate ceasefire for the war in Gaza and had the support of 13 of the 15 Council members, struggles to meet our expectations for the maintenance of international peace and security. The need for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza is undeniable. The escalating casualties, serious injuries and looming threats of mass starvation require an immediate cessation of military operations to enable the large-scale delivery of humanitarian aid. Although Kenya recognizes the urgency of Israel's campaign against Hamas following the 7 October 2023 attacks, it is crucial to recognize that international law and international humanitarian law set firm limits — limits that have been exceeded according to nearly all authoritative sources familiar with the situation. No

country stands above international law or international humanitarian law.

We also call on all Member States to join Kenya in condemning Hamas for worsening the suffering of civilians through its terrorist tactics, including the use of human shields, and for its refusal to release hostages unconditionally.

We understand that there are negotiations and efforts under way to bring relief to the Palestinian people, but they are limited without the express will of the Security Council. The veto should instead protect innocent Palestinian lives, not increase their peril.

The essential criterion for evaluating the veto's use is whom it protects, particularly if it extends its safeguard to the most vulnerable. Under Article 24 of the Charter we, the Member States, are committed to abiding by the Security Council's decisions, trusting it to protect international peace and security on our behalf. However, the use of the veto, whether threatened or enacted, in situations of major harm to non-combatants, often impedes the Council's efforts to act in the shared interests of all, thereby eroding the global community's trust in the United Nations. Historically, the concept of the veto was rooted in a democratic ethos of ancient Rome, where tribunes used it to shield the common people from the patricians' detrimental decrees. Today its use has dramatically shifted. It now serves the interests of the most powerful against the collective will as it is overwhelmingly expressed by the General Assembly, particularly regarding the situations in Gaza and Ukraine. Perhaps it is time for the General Assembly to give itself the power to respond more decisively to negative votes in the Council that are a clear departure from its mandate.

In conclusion, it is imperative that all parties involved prioritize the welfare and safety of Palestinian civilians, allowing essential supplies and support to reach those in dire need without delay. We call on all Member States, especially those that have leverage over the parties, to work together to hasten negotiations that will lead to a two-State solution whereby Israel and Palestine can live side by side in peace within the pre-1967 lines. We also urge all Member States to leverage the Pact for the Future to make meaningful reforms to the United Nations peace and security architecture.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): Today we are once again meeting to discuss the use of the veto in the Security Council in the context of the crisis in Gaza.

New Zealand aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Australia on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the statement by the representative of Liechtenstein on behalf of the veto initiative States (see A/78/PV.59).

An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is urgently needed to allow an accelerated flow of desperately needed aid, the release of hostages and a safe environment for civilians. The General Assembly has been clear in calling for that during the recent meetings of its tenth emergency special session. New Zealand supports all efforts to bring the conflict to an end and hopes that a sustained ceasefire can follow a temporary cessation in hostilities. We emphasize the importance of negotiations to bring about an end to the fighting. All parties to the talks must reach agreement without delay. New Zealand appreciates the efforts of key parties, particularly Qatar, Egypt and the United States, to free the hostages and agree on a cessation of hostilities.

However, we are meeting again this week owing to the use of the veto to block a draft resolution (S/2024/173) that had the clear and strong backing of the Security Council. New Zealand welcomed key elements of the Algerian-led draft resolution, including the need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. New Zealand is a long-standing opponent of any use of the veto. We are therefore deeply disappointed that we have been obliged to meet again under the veto initiative, only two months after the last meeting (see A/78/PV.51 and A/78/PV.52). New Zealand has actively supported the veto initiative from its inception, and we remain a proud proponent of resolution 76/262. While we welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), the Council is not living up to its important responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. The Council acts on behalf of all Members and is accountable to all Members. Its credibility, and that of the United Nations as a whole, is at stake. We ask the permanent members to reflect on that responsibility. We need to do better. Now is a time for unity and common purpose to resolve that crisis and bring respite to the population caught in its midst.

Civil order is on the brink of collapse in parts of Gaza. Warnings of famine and reports of the desperation of Gazans are horrifying. It is clear that the aid reaching the civilian population is insufficient. The protection of civilians is paramount, and a requirement for all parties under international law. There must be safe and unimpeded humanitarian access into and throughout

Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must comply with the 26 January orders of the International Court of Justice for provisional measures and with its obligations as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

A negotiated political solution is needed to achieve lasting peace and security for Israel and Palestine. There is overwhelming support in the international community for a future Palestinian State. We are concerned about the recent rhetoric from senior members of Israel's Government that would deny Palestinians a State of their own. New Zealand will continue to firmly oppose developments that imperil the possibility of a two-State solution, such as the building and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and the forcible displacement of Palestinian civilians from Gaza.

Lastly, if resolution 76/262 is reactivated in the future, it will once again be incumbent on the Members of the General Assembly to continue to exercise our collective political responsibility under the Charter to address matters of international peace and security.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations (see A/78/PV.59).

It has now been five months since the brutal genocide aimed at the Palestinian people began once again, in the face of which the Security Council has been prevented by perennial United States vetoes from securing peace in Palestine, with the Council once again blocked from agreeing to the ceasefire that the international community demands. The Security Council continues to owe a debt to humankind, to the United Nations and to peace and justice, especially in the Middle East. It is reprehensible that under its banner proclaiming it a defender of human rights, the United States is the biggest accomplice and defender of the slaughter of the Palestinians, having now obstructed every effort to put an end to that barbarity four times. We should remind the Assembly that the United States has used its veto in the Security Council 45 times on the situation in the Middle East, including 19 negative votes since 1972 on the question of Palestine, in a clear demonstration of its lack of respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the international community and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We reiterate

that the Security Council must fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter and should do so urgently and without double standards. The Palestinian people are resisting heroically, but we are witnessing a clear demonstration of an attempt to exterminate them.

To date, out of a population of approximately 2.3 million people in Gaza, more than 30,000 Palestinians have died and more than 70,000 have been injured, amounting to more than 100,000 people dead, wounded or missing, two thirds of them women and children. But those painful death tolls are not static. They are increasing by the day. The Government and the people of Nicaragua strongly denounce and condemn the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Nicaragua, like the international community, considers that Israel's actions are clear violations of the 1948 Genocide Convention. They have been accompanied by statements from the most senior Israeli authorities that clearly show genocidal intent and illustrate the dehumanization that the Palestinian people have been subjected to. The execution of all of Israel's military actions, with the backing of the United States and European countries, clearly amounts to a decision to make the Palestinian people disappear. Nicaragua once again urges Israel to comply with its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law and to immediately end its military assault on the Palestinian people. We also call for an end to the occupation and the establishment of a lasting and permanent solution that respects the 1967 borders of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State.

The massive demonstrations all over the world, which every day show increasingly strong support for Palestinians and demand a ceasefire and a free Palestine, must not be ignored. The peoples of our Mother Earth are protesting, marching, demanding justice and condemning all those crimes. A conscience for peace is growing among those peoples, as is their repudiation of the Governments that support and promote those crimes and that as a result are becoming joint perpetrators. Nicaragua welcomed and supports South Africa's application to the International Court of Justice, filed on 29 December 2023, against Israel for its violations of its obligations under the Genocide Convention regarding the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

In accordance with its obligations under international law to ensure respect for those fundamental international texts and customary international law,

Nicaragua has urged the Governments complicit in this massacre to immediately halt their supplies of arms, munitions, technology and components to Israel, since it is likely that they have been used to facilitate or commit violations of the Genocide Convention. We have warned that the recent announcements by those Governments regarding their suspension of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) adds to the collective punishment of millions of Palestinians, who have already been condemned to famine, starvation and disease. If UNRWA stops its operations, thousands of Palestinians, especially babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly, will die as a result of those cuts. Nicaragua has informed those Governments in writing that it will take every step that it considers appropriate under international law, including recourse to the International Court of Justice, to ensure respect for international texts and customary international law.

Peace must prevail at all costs and above all else, in order to make way for the only just and true solution, which is that the State of Palestine must be recognized as a full Member of the United Nations. The current circumstances confirm more than ever that an international conference on Palestine must be urgently convened. Everyone here knows very well that the Security Council has a historic responsibility to once and for all enable the full realization of a State of Palestine and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Our pathway to stopping those who have policies of destruction and death for the Palestinian people is one of unity. Ultimately, we have the certainty, the conviction and the confidence that peace will defeat fascism, neo-fascism and imperialism.

Every day that passes without a ceasefire and an end to that ongoing genocidal campaign means more suffering, death and collective punishment. It is an affront to human conscience and represents an immeasurable catastrophe for children, for their mothers and for the Palestinian people. Because we are fervent believers in divine justice, in human conscience, in solidarity with oppressed peoples, it is our absolute belief that the Palestinian people will be victorious in their heroic struggle for their self-determination and their free, sovereign and independent State of Palestine, in accordance with the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Government and the people of Nicaragua have always supported and will continue to support the Palestinian people firmly and

in solidarity in their just cause for their State and their security. It is a matter of principle and of brotherly solidarity in struggle.

We demand peace and security in the Middle East, which requires a solution to the question of Palestine and the territories occupied by Israel, with the realization of the Palestinian people's exercise of their inalienable rights, based on two States, Israel and Palestine, existing on an equal footing, in peace and security. That lies at the heart of a just and lasting peace.

Mr. Vasconcelos y Cruz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is unacceptable that despite the dire humanitarian situation facing the population of the Gaza Strip and the alarming number of civilian casualties there, the United States has once again resorted to a veto, thereby preventing the Security Council from calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

We must ask ourselves whether last Thursday's reprehensible attack, which cost the lives of more than 100 Palestinian civilians who were receiving humanitarian assistance, would have happened if the Security Council had called for a ceasefire a few days earlier, as was the clear will of 13 of its member States. The answer is obvious.

Precisely in order to prevent the Security Council's inaction from leading to human tragedies owing to the abuse of the veto, we reiterate our call on all States that have not yet done so to join the Franco-Mexican initiative on limiting the use of the veto. Through that initiative, we seek a commitment from the permanent members of the Security Council to waiving the veto when it concerns potential situations of mass atrocities. We, the 106 countries signatories to the initiative, agree that the veto should not be a privilege but a responsibility.

Mexico reiterates its categorical condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October against Israeli civilians. At the same time, we condemn the indiscriminate attacks and the violence to which the Palestinian civilian population has been subjected by the Israeli Defence Forces. It is alarming that the Israeli military actions in Gaza have to date left more than 30,000 people dead and 70,000 injured, in addition to the incalculable damage to Palestinian infrastructure and other civilian property. We condemn the military operations in Rafah, which, until recently, was seen as the only safe zone within Gaza, where some 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering in overcrowded conditions.

Mexico urges all parties to respect international law, specifically international humanitarian law. In that regard, we recall that the order issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January ordered Israel to "take all possible measures to prevent" genocide in Gaza. Mexico reiterates that the order is legally binding and must be complied with unconditionally.

We also recognize the work being done by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the investigation phase on the situation in the State of Palestine. That is why Mexico and Chile referred the situation to the ICC in January. We trust that the proceedings initiated in that body will ensure an impartial investigation to attribute individual criminal responsibility for the crimes provided for under the Rome Statute if the relevant evidence is found so as to ensure justice for the victims.

We also call on all Member States to refrain from acts such as massive arms transfers, which help to perpetuate the vicious cycle of violence in the region. Let us prevent a further escalation from exacerbating the fragile security situation in the Middle East. Lately, we have seen the risk of a regional conflagration with the recent events in the Red Sea, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm that Mexico supports a lasting solution to the conflict under the premise of two States, which addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns and allows for the consolidation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with international law and, in particular, the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): I thank the President for convening this debate to discuss the ongoing situation in Gaza following yet another failed attempt in the Security Council to uphold its mandate.

Today marks the 150th day since 7 October 2023. Since then, about 1,130 Israelis and more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, of whom 12,300 are children, that is, more than 200 people a day. When is it enough for some countries in this Assembly to finally accept that far too many innocent lives have been lost? When do we say that it is time to end that unjust killing? When do we demand a ceasefire? Do some of us want to continue to believe that we need to allow Israel more time to justify its so-called right to defend itself against

a population whom it illegally occupies? When will this stop? Until there are no Palestinians left in Gaza? The war has clearly shown us in this Assembly that some lives mean more than others. There appears to be an Orwellian justification that some are more equal than others, and therefore some countries are above the law and cannot be sanctioned or stopped from their merciless persecution and genocidal acts.

In addition to the constant bombardment of Gaza, we are also witnessing the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza against the backdrop of limited access to relief aid, including medical, food and water supplies, as a result of blockages instituted by Israel. In recent days, we have seen shameless attacks on those waiting for aid, as well as the rising number of infants dying from malnutrition. The starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited under international humanitarian law. There must be the safe and unimpeded delivery of the humanitarian aid that has been provided by United Nations agencies and other international humanitarian organizations.

South Africa reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire. With an overwhelming majority, the General Assembly has called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. That has been met with defiance by a country that supposedly subscribes to the Charter of the United Nations despite violating it and persistently not abiding by the resolutions of the Organization.

In the context of violations of international law, South Africa resorted to international judicial mechanisms, including at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, to seek justice for the people of Palestine. We regret that, a month after the provisional measures were issued by the Court, Palestinians continue to suffer immeasurably under the occupying Power's intensified military operations. The events of the past few months in Gaza have illustrated that Israel is acting contrary to its international law obligations, including those in terms of the Genocide Convention. The provisional measures of the Court are directly binding on Israel, which, pursuant to the Court's order and to the Genocide Convention, is required to stop all acts by it that are possibly genocidal. There is clearly no credible basis for Israel to continue to claim that its military actions are in full compliance with international law, including the Genocide Convention. Similarly, in its attacks on civilians and by taking hostages, Hamas also violated international law and must be held accountable for

those actions. We reiterate South Africa's call for the immediate release of all the hostages.

The discussion on the ongoing situation in Gaza by the General Assembly is prompted by the failure of the Security Council to act in calling for a humanitarian ceasefire following a veto cast by one permanent member of the Security Council, which prevented the Council from taking the action that was supported by almost all other Council members. That is regrettably prolonging the suffering of Palestinians and eroding the credibility and integrity of the Security Council and the global peace and security system. We reiterate that the international community cannot proclaim the importance of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations in some situations and not in others, as if the rule of law only applies to a select few. For international law to be credible, it should be uniformly applied and not be selective. The failure or inability of the Security Council to act and respond effectively to conflict situations, such as that in Gaza, has highlighted over and over again the much-needed reforms in the Security Council. We cannot afford to delay the necessity for reforms any longer.

South Africa is gravely concerned by the severe impact that the suspension of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) has had on the ability of the institution to implement its mandate and provide assistance to Palestinian refugees. The Agency is nearing its collapse as a result of those decisions. Such a situation brings to the fore the need for the General Assembly to consider alternative approaches to supporting UNWRA with predictable and adequate funding. We reiterate our call for donor Governments and members of the international community to resume and scale up funding for UNWRA as a matter of urgency. That is in the interest of humanity, which we, as States Members of the United Nations, have committed to preserving.

South Africa believes that addressing the root cause of the Israel–Palestine conflict is long overdue. At the centre of the root cause are the illegal occupation and expansion of settlement activities, which are unfortunately continuing in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, amid the heinous and barbaric Israeli offensive in Gaza. Illegal settlements, leading to dispossession and displacement, and human rights abuses are a flagrant violation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and contravene

international law. The continued policies of the occupying Power can only spur hatred and resentment.

In conclusion, the events of the past months must awaken us to the urgent need for a negotiated settlement towards a two-State solution, which this Assembly and the Security Council have recognized in their resolutions, and, ultimately, the self-determination of Palestinians. The situation in Gaza should serve as a catalyst for finding a just and lasting peace for Palestinians, as well as Israelis.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): Regrettably, we are here once again to discuss a veto cast against the virtually unanimous call by the international community for peace in the occupied Gaza Strip. The Algerian draft resolution vetoed by the United States (Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173) urged the immediate cessation of hostilities — a call already made by this General Assembly compellingly and overwhelmingly. Unfortunately, once more, due to one veto, the Security Council failed to act to prevent an even bigger tragedy from befalling the innocent people in Gaza.

The massacre of 29 February is a crude testament to the Council's repeated failure to speak up decisively against that tragedy. The catastrophe has already killed more than 30,000 people, most of them women and children. In a conflict that cannot be won militarily within the limits of international law, such inaction does not live up to the purposes of the United Nations.

The collective peace and security system, centred on the Security Council, must urgently be reformed; the world, especially developing countries, can no longer be kept at the margin of its decision-making. The Council needs adequate representation. It needs to ensure respect for universal norms, especially in preventing serious breaches of international humanitarian law, and it needs a renewed commitment that brings the world together in promoting peace, security and full respect for international law.

Attempts to justify the Council's inaction in Gaza argue that a call for a ceasefire would jeopardize parallel diplomatic efforts. How long will the whole world, and how long will Palestinians, wait for those efforts to succeed? The Council cannot be prevented from meeting its responsibilities based on non-fulfilled promises of direct talks.

Simply awaiting a solution based on direct negotiations, while unceasing ruthless military operations continue to kill unarmed civilians and target protected objects, implies complicity with death and destruction. Simply idly awaiting the end of the conflict implies complicity with actions that breach the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, including the order to allow humanitarian assistance into the Gaza Strip.

Let us be clear: the continuation of hostilities in Gaza is not acceptable by any standard. There is no room for delaying a ceasefire, either morally or legally. There is no legal basis for the establishment of settlements in any of the occupied Palestinian territories. Such settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

Like 138 Members of the United Nations, Brazil recognized the State of Palestine and strongly supports its admission to the United Nations as a full Member. That would help to create conditions for the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as would other initiatives aimed at consolidating Palestinian statehood, as part of the two-State solution, long supported by the international community. We call on the Council to uphold the desire of the majority of the Members of the United Nations and to admit the State of Palestine as a full Member of the Organization.

Brazil reiterates its call for serious negotiations leading to the two State-solution, allowing for the creation of an independent, sovereign and economically viable Palestinian State, coexisting with Israel in peace and security within the mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders, which includes the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as its capital.

Mr. Garrido Melo (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this formal meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the veto of Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173, on the situation in the Gaza Strip, drafted by Algeria, on Tuesday, 20 February. We also take note of the special report issued by the Security Council on this matter (see A/78/786, annex). Chile supports the statement made by the representative of Liechtenstein on behalf of a group of countries (see A/78/PV.59).

We wish to acknowledge the work done by Algeria to reach a consensus on various elements and opinions of States members of the Security Council on a highly

sensitive issue. We followed the meeting closely, and we recognize the efforts of Algeria to achieve a text with substance and aimed at achieving an immediate cessation of hostilities. We are aware that the negotiations were not easy; nevertheless, there were 13 votes in favour and only one vote against. Clearly, a large majority of members expressed their opinion in agreement with the text presented. Moreover, the text contained language that had already been adopted at the tenth emergency special session also by an overwhelming majority.

In other words, there is a clear will on the issue before us on the part of all Member States, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly. That shows that the use of the veto can undermine the credibility of the multilateral system. In that regard, we stress that the use of the veto should be limited, particularly in cases such as mass atrocities and war crimes. We therefore once again emphasize the importance of achieving Security Council reform so that decisions on safeguarding international peace and security can be taken in a timely manner. That is crucial to strengthening the capacity of the Organization as a whole.

Refusing to call for an urgent suspension of hostilities is a contradiction of the Security Council's role. We demand that that organ fulfil its mandate and put an end to the cruel war. The veto is not a privilege but a responsibility. It is truly regrettable that, after more than 150 days of conflict, the Security Council has failed to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip — an essential step in protecting civilians, thereby ensuring full, immediate, safe, focused and sustained access for humanitarian aid, which includes respecting resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), adopted by the Security Council itself last year. We believe that the use of all available routes into the entire Gaza Strip must be facilitated. A ceasefire remains a priority for the protection of civilians, in particular women, the elderly and children. There is no doubt that human life must be the top priority, and at present the Security Council has failed to accomplish that objective.

Chile supports the two-State solution and the right of Israel and Palestine to live in harmony within secure and recognized international borders and with full respect for the basic rights of all their inhabitants. We therefore urgently call for full and prompt compliance with the relevant resolutions that support the right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign State.

We recall Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirms that Israel's establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. Clearly, the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October and the indiscriminate response by the State of Israel on the civilian population living in the Gaza Strip, which has also affected the West Bank, are in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law.

With each passing day, we become increasingly alarmed by the repercussions of the conflict on the rest of the region. We echo the call of the Secretary-General himself and the respective heads of various United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and UNICEF, that an immediate, lasting and comprehensive ceasefire is essential in order to de-escalate tensions and protect the civilian population.

We have faith in the work of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and hope that she will be given every assistance in carrying out her duties. We underline that there is no contradiction between the legitimate defence of a State or the fight against terrorism and respecting the lives of civilians; it is simply not permitted to attack critical civilian infrastructure, including homes, health and education centres and shelters, among other places. We stress that violence is not solved with more violence, and its indiscriminate use has cost the lives of thousands of Palestinian civilians and puts the lives of kidnapped Israeli citizens at great risk, as has already been tragically demonstrated.

Chile has unequivocally condemned the actions of Hamas, as well as all terrorist acts, acts of violence and hostilities against the civilian population. We also demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still held by Hamas, ensuring their welfare and treatment in accordance with international law. We encourage all the parties involved, as well as the international community, to continue to work to end the war. That is possible only through diplomacy and dialogue. We therefore appreciate the efforts and results that friendly countries have achieved to defuse the crisis.

Finally, for Chile, the clarification of the facts and responsibilities in this matter is essential so as to prevent a repetition of the situation. Together with Mexico, we submitted a letter to the International Criminal Court on the situation in Palestine, with the aim of strengthening the Prosecutor's investigation into the alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel, which are crimes under the Rome Statute.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): This week, we will mark five months of the current conflict in Gaza. It has been five months of immense suffering. We have held meetings in this Hall time and again. The Security Council has met numerous times to discuss the situation in Gaza. It addressed several aspects of the crisis in detail, among them the protection of civilians, particularly children and women, humanitarian access, the safety and security of United Nations personnel, the spiralling health crisis and, just last week, hunger and starvation. With every single briefing and every single distressing statistic, Slovenia's call for a ceasefire becomes stronger: our call for alleviating the humanitarian situation and for reinforcing the protection of civilians and a call for a political solution. The call by this very Assembly has been clear. The call by the global public has been clear. Slovenia therefore deeply regrets the use of the veto.

Slovenia continues to condemn the terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October. We call for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of hostages. We also call for full respect of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We underline our deep distress over the grave violations taking place in Gaza. More than a month ago, the International Court of Justice issued an order on provisional measures. It is alarming that we have not yet seen a change in the way in which military operations are carried out, including in the continuing threat of an imminent Israeli ground invasion of Rafah. We urge Israel not to carry out such plans and to fully comply with the order of the International Court of Justice.

We are deeply alarmed by the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and by the conditions that humanitarian, medical and United Nations workers are facing. We call for full respect for humanitarian, notification and deconfliction mechanisms, as well as for the facilitation of appropriate security equipment to United Nations and humanitarian personnel. We are deeply concerned that the humanitarian aid entering Gaza has decreased

considerably, especially in the light of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. We reiterate that international humanitarian law prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Starvation amounts to a war crime under international law. A scaled-up, continued, sustained and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to and within Gaza should be ensured, in accordance with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and humanitarian principles.

In relation to that, we welcome the fact that the General Assembly received a briefing by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) yesterday. We heard first-hand about the role, work and challenges faced by the Agency. We reiterate that UNRWA continues to be the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza.

In conclusion, only a cessation of hostilities can prevent the continuation of the current alarming scale of killing, suffering and destruction. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and its role in addressing the crisis is clear. What we are facing in Gaza today is an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, which has the potential to further destabilize the wider region. All that culminates in what will likely be one of the main challenges for the Organization that our generation of diplomats will address. It is only with a strong united voice that we can tackle it.

Mr. Muhumuza (Uganda): First and foremost, I thank the President for having convened this debate. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Republic of Uganda, but, first, let me align my delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59).

My delegation appreciates this debate on the question of the veto, on which I will spend many of my few minutes at the rostrum. Uganda has long held that if the veto is to be used, it should be done as a last resort. In any case, it should never apply in cases in which genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are an issue. It should also not be utilized when the interests of a veto holder are concerned. Unfortunately, Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits the practice, has been ignored as if it does not exist at all.

It is a long-held principle of natural justice that no one should be a judge in their own cause. Our reading of Article 27, paragraph 3, properly lines up with such a principle of natural justice. With that in mind, our forebears provided that a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting. Unfortunately, we do not see that being adhered to, and it leaves us at a loss. The most that should be expected is an abstention by the veto holder if its interests are being put to a vote. However, the common practice is the use of a negative vote, which, when applied by a permanent member, translates into a veto. Perhaps that is a low-hanging fruit, so as to speak, that can be rectified just by addressing the working methods and allowing the President of the Security Council at the time to regard such a negative vote as an abstention by a veto holder if it was made on a matter in which the permanent member has an interest and call it as such. We must therefore continue our efforts for urgent Security Council reform, beginning with the working methods. The use of the veto in the Security Council continues to create paralysis in situations of dire need, where the protection of civilians should be of paramount priority.

Reform of the Security Council should be comprehensive, addressing all substantive issues relating, inter alia, to the question of the membership, regional representation, the Council's agenda, its working methods and the decision-making process, including the veto, and should garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States, in line with the provisions of the Charter and the relevant General Assembly decisions, particularly decision 62/557. The question of the veto should be carefully addressed, and the use of the veto by permanent members needs regulation prohibiting its unjustified use or abuse against the wishes of the majority. To be effective, perhaps the veto should be exercised by at least two permanent members in each particular situation in which it is warranted and the members' interests are in play. It should be supported by three non-permanent members and backed by the General Assembly with a simple majority.

The Council's legitimacy and credibility are being constantly scrutinized, and the Council should not allow the major Powers to overrule the wishes of the majority with just a single vote. It is important to stress that the mechanism of the veto runs against the very principle upon which the United Nations was built. My delegation recognizes that several Member States and

interest groups continue to criticize the existence of the veto, while others oppose outright any extension of the veto. However, so long as the veto continues to exist, it should be extended to new permanent members, with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, as a matter of common justice. It has been six decades since the San Francisco Conference — I believe that it will be seven shortly — and the United Nations membership has increased dramatically. The needs have changed as well. We therefore call for a Security Council that reflects the current geopolitical realities. Only then will it be appreciated as a relevant organ of this great institution. That will ensure equitable representation on the Security Council and enable equal participation in decision-making on issues of international peace and security that affect especially the African region, with more than half of the issues on the agenda of the Security Council.

Mr. Ben Lagha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we once again meet at the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Middle East following the casting of the veto by a permanent member of the Security Council against draft resolution S/2024/173, submitted by Algeria, whose efforts calling for a ceasefire in Gaza we appreciate. The draft resolution also calls for ensuring the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance and an end to the forced displacement of Palestinians, which are the least that the Council can do to spare the Palestinian people from the ongoing catastrophic situation and alleviate the horrors imposed on them in Gaza.

While Tunisia expresses its deep regret and dissatisfaction at the continued failure of the Security Council to carry out its basic tasks, we hold it responsible for the consequences. We reiterate our firm position in support of the brotherly Palestinian people in their steadfastness against the occupation and the genocidal war to which they are subjected and in their struggle to establish their independent State on all the land of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

My country has made all possible efforts to support the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to regain their inalienable rights, which are not subject to the statute of limitations, and to end colonialism, which remains the main obstacle to achieving peace in the region.

The use of the veto once again prevented the Security Council from carrying out the tasks entrusted

to it to maintain international peace and security. Like many speakers before me, I wish to recall that such tasks are carried out by the Council on behalf of the entire membership of the Organization, as stipulated in Article 24 of the Charter, which also clarifies that such a mandate stems from the commitment to ensuring that the work carried out by the United Nations is prompt and effective.

Where do we therefore stand today regarding that mandate while the Council remains totally unable to adopt a resolution allowing for a humanitarian ceasefire — a request that received the support of 153 countries, constituting the vast majority at the General Assembly, during its emergency special session on 12 December 2023 (see A/ES-10/PV.45)? Where do we stand today when it comes to the need for prompt and effective action after more than four months have elapsed since the outbreak of the hideous genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza, claiming more than 30,000 victims, not counting those missing under the rubble and the wounded? There have been more than 150 days of indiscriminate bombardment and systematic destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and basic infrastructure, during which the occupation entity committed horrific war crimes in full view of the world. It is now starving more than 1.5 million Palestinian people, who were forcibly displaced to Rafah and are currently being deprived of their humanity, in flagrant violation of all humanitarian, legal and moral values and standards. Such crimes cannot remain non-accountable. We are therefore still awaiting the measures that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court will take in that regard.

It is not the first time that the veto has been cast at the Security Council against ceasefire draft resolutions in Gaza since the outbreak of the brutal Israeli aggression. We have heard a number of justifications for that, including that adopting such a draft resolution would undermine the direct diplomatic efforts to save lives undertaken by some parties on the ground.

There may not be enough time here to discuss the validity of such justifications, but the reality clearly affirms that the quiet diplomacy to save lives that was used as a pretext did not save lives, but, on the contrary, it gave the occupation entity the green light to kill more children and women and to cause more destruction and commit more massacres, the most recent of which was the flour massacre, which claimed the lives of more than 100 people who were trying to obtain humanitarian

assistance in the northern Gaza Strip. How many more massacres must be committed against the Palestinian people until we are convinced that we have exhausted our ethical and humanitarian imperative in dealing with that historical injustice?

All that can be said about the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe that the Palestinian people are experiencing today in Gaza due to the aggression of the occupation entity has been said here at the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and by the Secretary-General, the United Nations organs, its competent agencies and the International Court of Justice. We call for implementing the provisional measures adopted by the Court. All has been said by the non-governmental organizations and representatives of the civil society after they came back from Gaza with horrific testimonies. All has been said by the free and committed media across the world despite it being ignored by certain major western media, whose independence and integrity we question despite the fact that they exist in countries committed to freedom of the press.

Given the daily horrors that they are enduring, the Palestinian people no longer need expressions of deep concern and compassion. They need concrete measures to end the ongoing massacres. The Palestinian people need to be able to extract the remains of their dead from under the rubble and bury them, treat the wounded and provide shelter for the thousands of children who have lost their families and need water and food. In a word, they need to have their dignity and humanity restored.

When is that war going to end? As for us, we need today to stand up frankly before our conscience, before our peoples and before history to ask ourselves: how many human lives and how many innocent children could have been saved if we had moved from the statements to actions? How can we accept such atrocities happening today, 79 years after the establishment of the United Nations and after adopting all those international treaties and conventions to protect civilians, to protect human rights and to address crimes against humanity? Has the killing of Palestinians become permissible or are their lives less valuable than those of other people? How can we accept that as the peoples of the United Nations determined to save future generations from the scourge of war, as stated in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations?

In conclusion, my country's delegation believes that double standards and the abhorrent selectivity by certain international parties towards the Palestinian question, including through the use of the veto at the Security Council, undermine multilateral work, weaken the rule of law and threaten to collapse the system of principles and values that underpin the United Nations Organization. That truly requires a decisive stance to save this Organization, including by reforming the Security Council until the Organization restores its credibility and prestige.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President for having convened this meeting on the use of the veto in the context of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Switzerland voted in favour of Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173, submitted by Algeria, and regrets that it was not adopted despite the very broad support that it received. That support is illustrated by the joint statement by the elected members of the Security Council, which Switzerland fully endorses (see A/78/PV.59). I would like to add the following points in my national capacity.

In view of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is necessary and must remain a priority. Such a ceasefire is essential to free the hostages, protect the civilian population and enable the safe supply and distribution of the assistance that the civilian population so desperately needs. We cannot allow hundreds of thousands of besieged civilians to be left prey to bombardment, starvation and epidemics. Moreover, we remain deeply concerned about the catastrophic consequences that a major Israeli military offensive in Rafah would have both on the more than 1.5 million people who have taken refuge there and on humanitarian operations in Gaza.

We would not be in such a serious situation with such levels of suffering if international law were fully respected. All parties must in all circumstances respect international humanitarian law and human rights, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians. Under the Geneva Conventions, the parties must allow and facilitate the safe, rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. We also recall the mandatory nature of the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, including the provision of humanitarian aid and basic services in Gaza.

Switzerland calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held captive in Gaza since the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October. We deplore the fact that no firm and explicit condemnation of those acts was included in the draft resolution despite our appeals and those of several Council members.

Switzerland has long been committed to the restrictive use of the veto in the Security Council. We recall the code of conduct proposed by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group on veto use, supported by more than two-thirds of the members of this Assembly to date. It is high time together to step up efforts to implement it. That would send a clear signal for transparent, responsible and effective multilateralism. The credibility of the Security Council depends on its ability to act, in accordance with its mandate, to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, human rights and the protection of civilians around the world. Switzerland will remain committed to unified action by the Council to that end.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): We convene once again to reflect on the use of the veto by a permanent member of the Security Council. This plenary meeting on the use of the veto, like other meetings before it, brings into focus the weight of the power vested in Council members — the power to hold accountable, the power to end impunity and the power to enforce compliance of its legally binding resolutions.

The Council and its members should not provide a shield for, or aid and abate, the violation of international law. Equally, the Council should not shy away from the robustly established guardrails that protect civilians, humanitarian aid workers and infrastructure in conflicts. It is the considered view of my delegation that ample time must always be accorded for diplomatic efforts to be carried out. In the face of grave injustice in the ongoing genocidal war in Gaza, however, we have not seen results tangible enough to warrant further patience, even at the expense of circumventing the confines of international law and the resolutions adopted by this Assembly and by the Council or the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice.

This Assembly is unequivocal in what it deems as a solution to the current crisis — an immediate ceasefire, marking an end to the violence and forced displacement, coupled with the immediate full, safe and rapid provision of humanitarian aid.

Draft resolution S/2024/173, presented to the Security Council by Algeria, comprehensively addressed several issues and was explicitly prescriptive in calling for accountability for all violations of international law. It is therefore counter-intuitive to have had this draft resolution vetoed on the grounds that it does not single out a party to the conflict when there is no lack of clarity on what is expected of all parties.

In its oral statements before the International Court of Justice on 23 February, Namibia articulated with lucidity the need for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The continued breach by Israel of peremptory norms of general international law should have legal consequences, and we eagerly await the determination of the Court in that regard.

Peace is contingent on the end to occupation in Palestine. The yardstick by which commitment to peace is measured in the current context is an unconditional ceasefire. Peace is also contingent upon States refraining from rendering assistance to Israel, including the transfer of arms and political support that perpetuates injustices against the people of Gaza.

More than 30,000 people have lost their lives in the most brutal manner in the past five months alone. An infrastructure destroyed will have implications for generations to come, and our collective continued inability to bring the conflict to an end will be what posterity records.

In conclusion, Namibia will support all efforts geared towards the recognition of the State of Palestine as a viable independent State, with its people living freely, standing tall among the family of nations and fully exercising their inalienable right to self-determination.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): Brunei Darussalam aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59).

We welcome the convening of this plenary meeting following the recent veto cast at the Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (see S/PV.9552), but we regret that this meeting has had to take place to begin with. The use of the veto has once again impeded the realization of the very important Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173 — one that would have demanded

a humanitarian ceasefire, urged accountability and commanded much-needed action, a draft resolution that, if successfully adopted and implemented, would have contributed to the saving of many innocent lives.

Furthermore, the draft resolution would have demonstrated the Security Council’s capability to uphold its special and moral responsibility to preserve international peace and security. The Council’s inability to call for an immediate ceasefire and failure to ensure the protection of civilian populations throughout the occupied Palestinian territories are of grave concern. We recognize that that is not the result of the absence of unity within the Council; rather, it is part of a larger paralysis owing to the use of the veto when it does not resonate with the desires of the international community. That issue must be addressed urgently. In that regard, we urge the permanent members of the Council to use the veto with principles and maximum restraint, and we hope for its eventual elimination.

Regarding the crisis in Gaza itself, Brunei Darussalam reiterates its strong condemnation of the unprecedented levels of violence and attacks by the occupying Power. We categorically reject the large-scale offensives on Rafah, where millions of displaced Palestinians are seeking refuge. We join the international community in calling for an immediate ceasefire and for the occupying Power to de-escalate tensions and immediately halt its systematic aggression against the Palestinians. The latest incident, in which civilians were killed at an aid distribution site in Gaza, further illustrates the necessary urgency for an immediate ceasefire. Securing a permanent cessation of hostilities and lifting the siege are important so as to guarantee the secure delivery of life-saving supplies. We therefore urge all parties to abide by their obligations, in accordance with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Brunei Darussalam will continue its full support for all initiatives to immediately de-escalate the crisis. We will continue to back all efforts that ensure that the situation in Palestine remains the top priority on the international agenda, especially here at the United Nations. Lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without an independent State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Finally, Brunei Darussalam remains steadfast in its support for the State of Palestine to be accorded permanent membership of the United Nations.

Mr. Gómez Hernández (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the President for having convened this debate after the veto in the Security Council on 20 February (see S/PV.9552). Algeria tried to seek a consensus text, and a broad interregional majority supported its draft resolution S/2024/173. We recall Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). Both resolutions demand that parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, respect for the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel and humanitarian access.

The massacre on 28 February in northern Gaza of Palestinians who were desperately seeking humanitarian aid is a reminder that international humanitarian law is not being respected in Gaza. Those responsible must be brought to justice. United Nations agencies continue to warn of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, where more than 1.9 million people — 85 per cent of the population — are displaced. Malnutrition and health crises continue to rage and wreak havoc, and Gaza now faces the first signs of a famine.

Access for humanitarian aid remains inadequate. The passage of trucks through Rafah and Kerem Shalom is insufficient and faces too many obstacles, compounded by an increasing lack of security and the absence of humanitarian personnel in the Gaza Strip. The delivery of aid by air is welcome news, but it cannot alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe.

Since the attacks of 7 October, we have reiterated our total condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas. We also demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which must lead to the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages, and which must put an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We are therefore grateful for the efforts of the United States of America, Egypt and Qatar in the negotiations towards that goal and to that end.

From the outset, Spain has demanded strict compliance with international humanitarian law and international law in Gaza. In response to successive United Nations humanitarian appeals since the military operation began in Gaza, Spain has tripled its aid to Palestine annually to €48.5 million in 2023. That commitment extends to the United Nations Relief

and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which carries out vital work with Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, as mandated by this General Assembly, and which also has a vital role to play in the current situation in Gaza. In 2023, our contribution to UNRWA was €19.5 million. This year, we have already increased our contribution by an additional €3.5 million in January, and we are preparing a support package, which we will announce shortly. To address the humanitarian crisis and to start reconstruction as soon as hostilities cease, we must work with the Palestinian National Authority. It is our partner for peace, and the task that it faces must be given strong international support.

The only way to prevent a further crisis in Gaza and in the region is to end the conflict once and for all. To do that, we must adopt a concrete, practical political approach to specifically meeting the needs and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians for peace and security. That is the only way to ensure the durability of a ceasefire and to strengthen the Palestinian Authority.

I once again reaffirm the firm commitment of my country, Spain, to achieving the two-State solution, for which a peace conference with the parties and the international community must be convened as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations. That is the only possible path towards the indispensable goal of a State of Israel and a viable, feasible and contiguous State of Palestine, both living in peace and security.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg endorses the statements made yesterday by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Liechtenstein, on behalf of an interregional group of countries (see A/78/PV.59). I will add a few points in my national capacity.

Luxembourg thanks the President for having convened this meeting in accordance with resolution 76/262. We are grateful to the Security Council for its special report on the use of the veto at the meeting that it held on 20 February on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see A/78/786, annex). We thank the President for his undertaking to prepare a report on our debate for the Security Council.

We deeply regret that, because of the veto, the Security Council was once again unable to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, even though the situation in the Gaza Strip is intolerable. Hunger and infectious diseases are spreading. The risk of famine

is very high, and the health system is collapsing. The food supply chain has virtually broken down. Water, electricity and fuel are in short supply. The draft resolution, proposed by Algeria on behalf of the Group of Arab States (S/2024/173), demanding a ceasefire was widely supported by the members of the Security Council, 13 of whom voted in favour.

We thank Algeria and the other elected members for their efforts to reach an agreement in the Security Council. We hope that the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States of America to achieve a ceasefire before Ramadan will soon bear fruit. In the meantime, the death toll continues to rise. Women and children are the main victims. The situation is becoming increasingly desperate. We saw that on 29 February, when more than 100 Palestinians were killed and hundreds injured as they tried to obtain food aid in Gaza. That incident must be fully investigated. Accountability must be ensured for all the crimes committed. Justice must be done for the victims.

The protection of civilians and respect for international law and international humanitarian law must be ensured at all times and in all places. We strongly condemn the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas since 7 October 2023, which have included sexual and gender-based violence. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. The Geneva Conventions must be implemented in all circumstances and by all.

Humanitarian workers, journalists, hospitals and schools, as well as United Nations premises, must never be targeted by parties to the conflict. Luxembourg is deeply concerned about the threat of an Israeli offensive in Rafah, which would only exacerbate the humanitarian disaster that is already under way.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and all humanitarian actors on the ground must urgently receive the support that they need to fulfil their mandate. Safe, unhindered and expanded humanitarian access must be ensured without delay, and the delivery of humanitarian aid must be increased. It is imperative that aid be delivered at the required level throughout the Gaza Strip, including in the north. In that regard, Luxembourg calls for the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), the resolutions of this Assembly and the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January.

Luxembourg remains committed to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that ensures Israel's right to security, while respecting the Palestinians' right to self-determination and a life in dignity. Only a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on a two-State solution, will break the cycle of violence.

Listening carefully to the statements made during our debate yesterday and today, I must say that there are many points of agreement on the way forward. We hope that, on that basis, we can work together in a concrete way, both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council, for the implementation of an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and for the realization of the two-State solution.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin this statement by thanking the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 76/262, due to the veto cast in the Security Council on 20 February when considering draft resolution S/2024/173, submitted by the delegation of Algeria. We associate ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Malta, on behalf of the elected 10, and of Liechtenstein, on behalf of a group of countries (see A/78/PV.59). In addition, in our national capacity, I will refer to the issue on which the veto occurred and then on the issue of the veto itself.

First of all, I must acknowledge the transparent negotiation process, led by the drafter, which included the other members of the Council, and which concluded with the presentation of a draft text demanding a humanitarian ceasefire, which our country believes to be indispensable to alleviate the situation of the civilian population in Gaza. The unconditional and immediate release of the hostages was also demanded. Ecuador, a Council member, therefore voted in favour of the draft resolution.

For Ecuador and for the majority of Council members, the draft text should also have included a clear condemnation of the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023. However, my country is aware that it is unrealistic to expect the Council's products to be a faithful reproduction of national positions and aspirations.

With regard to the use of the veto, Ecuador participated in the meetings convened by the Assembly to deal with it, as those debates serve as an amplifying

lens for the arguments of Member States whose positions differ from those of the country that used the veto. Such debates show that the majority opinion is often ignored, and the Council prevented from acting through the will of only one of its permanent members.

As Ecuador pointed out in April 2022, when the resolution that brings us together today was adopted, those debates are not an end but a starting point. For example, it is time to ask ourselves how Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, is being interpreted and implemented, whereby in decisions under Chapter VI, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting. It is also time for a thorough discussion of the initiative led by France and Mexico that the five permanent members of the Council voluntarily and collectively suspend the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities.

Finally, Ecuador reiterates its firm belief that the mechanism established by resolution 76/262 helps transparency and accountability, strengthens the authority of the General Assembly and its relationship with the Council and, as a consequence, enhances the United Nations system.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We thank the President for having convened today's meeting, in accordance with resolution 76/262, on agenda item 63, entitled "Use of the veto".

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its deep regret over the use of the veto on Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173, submitted on behalf of the Group of Arab States by the delegation of Algeria, whom we thank. The draft resolution calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and its surrounding areas. That underscores the urgent need for Council reform in order to ensure that it can assume its responsibility to maintain international peace and security in a credible way without double standards. The Council's inability for the third time to adopt a resolution to end the attacks against Gaza due to the use of the veto reflects the failure of the international community as a whole to end the major humanitarian disaster, which is worsening daily in the light of the continued violations

of international instruments, legitimate resolutions and humanitarian principles.

The use of the veto power in the Security Council by the United States of America was an obstacle to ending the loss of human lives. It negatively demonstrated the ability of the international community to protect civilians, while the role of the international community is to end human tragedies, not to prolong them. Today the world is in dire need of applying ethical norms and taking the side of humanity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates its call for the international community to assume its responsibility to end the war and the unjustified and irresponsible escalation in order to protect innocent civilians. We caution against the disastrous repercussions of the threats to storm the city of Rafah, which has become the last refuge for hundreds of thousands of civilians as a result of the forced displacement by the Israeli occupation army, which to date has killed nearly 30,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children. That army continues to carry out the most heinous human rights violations against defenceless civilians. The most recent such practices included targeting civilians gathered to receive humanitarian aid, which led to killing and injuring more than 800 people.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns all such practices, which represent a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The Kingdom calls on all countries that support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to play their role in bridging the Agency's funding gap. UNRWA must be in a position to perform its duties in such a way that ensures the provision of essential services and basic goods for the Palestinians so as to mitigate the effects of the humanitarian crisis witnessed in occupied Palestine, given the Agency's leading role in humanitarian response operations.

My country reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire to prevent further innocent civilian casualties. It calls for the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023), the operationalization of the humanitarian mechanism pursuant to it, the immediate opening of safe humanitarian corridors, the evacuation of the wounded and the delivery of relief aid and medical equipment without restrictions in order to alleviate the humanitarian disaster and prevent it from worsening.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that the current crisis is the result of the international community's failure to end the occupation and implement a two-State solution. We emphasize that peace is the strategic choice for the Middle East. The region's security requires acceleration to achieve a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian question, in line with resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, in a way that ensures the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We condemn all unilateral measures that undermine the two-State solution and call for their immediate and complete cessation.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): We are gathered here at this meeting concerning the situation on which a veto was cast in the Security Council on 20 February (see S/2024/PV.9552). We regret that the Security Council once again was unable to take action despite the urgent and deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Thailand remains deeply concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. Over 30,000 people have been killed, over 70,000 injured and over 2.3 million people displaced. Those are figures that we have heard in this Hall and elsewhere. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, food insecurity has reached the point at which 576,000 people there are one step away from famine and are facing catastrophic levels of deprivation and starvation.

The tragic news of the recent incident in northern Gaza, where more than 100 people were killed or injured while waiting for humanitarian supplies, only adds to the already dire situation on the ground. Rafah, to which well over 1 million displaced persons from other parts of Gaza have fled, has become another battlefield in the devastating conflict. An escalation of the fighting in Rafah would lead to another unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. It is therefore more critical than ever that there be an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, and Thailand joins the international community in calling for it. To ease the plight of civilians in particular, Thailand urges all sides to respect and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Thailand continues to appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, including Thai nationals. As I have appealed at previous meetings of

the General Assembly, let the hostages come home. Pending their release, we call for the continuation of proper treatment and care for those hostages. Thailand therefore supports the ongoing negotiations by the relevant parties that would bring about a humanitarian ceasefire and secure the release of the hostages, including Thai nationals. We welcome their efforts, and we look forward to such negotiations bearing fruit.

Let me reiterate that we condemn in the strongest terms all forms of violence and attacks against innocent civilians, regardless of their nationality. The protection of civilians must be a priority at all times. We therefore oppose actions that would result in the further forced displacement or transfer of civilians from Gaza, and we are gravely concerned over the heightened risks of the conflict, which has assumed more regional dimensions. We therefore call on all sides to implement in full the resolutions of the Security Council and the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly that have laid out the foundations towards de-escalation, the delivery of humanitarian aid, a cessation of hostilities and the promotion of peace in the Middle East.

Thailand expresses solidarity with all United Nations personnel working in the extremely difficult and dangerous conditions in Gaza. Their sacrifices must not be forgotten. The recent briefing by Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), confirms the need to ensure funding for relief efforts, as well as rapid, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access for those in need in Gaza. In that regard, Thailand appeals to the international community to resume funding for UNRWA to help to alleviate the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Thailand reiterates its support for the collective efforts for genuine dialogue, diplomacy, de-escalation and peaceful means, with a view to finding a mutually agreed solution to the issue, in accordance with the two-State solution, by which the States of Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security within secured and recognized borders, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In the broader picture, a united Security Council would have made a big difference here on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, as well as on other issues that have had significant humanitarian consequences. Such unity cannot be achieved in many cases because

of the exercise of the veto. Thailand shares the views of the majority of States Members of the United Nations that a veto right is not a privilege but an international responsibility. Thailand also shares the aspiration of the international community that the Security Council find the way to work together to effectively discharge its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations, including through its reform.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in this debate for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon in this Hall after an informal meeting to hear the remaining speakers from yesterday on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.